

DECCAN Chronicle

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



NATION | 4

Sasikala may be released in Jan. 2021



WORLD | 5

Trump to host Israel, UAE deal signing event

SPORTS | 8

Blues begin EPL with a bang



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WEATHER

Max: 29.4°C
Min: 21.6°C
RH: 74%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky. Rain likely. Max/Min temp. 29/22 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+94,709)	(+1,308)
50,17,884	82,088
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+2,058)	(+10)
TS: 1,60,571	984
(+8,846)	(+69)
AP: 5,83,925	5,041

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,95,69,312
DEATHS
9,35,137
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213
worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Bhadrapada Bahula Chaturdasi till 7.52 pm
Star: Magha till 12.15 pm
Variyam: 7.26 pm to 8.52 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.46 am to 12.35 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HILIRI CALENDAR
Muharram 28, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.04 am
Zohar: 12.21 pm
Asar: 4.32 pm
Maghrib: 6.24 pm
Isha: 7.31 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.17 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.04 AM
MOONSET TODAY 5.43 PM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.42 AM

COUNTER POINT



We tested positive? It's a conspiracy by the Opposition!

IN BRIEF

India beats China in UN body polls

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

Soldier killed in Pak shelling

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

State asks CBI to probe irregularities in Fibernet

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

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

lance commission, the tender was awarded to TSL for laying the optical fiber network without considering the serious allegations against TSL by some of the co-bidders. It was found that the work of the project monitoring agency (PMA) was awarded to M/s Gemini communications ltd, by cancelling the earlier awarded tender for the same work, in which M/s Merax technologies private limited stood as L-1, surpassing some of the crucial tender conditions and relaxing others.

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

COVID CASES CROSS 50 LAKH MARK IN INDIA

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

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

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

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

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

they may set-up a committee of five people, also having a former Chief Justice of India and an eminent person from media, to lay down standards of broadcasting. He said that the committee would comprise "eminent and unbiased" people. The four episodes of the TV programme, projected as an "investigative" story, have already been telecast on September 11, 12, 13 and 14. The remaining five episodes were to be telecast in succession on a daily basis.

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

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

COVID | FALLOUT

Poor in AP sell plasma for survival

SAMPAT G. SAMARITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rajnath warns China for stepping up its presence along LAC

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

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

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

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

Asserting that the Indian Army has inflicted heavy



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

RAJNATH SINGH, Defence minister

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAMPA PUTS ACRES OF LAND AT FLOOD RISK

VADREVVU SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, SEPT. 15

Pampa reservoir at Annavaram in Sankhavaram mandal of East Godavari received heavy inflows due to heavy rains on Tuesday.

The reservoir received 1,400 cusecs of waters and the officials discharged 800 cusecs of waters into the sea by lifting three gates out of its five gates as the water levels in the reservoir reached 104 feet. Assistant engineer A. Srinivasa Kumar said surplus water was discharged into the reservoir from upstream rivulets, which submerged hundreds of acres of paddy fields.

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

Preparing for winter



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

Heavy rains pound Kurnool

D SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL, SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 copper plates found at Srisailem

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL SEPT. 15

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

The copper plates stacked together, found along with 245 silver coins and a copper coin, mention the exact day and time of inscription, said

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

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

Of the total silver coins, 148 were found in brass-bowl and 97 unearthed from separate places. The copper coin was also found in brass-bowl.

SHORT TAKES

BROKERS MAKE MOOLAH IN PLASMA 'TRADE'

From Page 1

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

On the other hand, some middlemen with access to a list of Covid-19 infected and recovered patients and registered donors of plasma, are arranging plasma donors for patients especially in notified Covid-19 hospitals and charging more money.

It depends upon the demand and supply for the day. Some corporate hospitals too are offering 'good commission' to middlemen who can arrange the donation of plasma of specific blood groups.

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

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

● **SOME MIDDLEMEN** with access to a list of Covid-19 infected and recovered patients and registered donors of plasma, are arranging plasma donors for patients especially in notified Covid-19 hospitals and charging more money.

● It depends upon the demand and supply for the day. Some corporate hospitals too are offering 'good commission' to middlemen who can arrange the donation of plasma of specific blood groups.

INTER-STATE BURGLAR, WIFE ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Cops of LB Nagar CCS along with Ibrahimpatnam police of the Rachakonda police commissionerate have arrested an inter-state burglar Katti Ravi Kumar along with his wife and recovered 40 tolas of gold ornaments and property document of a 100 sq. yard plot all worth ₹16 lakh.

Ravi, an habitual offender, is a resident of Shiva Sanjeevaiah colony of Narsaraopeta in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

He started committing offence at a very early age and was previously arrested and sent to jail several times.

He used steal bikes and other property by carrying out a recipe of the colonies along with this wife both in Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh.

NEW POLICE STATIONS IN TS SOON: MINISTER

Hyderabad, Sept. 15: Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali said on Tuesday that attempts were being made to set up new police stations in the state police stations.

"The process of building new police stations has already begun and the Director-General of Police Mr Mahendar Reddy is looking into it," he said in reaction to a question on the traffic situation in the Medak district during Question Hour in the Telangana Legislative Council.

He said there were no traffic police stations in 11 new districts, including Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Kumuram Bheem, Narayanpet, Kamareddy, Jogulamba Gadwal and Mulugu. "The police department uses law enforcement resources and directs the police to regulate traffic where there is no dedicated traffic police," Ali said, adding that the necessary steps would be taken to ensure a smooth flow of traffic.

"We will also deploy additional police at busy junctions to control traffic," he said when MLC Seri Subash Reddy told the Minister of the problems faced by motorists in Medchal and Kompally due to the lack of availability of traffic police and signal lights. —*INN*

TS records 2,058 new Covid infections, 10 more deaths

Out of 1,60,571 cases so far, 1,12,400 are asymptomatic, says health dept

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Telangana state recorded 2,058 new Covid-19 cases taking the total Coronavirus infections so far to 1,60,571 even as the number of deaths from the disease reached 984 with the health department reporting 10 more fatalities.

The department, in its Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday, said the state had 30,400 active cases as on Monday 8 pm. It said 2,180 persons had recovered between Monday and Tuesday evenings taking the number of people discharged or considered recovered so far in the state to 1,29,187.

Of the total 1,60,571 cases so far, 1,12,400 have been asymptomatic while 48,781 have had symptoms of the disease, the department said. It also revised its percentages of asymptomatic and symptomatic cases so far to 70 and 30 respectively from 69 and 31.

It may be recalled that until the break-up of asymptomatic and symptomatic cases was included in the Covid-9 bulletin, the government had been claiming that anywhere from 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the people catching the virus in the state were asymptomatic.

Meanwhile, 277 more residents of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits were declared as Covid-19 positive by the department. This number was 143 for Ranga Reddy, 135 for Karimnagar, 108 for Warangal Urban, 106 for Siddipet, and 103 for Khammam districts. New cases in their nineties were recorded in Medchal-Malkajgiri (97), and Nalgonda (96) districts.

● **277 MORE** residents of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits were declared as Covid-19 positive by the department.



A large number of patients line up at the NIMS Hospital for medical tests without following the social distancing norms, in Hyderabad on Tuesday. — P. SURENDRA

Docs in a fix over no mandatory Covid test in emergency cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

A Covid-19 test for emergency procedures being rendered non-compulsory has led to confusion among doctors across the country who state that it will harm the healthcare workers and doctors more than anyone else.

With the exposure rate of these sections high in hospitals attending to emergency patients, not knowing their status is going to increase the risks.

On a question in the Rajya Sabha about the need for tests results being mandatory in government hospitals, it was stated that health is a state sub-

ject but the central government has advised states that a Covid-19 test is not mandatory for emergency procedures. This advisory is for both government and private hospitals.

Dr Sanjiv Singh Yadav, state secretary of Indian medical association, Telangana says, "There are two ways in which it is being seen. The patient and family will be reluctant as they do not have any symptoms on the basis of which to conduct the tests. But for the healthcare workers and doctors being close to the patient in emergency care is exposing themselves. Despite wearing personal

protection equipment, doctors and healthcare workers are getting infected and many have died. Young doctors and healthcare workers have died. For this reason, tests are important and it will be the doctors and hospitals which will have to convince patients and their families to do the test."

Most private hospitals are not taking in patients for procedures without tests results. The tests are mandatory as, accordingly, patients are shifted to Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 wards.

Dr Kiran Madhala, senior government doctor, explained "Tests can be done after admission also

as the results take time. The Indian council of medical research guidelines state that no patient must be kept on hold even during emergencies for lack of Covid-19 tests results. They have specifically pointed out birthing as these procedures cannot be delayed. In these cases, the tests results affirmed later will help doctors and healthcare workers to take the required protection and medication to safeguard the patient and themselves." With the death of healthcare workers and doctors, alertness and fear are making it important to be on guard before treating patients.

EIGHT ORGANS OF BRAIN DEAD PERSON DONATED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Organs of 36-year-old Kanumuri Seetharamaraju, who was declared brain dead, were donated under the Jeevandan Scheme of the government. A resident of Kukatpally, Seetharamaraju had met with an accident in Solapur, where he was working. He was rushed to Hyderabad for treatment and was undergoing treatment at Global Hospitals. Seetharamaraju could not recover and was declared brain dead on Monday. His wife Naga Swetha and family members agreed to donate his two kidneys, liver, heart, lungs and cornea under the government's Jeevandan scheme. Hyderabad Traffic Police provided a green channel for transportation of the live heart from Global Hospital, Lakdikapul, to Care Hospital, Banjara Hills. The stretch of 3.6 km was covered in just four minutes - leaving Global at 9.32 p.m. and reaching Care at 9.36 p.m.

Army attempts to seal roads draw flak

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Residents of Secunderabad have grown tired of army authorities' repeated attempts to curb their movement by sealing off roads and thoroughfares.

This, after they got wind that the state government would be constructing an alternate road to travel from the north eastern part of the city. Even though the 'alternate road' proposal has been

doing the rounds for several years now, it is yet to strike the right chords.

"We think that it could be a part of the state government's idea of having link roads. However, these alternative roads have to cater to all the areas, and not just Malkajgiri. It must be used by people of Kapra, Yaprall, Sainikpuri, and other areas in the north-eastern part of the city," CS Chanrasekhar, secretary, Federation of North-Eastern Colonies of Secunderabad (FNECS)

● **EVEN THOUGH** the 'alternate road' proposal has been doing the rounds for several years now, it is yet to strike the right chords.

told *Deccan Chronicle*.

He said if the roads are to be usurped by the army, then they must give back the same amount of land for developing alternate roads. "They cannot close 20-odd roads and give one alternate route," he added. Officially speaking, the

question of having alternate roads is a long-drawn battle, for which places were already identified.

"Laying new roads is not just about identifying new areas. There are other issues like the monetary compensation that has to be given to the army, and who would do it. The second issue was that they want an alternate piece of land-matching with what they are parting," said Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) vice-president, Ramakrishna.

Domestic workers' protest on Sept. 24

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Domestic workers and their unions in Telangana have called for a protest on September 24 in response to the nationwide protest call to highlight their problems during the ongoing Parliament session. Domestic workers will also try to meet Members of Parliament and urge them to enact comprehensive legislation for them.

As per Telangana Domestic Workers Union data, there are around 10 to 12 lakh domestic workers in Telangana of which five to six lakh are based in Hyderabad. Their national body is keen to classify them as essential workers.

The major demands include a comprehensive legislation, transfer of cash to vulnerable domestic workers as mandated by Disaster Management Act and implementation of urban employment

guarantee scheme, according to Sr Lissy Joseph, secretary of Telangana Domestic Workers Union.

Domestic workers are among the worst hit by Covid-19 as many employers have removed them from service. They have neither been shown any alternative livelihood nor have been given any compensation.

According to the Telangana Domestic Workers Union, the government failed to provide

recognition to domestic workers, who paid a heavy price during the lockdown.

Vijaya Lakshmi, a domestic help living at Dammaiguda, said "in the surrounding areas, there are around 5,000 domestic workers. We have thrown out as the employers feared that we could carry the disease to their homes. No compensation has been given to us and we have been jobless since the time the pandemic broke."

SOS | FROM GULF

Many arrested for signal crossing, vegetable and water sale

TS workers in Saudi jails seek help

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, SEPT. 15

Around 450 Indian workers are in Jeddah jail for the last four months. Migrant workers belonging to various states, including Telangana, landed in the jails for petty crimes. The victims urged their respective state governments and Ministry of External Affairs for their release and safe return to their native places.

In a video clip received by *Deccan Chronicle* on Tuesday, the inmates explained their woes.

According to them, a majority of migrant workers were imprisoned for signal crossing, vegetable and water sale and lockdown violations. Due to ignorance of local laws, the migrants had committed petty crimes in Saudi Arabia and landed in jail. A similar plight is being faced by migrant workers from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, they said in the video.

With no money, they are unable to get legal aid in Saudi Arabia. Neither getting work nor able to



Indian workers in Jeddah jail in Saudi Arabia.

return home, they have been in jail for the last four months.

"We are the sole bread-

winners of our families and they are nearing the brunt back", they lamented. Incidentally, those

from Pakistan, Bangladesh and others are being released in a phased manner, while Indian workers are left to languish, they said.

The migrant workers mostly belong to Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

"We appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure our safe release by taking up the issue with Saudi Arabian authorities", the workers pleaded.

Antibody may reduce Covid reinfection risk

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Antibody memory in the cells of those infected with Covid-19 will be long-lasting and natural immunity in the population is going to protect them from the disease according to an immunity study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The path of immunity has been discussed in detail as it was found that there is an early decline of antibodies in the population. But this neutralising effect is not a concern as the memory in the cells ensures protection from the disease, say researchers.

Dr Narahari B., senior government doctor, explained, "After every acute phase of infection, there is a reduction in the antibody levels. But the memory is maintained in the plasma cells and the antibody is secreted. The antibody response to an infection is from this pool of long-lasting memory in the cells."

With cases of re-infection being noted across the world, the natural immunity built up after the first infection will help to fight the virus is the conclusion of scientists and treating doctors.

With more and more people recovering from the disease, resistance has been created and that will help to recover.

CCMB, CSIR PACT TO DEVELOP VACCINE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Vaccines to protect against SARS Cov 2 are being developed by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in collaboration with Aurobindo Pharma Limited. An agreement to this extent has been signed between CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) and Aurobindo Pharma.

Three CSIR labs, including CCMB Hyderabad, Institute of Medical Technology (IMTECH), Chandigarh and Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (IICB), Kolkata are developing vaccine candidates using different technology platforms.

Aurobindo will undertake clinical development and commercialisation of the vaccines. Aurobindo, through its US subsidiary Auro Vaccines, is developing a recombinant vesicular stomatitis vaccine delivery platform.

Experts predict that within a few years SARS Cov 2 will become endemic like previous Coronaviruses and become another common cold virus.

TS has 1,782 ICU beds for Covid, says Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

The Central Government on Tuesday said that Telangana state has a total of 1,782 dedicated Covid-19 beds in intensive care unit (ICU) wards in the state's hospitals. Union minister of state for health Ashwini Kumar Choubey informed the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday in a written reply to a question that this was as per information provided by the state on the Covid-19 Portal as on September 14.

The number of dedicated Covid-19 ICU beds in the state, as per the data uploaded by the state, covers both government and private hospitals, Choubey said. Data provided by Choubey in Parliament, however, is at variance with the information released by the state government through its daily Covid-19 bulletins for the state.

As per the latest bulletin on Tuesday, for data pertaining up to 8 pm on Monday (September 14), the state government-run hospitals alone have 1,222 ICU beds equipped with ventilators and Continuous Positive Air Pressure (CPAP)

machines. The bulletin also says that in addition to the 1,222 ICU beds in 42 government hospitals, the 204 private hospitals in the state which have been permitted to treat Covid-19 patients, have an additional 2,129 ICU beds equipped with ventilators and CPAP machines.

As per Telangana's official Covid-19 bulletin, which the state health department says is released in the 'High Court Format' - providing details as directed by the Telangana High Court - the state, as on September 14, had a total of 3,351 ICU beds in its Covid-19-designated hospitals in the government and private sector.

The Centre, however, on Tuesday said the state has only 1,782 dedicated Covid-19 ICU beds. In the same bulletin, the state also says in a table titled 'Details of Infrastructure/Bed Government', that the state has 2,251 ICU beds. However, this table does not make it clear if this figure pertains to the total ICU beds available in government hospitals or if the reference to this figure is about infrastructure available for managing Covid-19 patients.

AIIMS Bibinagar starts RA testing

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bibinagar, has started Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) from Tuesday to diagnose cases of Covid-19. RAT is a relatively economical and faster method of diagnosing Coronavirus, providing good sensitivity and very good specificity.

Maximum duration for interpreting a positive or negative test through this process is just 30 minutes. Beneficiaries include family members of Covid positive patients, those who have come in contact with them, patients with co-morbidities, and those with symptoms.

Executive director Dr Vikas Bhatia said the Department of Microbiology at AIIMS, in collaboration with Telangana state government, has made all necessary arrangements with a designated sample collection room and testing area.

A maximum of 50 tests per day will be done for the present, which will be increased in future, if required. Patients can use the Covid testing facility from Monday to Saturday between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm. Patients will, however, have to register their names one day in advance (from 10 am to 4 pm) through helpline number 08685295050. They should get their Aadhaar card along with them at the time of testing.

OTHER STORIES

SISTER DEAD, MAN HURT AS TRACTOR RAMS INTO A BIKE**DC CORRESPONDENT**
WARANGAL, SEPT. 15

One person died and another severely injured when a speeding tractor rammed into a bike near Upparpally crossroads in Wardhannapet mandal.

The deceased, identified as Gosangi Upendra, native of Gopannapalli in Parvathagiri mandal, died on the spot. Her brother Ramesh sustained severe injuries and was shifted to the MGM hospital by the police.

The accident took place when the duo were on their way to Warangal and the tractor was coming in the opposite direction. The driver of the tractor lost control and hit the bike. He immediately fled the spot after the incident.

Minister for panchayat raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao expressed anguish over the incident and asked the police to trace the driver.

He said the family of the deceased would be looked after by the government and the injured would be provided treatment.

Wardhannapet Sub-inspector K. Vamsi Krishna said that a case has been registered under Section 304A IPC and 337 IPC and the body was shifted to MGM Hospital for autopsy.

TWO HELD FOR RUNNING LUCKY DRAW SCHEMES**DC CORRESPONDENT**
NIZAMABAD, SEPT. 15

Taskforce police conducted raids on lucky draw centres at Yendala towers and Suryanagar under IV town police station limits in Nizamabad on Tuesday.

The police seized brochures and receipt books from the accused. S. Rajender of Balaji residency of Akshara Agency and Prakash of Suryanagar of Smart Life Agency were taken into custody.

The accused allegedly cheated the people by offering valuable gifts, if one member paid ₹1000 per month for 13 months.

MINISTER ASSURES REGULAR V-C FOR ALL UNIVERSITIES**PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC**
KARIMNAGAR, SEPT. 15

The more than five-year wait for a regular Vice-Chancellor and permanent teaching and non-teaching staff at Satavahana University in Karimnagar district would end soon.

This assurance was given by Education minister, P. Sabitha Indra Reddy during the Assembly session on Tuesday. She also assured that the government is to appoint full-fledged VCs for universities in the state.

Even though the state government announced notification for recruitment of vacant posts, University Grants Commission (UGC) has put a hold on recruitment process in its order issues on May 5 in 2018.

A report by the special committee appointed by the state government on June 15 of this year has helped clear all hurdles and the recruitment process has also been okayed, she stated.

Satavahana University established in 2008 has 160 degree and PG colleges affiliated to it. However, presently there are only 120 colleges, including 17 degree, five welfare, two aided and 96 private colleges.

The varsity has had regular VCs only twice-Md. Iqbal Ali from July 28, 2008 to July 27, 2011 and K. Veera Reddy from April 19, 2012 to April 21, 2015. At present, the HMDA (Hyderabad Municipal Development Authority) Commissioner, T. Chiranjeevulu is the in-charge VC of the university.

For the past five years, the university has been running under in-charge VCs. Lack of infrastructure, and absence of permanent teaching and non-teaching staff have prevented the university to get the 12 (B) status from the UGC.

It was at the behest of Registrar, Prof. Umesh Kumar that the first convocation of Satavahana University was held last year.

Meanwhile, professors from Osmania, Kakatiya and Satavahana universities have already applied for the VC post. Also in the race are five professors from English, Telugu, Botany and Management departments of Satavahana university. It is believed that hectic lobbying is underway to grab the plum post.



Water released from Sriramsagar project to river Godavari on Tuesday. 16 radial crest gates lifted and 50,000 cusecs of water released.

— DC

SRSP reaches full reservoir level, 16 crest gates lifted**Inflows stand at 74,354 cusecs, outflow at 70,989 cusecs****NARENDER PULLOOR | DC**
NIZAMABAD, SEPT. 15

North Telangana lifeline Sriramsagar project has reached its full reservoir level (FRL) on Tuesday as flood continued from Maharashtra in river Godavari. Of 1,091 feet of full reservoir level, the project has reached 1091 ft level and gross storage capacity of 90.313 tmc ft of water.

Meanwhile, SRSP officials lifted 16 radial crest

● Water is being released into Kakatiya canal 1000 cusecs, Saraswathi canal 500 cusecs, Laxmi canal 300, flood flow canal 10371 cusecs and escape radial gates 8,000 cusecs respectively.

gates of the dam and released around 50,000 cusecs of water into river Godavari.

The inflows stand at 74,354 cusecs on Tuesday and outflow maintained at 70,989 cusecs. Water is being released into

Kakatiya canal 1000 cusecs, Saraswathi canal 500 cusecs, Laxmi canal 300, flood flow canal 10371 cusecs and escape radial gates 8,000 cusecs respectively. Water release for Alisagar, Gupta lift irrigation schemes halted.

Evaporation losses at 666 cusecs and Mission Bhagiratha scheme requirement is 152 cusecs, the officials said.

Meanwhile, floods continue from neighbouring Maharashtra state. SRSP engineers are monitoring the flood situation with their counterparts in neighbouring Nanded district. Following the flood flow in river Godavari, the district administration in Nizamabad, Nirmal, Jagtial and Mancherial alerted.

NCBC: DON'T EVICT GOLLAPADU DWELLERS**DC CORRESPONDENT**
KHAMMAM, SEPT. 15

District collector R.V. Karnan made his presence before the National Commission for Backward Classes in New Delhi on behalf of the state government on Tuesday and explained the state government's measures in shifting the dwellers of Gollapadu channel to Velugumatla.

It may be noted that the NCBC directed the collector to attend the hearing on Gollapadu channel dwellers' issue on September 15.

The Commission member said that the government had not taken the woes of the dwellers on the sudden shifting of them from Gollapadu to Velugumatla. The collector explained that the Commission provided all facilities at Velugumatla and the people moved on their own.

The Commission member T. Achary objected to Mr Karnan's statements, and the people of Velugumatla sent videos about the lack of facilities. The Commission told the government not to evict the remaining families in Gollapadu channel until the conditions of COVID-19 improved. The dwellers should extend all infrastructure facilities at the location. He said that the government should not harass the families of Gollapadu and asked if they were being paid any compensation.

● The NCBC had directed the collector to attend the hearing on Gollapadu channel dwellers' issue.

Ten gram panchyats de-merged from KMC**RAVINDRA SESHU | DC**
KHAMMAM, SEPT. 15

The state government de-merged ten gram panchayats from Khammam Municipal Corporation (KMC) keeping the forthcoming corporation elections in view.

Gram panchayats like Polepalli, Rajiv Grihakalpa, Gurralapadu, Nayudupet, Jalagamnagar, Gudimalla, Venkatagiri, Edulapuram and Pedathanda have been de-merged from the corporation. Minister for municipal administration, K.T. Ramarao, placed and passed the Amendment Bill in the Telangana Assembly.

The ten gram panchayats are accustomed to be part of the corporation and they appreciate all the facilities coming from the urban body. The sudden change in the mindset of the TRS government has surprised them.

The ten villages were merged in March 2019 by the TRS government and it has changed its stand now. The KMC elections

● The ten villages were merged in March 2019 by the TRS government and it has changed its stand now.

● The KMC elections will be conducted within four months.

will be conducted within four months. Minister for transport, Puvvada Ajay Kumar, is working on it and showing his mark is important to him. Winning in KMC is a must to his political career. Congress, CPI, CPI-M and Telugu Desam are strong in these villages and they may become barriers to TRS in the elections. CPI-M and Telugu Desam has many votes in Gudimalla and Jalagamnagar. Congress is strong in Venkatagiri, Rajiv Grihakalpa and Polepalli and CPI has good votes in Edulapuram and Nayudupet.

In Pedathanda, TRS is weak and Congress and

CPI are strong.

In this scenario, TRS may face troubled waters in these areas in the elections if the opposition parties joined together. To implement its plan, some of the persons from these gram panchayats sent petitions to the government to de-merge their villages from the KMC. The issue was taken to Ramarao's notice by Kumar. The file was moved fast and the gram panchayats were de-merged.

Congress corporation leader, Vaddeboina Narasimha Rao, said that it is purely a political decision. TRS noticed the pulse of the people who are opposing the policies of the government, particularly in the Covid-19 situation and GO MS no. 131 on the land regularisation scheme.

The government did not extend any assistance to the poor and middle classes during the lockdown. Thousands of small-scale employees lost their jobs. This is a last-ditch attempt to retain power.

Telangana state RTC seeks equal services with APSRTC**DC CORRESPONDENT**
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Negotiations between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh over coming to an agreement on allowing their respective state-owned passenger bus services to operate in the other state, have been put off for a few more days here on Tuesday.

A meeting was held between the managing directors of APSRTC and TSRTC where the two sides discussed modalities on working out a plan on the number of routes the two states can allow each other to operate – AP in Telangana and vice versa.

TSRTC, it was learnt, proposed that any such agreement must be on

equal terms and suggested that AP allow TSRTC to operate an equal number of routes, over an equal number of kilometres that APSRTC runs in Telangana.

Following this proposal from TSRTC, the APSRTC officials are learnt to have sought a few days before getting back on TSRTC's proposal.

MEETING | CENTRE**Each Rythu Vedika, which is considered as a cluster, is constructed at a cost of ₹22 lakh**
Rythu Vedikalu to strengthen bond between govt and farmers**DC CORRESPONDENT**
ADILABAD, SEPT. 15

'Rythu Vedikalu' will to play a mediator role between government and farmers in gram panchayats for all round welfare.

The state government is focusing on early completion of 'Rythu Vedikalu' so that it can spread a positive message about government among the farming community.

The state government is also likely to campaign through Rythu Vedikalu welfare schemes such as Rythu Bandhu, Rythu

Bheema, supply of subsidised seeds, fertilisers and sprinklers, Polyhouse (greenhouse), drip irrigation and 24-hour free power supply to farmers.

The state government will also use Rythu Vedikalu to spread awareness on how irrigation projects constructed so far have helped in irrigation in the state and make them Rythu Vedikalu a symbol of its commitment towards farmers' welfare and how the government made agriculture into a profitable business.

The Rythu Samanvaya

● 27 Rythu Vedikas will come up in the Adilabad Assembly Constituency and each will represent an area of 5,000-7,000 acres

Committees of the government will play a key role in the activities of Rythu Vedikalu. However, the committees do not boast of many contributions for farmers' welfare and these committees and are expected to get activated with Rythu Vedikalu.

Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna said the Rythu

Vedikalu will play a positive role in the lives of farmers and in the development in the state. He said, there are 1.47 lakh acres of land under cultivation in the Adilabad Constituency.

Each Rythu Vedika is being constructed at the cost of ₹22 lakh and each Rythu Vedika is considered as a cluster.

A total 27 Rythu Vedikas will come up in the Adilabad Assembly Constituency and it is said that each will represent an area of 5,000-7,000 acres of agricultural land.

BJYM demands official fete of Telangana Formation Day**ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC**
WARANGAL, SEPT 15

Demanding the state government to officially conduct the Telangana liberation day on September 17, the Bharatiya Janata Yuvajana Morcha (BJYM) activists on Tuesday organised a fire torch rally from the Adalath circle in Hanamkonda to the Ambedker junction.

The rally was led by BJYM Warangal Urban president Siddam Naresh Patel. BJP Warangal Urban district president Rao Padma paid floral tribute at the Telangana martyrs memorial and flagged off the rally.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Padma asked why Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, who demanded an official celebration of Telangana Liberation Day, not do the same after coming to power. She alleged that CM KCR is sidelining the sentiments of the people of Telangana at the behest of the Majlis party.

"The celebration of Telangana Liberation Day is the right of the people and the responsibility of the government. However, the KCR government is afraid to celebrate official fearing it would affect its vote bank politics. The day must be celebrated in memory of the martyrs who laid down their lives fighting off the Razakar army," she demanded.

BJYM president Naresh Patel said it was the youth who played the major role in separate Telangana statehood agitation. However, while the youth fought for jobs, they were left only with tears even after formation of the state.

"Despite this, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao failed to recognize the sacrifices of the youth and promoted defectors to minister posts. The youth of the state is subjected to negligence. CM KCR deceived the youth in his five and

TRS ignoring T armed struggle movement: Chada**PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC**
KARIMNAGAR, SEPT. 15

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is ignoring the Telangana people's armed struggle movement during which thousands of people lost their lives fighting against feudal landlords, alleged the state secretary of the Communist Party of India, Chada Venkat Reddy here on Tuesday.

As part of the 74th anniversary of the Telangana armed movement, Reddy, along with CPI party leaders, paid floral tributes to the statues of Anaberi Prabhakar Rao who lost his life in the movement and that of Baddam Yellareddy, who gave a call for armed movement here in Karimnagar.

Speaking on the occasion, Reddy said that the Communist party leaders, Ravi Narayana Reddy, Baddam Yellareddy and Magdum Moinuddin, had given a call for armed struggle in the year 1947, on September 11, against the Nizam kings, the Razakars, Deshmukhs and police which continued until September 17, 1948.

The credit of the re-distribution of around 10 lakh acres of land to the poor goes to communist party leaders. With the sacrifice of around 4,500 people in the movement who fought against the Nizams, the Hyderabad state was able to merge with the Indian union.

Rao has recollected the movement on several

occasions, during the separate Telangana movement. He even lauded the sacrifices of leaders who lost their lives during the armed struggle movement in front of lakhs of people in several public meetings. Rao even criticised the rulers of the previous government for not celebrating September 17 as Liberation Day officially, Mr Reddy pointed out.

Alleging that the backward class minister, Gangula Kamalakar, promised the people of Karimnagar that the area which at present surrounds the statue of Anaberi Prabhakar Rao will be developed beautifully to remember his sacrifices for Telangana region, Mr Reddy said Kamalakar has reneged on his promise and insulted the great leader.

The BJP party is trying to give the wrong definition to the armed struggle movement, he said. Then Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, created a panic situation in Hyderabad state using military and police forces. It is the responsibility of the state government to include the Telangana people's armed struggle movement in the school syllabus so that the people of present and coming generations will come to know about the actual history of the armed struggle movement, he said.

CPI leaders Kedari, Srujan Kumar, Narasimha, Lakshminarayana, Ashok, Raju, Sammaiah, Ramana Reddy, Sridhar Reddy, and others were present.

half year rule. While he promised a job per house in the new Telangana state, he failed to keep his

own word. The downfall of the Kalvakuntla family would begin from Warangal itself," he said.

Congress starts reviving its frontal bodies in KMC**DC CORRESPONDENT**
KHAMMAM, SEPT. 15

Congress is making efforts to strengthen the party within the limits of Khammam Municipal Corporation. As a first step, it has started filling up the posts in its frontal bodies like BC, SC, ST and minority cells.

The party has taken limits of police stations as its units to fill up posts in the BC cell committees. Khammam City Congress BC Cell president Narala Mohan Naidu has given appointment letters to BC Cell committees of three divisions. It is decided to set up committees at the other cells soon. Each BC Cell will have a president, vice-president and secretary.

Congress still has considerable strength in Khammam as it has retained its traditional vote bank. The party has won Khammam municipality twice with Raparti Ranga Rao and Nagamallika serving as municipal chairpersons. The party is trying to get back to power in the coming corporation elections. A major relief to the party is youth coming forward to join Congress.

CONGRESS ZPTCs URGE RELEASE OF FUNDS UNDER FASAL BHIMA YOJANA**DC CORRESPONDENT**
ADILABAD, SEPT. 15

Talamadugu Congress ZPTC Goka Ganesh Reddy appealed to the state government to release ₹525 crore, the pending share towards the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bhima Yojana for the benefit of the farmers for 2018-19 and 2019-20 in the Adilabad.

Mr Ganesh Reddy submitted a memorandum to K. Ramakrishna Rao,

principal secretary for finance. Ganesh Reddy told Ramakrishna Rao that the farmers did not get the insurance under Fasal Bhima Yojana for two years from 2018-20 and the state government is due for its share to ₹205 crore for 2018 kharif and ₹320 for 2019 kharif. Mr Reddy said that the farmers had paid their premium from the crop loans toward the scheme but did not get the insurance for the damaged crops.

In sixteenth division of KMC, youth including Thodeti Venkatesh, P. Tharun, Nagavalli Sathish, Ramesh, Krishna and Shaik Nayeem have joined Congress in the presence of DCC president Puvvalla Durga Prasad.

Congress party has good strength in 30 of the total 50 divisions in the KMC. DCC president Puvvalla Durga Prasad said Khammam people have retained their love and affection towards Congress. People from various divisions want that Congress play a

key role in the state and the country.

Mr Prasad said, "NDA government at the centre has failed in addressing problems of people during the Covid-19 pandemic. PM Modi and home minister Amit Shah have remained as spectators while crores of people were forced to reach their destinations by walk during lockdown. Thousands of labourers died before reaching their native places. No minister at the Centre took initiative in providing vehicles to them."



The first Rythu Vedika building that is completed in Talamadugu in Adilabad district.

SHORT TAKES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RS passes Aircraft Amendment Bill 2020

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

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

Introducing the Bill, which also seeks to

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

However, some members,

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

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

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

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

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

Oppn members criticise
privatisation of airports

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

would continue and be applicable in this also.

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

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

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



Labourers sort onions at a market in Karad on Tuesday.

— PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The auctions started on

Nashik farmers
stage protests

Nashik, Sept. 15: Farmers in Nashik's Lasalgaon area, home to among the largest onion markets in the world, and some other trading spots in the district on Tuesday took to the streets in protest against a ban on export of the kitchen staple.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

election, the farmers are being sidelined.

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

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

DID I&B
MINISTRY APPLY
ITS MIND, ASKS
SUPREME COURT

From Page 1

"We have to see if there was a need for laying down such standards of broadcasting," Mehta said.

Referring to the September 9 notification of the Information & Broadcasting ministry asking Sudarshan TV to adhere to the programme code failing which it will be acted against and Section of 6 of the Cable Television (Network) Rules that prohibits attack on religion and communities, Justice Chandrachud asked the Solicitor General that after the notification there were broadcasts from September 11 to 14. "Did the ministry apply its mind to those programmes," the judge asked the S-G.

The Solicitor-General said, "I need to take instructions."

While the court was primarily focusing on the visual media, given its reach and people's inclination to watch them, the Solicitor General sought to broaden the scope of the hearing and took the court to the portals and blogs which were writing and saying "nefarious" things having serious ramifications.

Pointing to the "critical qualitative" difference in different platforms, Justice Chandrachud said, "Law has not to be for everything to regulate something" thereby suggesting that just to regulate visual media it is not necessary that there should be law to regulate every platform. Justice Chandrachud said that it is difficult to regulate the internet as it is based overseas but something that is based within the country and beams here can be regulated.

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

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

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

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

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

No need for Jaleel to resign, says Pinarayi

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He said that there was no precedent of a person

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IN BRIEF

China launches nine satellites

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

NBW issued for Nawaz

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 15

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

UK returns 3 idols to India

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

AVNI DOSHI ON BOOKER PRIZE SHORTLIST

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

Doshi, born in the US and now living in Dubai, has previously spoken about the long journey to her first novel, which was released in India last year as 'Girl in White Cotton' and for its UK release in July. Others in the shortlist include Diane Cook for 'The New Wilderness', Tsitsi Dangaremba for the third novel in her trilogy — 'This Mournable Body', Maaza Mengiste for 'The Shadow King', Douglas Stuart for 'Shuggie Bain' and Brandon Taylor for 'Real Life'. Literary heavyweight and former double Booker winner Hilary Mantel, failed to make the shortlist cut.

Brexit bill clears 1st hurdle in Parl

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bigger response if Iran attacks: Don

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

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



Donald Trump

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

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

India beats China to win poll to UN women panel

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

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

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

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

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

Don to preside over historic Arab-Israeli recognition deals

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lancaster (US), Sept. 15:

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

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

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

Authorities did not

Police chief fired over Prude death

Rochester (US), Sept. 15:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FEDS PROBING IN-CUSTODY DEATH OF POC

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

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

Leave waters, Indonesia to China

Jakarta, Sept. 15:

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

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

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

Washington, Sept. 15:

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

In a statement, the Department of Homeland

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

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

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

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

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

DECCAN Chronicle

16 SEPTEMBER 2020

A gross misuse of anti-terrorism laws

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

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

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

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

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

Govt's utter callousness

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

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

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Subhani

Export agro-produce to sow seeds of prosperity



V. Vijayasai Reddy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Institute of Fisheries Technology for promoting tuna production and export.

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

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

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

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

We must ensure that spices with lesser exportable value are not

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

GREAT LOSS

It is sad that Dr Raghuvansh Pratap Singh, former Union minister and leader of the RJD, passed away due to Covid-19 related ailments (*Mathematician who found formula to help poor, DC Sept. 15*). He was an architect of MNREGA which is providing employment for millions of rural poor. He was an ideal parliamentarian. The country has lost a good leader and a well-wisher of the poor.

Dr O. Prasada Rao
Hyderabad

BUILDING PERMITS

The common problem by builders is that they occupy roads in one form or the other. (*Assembly clears law to ease building permits, DC, Sept. 15*). In the plan a red zone may be created to indicate pavement. The height of the building can be counted from underground cellars, not from ground level. Demolition clause should be applicable to all types of plots. Builders must understand the Rule Book.

R. Pratap Narayan,
Hyderabad

No doubt the TS government has done a good job by bringing in a new Bill to ease building permissions. But mere passing of the law is not sufficient unless the government implements it in letter and spirit. Despite strict rules in the past illegal constructions have come up in our city leading to narrowing of lanes and parking.

Wasim Ahmed khan
Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Giri: Writers must strengthen democracy

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

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

Bela Bhatia



Lockdown for some, lock-up for the others

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More humane provisions are needed

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

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

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

quick BITES

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

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Gujarat okays Lol for first CNG terminal

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

IndiGo, GoAir told to fly with altered PW engines



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

Aurobindo ties up with Birac to develop vaccine

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

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

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



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

ANURAG KOTOKY SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

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

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



Shekar Viswanathan, vice-chairman, Toyota Kirloskar Motor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

cessive governments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

E-com, logistic firms kick off festive season hiring

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

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

On Monday, logistics firm Ecom Express had



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

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

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

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

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

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

US tariffs on China illegal: WTO

JAMEY KEATEN GENEVA, SEPT. 15

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

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

allies and rivals alike.

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

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

The ruling, in theory, would allow China to

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

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

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

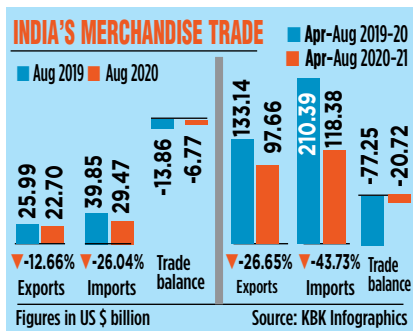
The WTO panel ruled that the US measures violated long-standing international trade rules as they only applied to products from China, and that the US had not substantiated its claim that the Chinese products hit with the extra duties had benefited from unfair Chinese practices. —AP

Merchandise exports decline 12.6% in August

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

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

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



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

Volatility in markets natural: WFE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

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

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

"This year has seen a diminished global eco-

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

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



ments, WFE said.

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

Market infrastructures –

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KAREN LEMA MANILA, SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

India's economy is expected to contract 9.0

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

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

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

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

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

Home prices across India fall 2.3% in first half

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

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

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Messi in sporting billionaires club

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

The 33-year-old knocked Juventus forward Ronaldo (\$117 million) off the top of the football salary chart with Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar (\$96 million) in third place. — *AFP*

French Open wild card for Murray

Paris: Andy Murray received a wild card into the French Open. The former No.1 was the only non-Frenchman of eight players to be given a free pass into the main draw of the clay Grand Slam which starts in 13 days. Murray was also awarded a wild card into the US Open, after his struggles with pelvic and shin injuries dropped his ranking to 129th. He went two rounds in New York, and improved to 110th, but still too low for the French Open when it published its main draw entry list. Murray's best French Open result was the final in 2016. Tsvetana Pironkova of Bulgaria and Eugenie Bouchard of Canada were the only non-Frenchwomen to receive wild cards.

Pironkova, who made the US Open her first comeback tournament since 2017 after having a son, achieved an impressive first-time run to the quarterfinals, where she was stopped by Serena Williams. — *AP*

156 Tour riders pass virus test

La Tour-Du-Pin, France: The remaining 156 Tour de France riders were authorised to keep racing on Tuesday after the latest coronavirus tests. All 785 tests on Sunday and Monday of riders and staff members of the 22 teams returned negative, Tour organizers and cycling governing body the UCI announced before Stage 16 in the Alps. No rider has tested positive since the race started on Aug. 29 in Nice. The latest screening around the race's second rest day was the fourth since the beginning of the Tour, and the last one before the peloton reaches the Champs Elysees on Sunday.

At risk of being cancelled because of the pandemic, the Tour was delayed from its traditional July date to the end of the summer and is being run amid strict health protocols. Anyone who tests positive has to leave the race which affected race director Christian Prudhomme last week and any team with two or more positive tests within seven days also has to abandon. — *AP*

Covid-19 made Manpreet stronger

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

WWE NXT

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

FORECAST SUNNY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Blues boss Lampard has splashed out on a host of new signings and the early returns on his lavish investment were promising. Germany striker Timo Werner, a £53 million recruit from Leipzig, won the penalty that Jorginho converted to put Chelsea ahead. Kai Havertz, who made a £70 million switch from Bayer Leverkusen, wasn't quite so impactful, but Lampard will be confident there are better days to come from the young Germany forward.

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

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

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

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



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

Players want quarantine reduced

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

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

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from September 19.

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

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

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

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

FORMER INDIA PLAYER PATIL PASSES AWAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thomas-Uber Cup postponed

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

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

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

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

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

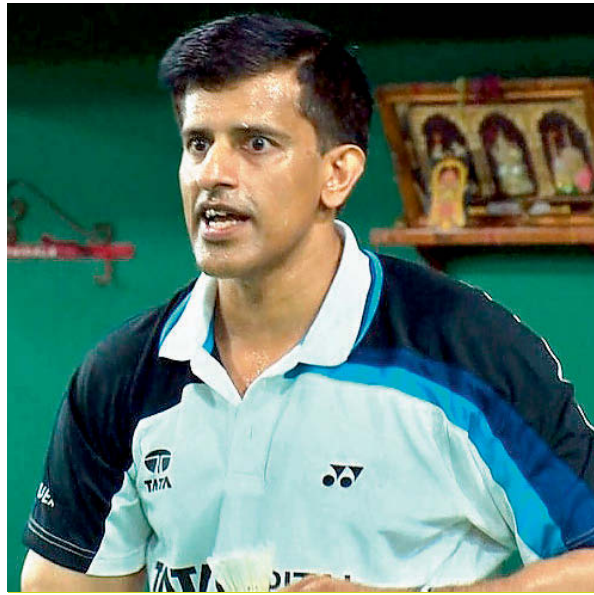
● **After Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, badminton's governing body held a virtual emergency council meeting and made the decision.**

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

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

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

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



Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar.

Vimal blames it on teams from Asia

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

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

— **VIMAL KUMAR** badminton coach

the event to next year.

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

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

SAI UPGRADES COVID-19 SOP TO TACKLE THREAT

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

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

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

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