

IN BRIEF

Man arrested with 7 cartridges at IGI

New Delhi: A 41-year-old man was arrested after seven cartridges were found in his hand baggage during a security check at Terminal-3 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport here, police said on Wednesday. The man has been identified as Kalathiya Rajeshbhai, a resident of Surat in Gujarat. He works as a labour contractor and was travelling from Delhi to Ahmedabad, they said. Deputy commissioner of police (IGI Airport) Rajeev Ranjan said five live and two empty cartridges were recovered from the passenger during pre-embarkation security check at IGI's T-3 by the Central Industrial Security Force on Tuesday. "During questioning, he produced his arms licence and asserted that the ammunition recovered from his hand baggage actually belongs to his licensed weapon and he was not conscious about the presence of rounds in his bag," he said. A case has been registered against him under sections of the Arms act since the arms license produced by him is valid only for the state of Gujarat, he said. A total of 51 such cases under Arms Act have been registered by the IGI Airport Unit during the current year so far in which passengers have been inadvertently or knowingly detected with ammunition while security screening at the airport, the DCP said. The officer said despite issuing appeals to the public that "carrying ammunition at the airport is a non-bailable offence", such cases where ammunition or cartridges are detected in the baggage of the passengers are still being reported, which is a matter of concern.

Ambulances for stray animals flagged off

New Delhi: The North Delhi Municipal Corporation on Wednesday flagged off animal ambulances for stray animals. Leader of House in North Corporation, Yogesh Verma flagged off two animal ambulances for stray animals from the civic body's headquarters. Former mayor, Preeti Agarwal, chairperson of works committee, Archana, chairman of DEMS, Surjeet Thakur and others were present on the occasion. According to Mr Verma, special arrangements have been made in these vehicles for the convenience of stray animals, such as the hydraulic system installed in the carriage for unloading and climbing of the animals, melodious tune for the animal so they don't get distracted. "These vehicles have been specially made for stray animals only. One animal ambulance has been arranged for each zone by the North Corporation. Out of a total of six animal ambulances, three have been received and two have been flagged off today," said Mr Verma.

Car catches fire but safe exit for couple

New Delhi: A car caught fire in southeast Delhi's Amar Colony area on Wednesday morning, police said. Police received information at 10.30 am about the incident that took place at Sant Nagar near Ran Basera in East of Kailash, a senior police officer said. "It was found that a man named Dinesh Kumar Sharma along with his wife were passing through Sant Nagar, when the car's air conditioner caught fire," deputy commissioner of police (southeast) R.P. Meena said. Both the passengers got out safely from the car. The car was burnt completely but no one sustained any injury, police said, adding that the fire brigade doused the fire.

Man found hanging from tree in Noida

Noida: A Delhi-based man was found hanging from a tree in a park in Noida Sector-7 on Wednesday, police said. Raju, aged around 50, who lived in Ashok Nagar of East Delhi, just across the Noida border, is suspected to have killed himself, they said. "The body was hanging by a 'gamcha' that was used a noose," Rakesh Singh, the SHO of the local police station, said. "Raju lived in Ashok Nagar in Delhi but hailed from Bihar. He took the extreme step due to domestic conflicts, as per the initial investigation," Singh told PTI. The body has been sent for post mortem and further proceedings are underway, the official added. — PTI

■ Total number of cases 2,01,174 ■ Death toll mounts to 4,638

Over 4K Covid-19 cases in city, highest single-day spike so far

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

Delhi reported 4,039 fresh Covid-19 cases on Wednesday, the highest single-day spike here so far, as the tally breached the two lakh-mark in the national capital, where a record 54,517 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, authorities said.

This is the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic, that over 4,000 cases have been recorded in Delhi in a day.

The previous highest single-day spike of 3,947 cases in the city was recorded on June 23. Twenty fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 4,638, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department.

The tally of active cases rose to 23,773 from 22,377 the previous

day, it said. The death toll from Covid-19 in Delhi stood at 4,618 on Tuesday.

The bulletin on Wednesday said the death toll from coronavirus infection has risen to 4,638 and the total number of cases has climbed to 2,01,174. Delhi government has significantly ramped up testing in the past few days. Barring August 31 when over 14,000 tests were conducted and 1,358 fresh cases reported, since Sunday, daily cases count has been recorded in excess of 2,000.

The number of tests conducted and corresponding fresh cases reported from August 30-September 8 in that order are: 14389 (1358); 20437 (2024); 24198 (2312); 28835 (2509); 32834 (2737); 36219 (2914) 38895 (2973); 36046 (3256); 22954 (2077); and 45797 (3609).

The number of tests done per million, as on Wednesday, crossed the

Don't be scared by no of cases. Del wages war against corona wid aggressive testing (sic). No of deaths continues to be low. It is 20 today, against more than 100 oer day in June.

— Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM



one-lakh mark, the count being 1,00,198, it said. The positivity rate on Wednesday stood at 7.4 per cent while the recovery rate was over 85 per cent, the bulletin, adding that the case fatality rate stood at 2.31 per cent.

The number of containment zones in Delhi jumped to 1,226 from 1,166 the previous day. Meanwhile, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal directed medical superintendents and authorities to take every possible step to prevent the spread of the virus in the city. The chief minister earlier held a review meeting with Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain, chief secretary Vijay Dev, senior officials and medical superintendents of Delhi government-run hospitals.

Later he also tweeted to acknowledge the highest number of daily cases in Delhi, but asserted that the day saw "highest number of tests-54,517 against 15,000/20,000 tests till last week".

"If we did same no of tests, today's cases wud be less than 1500. So, don't be scared by no of cases. Del wages war against corona wid aggressive testing (sic)," he tweeted. "No of deaths continues to be low.

MLAs to undergo Covid test for Sept. 14 session: Speaker

New Delhi, Sept. 9: Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel has directed for COVID-19 testing (RT-PCR) of all MLAs participating in the one-day session of the house on September 14.

All the members are required to mandatorily carry the report of their Covid-19 test done 48 hours before the start of the session, said the Assembly Secretariat in a statement.

"Hon'ble Speaker has directed that all Hon'ble members may get RT-PCR test done at their own level or at the Assembly complex on Friday, 11 September between 10 AM to 1 PM, alongwith their Aadhaar Card for the RT-PCR test," it said.

All the Assembly staff will also be tested for COVID-19 from Thursday. Those who enter the Assembly Hall

will have to undergo RT-PCR test and others Rapid-Antigen test, officials said.

The session will commence at 2 PM and continue till it is adjourned for the day, said the statement. According to the Speaker's direction, members who want to raise matters under Rule-280 may give notice by 11 AM on September 14.

"The members are requested to confine the text of the Special Mention to 8-10 lines only and not to deviate from the original text while raising the same on the floor of the House. Any deviation will be disallowed and treated as summarily expunged from the proceedings. The matter should relate to only one department and raise only one issue," it said.

— PTI

It is 20 today, against more than 100 oer day in June. People falling ill and recovering. Thro aggressive testing, we r isolating them and preventing its spread (sic)," Kejriwal said.

Jain also held a meeting with medical directors and medical superintendents of all Delhi government hospitals to review the status of testing, the bulletin said. Delhi chief secretary also held a review meeting with all district magistrates on COVID-19 management, it said. Since August 18, cases again had been coming in four-figure count in the city.

According to the bulletin, out of the total number of

beds in Covid hospitals, 8,636 are vacant. Also, 2,906 beds in COVID care centres are occupied by persons under quarantine, including travellers who have returned by Vande Bharat Mission and bubble flights, it said.

According to the bulletin, 1,72,763 patients have recovered, been discharged or migrated so far. The number of people in home isolation stands at 12,518.

The number of Rapid Antigen Tests conducted on Wednesday stood at 43,416 while the RT-PCR, CBNAAT and True NAAT tests figures were 11,101, in all adding to 54,517, according to the bulletin.

DCW urges capital punishment for rapists of minor & 86-yr-old

New Delhi, Sept. 9: Delhi Commission For Women chief Swati Maliwal on Wednesday wrote to L-G Anil Bajjal to ensure that the police file chargesheets in the rape cases of a 12-year-old girl and an 86-year-old woman within three days. She also urged Bajjal to ensure exemplary punishment of death penalty to the culprits in both the cases in a fast tracked manner.

A 12-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted last month while an 86-year-old woman was raped on September 7. "The minor has suffered untold



Swati Maliwal

The 90-year-old woman, who was raped the day before yesterday, has also been subjected to vicious beatings and gruesome rape by a 37-year-old man. She continues to be in deep trauma," she said in the letter.

The Delhi Police has registered FIRs in both the matters and has arrested

miseries and grievous injuries on her private parts and still continues to be hospitalised in AIIMS.

The concerned men, Maliwal said. "Since these cases are really distressing and brutal, I appeal to you to kindly look into the matter and ensure exemplary punishment – death penalty to the culprits in both the cases in a fast tracked manner," she said. Ms Maliwal urged him "to issue necessary orders to police to file the chargesheet in both matters within next three days and also direct suitable arrangements for speedy trial of the cases ensuring the completion of trial in two months". "I plead your hon'ble self

to try and ensure the strongest action against the culprits in both these cases," she added.

Ms Maliwal said she had met both the survivors and "can never ever forget their pain and trauma". The families of the survivors also want that their cases be fast tracked and the perpetrators be given the capital punishment, she added.

It's unfortunate that in today's times females of all ages whether it's an eight-month-old baby, a 12-year-old girl or a 90-year-old woman are all unsafe, she said.

— PTI

CBI books cop for 'submitting' forged documents in DANIPS selection

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

The CBI has booked Delhi Police additional DCP Sanjay Kumar Sehrawat for allegedly submitting forged credentials and documents for selection in the Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Police Service (DANIPS), officials said Wednesday.

The agency's teams carried out searches at Sehrawat's room in DCP East office and residential

premises in Pitampura on Wednesday after registering the case, they said. Acting on a complaint against Sehrawat, a 2011-batch DANIPS official, the

CBI alleged that he used credentials of another person having similar name to get selected in the service, they said.

He is posted as Additional DCP 2 in East Delhi. When contacted, Sehrawat said the vigilance department of Delhi Police had done an inquiry on the basis of a complaint from his ex-father-in-law. There was a matrimonial dispute between him and his ex-wife, Sehrawat claimed.

14 children trafficked from Bihar rescued in city, 10 held

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

Fourteen children who were allegedly being trafficked from different districts of Bihar to Delhi were rescued by the police and 10 people were arrested by the Railway unit of Delhi Police, officials said on Wednesday. As per protocol, the rescued children who are in the age group of 12-14 have been taken to a quarantine centre in south Delhi's Lajpat Nagar, they said.

The matter came to notice after an information was received from an NGO on September 7, about 14 minors being trafficked and bring

brought to Delhi by Mahananda Express Train from different districts of Bihar, a senior police officer said.

A joint operation was laid at Old Delhi Railway Station by police along with NGO Bachpan Bacho Andolan, Salam Balak Trust and RPF personnel. The team kept a sharp vigil on movement of passengers when the train arrived and closely monitored the CCTV cameras to see any suspicious movement, he said.

Deputy commissioner of police (Railways) Harendra K Singh said "Ten persons were detained and 14 children accompanying them were

rescued. These children were medically examined and taken to quarantine centre, Lajpat Nagar. They were produced before the

laborers in factories due to Covid-19, the accused persons saw an opportunity to carry the children to work as laborers in the factories as there had been high demand of labour.

They used to target poor families in Bihar and promised them jobs and supplied their children to different places for child labour.

Jawan hangs self from ceiling fan at Rashtrapati Bhavan

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

A 40-year-old army jawan ended his life on early Wednesday morning by hanging himself from a ceiling fan in the barrack of Gorkha Rifles situated in Rashtrapati Bhawan, police said. The deceased was identified as Tek Bahadur Thapa, a resident of Tikhayan, Ghandrak of Kaski district in Nepal, they said.

The police were

informed about the incident around 4 am at South Avenue police station. Additional deputy commissioner of police (New Delhi) Deepak Yadav said the man was found hanging from a ceiling fan in the barrack of Gorkha Rifles at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

According to police, he was suffering from lower back pain and had blockage in veins. He was performing duty as in-charge since long.

Child Welfare Committee through video conferencing. Based on their statements before the committee, the case was registered and the ten accused persons were arrested."

During interrogation, the accused disclosed these children belong to different districts of Bihar. Among those rescued, nine children were from Katihar, two from Begusarai, two from Kishanganj and one from Purnia. He had planned to take these children to different places, four to Azadpur in Delhi, two to Seelampur, another two to Faridabad and six to Punjab, he said.

Due to the shortage of

laborers in factories due to Covid-19, they saw an opportunity to carry the children to work as laborers in the factories as there had been high demand of labour. They used to target poor families in Bihar and promised them jobs and supplied their children to different places for child labour, the DCP said.

The arrested accused have been identified as Md. Akbar (35), Md. Manzoor Alam (25), Naushad (36), Tasuvil (30), Md. Naseem (35), Aman Kumar Sharma (21), Noor Alam (32), Md. Mehraj (24), Maskhur Alam (23) and Mahesh Lal Kewat (33), all residents of Bihar, police said.

HC to cops: No coercive steps against Zubair

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the police not to take any coercive steps against fact-checker website Alt News co-founder Mohd Zubair in a case of allegedly threatening, torturing a minor girl on social media.

Justice Yogesh Khanna sought response of the police and National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), on whose complaint a case was lodged, on the journalist's plea seeking quashing of the FIR against him.

The Delhi Police has registered an FIR against Zubair on August 9 for the offences under the Information Technology Act for allegedly threatening and torturing a girl child on Twitter on a complaint received from the NCPCR.

The NCPCR complaint referred to the photo of a girl and her father shared by Zubair on Twitter during an online spat with the minor's father. The high court also directed Twitter India to cooperate with the police in the investigation of the matter.

The accused approached the high court seeking quashing of the FIR against him. He also sought a copy of the FIR saying the cyber cell refused to provide him the document.

Delhi government standing counsel (criminal) Rahul Mehra, representing the state and DCP of police, said though he has no instructions from the department about the matter but as an officer of the court he has no objection in supplying the copy of the FIR to the accused as he has a right to know the allegations against him. The high court asked the police to pro-



Mohd Zubair

THE DELHI Police has registered an FIR against Mohd Zubair on August 9 for the offences under the Information Technology Act for allegedly threatening and torturing a girl child on Twitter on a complaint received from the NCPCR

vide him the copy of FIR so that he can respond to the allegations.

Zubair refuted the allegation levelled in the FIR as an absolutely frivolous complaint. The high court asked Delhi Police and DCP Cyber Cell Anyesh Roy to file a status report within eight weeks and listed the matter for further hearing on December 8. No coercive action against the petitioner (Zubair) till then, the judge said.

During the hearing, senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for Zubair, submitted that he is the co-founder of the fact-checking website news outlet Alt News and debunks misinformation put out by individuals and political parties without any bias. Due to the nature of his work, he is often abused, threatened and demeaned by people.

He said two FIRs have been lodged against him for the same incident, one in Delhi and the other in Chhattisgarh.

Woman held for cheating on pretext of jobs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

A 57-year-old woman has been arrested for allegedly duping people on the pretext of providing them government jobs, police said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, police received information that a woman had been caught cheating people at Bhogal market in Jangpura area. The police reached the spot and apprehended her.

The accused has been identified as Anita Dhiman, a resident of Safdarjung Enclave.

SHORT TAKES

Truck with arms
confiscated in J&K

Srinagar: The security forces late on Tuesday night arrested two persons after a US made M4 carbine, an AK rifle and six pistols with live ammunition were found in a goods truck they were driving into Kashmir Valley from Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir. A spokesman of J&K police here said on Wednesday that the truck bearing registration number JK22B-1737 was intercepted by a joint team of the local police and Central armed police forces at Jawahar Tunnel, about 91 kilometres south of summer capital Srinagar, "on a tip off". "The arms and ammunition were being smuggled into Kashmir. The truck was on its way to the Valley from Samba. During the search of the truck, the security forces found one AK rifle with two magazines, one M4 US Carbine with three magazines and six Chinese pistols," the spokesman said.

Huge banded krait
saved from garden

Baripada: A huge banded krait (Rana) snake was rescued from a villager's garden in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district on Wednesday. The snake was more than eight-foot long and estimated to be more than 15 years old. Initially one Purna Chandra Mohapatra of Badakaranjia village under Khunta police limits of Mayurbhanj district spotted the banded krait on the wood barricades of his garden. He informed the forest personnel immediately about the snake. Later, snake catcher Krushna Chandra Gochhayat reached Purna Chandra's house. He rescued the snake from the garden barricade and released it into Similipal forest.

Odisha: Drug addicts
kill teen for ₹100

Bhubaneswar: Drug addicts in Bhubaneswar killed a 14-year-old boy for a sum of ₹100 he was carrying to buy grocery and vegetable items. The boy was attacked by the drug addicts on September 2 evening as he refused to part with the money. He succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday night. The deceased was identified as Ashwini Padhi, a native of Bharatpur under Khandagiri police limits. Four of the attackers were on Wednesday taken into custody by the local Khandagiri police after the locals took to the streets protesting the ghastly killing of the boy. According to the parents of the deceased, they had sent the boy to a grocery shop to buy some essential items.

Scheme beneficiary
talks to PM online

Bhopal: A street vendor in a Madhya Pradesh town, beneficiary of a welfare scheme launched by the Centre, was on Wednesday thrilled to bits to get the opportunity to speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi "directly". Chaganil Verma, who sells brooms on the streets in Sambre in Indore district, interacted with the PM online on the sidelines of the launch of "PM Svanidhi Yojana" on Wednesday. "I can't describe my feelings in words. I had never imagined even in my wildest dream that I will speak to the PM directly one day. I was quite nervous initially. But, I felt comfortable to talk to the PM with the progress of our interaction", 56-year-old Mr Verma said while narrating his experience. Mr Verma was one of many street vendors of MP who had interacted with PM on the occasion of the launch of the programme, aimed at reviving the economy of street vendors.

Rajasthan: 9 killed
in road accidents

Jaisalmer/Jalpur: Nine people, including a police inspector, were killed in two separate road accidents in Rajasthan on Wednesday, police said. In Pratapgarh, four people, including a police inspector, were killed when their car collided with a trolly vehicle. The incident occurred near Paldiya village on the Pratapgarh-Banswara Highway, they said. The deceased have been identified as police inspector Akhilesh Singh, his wife Mamta, Vinit Yadav and his wife. The inspector was posted in Banswara, police said. In the second incident, a passenger jeep collided with a military truck in Mohangarh area leading to the death of five people. — PTI

Lockdown not an attack on
Covid-19, but on poor: Rahul

'It was an attack on unorganised sector. We should stand against it'

New Delhi, Sept. 9: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said the lockdown was not an attack on coronavirus but on the poor people and proved to be a "death sentence" for the unorganised sector as it "finished" jobs and small businesses.

Everyone should stand against the attack, he said. "The lockdown was not an attack on corona. The lockdown was an attack on the poor of India. It was an attack on the future of our youth," Gandhi said in a video series on the lockdown triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

"The lockdown was an attack on labourers, farmers and small shopkeepers. It was an attack on our unorganised sector. We have to understand this. We all have to stand



against this attack," he said.

"Whatever was done in the name of Corona was the third attack on the unorganised sector," he also said.

This is the fourth part of the video series launched by the former Congress president on the economy and the lockdown.

"The sudden lockdown proved to be a death sentence for the unorganised class. The promise was to finish corona in 21 days,

The sudden lockdown proved to be a death sentence for the unorganised class. The promise was to finish corona in 21 days, but instead finished crores of jobs and small industries.

— **Rahul Gandhi**
Congress leader

but instead finished crores of jobs and small industries. Watch this video to know Modi Ji's anti-people 'disaster plan'," he said in a tweet in Hindi along with the video that was shared on his social media platforms.

The former Congress chief said the poor, working in small and medium businesses, are daily wage earners and eat with what they earn every day.

"When you announced a lockdown without a notice, you launched an attack on them," he said.

Mr Gandhi said the prime minister said the fight will be for 21 days, but broke the backbone of the unorganized sector in 21 days.

When it was time to open after the lockdown, the Congress party told the government several times that helping the poor is essential, he said, noting that a scheme like NYAY should have been implemented and money directly deposited in their bank accounts. "But they didn't do it." — PTI



Locals look on from their balconies in a waterlogged area following heavy rains overnight at Horamavu in Bengaluru on Wednesday. — PTI

Forces at LAC gearing
up for a long winter

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

Home ministry has directed border guarding forces, particularly along China and Nepal borders, to finalise their "winter deployment schedule" within this month and start deployment for the same next month itself.

In addition, the security forces has been asked to send in any specific requirements in terms of equipments and arms so that they can be provided before the winter deployment starts.

This urgency is largely on account of the ongoing border clashes with China in the Ladakh sector. Sources claimed that home ministry has been preparing well in advance to ensure that the borders remain absolutely safe and secure during the winter season.

It has been noticed, senior officials added, that China has been trying to take advantage of the situation along the Line of Actual Control during the winter season by occupying important position along the border.

Most parts of the LAC are not covered by security agencies as both Indian and Chinese security forces pull back during the harsh winter season. However, in wake of the ongoing clashes with the Chinese forces in the Ladakh sector this winter season the security agencies are in no mood to take any chances.

HOME MINISTRY has been preparing well in advance to ensure that the borders remain absolutely safe and secure during the winter season.

"We are putting in place a foolproof security plan for securing all border locations, particularly with China, this winter. Preparations have started well in advance for the same and strategy has been finalised. The security forces have also been directed to send in their specific demands for arms and equipments which can be provided to them before the onset of winter," a senior home ministry official added.

Due to timely intervention of security forces in the Ladakh sector the Chinese forces could not occupy any Indian territory which they had attempted a few days ago. Now with a formidable border security plan being put in place security officials are confident that during winter season any attempts by Chinese forces would be successfully handled.

PM may hold virtual summit with Abe

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

Prime Minister Narendra Modi could hold a bilateral Virtual Summit with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe very soon, possibly as early as even Thursday or the next few days subject to the health of Mr. Abe who had resigned earlier on health grounds but continues in office till his successor is elected and sworn in. PM Abe is expected to be in office till early next week. A crucial Proposed defence logistics pact—the Acquisitions and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA)—between India

and Japan could be inked at the Summit when it takes place which will provide the Navies of the two countries access to each other's bases. Japan is already a participant in the trilateral naval Malabar exercise with India and the United States.

Amid Sino-Indian military tensions, a resolute India is also sending out clear strategic signals to China like strengthening defence ties with American allies in Asia such as Japan with which China has a maritime dispute.

It may be recalled that the Japanese PM had cancelled his visit to

Guwahati last December for the proposed India-Japan Annual bilateral Summit following the violence over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in Assam then.

According to a BBC report earlier, the 65-year-old Japanese PM has suffered for many years from ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory bowel disease. According to the report, Mr. Abe had said his condition had worsened recently and that he did not want his illness to get in the way of decision making while also apologising to the Japanese people for failing to complete his term in office.



DMK president M.K. Stalin being greeted by newly elected party general secretary Duraimurugan during party's general council meeting at Anna Arivalayam in Chennai on Wednesday. — PTI

India holds 1st trilateral dialogue with France, Australia

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

In a major strategic move, India on Wednesday held its first trilateral dialogue with France and Australia at a top officials' level in which "the focus of the dialogue was on enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region" and tackling "economic and geostrategic challenges" as well. The three countries decided to "synergise their respective strengths to

ensure a peaceful, secure, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific Region" and also "agreed to hold the dialogue on an annual basis".

The move is significant, given the Chinese military assertiveness in the maritime region. India already partners with Australia in the four-nation Quadrilateral arrangement along with the US and Japan which focuses on maintenance of a rules-based order in the region.

France, which has island territories as its part in the maritime region, is also a close strategic partner of India.

In a statement, the MEA said, "The first India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue was held virtually on 9 September 2020. The meeting was co-chaired by Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary of India, Mr. François Delattre, Secretary-General, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Ms.

Frances Adamson, Secretary, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The focus of the dialogue was on enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region."

New Delhi further said, "During the dialogue, the three sides discussed economic and geostrategic challenges and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic responses to COVID-19. Cooperation on

Marine Global Commons and potential areas for practical cooperation at the trilateral and regional level were also discussed, including through regional organisations such as Asean, IORA and the Indian Ocean Commission. The three countries also had an exchange on the priorities, challenges and trends in regional and global multilateral institutions, including the best ways to strengthen and reform multilateralism."

■ **SP chief called for 9-min darkness on Wednesday**

Joblessness: Akhilesh urges
people to switch off lights

Lucknow, Sept. 9: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav



Wednesday appealed to people to switch off lights for 9 minutes at 9 pm on Wednesday to express solidarity with the youths and their families who are facing the consequences of unemployment. "Mutthiyen jab bandh jati hain nau-jawanon ki, nind ud jaati hai julmi hukmraon ki" (When the youths get determined, oppressive rulers lose their sleep), he said in a tweet in Hindi.

"Come, let us light the torch of revolution by switching off the lights for 9 minutes at 9 pm tonight to express solidarity with the youths and their families who are facing the darkness of unemployment and cash payment to women, poor senior citizens and farmers.

Attacking the government's policy of providing them employment. We will be switching off lights in the night as a

Govt assistance to poor
niggardly: Chidambaram

New Delhi, Sept. 9: Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Wednesday attacked the government over its assistance to the poor under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, alleging that money given was "niggardly and totally insufficient".

The finance ministry on Tuesday said more than 42 crore people have received ₹68,820-crore financial assistance under the government's Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana to protect the poor and vulnerable from the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

As part of the ₹1.70 lakh crore PMGK, announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 26, the government announced free foodgrains and cash payment to women, poor senior citizens and farmers.

Attacking the government's policy of providing them employment. We will be switching off lights in the night as a

ment, Mr. Chidambaram asked, "How much did each beneficiary get under the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana? Was it 'relief' in any real sense or tokenism?" Under the National Social Assistance Programme, 2.81 crore people got ₹2,814 crore or ₹1,000 per person, the former finance minister said and asked, "Could that sum have kept body and soul together?" "Jan Dhan account holding women (20.6 crore) got ₹30,925 crore or ₹1,500 each over three months. Could a homemaker have run a family on ₹500 a month?" he said in a series of tweets. "Migrants (2.66 crore) got 2.67 lakh MT of food grains over 2 months. That is 5 kg per month. Could it have sustained a migrant and his family? The numbers prove that the money given was niggardly and totally insufficient," he said. — PTI

■ **Overall death toll is 73,890**

India records new
89,706 Covid cases,
1,115 death in 24 hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

India on Wednesday recorded 89,706 fresh cases of novel coronavirus pushing the country's overall tally to 43.70 lakh. In one day 1, 115 deaths took place taking overall fatalities due to the virus to 73,890.

Apart from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu that continue to register high cases, the national capital Delhi, where Covid-19 cases had come down substantially last month, has now started witnessing a fresh wave of high cases. Delhi on Wednesday recorded 4,039 fresh cases, which was the highest single-day spike in the city so far taking its overall tally over 2 lakh and death count 4,638.

Union health ministry officials said India has progressively maintained a low Case Fatality Rate which was 1.7% on Wednesday, compared to the global average of 3.28%. "The aim is to achieve a national CFR of less than 1%. There are 17 States/UTs that are even today reporting mortality figures lower than 1%," officials said.

Himachal official
admits community
spread in state

Shimla, Sept. 9: (PTI) Community spread of the novel coronavirus has been witnessed in Himachal Pradesh's capital Shimla, a senior health official said on Wednesday.

In a statement, Shimla chief medical officer Surekha Chopra said the recent data of Covid-19 cases established community spread of the virus.

The coronavirus cases are increasing day by day and neither their index cases nor travel history is being found which establishes its community spread, she added.

The health ministry said that in the last 24 hours, India has scaled a new high of recoveries as the total number of recovered patients in a single day surged to a record 74,894. With this, the total number of recoveries has touched almost 34 lakh taking the Recovery Rate to 77.77%.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



NISHA

Her physical description is as under:-

Age : About 20 Years, **Height:** 5'3", **Complexion :** Fair, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing :** Golden colour suit, red colour salwar and hawai chappal in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Nand Nagri, Delhi. at E-mail Id — cic@cbi.gov.in or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Phone: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/265/NE/2020

SHO
P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi
North-East Distt., Delhi
Ph. No. 011- 22583307

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



Ikra

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely Ikra, D/o: Shehzad, R/o: H. No. T-2, 1079, Ward No. 1, Mehrauli, New Delhi has been reported missing/kidnapped since 24.08.2020 at 02:00 PM from the area of P.S. Mehrauli, New Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 570/20 dated 25.08.2020 U/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Mehrauli, New Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped girl is as

under:
Name: Ikra, **Age:** 17 Years, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Dark reddish purple colour (Mehroom) suit and reddish colour pallazzo.
If anyone have any information about this missing/kidnapped girl please inform P.S. Mehrauli, New Delhi.
Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, **Email:** cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641, **Fax:** 011-24368639
SHO
Police Station, Mehrauli, New Delhi
DP/196/SD/2020 **Ph: 011-26645050, 8750870824**

SHORT TAKES

Cop suspended for sending obscene pic

Shahjahanpur: A police constable in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur district was suspended for allegedly sending a message with an obscene picture to a woman colleague, a senior officer said on Wednesday. A probe has been ordered into the matter, he said. "Constable Nisar Hussain, who was posted at Kotwali police station, had sent an obscene picture to a woman constable, following which she complained. Prima facie, Nisar Hussain has been found guilty, and has been suspended with immediate effect," Superintendent of Police S Anand told PTI. He said Circle Officer (city) Praveen Kumar has been asked to probe the matter.

Student kills self over smartphone

Jalpaiguri: Upset over not being able to afford a smartphone to attend online classes, a 20-year-old college student died by suicide in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district, police said on Wednesday. Jayanti Bauli, a BA first-year student of Mal College, hung herself in her house in Dabripara village in the Saripukur area on Monday night, said Dilip Sarkar, the officer-in-charge of Kranti police outpost. Her father Aviram Bauli told police that he works as a daily wage and somehow manages to make both ends meet and also pay the tuition fees of her daughter. "My daughter was wanting a smartphone for some time for the online classes. She was upset that I couldn't get it for her. But had I known that she would do something like this, I would have borrowed money from somewhere and bought her a phone," said Aviram as he broke down. — PTI

SP suspended on corruption charges

Lucknow: Mahoba superintendent of police Mani Lal Patidar was on Wednesday suspended with immediate effect by Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on corruption charges. Patidar had been accused by ballast transporters of demanding money from them for allowing the transportation of the material. "SP Mani Lal Patidar had been illegally demanding money for the running of vehicles engaged in ballast transportation. When his demand was not met, vehicle owners were harassed through the police," said UP Additional Home Secretary Awanish Awasthi in an official statement. On CM's order he has been suspended with immediate effect, he said. — PTI

Adhir Chowdhury is Bengal Cong chief

New Delhi: Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday appointed Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury as the new president of the West Bengal Congress, the party said. Chowdhury is also the leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha. His appointment was necessitated after the demise of former West Bengal Congress Committee chief Somen Mitra. "The Congress president has appointed Shri Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury as the president of West Bengal Congress Committee with immediate effect," an official communication said late on Wednesday night. "At this juncture, the party also remembers the services of Late Shri Somen Mitra, a veteran Congressman," AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal said. — PTI

'J&K healthcare will be best in country'

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said his government aims to make the healthcare system in the union territory the best in the country and called for "strenuous efforts" from all stakeholders to achieve the goal. Mr Sinha made the remarks during a visit to the AIIMS construction site in Samba district's Vijaypur area. He inspected the pace of the construction work for the project which is slated to be completed by August 2022. He also exhorted the concerned officers of executing agencies to make sure that necessary measures are taken to ensure quality of work. — PTI

■ Your arrogance will crumble too: Kangana to Uddhav ■ 'Action like Babur demolishing Ram Mandir'

BMC demolishes 'illegal' parts of Kangana office

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

The Shiv Sena-ruled Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday demolished the illegal alterations in Kangana Ranaut's office, evoking a sharp response from the Bollywood actress who termed the action as Babur demolishing the Ram Mandir.

The demolition notice was issued by the BMC on Tuesday under section 351 of the MMC Act citing illegal constructions at her Pali Hill office in Bandra. The civic body had given 24 hours to Kangana to respond to the notice and carried out the demolition work by Wednesday afternoon. Soon after the demolition work began, Kangana tweeted comparing the BMC officials to Babur army and said that history will repeat itself and she will reconstruct her 'Ram Temple'. She also shared videos of her partially demolished office with the caption "Pakistan... #DeathofDemocracy." She



BMC officials demolish 'illegal alterations' at the Bandra bungalow of actress Kangana Ranaut. — PTI

tweeted, "I am never wrong and my enemies prove again and again this is why my Mumbai is PoK now." Kangana later unleashed a series of tweets targeting Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray. Kangana also released a video message, in which she said, "Uddhav Thackeray, tuje kya lagta hai? (what do you think?) My home was demolished today, your arrogance will crumble tomorrow. Thus is the

wheel of time, it keeps changing."

The actress had landed in Mumbai in the afternoon, amid protest by Shiv Sena workers at the airport over her remarks on Mumbai police.

On her arrival, she was taken to her residence in Khar in tight security. Kangana has courted controversy with her recent comments about the Mumbai police and comparing Mumbai with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

NIA court grants bail to two students held for Naxal links

Alan Shuhaib and Thaha Fasal were arrested from Kozhikode

AGE CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEP. 9

Two students who were arrested for their alleged links with Maoists and charged with Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), were granted conditional bail by a NIA special court in Kochi after 10 months in custody.

Alan Shuhaib and Thaha Fasal who are students of journalism and law respectively and former members of CPM's local branch committee, were arrested from Kozhikode on November 2, for alleged links with Maoists.

The bail has been granted on the personal surety bond of ₹1 lakh each filed by Alan and Thaha's parents. In their bail plea, the duo had contended that no evidence has been produced by investigating agencies yet to prove their connection with Maoists and they have been lodged in the jail for more than 10 months now. Alan and Thaha were arrested for allegedly pos-

sing and distributing brochures favoring Maoists. The two students were expelled from the CPI(M) earlier this year. The LDF government in Kerala had drawn flak for slapping UAPA against the students. The UAPA sections were charged at a time when the CPM at the Centre had opposed the draconian law within and outside Parliament.

Chief Minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan's statement describing the students as Maoists had sparked off a controversy in the state. The use of UAPA had surprised many in the Left circles. After the LDF came to power in 2016, there was a big debate on UAPA cases registered during the previous Congress led UDF Government's tenure.

political parties also criticized the Ladakh police and the BJP MP for their allegedly trying to muzzle freedom of expression. In Delhi, the Indian Journalists Union in a statement while condemning the arrest of Mr. Rigzin Ladakh said that it was a "blatant attack on freedom of expression". Mr. Rigzin is the general secretary of the Ladakh Journalists Union, an affiliate of the Indian Journalists Union.

In May last year, the Leh's Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) had while acting on an application filed by the Press Club Leh permitted the police to investigate the complaint filed against Mr. Randhawa and BJP's J&K unit chief Ravinder Raina after they allegedly tried to bribe local reporters for favourable coverage during the Lok Sabha elections.

Separately, Congress candidate for Ladakh Lok Sabha seat Rigzin Spalbar had also moved the court with a complaint that the BJP has violated the Model Code of Conduct.



Narcotics Control Bureau officers take actress Rhea Chakraborty to Byculla women jail in Mumbai on Wednesday. Kangana Ranaut arrives at Mohali International Airport before she left for Mumbai on Wednesday. — PTI



Rhea shifted to Byculla jail, seeks bail

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 8

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) shifted actress Rhea Chakraborty to the Byculla Women's Prison on Tuesday in connection with the drugs angle pertaining to Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case. The officials have stated that they would not need her further custody for interrogation that was done for three days before arrest. Rhea's judicial custody will go on till September 22.

The NCB has now collated the required evidence in the case and will take an action based on the statements recorded. Rhea

has been found procuring narcotics substances for Rajput. The suppliers of banned substances, identified as Abdul Basit Parihar and Zaid Vilatra, have already been arrested by the NCB.

The deceased actor's house manager Samuel Miranda, house help Dipesh Sawant and Rhea's brother Showik have been arrested for mediating and passing on the narcotics substances from the peddlers to Rhea and Rajput. "Rhea was taken to Byculla prison at around 10.15am after she spent a night at the NCB lockup. She has been put up at the women's prison till her judicial custody ends," said an official

pry to the investigation. Meanwhile, Rhea on Wednesday moved a bail plea before a special NDPS court in Mumbai. This is her second attempt to seek release after a magistrate court on Tuesday refused to grant her bail.

The actress has filed this plea through her lawyer Satish Maneshinde in which she claimed to be "innocent". It is also claimed that during her custody, she was coerced into making a self-incriminating confession, which she retracted later on September 8.

According to her bail plea, she is entitled for bail because "no drugs or psychotropic substance has been seized from the

present applicant and the allegations, if any, would pertain to small quantities" and hence section 27A is not applicable. Therefore, there would be no bar on granting her bail. As a result, the offence, if any, is bailable in nature and "the applicant ought to be enlarged on bail forthwith," read her bail plea.

It also said that perusal of remand applications of all the accused, who have been arrested, makes it evident that there is nothing on record that suggests involvement of the present applicant in any way. It is contended that even as per the case of the NCB, Rhea procured drugs for Sushant.

TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN & CHILDREN

Irani says govt working on 'most stringent law possible'

New Delhi, Sept. 9: The government is currently undertaking an exercise to present in parliament the "most stringent law possible" on trafficking of women and children, Union minister Smriti Irani said on Wednesday.

Addressing the third Laureates and Leaders for Children Summit on the Fair Share for Children, she said the government is working diligently towards protection of children.

The Laureates and Leaders for Children is a coalition for ensuring child rights. It is led by Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi.

"We in the Ministry of Women and Child Development are currently undertaking an exercise to present to parliament the most stringent law possible on trafficking of women and children," Irani said while address-



Smriti Irani

ing a session on 'The impact of COVID-19: Economic Exploitation of Children and the Role of Global Supply Chains'.

The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 was passed by Lok Sabha in 2018, but it did not make it to Rajya Sabha. The bill lapsed when the Modi government's first term ended in 2019.

Elaborating on other steps taken by the government for ensuring safety and protection of children, the women and child development minister

said before the pandemic hit the global community, the Indian parliament passed stringent laws to protect children from sexual assault and brought in instrument for penalising those who indulge in child pornography. "We have sanctioned anti-trafficking units across each district so that women and children in our country are better protected. In the past six years, we have set up in every district of the country one-stop crisis centres which can be used by women and children, specially those civil society leaders who want to become a link between support mechanisms and the children at large," she said.

Addressing the session, Guy Ryder, Director General at International Labour Organisation, said Covid-19 has created damage to the labour market around the world. — PTI

Defence PSUs must be revamped: CDS

New Delhi, Sept. 9: Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat on Wednesday called for revamping India's defence public sector undertakings and ordnance factories with a focus on improving their work culture and enhancing quality control. Gen Rawat also said that some of India's vintage military platforms, with retrofits, can be exported to countries that lack the desired firepower to defend themselves.

Addressing a seminar,



► ADDRESSING A SEMINAR, the Chief of Defence Staff also pitched for having a 'hard look' at the distribution of India's defence expenditure, saying a realistic analysis of the spending must be carried out

the Chief of Defence Staff also pitched for having a "hard look" at the distribution of India's defence expenditure, saying a realistic analysis of the spending must be carried out.

Gen Rawat said India must move out of constant "threat of sanctions" or dependence on individual nations for its military requirements, in an apparent reference to dif-

iculties involved in the procurement of equipment from countries facing sanctions. In October 2018, India had signed a \$5-billion deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 air defence missile systems, notwithstanding a warning from the Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions.

The US had imposed sanctions on Russia under the stringent Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. — PTI

Omar house-hunting, will vacate govt bungalow

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 9

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah has gone on house hunting after he decided to voluntarily vacate the government accommodation provided to him about eighteen years ago. This comes in the backdrop of the change in rules of entitlement in the Union Territory.

Sources close to Mr. Abdullah said that he is looking for an abode which will suit his budget and, more importantly, is

located in an area in Srinagar where his security and privacy concerns are satisfied.

50-year-old Mr Abdullah who is vice president of National Conference (NC), J&K's main opposition party, on Wednesday released a letter on his Twitter handle that he had written on July 31 this year to the administrative secretary of J&K's estates department saying that he would be vacating his government accommodation in Srinagar in eight to ten weeks time.

"The point to note is



Omar Abdullah

that contrary to stories planted in the media last year I received no notice to vacate and have chosen to do so of my own accord," Mr. Abdullah said in a tweet. He said that he would be vacating his government accom-

modation in Srinagar before the end of October.

The letter says that after the renovation of an adjacent house, the premises in entirety were used by Mr. Abdullah as chief minister's official residence from October 2010 onwards but he continued to stay there even after demitting the office of chief minister in January 2015 "as the rules allowed me to retain an accommodation in Srinagar or Jammu (twin capitals of J&K) and I chose to retain an accommodation in Srinagar." The letter further says that there has

been a change in the entitlement of former chief ministers of J&K some months ago, "I now find myself in unauthorized occupation of this accommodation, as no attempt has been made to regularize the allotment."

Mr. Abdullah says that this was a situation which was unacceptable to him as "I have never held on to any government property I was not entitled to."

Former chief ministers in erstwhile J&K were entitled to government accommodation but this entitlement was withdrawn earlier this year.

THE ASIAN AGE

10 SEPTEMBER 2020

India, China leaders must defuse Ladakh row swiftly

The escalation of the already tense standoff at the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh by Chinese troops earlier this week, with the People's Liberation Army trying hard, unsuccessfully, to dislodge Indian soldiers from the commanding heights at Mukhpari (at over 18,000 ft), on the ridgeline north of Rezang La, led to the first shots fired at the LAC in 45 years. While there are claims and counter-claims on who fired the first shot, it seems clear that Chinese forces – armed with machetes, spears, clubs and automatic weapons – tried to intimidate the Indians into retreating with a show of force and firing in the air, but backed off when the Indian Army didn't budge, using loudspeakers and floodlights and firing in the air to stop the Chinese advancing. No clash took place, and there were no casualties, but if more such encounters occur, the two sides may end up shooting at each other, and from that it's just one step to a full-fledged war. While senior officers of the two armies are talking to each other, the two governments must actively step in now. External affairs minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar is in Moscow to attend a foreign ministers' meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and he will meet China's foreign minister Wang Yi in a face-to-face encounter, the first between since the standoff began in early May. Mr Wang Yi is not only foreign minister, but also a state councillor (which ranks higher in Beijing's hierarchy) and special representative on the boundary issue and is well versed in its nuts and bolts. He is also due to talk to India's special representative, NSA Ajit Doval, in the coming days.

There is a long history, over decades, of the Chinese side intruding across the LAC, but after a brief period the PLA troops usually withdraw. The current standoff is unusual, even in contrast to Doklam in 2017, in its duration (now in its fifth month) and because the Chinese are showing no sign of withdrawing from the areas they occupied, such as from Finger 4 to Finger 8 and in Chusul (where Monday night's firing took place) and go back to their pre-April 2020 positions. This is what India has been consistently demanding. The Indian Army's pre-emptive move to occupy two dozen strategic heights on Pangong Tso's southern banks late last month – giving Indian soldiers the tactical advantage as they can keep a close watch on PLA movements – is said to have rattled the Chinese, and some of their renewed aggressiveness is attributed to this. With winter just two months away, India could use its control of these heights to negotiate with China from a position of strength and push for a swift return to the status quo.

While the Ladakh situation is critical, it's not the only place China is intruding into Indian territory. Transgressions by the PLA are reported across the 4,056-km LAC, in Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, which the Chinese call "Southern Tibet". China's aim is clearly to keep the Indian Army on edge across the long frontier.

Unless there is a swift breakthrough at Mr Jaishankar's Moscow talks, it may be time to involve the top leadership. China has consistently held, as has India, that bilateral negotiations are the only way forward. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping should start talking before it is too late.

A bizarre potboiler

The bizarre events that followed the tragic death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput have reached a curious point with the arrest of his friend Rhea Chakraborty by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on charges of "procuring drugs for him and for managing finance for drug procurement with him". The charge is based on the discovery of 59 grams of curated marijuana from the possession of two drug peddlers whom the agency alleges have links to Sushant Singh. It has admitted it found no "drug" on Rhea.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), as ordered by the Supreme Court, has started investigation into the death, which the victim's father himself had said was a suicide. The agency has in the past proved deaths, marked as suicides, to be murders after investigation, but this would perhaps be the first case in which it would be investigating a suicide.

One cannot lose sight of the incredible amount of energy being spent on and the hard politicking being involved in the case. Three central government agencies — the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate and the NCB — have their attention focused on the case. Remember, the Bihar government had lost no time demanding a CBI investigation saying the actor hailed from Bihar. Now the state, which goes to polls in a couple of months, reverberates with the slogan "Justice for Sushant" as if it has no other issues to grapple with.

All this happens at a time when the world has started taking a liberal view of drugs such as marijuana; some countries have either legalised or been contemplating legalising its use and instead chase more harmful synthetic drugs that permanently damage lives. One may only hope that the central agencies have set professional targets in this case and are not playing a role in a drama to divert public attention from real problems the country is faced with and to which the government seems to have no solution.

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Sanju Verma



Worst over, healthy auto sales signal bounceback

India's GDP decline of 23.9 per cent for the June 2020 quarter has generated heated debate. A stringent lockdown necessitated by the worst global pandemic in 102 years was enforced with the idea of saving lives. Thanks to the lockdown, India's track record turned out superior to other nations', with a fatality rate below two per cent. In fact, every major global economy contracted sharply in the June quarter.

While the United States reported a staggering 32.9 per cent annualised crash in GDP growth, the comparable fall was 42.9 per cent for Singapore, a decline of 38.7 per cent for Canada, a 12.1 per cent fall for Eurozone, a 10.1 per cent drop for Germany, a steep contraction of 20.4 per cent for the United Kingdom and a massive plunge of 27.8 per cent in the case of Japan. In India's case, we had a bright spot, with the agriculture sector growing by a healthy 3.4 per cent in that quarter.

Another fact that deserves attention is the GDP data pertaining to the March 2020 quarter. Much before the global pandemic struck, while India's GDP grew at only 3.1 per cent, we were the only large economy to report posi-

tive growth in the March quarter, with agriculture growing by a solid 5.9 per cent. Other economies like the US contracted by 4.8 per cent, Germany by 2.2 per cent, Eurozone by 3.8 per cent and China actually saw a steep GDP fall of 6.8 per cent in March quarter. Global rating giant S&P says India will have a V-shaped recovery, with a projected GDP growth of 8.5 per cent for 2021-22, far higher than its international peers.

Thanks to stellar reforms in the last six years by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India became the fifth largest economy in the world, after surpassing the United Kingdom in February 2020, after becoming the sixth largest overtaking France in 2019. The media has been screaming itself hoarse about India's biggest GDP drop in 40 years but it failed to inform its audience that, on the positive side, India's policy repo rate at four per cent is the lowest in 58 years. The coal sector was denationalised and coal mining was privatised for the first time in 2019-2020 after 47 years. Banking consolidation by merging 10 public sector banks into four, starting April 2020, has happened for the first time in 51 years.

The country's foreign exchange

reserves swelled to a record high of \$538.191 billion. The best part is short-term trade credit at just 18.2 per cent of overall external debt. Again, over 66 per cent of the aforesaid accretion in forex reserves in the past one year is accounted for by stable and high quality FDI and not fickle FII flows.

Is the worst over? The answer is a decisive "yes". Take the GST revenues for August, for instance, which stood at ₹86,449 crore. Despite the lockdown, this was 88 per cent of the GST collected in the same month last year. Overall, 48.3 million e-way bills were generated in July, almost back to pre-Covid levels of 55.3 million bills, in January 2020.

Again, Indian Railways' Freight loading for August 2020, at 94.33 million tonnes, was 3.31 million tonnes higher compared to August 2019. CBDT has, so far, issued refunds of over ₹88,652 crore to more than 24.64 lakh taxpayers from April 1, 2020, onwards. The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 52 in August, up from 46 in July. Amounts sanctioned under the emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS) by public sector banks increased to ₹76,044.44 crores, as of August 18, 2020. Similarly, private

banks sanctioned loans to the tune of ₹74,715.02 crores, under ECLGS, pointing at a swift uptick in the economy.

More importantly, let Modi naysayers not forget that 20 billion dollars is what India attracted in investments and pledges from 15 companies in just three months from April to July 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. This US \$20bn is a massive vote of confidence for Modinomics, by some of the world's largest and richest corporations like Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Apple, Saudi Arabia's PIF, SGS, Axtria, and so on. Taiwanese company, Pegatron, is the fourth Apple supplier to decide to set up a base in India, after Foxconn, Wistron and Compal Electronics, have pledged billions.

Suffice to say that India is not alone in this misfortune. Every global behemoth has been adversely impacted by Covid. But unlike others, India has a vibrant rural economy, accounting for over 50 per cent of our workforce. News has it that Australia is facing its worst recession in 30 years. China's food shops are running out of supplies and the US might end the year with a 4.2 per cent drop in consumption. In sharp contrast, India is doing a far better job

in dealing with the Wuhan virus.

At his US-India Strategic Partnership Forum address, Mr Modi said, "We are future-proofing India in every way, enabling New India to take off." Well, Mr Modi's words have found resonance, India's Hero Motocorp, the world's largest two-wheeler company that derives over 65 per cent sales from rural areas, for example, reported a healthy 7.6 per cent year on year growth in overall sales, selling 5.8 lakh units in August 2020. Ditto for M&M that derives over 50 per cent sales from rural India. It saw a robust 28 per cent YoY rise in overall tractor sales in July 2020. Maruti Suzuki saw a 21.3 per cent growth in car sales in August, while Tata Motors saw a splendid 154 per cent growth in auto sales. Indeed, since auto sales are a lead indicator, India's September quarter GDP should see a sharp bounceback, aided by government spending, which is moving ahead in full throttle, undeterred by the pandemic.

The writer is an economist, chief spokesperson for BJP Mumbai and bestselling author of Truth & Dare — The Modi Dynamic



Subhani

NEP: Ambitious targets set for education sector



Amitabha Bhattacharya

The National Education Policy 2020 in 65 pages, distilled from its 500-page draft version and modified via extensive feedback and comments from all stakeholders, including schools, colleges, universities, state governments and the public, has aroused a great deal of interest. While a few commentators criticised it for inadequacies and some politicians went vocal over the language issues, the document has broadly been accepted as timely and progressive. It is a continuation of earlier policies, especially NEP (1986/1992), but also marks some significant departures from the past.

To appreciate NEP 2020's defining characteristics, one must remember it primarily reflects the nation's intent to shape the contours of this sector in the medium-to-long term, the implementation of which, based on carefully designed action plans, will depend upon mobilisation of the needed resources and the political will at all levels. Besides, this extremely condensed document that combines modern thinking with the views of visionaries like John Henry Newman, John Dewey, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi in some form or another will be better understood if the more elaborate 2019 draft NEP is referred to. The draft, put together by sharp minds like K. Kasturirangan, Manjul Bhargava and others, provided the detailed logical underpinnings behind most of the crystallised ideas found in the final document.

A document like this should be valued for the way continuation of validated ideas is seamlessly integrated with bold new ones. While earlier policies and recommendations of various commissions had indeed stressed upon inclusion and equitable access to education, need for flexibility in devising the cur-

riculum, reduction of academic load for schoolchildren, moving away from rote learning, putting teachers at the heart of the education system, universalisation of basic education, integration of vocational education, enhancement of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at every level, increasing public expenditure on education to six per cent of our GDP and the like, NEP 2020 should be characterised by the following factors.

First, it stresses on numeracy as much on literacy, urging the attainment of universal foundational literacy and numeracy of all children on a mission mode. In today's world, mathematical skills are as important as linguistic and other skills. Despite many attempts made so far, why a substantial number of our children have still been performing poorly, as measured by their learning outcome, remains a moot question. This and the remedial measures needed are addressed squarely in this document.

Second, based on the evidence of neuroscience that 85 per cent of a child's cumulative brain development occurs before the age of six years, pre-school education or school-readiness for three years under Early Childhood Care and Education, facilitated by "play and discovery-based learning", has been proposed. In addition to the current coverage of 6-14 years under the existing law, three years of pre-school and four years of secondary education, making integrated schooling from 3-18 years, will be the new norm. Achieving a GER of 100 per cent for this entire spectrum by 2030, and a GER of 50 per cent for higher (including vocational) education by 2035, has been targeted. Ambitious, but not unachievable.

Thirdly, NEP seeks to restore the importance of the arts, humanities and social sciences in our edu-

cation system. In our engagement with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as these areas offer higher employment opportunities, we have accorded lesser value and importance to non-STEM disciplines. Institutions focusing only on engineering, medicine or legal studies have inherent limitations, and this model often militates against the idea of a university. Introducing flexibility in course design, allowing much greater choice to students for selecting subjects as per their aptitude and preferences, offering different entry and exit options, and stressing on the crucial need for multi-disciplinarity in education are among the measures suggested.

Fourth, the quality of research in most of our universities, especially in science, has been declining. NEP addresses this question and suggests how conditions conducive to high quality research in universities and colleges can be created. The idea to set up a National Research Foundation with adequate resources is a major step in this direction.

Fifth, recognising the power of the languages, a major emphasis has been laid on language learning. Children between 2-8 years are known to pick up languages swiftly, and the advantage of multi-lingualism in their cognitive development cannot be exaggerated. Equally important is the need to ensure that children are encouraged, in the initial years, to learn subjects through their mother tongue. To see this move as anti-English or pro-Hindi shows a clear bias and shows an inadequate understanding of the purpose of the new policy.

Finally, a slew of structural changes has been suggested without which the envisaged reforms can-

not be carried out. Establishing four verticals for standard setting, accreditation, funding, and framing "graduate attributes", under the umbrella Higher Education Commission of India, would form the basic architecture. Education being a concurrent subject, evidently a great deal of coordination between various departments and also between states and the Centre will be imperative. If members are chosen carefully and transparently, HECI and the four bodies under it will facilitate this participative process.

Many important issues like expanding the role of the private sector in this area, granting of autonomy to unwilling or unprepared public institutions, recognising the role of parents in the education of children, imposing conditions for inviting reputed foreign universities "on our own terms", and substantially raising public expenditure on education must be grappled with. However, though the NEP promotes the idea of "credit transfer" in higher education institutions, it does not specifically address the problems of school students migrating from one state to another. NEP 2020 has broadly articulated all the problems that were plaguing the educational sphere as a whole, and based on the collective experience so far, sought to suggest ways for a bright new future. As we know, policies rarely fail, it's the more complex process of implementation that often does.

The first priority now will be to set up the bodies and set in motion the missions proposed in the next three months. The key to success lies in taking along the states, which must bear most of the extra expenditure involved. As such, this NEP will make a difference if only the Prime Minister leads the process. How seriously the Union government wants this transformative policy to revolutionise India's education sector will be evident in the next few years.

The writer is a retired IAS officer from the Andhra Pradesh cadre, who has also worked with UNDP and with the private sector

LETTERS

QUOTA NO SOLUTION

The Supreme Court's interim stay on reservation for the Maratha community in jobs and courses in Maharashtra was along expected lines. The case was referred to a larger bench to consider the question of whether reservations in public service and educational institutions can exceed the 50 per cent cap laid down by the Court. Several states have defied the limit for political mileage. With 12 per cent quota in education and 13 per cent in government jobs for Marathas, the total reservation in Maharashtra in the two sectors is 64 and 65 per cent, respectively. These quotas are not justified.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

ISOLATE AT HOME

TUESDAY'S 3,609 new cases of Covid-19 infection are the highest count in 24 hours after June 24 in Delhi. The Delhi high court has ordered that a doctor's prescription will no more be necessary for a person going for the Covid test. The Delhi government claims to have launched an extensive awareness campaign urging people to follow Covid safety precautions and get tested for the virus. All important information about home isolation must be an essential part of the campaign since the pandemic is still not showing any sign of receding and the hospitals are full.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

DISMAL DASARA?

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC will rob this year's Mysuru Dasara festivities of its pomp and gaiety. The celebrations done on a grand scale are a big draw and attract lakhs of visitors every year. Though the traditional celebrations will go on inside the palace, the government has dropped the colourful events. The highlight of this year's celebrations is that Covid warriors, including doctors and nurses, pourakarmikas, Asha workers and police personnel will inaugurate it.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

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

IN BRIEF

Another Belarus activist detained

Kyiv: Belarusian authorities on Wednesday detained one of the last leading members of an opposition council who remained free, moving methodically to end a month of protests against authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko. Lawyer Maxim Znak, a member of the Coordination Council created by the opposition to facilitate talks with the country's leader of 26 years on a transition of power, was taken out of the council's office by unidentified people in ski masks, his associate Gleb German said. He said Znak only had time to text message "masks" before they took the phone away from him.

Israel, UAE to ink deal next week

Washington: Israel and the United Arab Emirates will sign their historic deal normalising relations at a White House ceremony on Sept. 15, officials said. Senior delegations from the two countries will be led by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the brother of Abu Dhabi's powerful crown prince. US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the ceremony would either be on the South Lawn, the Rose Garden or inside depending on weather. Late Tuesday, Netanyahu tweeted he "was proud to leave for Washington next week at the invitation of President Trump and to participate in the historic ceremony at the to sign the deal with the UAE."

Pak mine collapse toll rises to 22

Peshawar: At least 22 people have been killed and dozens were battling for their lives after six units of the famed marble mines in Pakistan's Ziarat Ghar mountain collapsed, causing large boulders to fall on them. The mines collapsed on Monday night, instantly killing 12 miners, the *Geo News* reported. The death toll rose after 10 more succumbed to injuries at the District Mohmand Hospital. Majority of the deceased include labourers and few others who had gathered at the foothill in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Saff town near the Afghanistan border, about 85 km from provincial capital Peshawar. Mohmand District Police Officer Mohmand Tariq Habib told *Geo News* that people are still buried under the rubble.

NAWAZ IS PO, ZARDARI INDICTED

SHAFQAT ALI ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 9

Former Pakistan president Asif Ali Zardari was indicted in the Toshakhana reference on Wednesday, while former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was declared a proclaimed offender. An Islamabad accountability court heard the Toshakhana reference on Wednesday. Former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani was also indicted. Mr Zardari and Mr Gilani have denied the charges. The judge, Asghar Ali of court number three, ordered a copy of the indictment to be given to the suspects. Taking to the rostrum, Mr Gilani said these kinds of matters should go to the Public Accounts Committee, not the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The cabinet division had sent the summary to give the cars from the Toshakhana, he argued. "The summary landed on my desk after a whole process but the bureaucrats who sent it to me haven't been declared suspects."

Kabul bomb targets VP, kills 10 civilians

10 shops were smoldering after the explosion, windows of dozens of homes shattered

Kabul, Sept. 9: A bombing in the Afghan capital on Wednesday targeted the convoy of the country's first vice president, killing 10 people and wounding at least 31, including several of the vice president's bodyguards, injured

31 wounded were taken to different hospitals for treatment. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban quickly denied they were behind the bombing. First Vice President Amrullah Saleh suffered minor burns in the blast. The bomb was hidden in a cart by the roadside and detonated as his convoy passed by. Saleh, who is also Afghanistan's former intelligence chief, said in his first television appearance immediately after the attack that he was fine and had sustained only slight burns. He appeared in the TV footage with bandages on one hand. "Me and my younger son who was also with me are fine," Saleh said. "I have slight burns on my face and hand from the wave of the blast. I don't have exact details right now, but I apologise to those who suffered casualties and those who lost their property in the attack."

His spokesman, Razwan Murad, called the attack a "vicious terrorist attempt" on Saleh's life. The roads in the vicinity of the bombing were closed off. The blast ignited a fire that set ablaze a number of the shops. The explosion left behind a scene of destruction — at least 10 shops were smoldering in the aftermath of the explosion that had also shattered windows of dozens of nearby homes, some with doors hanging off their hinges. —AP

10 people killed and at least 31, including several of the vice president's bodyguards, injured

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The bomb was hidden in a cart by the roadside and detonated as convoy of First Vice President Amrullah Saleh passed by



Afghan security personnel and municipality workers clean the site of an explosion in Kabul, on Wednesday. Spokesman for Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said the bombing that targeted the convoy of the country's first vice president on Wednesday morning killed several people and wounded more than a dozen others, including several of the vice president's bodyguards.

— AP

MAN CHARGED WITH MURDER OVER STABBINGS

London, Sept 9: A 27-year-old man appeared in a UK court via video-link on Wednesday charged with murder in connection with stabbings that took place in Birmingham city centre in the early hours of Sunday. Zephaniah McLeod has been charged with the murder of Jacob Billington, who was one of eight people stabbed. McLeod is also accused of the attempted murder of the seven other victims of the knife attacks and was remanded in custody by Birmingham Magistrates' Court to appear at Birmingham Crown Court on Thursday, again via video-link.

He spoke only to confirm his personal details during an appearance before two magistrates and was not asked for any pleas. There was no application for bail, West Midlands Police said. The victims of the attempted murder charges were Dimitar Bachvarov, Migle Dolobauskaite, Thomas Glassey, Michael Callaghan, Shane Rowley, Rhys Cummings and Ryan Bowers, the court was told.

Billington, 23, died after being attacked in Irving Street while enjoying a night out with school friends from Liverpool visiting one of their group who is studying in Birmingham. A post-mortem concluded he died as a result of a stab wound to the neck. A 23-year-old man, who was injured, remains in hospital. —PTI

10 dead in Chicago weekend gunfire

Chicago (US), Sept. 9: An eight-year-old girl shot in the back was among 10 people killed in gunfire over the Labour Day weekend in Chicago, police said on Tuesday, marking the latest deadly holiday weekend in the nation's third-largest city.

More than 50 people were shot from Friday until just before Tuesday midnight during a year where vio-

lent crime has soared in Chicago and other big US cities. But the holiday weekend's shooting death and injury counts weren't as high as recent holiday weekends and police noted a preceding two-month decline. "We're going to continue, obviously, looking at addressing violence crime," Police Superintendent David Brown told reporters. "We are seeing... ten-

uous progress. It's fragile, obviously. But we're seeing tenuous progress."

From July to August, murders dropped 45 per cent while shooting incidents dropped 15 per cent in the same time frame, police said. The department attributed the drop to tactics started in July, namely adding more officers to higher crime areas. The department has previ-

ously made similar deployments to crime hotspots, which experts say can temporarily lower crime but can be too aggressive.

Brown has said this time officers are also involved more in community-relations events such as food drives, an effort he hopes can work long term. The July Fourth weekend was particularly bloody with 17 people killed and at last

70 wounded in gun violence. A seven-year-old girl and 14-year-old boy were among those fatally shot.

Killed over the Labour Day weekend was an eight-year-old girl identified by the Cook County medical examiner's office as Dajore Wilson. The child was in the car with two adults on the city's South Side when they stopped at a red light. —AP

UK PM plans law banning large gatherings

London, Sept. 9: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is planning tougher new restrictions on social gatherings of more than six people in England starting next Monday, following a significant rise in the Coronavirus cases.

A law change to be introduced will ban larger groups of friends and family meeting anywhere socially indoors or outdoors, to be enforced through a £100 fine if people fail to comply and doubling on each offence up to a maximum of £3,200.

The rule will not apply to schools, workplaces or Covid-secure weddings, funerals and organised team sports. Downing Street said on Wednesday. "We need to act now to stop the virus spreading. So we are simplifying and strengthening the rules on social contact — making

Las Vegas Covid +ve children contract inflammatory disease

Las Vegas (US), Sept. 9: Health officials said Tuesday that eight Las Vegas-area children under age 14 who tested positive for Covid-19 since March were also diagnosed with a rare inflammatory condition linked with the Coronavirus.

The Southern Nevada Health District said all the children were hospitalised and released, and the district has begun adding

daily tallies of confirmed cases of the illness to its daily online Coronavirus response report.

Not all children exhibit the same symptoms, and the district said that while there isn't a known cause, many children with the illness had Covid-19 or had close contact with someone who did. Researchers say the illness can cause inflammation of the multiple internal organs.

The Health District reported 61,543 cases of Covid-19 in and around Las Vegas, an increase of 67 cases since Monday, and a total of 1,206 deaths since March.

Officials say new case rates have decreased in the past two weeks. State health officials reported no new deaths and 137 new confirmed cases of Covid-19 statewide on Tuesday. —AP

them easier to understand and for the police to enforce," said Johnson. "It is absolutely critical that people now abide by these

rules and remember the basics — washing your hands, covering your face, keeping space from others, and getting a test if

you have symptoms," he said. Previously, guidance in England allowed gatherings of up to six people from different

households outdoors — or two households of any size, indoors or outdoors. But until now the police have had no powers to stop them unless gatherings exceeded 30 people.

Under the new law, any group of seven or more people gathering anywhere risks being dispersed by police or fined for non-compliance.

The change applies to people in England of all ages, and to gatherings indoors and outdoors, in private homes, public outdoor spaces, and venues such as pubs and restaurants. The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland set their own Coronavirus restrictions but largely follow similar patterns as set out for England. —PTI

US to withdraw troops from Iraq, Afghanistan

Baghdad, Sept. 9: US President Donald Trump was expected to announce further troop withdrawals Wednesday from Afghanistan and from Iraq, where several thousand US troops hunting down jihadist sleeper cells have faced increasing attacks blamed on pro-Iran factions.

The deadly bomb and rocket attacks have put additional pressure on Iraqi Prime Minister

Mustafa al-Kadhemi, who has pledged to rein in rogue groups pledged to fight the US military presence. Kadhemi travelled to Washington last month for strategic talks, including on the future of the US-led coalition deployed in Iraq since 2014 to fight the Islamic State group.

At the time, Trump told Kadhemi US forces would leave Iraq but gave no timetable or cap for troop levels. A senior US official

told reporters the president would make an announcement Wednesday but offered no details. There was no immediate response from the US-led coalition to a request for comment from AFP.

The US has already been steadily downsizing its troop levels in Iraq in recent months as Iraqis take over combat and training roles. "These withdrawals are part of the agreed transition of the US-led coali-

tion's role in Iraq," an Iraqi official said.

US and other coalition troops stayed on after IS's defeat in 2017 to support Iraqi forces with air strikes, drone surveillance and training to prevent a jihadist resurgence.

By late 2018, there were an estimated 5,200 American troops still stationed in Iraq, making up the bulk of the 7,500 coalition forces there, according to US officials. Over the past

year, dozens of rocket attacks have targeted those forces, the US embassy and logistics convoys heading to Iraqi bases, killing at least six military personnel — three Americans, one Briton and two Iraqis. US officials have blamed the violence on hardline factions close to Tehran, which as Washington's longtime foe has repeatedly demanded US troops leave the Middle East. —AFP



Refugees and migrants run as fire burns in the Moria camp in Greece on Wednesday.

— AP

Blaze destroys Greek camp, 13K homeless

DEREK GATOPOULOS ATHENS, SEPT. 9

A major overnight fire swept through Greece's largest refugee camp, which had been placed under COVID-19 lockdown, burning through container housing and leaving more than 12,000 migrants Wednesday in emergency need of shelter on the island of Lesbos.

In dramatic night-time scenes, migrants at the overcrowded Moria refugee camp fled fires that broke out at multiple points and were fanned by gale-force winds, gutting much of the camp and surrounding hillside olive groves.

Protests also broke out involving migrants, riot police, and firefighters. There were no reports of injuries. Aid agencies have long warned of dire living conditions at Moria, where more than 12,500 have been living in and around a facility built to house just over 2,750. A state of emergency was declared on the island starting Wednesday for public health reasons and will be in effect for four months, Greece's civil protection authority announced.

It has been a very difficult night, Greek government spokesman Stelios Petsas said, adding that all possible causes of the fire, including arson, were being examined. Petsas said those who had been living in Moria would not be allowed to leave the island to prevent the potential spread of the coronavirus. The camp was put under lockdown after a Somali man was found to have been infected with the virus. A major testing drive was ordered, and 35 people who tested positive had been quarantined in a separate facility that was not affected by the fire, officials said. Greece's interior and migration ministers, along with the head of the country's public health organization, were heading to Lesbos following an emergency meeting convened Wednesday morning by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. The commander of Greece's intelligence service, the civil protection head and the chief of defense general staff participated in the meeting. European authorities, who have often come under criticism for not doing enough to ease the migration burden on countries at Europe's southern borders, were quick to offer assistance. "What's happening in Moria is a humanitarian catastrophe," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas tweeted. —AP

In 3 big states, Biden looks to rebuild Dems' Blue Wall

Lansing (US), Sept. 9: In 2016, Donald Trump tore down Democrats' "blue wall", winning the White House with surprise victories in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. This year, Joe Biden is trying to rebuild. The Democratic presidential nominee's first pandemic-era campaign trips beyond his home in Delaware are taking him to all three states, an indication of how closely Biden's electoral prospects are tied to his ability to flip those political battlegrounds. Last week, Biden trav-

eled to Wisconsin and was followed quickly by running mate Kamala Harris, who held her own events there on Labour Day. On Wednesday, Biden heads to Michigan to tout a plan for boosting US manufacturing. He also has two stops scheduled this week in Pennsylvania.

Though the Biden campaign often emphasises that it sees multiple ways to secure the 270 Electoral College votes they need to win in November, the quickest path runs through Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

JUNE PRIMARY ELECTION: GEORGIA INVESTIGATING 1,000 CASES OF 'POTENTIAL DOUBLE VOTING'

Atlanta (US), Sept. 9: Georgia's top elections official said Tuesday that his office has identified about 1,000 cases of "potential double voting" in the June primary election — a felony he's determined to see prosecuted.

These voters submitted absentee ballots but also voted in person, a

problem that happened across 100 Georgia counties, and election officials didn't catch them in time to keep the second votes from being tallied, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said.

"No one gets to vote twice. Everyone gets one vote," Raffensperger said. It wasn't im-

mediately clear whether the outcome of any races may have been affected. It follows a suggestion last week by President Donald Trump that people who vote early by mail should show up at their local polling places on Election Day and vote again if their ballots haven't been counted. —AP

"If Biden wins any of them — but particular-

ly any two, with some of the other states that are

in play — it's pretty impossible for Trump

to win the Electoral College," said veteran Democratic strategist Joe Trippi.

"It makes tremendous sense to make those three states the base foundation of any strategy to win. If Biden wins all three, it's over." Biden's aides believe his focus on the economy and Trump's handling of the Coronavirus pandemic will resonate among key voters nationwide but particularly in states like Michigan, which took one of the sharpest hits nationally from the pandemic. The unemployment

rate in the state spiked at 24 per cent in April, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics. The statewide rate has since recovered to 8.7 per cent, but Michigan has nearly 414,500 fewer jobs than it did when Trump was inaugurated. Trump supporters say that he has fulfilled his promise of creating jobs and was temporarily sidetracked by the pandemic. But the jobs numbers show that hiring at factories across the Midwest began to stall and then decline in the summer of 2019. —AP

quick BITES

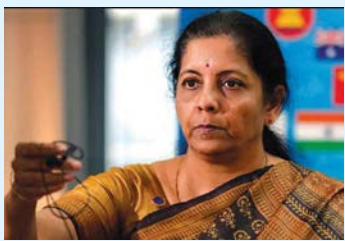
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,193.92	-0.45
Nifty 50	11,278.00	-0.35
S&P 500*	3,412.69	2.03
Dollar (₹)	73.54	0.48
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.28	1.35
Euro (₹)	86.61	0.41
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,149.251	0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.10	1.32
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.989	-0.067
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.693	0.009

* As of 9:30 PM IST

I-T Dept issues refunds worth ₹1.01 L cr in FY21

The Income Tax Department said it has issued refunds of over Rs 1.01 lakh crore to 27.55 lakh taxpayers between April 1 and September 8. This includes personal income tax (PIT) refunds amounting to Rs 30,768 crore issued to 25.83 lakh taxpayers and corporate tax refunds amounting to Rs 70,540 crore issued to over 1.71 lakh taxpayers during this period. The government has also been emphasising on refunds.

Banks catalysts of economic revival: FM



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said banks are going to be the catalysts for economic revival. "At this stage, the catalysts for economic revival, the catalysts who have the pulse of every one of our customers, are banks," the FM said. The minister said banks have to introspect on their core business and also focus on welfare. She also said all bank staffers should know the details of government schemes.

State Bank raises ₹4,000 cr in AT1 bonds

State Bank of India said it has raised Rs 4,000 crore through the issuance of Basel III compliant debt instruments. The Committee of Directors for Capital Raising at its meeting accorded approval to allot 40,000 Basel III compliant additional tier-bonds (AT1) aggregating to Rs 4,000 crore to bond subscribers on Sept. 9, SBI said in a filing. The bonds bear a coupon rate of 7.74 per cent, the lowest ever, it said.

Investigation into import of PVC resin from Japan

India has initiated a probe into an alleged increase in imports of a certain type of PVC resin, used in various sectors including construction and medical devices, from Japan following complaints by domestic firms. A notification from the Directorate General of Trade Remedies said an application was filed by DCW, DCM Shri-ram and Chemplast Cuddalore Vinyls for initiation of a probe into imports of 'PVC suspension grade resin' from Japan.

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Policy-makers to meet after Sept. 15 Govt set to exceed borrowing target

SIDDHARTHA SINGH SEPT. 9

India is set to exceed its annual borrowing target after the world's biggest lockdown decimated the government's revenue collection goals, people with knowledge of the matter said.

Officials from the finance ministry and the Reserve Bank of India will meet later this month to decide on the amount of borrowings needed beyond the targeted Rs 12 lakh crore (\$163 billion) in the year ending March 31, the people said, asking not to be identified as the discussions were private. Policy makers will also deliberate on options to raise funds, including selling debt directly to the central bank, the people said.

The meeting will be scheduled after September 15 because the government will have a clearer visibility of its financial position after advance taxes start flowing in, they added. All these proposals are being discussed and no final decision has been taken. A finance ministry spokesman was not immediately available for a comment.

The government isn't keen on slashing spending at a time when the country's economic outlook is grim. The economy contracted 23.9 per cent in the quarter ended June, the worst on record, after an extended lockdown to control the spread of the virus wiped out activity



STATES HAVE TO CUT CAPEX BY ₹3.4 L CR

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Despite the two options for additional borrowing put forth by the Centre, states will have to curtail FY21 capital spending by Rs 1 lakh crore to Rs 3.4 lakh crore, taking into account shortfalls in GST compensation and central tax devolution (CTD), finds Icra.

While offering two borrowing options, the Centre had pegged the GST compensation requirement of states at Rs 3 lakh crore for FY21 and the expected GST cess collections at Rs 65,000 crore, implying a gap of Rs 2.35 lakh crore. However, Icra has projected this gap to be Rs 2.9 lakh crore.

It estimates that in the current fiscal year, state governments would see fiscal deficit of a mini-

mum 4.25 per cent and maximum 5.52 per cent of GSDP.

Further, central tax devolution to the states will be Rs 5 lakh crore, Rs 2.8 lakh crore lower than the Rs 7.8 lakh crore budgeted by the Centre for FY21, partly on account of the adverse impact of the pandemic on consumption and the tax revenues of the Centre and the adjustment for excess devolution made in FY20.

Hence, there will be a shortfall of Rs 3.4 lakh crore. The additional maximum borrowing of 2.52 per cent of GSDP under Option I, if the states meet all the prescribed reforms within the set timeline, would be inadequate to cover the shortfalls in GST compensation of Rs 2.9 lakh crore and in CTD of Rs 2.8 lakh crore by Rs 1 lakh crore.

and dried up tax collections.

The government also wants to accelerate investments in port, roads and other infrastructure to

stimulate the world's fifth largest economy in the remaining part of the financial year, the people said.

—Bloomberg

Happiest Minds IPO subscribed 151 times



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

In a major boost to the primary equity market, public issues of Happiest Minds Technologies and Route Mobile received huge interest from all categories of investors. Both public issues have been fully subscribed.

Happiest Minds' Rs 702 crore initial public offering has been subscribed 150.98 times on the closing day, as per updated stock exchange.

Leading brokerages had given a subscribe, and subscribe for long term, call on Happiest Minds offer, leading to a huge rush from the retail investors category.

As per the latest data provided by the managers of the issue, Happiest Minds received over 22 lakh applications. Retail individual category portion was subscribed 70.94 times while high networth investors category was subscribed 351.46 times and institutional category was subscribed 77.43 times.

Route Mobile's Rs 600-crore IPO has been fully subscribed on the very first day of the bids opening, as per the subscription data updated by the stock exchanges.

PF board okays 8.5% rate

EPFO to credit 8.15% interest now and 0.35% after December

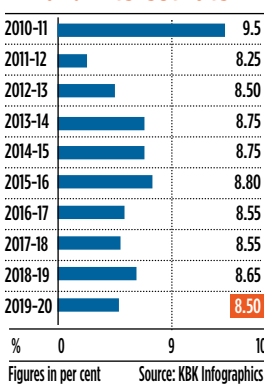
New Delhi, Sept. 9: Retirement fund body EPFO on Wednesday decided to provide 8.5 per cent rate of interest on employees' provident fund (EPF) for 2019-20 as committed earlier.

In March this year, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation's apex decision making body Central Board of Trustees headed by labour minister Santosh Gangwar had approved 8.5 per cent interest rate on EPF for last fiscal.

In a virtual CBT meeting on Wednesday, the EPFO has decided to provide 8.5 per cent rate of interest, a labour ministry statement said.

"In view of exceptional circumstances arising out of Covid-19, the agenda regarding interest rate was reviewed by the

Employees' Provident Fund interest rate



Central Board and it recommended the same rate of 8.50 per cent to the Central Government.

"It (8.5 per cent interest) would comprise 8.15 per cent from debt income and balance 0.35 per cent

(capital gain) from the sale of ETFs (exchange traded funds) subject to their redemption by 31st December, 2020," the statement said.

The board has recommended accounting such capital gains (from sale of ETFs) in the income of the financial year 2019-20 as being an exceptional case.

According to a source, the EPFO will provide 8.15 per cent interest on EPF soon and the remaining 0.35 per cent rate would be credited into the subscribers' account by December 31, after liquidation of ETFs.

The CBT also decided to hike the maximum sum assured payable under Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme 1976 to Rs 7 lakh from existing Rs 6 lakh.

—PTI

Biden for tax penalties on offshore profits

JENNIFER EPSTEIN SEPT. 9

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden is proposing a 10 per cent tax penalty on companies that move operations overseas and a 10 per cent tax credit for companies that create jobs in the US in a policy rollout Wednesday.

Biden, who is launching a renewed focus on economic issues with a speech in Michigan, also will promise to reverse Trump administration policies that his campaign said amount to "loopholes" that allow offshoring to take place. The former vice president will also pledge

to take executive action during his first week in office to direct the federal government to buy American goods and support American supply chains in their procurement processes, his campaign said.

Biden's proposals echo President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign push to focus on reviving manufacturing in the US and creating more US jobs.

Biden will also say that Trump has broken his promises to bring jobs and profits back to the US.

"Offshoring, outsourcing, Buy American. These are areas where Donald Trump's record has not

been remotely matched by the reality," senior policy adviser Jake Sullivan said.

Biden will propose a 28 per cent corporate tax rate plus a 10 per cent penalty surtax on the profits from any production by a US company overseas for sale on American soil, making the overall tax rate on those profits 30.8 per cent. The penalty will also apply to call centres and services that a US company locates overseas but serve the US.

He also plans to implement what his campaign described as "strong anti-inversion regulations and penalties," though it did not detail those plans.

—Bloomberg

Reliance Retail gets ₹7,500 crore

New Delhi, Sept. 9: US private equity firm Silver Lake Partners will buy 1.75 per cent stake in Reliance Industries Ltd's retail arm for Rs 7,500 crore.

Silver Lake will invest Rs 7,500 crore in Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd, a subsidiary of RIL, for a 1.75 per cent stake, the Indian firm said in a statement.

"This investment values RRVL at a pre-money equity value of Rs 4.21

lakh crore," it said.

This marks the second billion-dollar investment by Silver Lake in a RIL subsidiary after the \$1.35 billion investment in Jio Platforms announced earlier this year.

The world's largest tech investor picking up a stake in Reliance Retail cements belief that the firm is set to lead a disruptive, technology-led transformation of the Indian retail sector partic-

ularly relevant in post-pandemic India.

Reliance Retail Limited, a subsidiary of RRVL, operates India's largest, fastest-growing and most profitable retail business spanning supermarkets, consumer electronics chain stores, cash and carry wholesale business, fast-fashion outlets, and online grocery store JioMart. It operates almost 12,000 stores in nearly 7,000 towns. —PTI

Equity MFs see ₹4,000 cr outflow

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

The majority of equity and hybrid mutual fund schemes witnessed outflows in August, a trend which started in July. Retail investors booked profit after a sharp recovery in the equity market has led to many funds showing good gains in their net asset value post the March-April fall.

The August month data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed out flows of



Rs 4,000 crore (Rs 2,480 crore outflow in July 2020) from the equity funds category and Rs 4,819 crore (Rs 7,301 crore outflow in July 2020) from the hybrid schemes.

In the fixed income cate-

gory, liquid funds witnessed outflow of Rs 15,814.01 while overnight fund saw outflow of Rs 10,298.03 crore while healthy inflows were recorded in money market funds (Rs 7,911.53 crore), ultrashort duration funds (Rs 5,428 crore) and low duration funds (Rs 5,368 crore). Overall, the fixed income category witnessed outflows of Rs 3,907.53 crore.

The MF industry's total asset under management in August stood slightly up at Rs 27.49 lakh crore.

AstraZeneca vaccine trial paused over adverse effect

ADITI KHANNA LONDON, SEPT. 9

The human trials of one of the most promising Covid-19 vaccine candidates, being developed by the University of Oxford and simultaneously undergoing trial in India, has been put on hold after a UK participant had an adverse reaction to it.

AstraZeneca, the biopharmaceutical giant in tie-up with the university to produce the vaccine, described the pause as a "routine" one following what was an unexplained illness.

The trials had moved into phase III after successful phase I and II testing had raised worldwide hopes of it being ready by early next year as results showed that it produced a positive immune response.

The vaccine moved to phase III testing in recent weeks, involving around 30,000 participants in the US as well as in the UK, Brazil and South Africa.

As part of the ongoing randomised, controlled global trials of the Oxford coronavirus vaccine, our



BUT SERUM INST. SAYS INDIA TRIALS CONTINUING

Sept. 9: Serum Institute of India said on Wednesday that trials of AstraZeneca Plc's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in the country is ongoing and has not faced any issues. "We can't comment much on the UK trials," Serum Institute said in a statement, adding "as far as Indian trials are concerned, it is continuing and we have faced no issues at all."

—Reuters

standard review process was triggered and we vol-

untarily paused vaccination to allow a review of safety data by an independent committee, said a spokesperson for AstraZeneca on Tuesday evening.

This is a routine action which has to happen whenever there is a potentially unexplained illness in one of the trials, while it is investigated, ensuring we maintain the integrity of the trials. In large trials illnesses will happen by chance but must be independently reviewed to check this carefully, the spokesperson said.

Stressing that the adverse reaction involved only a single patient, the spokesperson added that the team is working to expedite the review of the single event to minimise any potential impact on the trial timeline.

We are committed to the safety of our participants and the highest standards of conduct in our trials, the spokesperson said.

Phase III trials in vaccines often involve thousands of participants and can last several years.

—PTI

Volkswagen T-Roc sold out for 2020

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, SEPT. 9

Despite Covid-19-induced slowdown, Volkswagen, Europe's largest car maker, has sold out the first batch of its T-Roc SUV which was launched on March 18 before the lockdown priced at Rs 19.99 lakh at pan India showroom.

Bookings have now been closed for the time being. Volkswagen T-Roc compete against the Jeep Compass, Skoda Karoq, and the facelifted Hyundai Tucson in the country.

"We are thrilled with the response received for our carlines—T-Roc and Tiguan Allspace," Steffen Knapp, director at Volkswagen Passenger Cars India, said. "Keeping this momentum, we are excited as we prepare for our next big



SUV—the Volkswagen Taigun to be launched in 2021," he said.

The mid-size SUV was imported and offered in a single top-specific variant. Only 1,000 units of the Volkswagen T-Roc were allocated for India for 2020.

According to the new rules, an automaker can import 2,500 units of a vehicle or different models in a year without needing to homologate it in India. This ensures that the manufacturer can test waters in India.

CAR RETAIL SALES FALL 7% IN AUG.

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, SEPT. 9

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (Fada) on Wednesday said passenger vehicle retail sales in August declined 7.12 per cent to 1,78,513 units compared to the same month last year.

But retail sales had improved from last month due to the festive season kicking in.

Two-wheeler sales also fell 28.71 per cent to 8,98,775 units last month compared with 12,60,722 units in August 2019.

Commercial vehicle sales, the barometer of economic activity, declined 57.39 per cent to 26,536 units against 62,270 units in August 2019.

Total sales across categories declined 26.81 per cent to 11,88,087 units last month as against 16,23,218 units a year ago.

Bela Bajarria is Netflix's global television head

LUCAS SHAW SEPT. 9

Netflix Inc named Bela Bajarria as the head of a new global television division, giving one-executive oversight over all shows at the world's largest TV network.

Bajarria, the former local-language series chief who joined Netflix in 2016, was promoted over veteran Cindy Holland, who will be leaving next month. Bajarria will now be in charge of English and local-language original series, both scripted and unscripted. Scott Stuber has a similar job overseeing movies all over the world.

Co-CEO Ted Sarandos is reconfiguring leadership at the company's enter-



Bela Bajarria

tainment operations following his own promotion in July to sharing the top spot with co-CEO Reed Hastings. As the company looks beyond the US for most of its new customers, Sarandos elevated Bajarria to the new spot instead of long-time Holland, who was more focused on the US.

"Since becoming co-CEO, I've wanted to simplify the way our content teams operate—with one global film team led by Scott Stuber and one for TV, which will now be led by Bela Bajarria," Sarandos said.

Holland played a critical role in the firm's transition from licensing other companies' shows to making its own, including House of Cards, Stranger Things and many more.

Bajarria, 49, who was crowned Miss India USA in 1991, moved to the US from London with her family when she was 8. She lives in Los Angeles with her writer husband Doug Prochilo and their three children.

—Bloomberg/Agencies

SHORT TAKES

Tokyo governor firm on Games

Tokyo: The postponed Olympics must be held next year “by all means”, Tokyo’s governor said on Wednesday, becoming the latest official to insist the event is feasible despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Yuriko Koike’s remarks, at an event hosted by Kyodo news agency, come after International Olympic Committee vice-president John Coates told AFP that the Games would go ahead in 2021 “with or without Covid”.

“Athletes are going through much hardship due to the one-year delay given that their physical condition and motivation were targeted at this summer,” Koike said, according to an English translation of her remarks published by Kyodo.

“We have to go forward with the Games next summer by all means,” she added, at the corporate event for the news agency’s subscribers.

The city will “implement every possible measure” to ensure the safety of the event, Koike said.

— AFP

Roy makes it to One-Day squad

Manchester: Jason Roy was added to England’s squad on Wednesday for the upcoming One-Day International series against Australia after recovering from a side strain.

The explosive opener missed the recent T20 series against Pakistan and Australia with the injury he sustained in training. Dawid Malan was promoted to the reserve list on the day he rose to No.1 on the Twenty20 player international rankings after scoring 66, 44 and 21 against Australia in the series.

England won 2-1. That took his career average to 48.71 and his overall strike-rate to 146.66.

The ODI series against Australia starts Friday in Manchester. They are the first ODI matches between the countries since England won the Cricket World Cup on home soil last year.

— AP

De Bruyne is Eng footballer of year

London: Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne was voted English football’s player of the year, denying Liverpool a third straight winner of the prestigious award.

De Bruyne became the first City player to capture the Professional Footballers’ Association award after scoring 13 goals and making a record-tying 20 assists last season.

The Belgian credited manager Pep Guardiola for giving him the freedom to be creative.

“Most of the time he just lets me be me,” De Bruyne said of Guardiola.

“We speak often about the team but in a lot of senses he knows when he gives the orders of what the team has to do that I will listen. But then on the other side, he gives me a lot of freedom; I don’t know why, that’s just the way it goes between us. He knows in one way I will always put the team first and then obviously if I can help myself I’m going to do that,” he said.

— AP

Vikas gets the nod to train in US

New Delhi: Olympic-bound boxer Vikas Krishan has got the Sports Authority of India’s (SAI) approval to train in the USA, where he also plans to resume his career in the professional circuit.

SAI has approved his training in the US till November 30 and also sanctioned ₹17.5 lakh for the stint.

Vikas, who competes in 69kg category currently, is an Asian and Commonwealth Games gold-medallist.

He will be travelling to the US along with his American coach Ron Simms Jr and they will train in Virginia.

— PTI

Live on TV

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Final: Trinbago Knight Riders vs St Lucia Zouks from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

US OPEN TENNIS

Matches from 9.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

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Cristiano’s century

Ronaldo second player to score 100 international goals

Stockholm, Sept. 9: Add 100 international goals to the extraordinary list of milestones achieved by soccer superstar Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ronaldo became just the second male player to reach a century of goals for a national team when he curled a free kick into the top corner from 25 metres for the first of his two strikes in Portugal’s 2-0 away win against Sweden in the Nations League on Tuesday.

Scoring one of the best goals of his international career was a fitting way to enter the “100 Club,” where he joins former Iran striker Ali Daei, and he wheeled away in delight in an empty Friends Arena in Stockholm before performing his trademark celebration the mid-air pirouette.

Ronaldo, who was playing in his 165th game for Portugal, then added a second goal another curler into the top corner and needs nine more to surpass the international record of 109 scored by Daei from 1993-2006.

Ronaldo already holds the record for goals in the Champions League with 131, 16 more than nearest rival Lionel Messi.

Portugal has won its two opening group games after beating Croatia 4-1 on Saturday, when Ronaldo was absent because of a toe infection.

Belgium and France also have maximum points.

The top-ranked Belgians beat Iceland 5-1 and France defeated Croatia 4-2 the same scoreline as the 2018 World Cup final.

England drew 0-0 at Denmark in Copenhagen.

GIROUD NEARS RECORD

Oliver Giroud moved to within one goal of Michel Platini’s national record for France by converting a penalty to complete the victory over Croatia at the Stade de France.

The striker was handed the opportunity to move onto 40 international goals by Antoine Griezmann, who gave away penalty duties having missed his last three for France.

Giroud made no mistake in the 77th minute.

A well-taken individual goal by center back Dejan Lovren put Croatia ahead, but Anthony Martial set up Griezmann for the equalizer before sliding in for a shot that hit the post, struck goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic on the back of the head, and rebounded into the net.

— AP

PARIS, Sept. 9: Kylian Mbappe has been ruled out of France’s Nations League game against World Cup runners-up Croatia on Tuesday after testing positive for Covid-19, national team management said Monday.

Mbappe, who took part in Monday evening’s training session before learning the result of his test, is the seventh Paris Saint-Germain player to contract the virus.

Neymar was among the first to test positive last week.

“He was set aside from the group after receiving the results at the end of training before returning to his home in the evening,” French team management said.

“Like the rest of the squad, Mbappe had undergone a test prior to meeting up. The result was negative like the one on Wednesday” requested by UEFA ahead of the Sweden fixture on Saturday in Solna, management said.

Mbappe scored the winner for the world champions in a 1-0 victory over Sweden in their opening Nations League encounter. However, he was expected to be rested for the game at the Stade de France against Croatia, with PSG’s opening match



Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates scoring the opening goal, his 100th goal for Portugal, during the UEFA Nations League football match against Sweden in Solna, Sweden, on Tuesday. Portugal won 2-0.

Covid +ve Mbappe ruled out

MESSI BACK TO TRAINING WITH BARCELONA SQUAD

Barcelona, Sept. 9: Lionel Messi rejoined the rest of his Barcelona teammates at practice on Wednesday. Messi had been practicing separately from the group since returning to the club on Monday. He had not been with the squad since announcing he wanted to leave and then deciding to stay to avoid a legal dispute with Barcelona.

He needed to pass two Coronavirus tests before he could practice with the rest of the squad under incoming coach Ronald Koeman.

Also back with the group was Philippe Coutinho, who also had been practicing separately. Players who had been with their national teams for Nations League matches also returned, including Frenkie de Jong, Ansu Fati and Sergio Busquets.

Barcelona said that defender Samuel Umtiti has been cleared by doctors after recovering from Covid-19. Luis Suarez and Arturo Vidal, who like Umtiti are not in Koeman’s plans for the season, also have been practicing normally.

The club has scheduled a friendly against third-division club Nastic for Saturday.

— AP

ons in a 1-0 victory over Sweden in their opening Nations League encounter. However, he was expected to be rested for the game at the Stade de France against Croatia, with PSG’s opening match

of the French league season scheduled for Thursday away to Lens.

Mbappe is the fourth player to be withdrawn from the France squad following a positive Covid-19 test.

— AFP

Aussies pull one back at the end of T20 series

Southampton, Sept. 9: Australia gained a consolation victory in the final match of its Twenty20 series against England to regain top spot in the format’s world rankings at the expense of its fierce rival.

Australia chased down its target of 146 with three balls to spare for a five-wicket victory at the empty Rose Bowl, with Mitch Marsh hitting the winning run to finish unbeaten on 39.

England won the series 2-1, but needed to sweep it to remain top of the T20 rankings after climbing into first place because of its win in the second match on Sunday.

England opener Jonny Bairstow overcame a slow start to smash a 44-ball 55 containing three fours and three sixes and lead the team to 145-6. That was the lowest score of the series so far, with paceman Mitchell Starc very economical by conceding just 20 runs off his four overs.

Joe Denly’s late-innings 29 off 19 balls gave England’s total some respectability.

— AP

Brief scores: England 145/6 in 20 overs (J. Bairstow 55, D. Malan 21, Moeen Ali 23, J. Denly 29 n.o., Zampa 2/34) lost to Australia 146/5 in 19.3 overs (A. Finch 39, M. Stoinis 26, M. Marsh 39 n.o., Rashid 3/21).



Australia’s Marcus Stoinis (second from right) celebrates the wicket of England’s Dawid Malan during their Twenty20 cricket match in Southampton.

CHAHAR BACK IN HOTEL

AGE CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Chennai Super Kings heaved a sigh of relief on Wednesday when Deepak Chahar returned to the team hotel in Dubai after completing his 14-day quarantine period. However, batsman Rituraj Gaikwad and one more CSK member are still in isolation and expected to join the squad only on September 12.

Chahar’s return is good news for CSK, but the pacer still has to clear a cardiovascular test to be conducted by BCCI’s medical team in order to join the training camp. His availability for the opening game against Mumbai Indians to be held on September 19 is still in doubt.

Awesome Osaka cruises into semis

New York, Sept. 9: Japan’s Naomi Osaka sailed into the semifinals of the US Open on Tuesday as Alexander Zverev of Germany booked his spot in the last four of the men’s draw.

Osaka, the tournament’s fourth seed, swept aside unseeded Shelby Rogers in straight sets to set up a match with Jennifer Brady for a place in Saturday’s final.

The 22-year-old Osaka required just 1hr 20 min inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium to defeat the 27-year-old Rogers 6-3, 6-4.

Osaka, the world number 9, said her victory was pay-back for three previous defeats to the 93rd-ranked Rogers.

They included a 2017 loss on clay in Charleston that Osaka said had left “a really bad aftertaste in my mouth.”

“Honestly, I just felt like she had the upper hand because I’ve never beaten her,” Osaka said.

Osaka’s dominant service game contributed to a comfortable runout for the 2018 US Open champion.

She won 83 per cent of points on her first serve and 70 per cent on her second.

In contrast, Rogers managed only 66 per cent and 33 per cent respectively.

Rogers hit 29 unforced errors compared to just eight committed by Osaka.

Brady conquered some serious nerves to defeat Kazakhstan’s Yulia Putintseva and reach the semifinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

The American 28th seed needed just 1hr 9 min to blow away her 23rd-seeded opponent 6-3, 6-2.

Brady is yet to drop a set and has lost only 24 games during her march to the semis, the fewest of anyone left in the draw.

Osaka said Brady would be a formidable opponent.

ZVEREV EASES PAST CORIC, IN SEMIS

Zverev bounced back from a shocking start to oust 27th-seeded Croatian Borna Coric in four sets.

The 23-year-old German prevailed 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 in 3hr 25min.

He began playing more aggressively after finding himself a set down, and 4-2 behind in the second set.

The German will play Spain’s 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in Sunday’s final.

The Spaniard defeated 12th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 0-6, 6-3 in an epic five-setter that ended in the early hours of Wednesday.

On Wednesday, second seed Dominic Thiem faces Australian Alex de Minaur and third seed Daniil Medvedev plays compatriot Andrey Rublev for the other semifinal spot.

— AFP



Jennifer Brady of the United States reacts after defeating Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan during the quarterfinals of the US Open tennis championships in New York on Tuesday. Brady won 6-3, 6-2.

YUVRAJ UP FOR COMEBACK

New Delhi, Sept. 9: World Cup-winning former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has decided to come out of retirement, giving in to a request from the Punjab Cricket Association more than a year after he called it quits.

The Player of the Tournament at the 2011 World Cup, Yuvraj had announced his retirement from all forms of cricket last June. PCA secretary Puneet Bali was the first person to approach the Yuvraj with an offer to come out of retirement for the benefit of Punjab cricket. He has agreed to resume for the state at least in the T20 format.

“Initially, I wasn’t sure that I wanted to take up the offer. I was done with domestic cricket, though I did want to continue to play in other domestic franchise-based leagues worldwide if I got permission from the BCCI,” Yuvi was quoted as saying by Cricbuzz.

— PTI

Butler shines as Miami pip Bucks

Miami, Sept. 9: The Miami Heat punched their ticket to the NBA Eastern Conference finals Tuesday, beating top-seeded Milwaukee 103-94 as injured Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo watched from the bench.

Jimmy Butler and Goran Dragic finished with 17 points apiece as six Heat players scored in double figures and Miami completed a 4-1 series victory in a bruising encounter against the league’s top defensive team.

Chris Middleton led the Bucks with 23 points.

Antetokounmpo — tipped to scoop a second straight NBA Most Valuable Player award this season — aggravated his sprained right ankle in the first half of the Bucks’ game-four overtime victory over the Heat.

The Bucks declared him inactive less than an hour before tipoff on Tuesday.

The loss of Antetokounmpo, who averaged career highs of 29.5 points and 13.6 rebounds per game this season, was a huge blow for the Bucks, as they tried to do what no NBA team has done before: come back from an 0-3 deficit to win a seven-game playoff series.

It’s the second straight campaign that the Bucks built the best regular-season record only to come up short in the playoffs.

— AFP