

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2020



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Akalis are misleading farmers on agri Bills, says Amarinder Singh



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Riding on Rayudu's knock of 71, CSK defeat MI in IPL opener at Abu Dhabi

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Actress Mouni Roy makes her debut on OTT platform with thriller, *London Confidential*



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WINDOWS



US actress Gina Gershon poses during the opening ceremony at the 68th San Sebastian Film Festival in San Sebastian, Spain, on Friday.

— AP

Augusta: Charges filed against Rajiv, Michel and others

New Delhi: The CBI has filed a supplementary chargesheet in the multi-crore AgustaWestland helicopter deal case against 15 persons. It details the role played by British national and alleged middleman in the deal, Christian Michel James, Rajiv Saxena and others in delivering bribes to politicians, bureaucrats and IAF officials. Former defence secretary Shashi Kant Sharma has not named him as an accused yet. This supplementary chargesheet was filed in the court of a special CBI judge in New Delhi.

■ [More on Page 3](#)

Spying for China: 3 more held in Delhi

New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Saturday said it has arrested three people for passing secret and classified information to Chinese intelligence. A Chinese woman, Qin Shi, her Nepalese associate, Sher Singh, and a freelance journalist, Rajeev Sharma, have been arrested.

■ [More on Page 2](#)

2 dead, 14 injured in NY party shooting

New York: Two people died and 14 others were wounded at a backyard party in Rochester, New York, early on Saturday, police said. The dead included a male and a female, both between the ages of 18 and 22, the police said. The 14 wounded people were taken to hospitals.

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COUNTERPOINT



Finally, they are staying at home!

WEATHER

Max: 37°C
Min: 26°C
RH: 52%
Rain: 10%

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Adhika-Ashvina Suddha Chaturthi till 2.28 am (Monday)
Star: Swathi till 10.54 pm
Varjyam: 6.22 am to 7.49 am; 4.01 am to 5.29 am (Monday)
Durmuhurtam: 4.34 pm to 5.22 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.19 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.09 AM

NIA arrests 9 'Al Qaeda cadre' for 'terror plot'

Bengal has become 'home to illegal bomb-making': Gov J. Dhankhar

RAJIB CHOWDHURI AND PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, SEPT. 19



Atirur Rehman Najmus Sakib



Abu Sufiyan Mamun Kamal Mosaraf Hossein

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday claimed to have busted a "Pakistan-sponsored module" of Al Qaeda and arrested its nine members from West Bengal and Kerala for allegedly planning terror attacks in New Delhi and other parts of the country.

The agency swooped down on the group operating out of Murshidabad in West Bengal and Ernakulam in Kerala in early morning raids and claimed to have recovered country-made pistols, a rudimentary body armour, batteries, switches and firecrackers, literature on home-made IEDs and other "incriminating material".

"The group was planning to undertake terrorist attacks at vital installations in India with an aim to kill innocent people... As per preliminary investigation, these individuals were radicalised by Pakistan-based Al Qaeda terrorists on social media and were motivated to undertake attacks at multiple places including the National Capital Region. For this purpose, the module was actively indulging in fund raising and a few gang members were planning to travel to New Delhi to procure arms and ammunition. These arrests have pre-empted possible terrorist attacks in various parts of the country," NIA said in a statement.

An NIA source said the group was led by one Murshid Hassan, a casual labourer from Ernakulam,

State has become home to illegal bomb making that has the potential to unsettle democracy. Police @MamataOfficial busy in carrying out political errands and taking on the opposition.
— Jagdeep Dhankar



and all the individuals in the group were in their 20s, "connected" and originally hailed from West Bengal.

Barring two, all the accused are either daily wage labourers or low wage earners. One of the accused is a computer science graduate while another is pursuing graduation in Arts. Among the them, six, including two college students and two migrant workers, were caught from different parts of Murshidabad which came under the NIA's scanner six years ago, during the probe in the Burdwan blast which blew the lid off Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh network active in West Bengal.

■ [More on Page 4](#)

■ It will help J&K's business sector to tide over crisis: L-G ₹1,350cr economic relief package for J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday announced a Rs 1,350 crore financial package for revival of businesses in the Union Territory (UT).

Lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha, while unveiling the package at a press conference here, said it would help J&K's business sector "to tide over the problems."

The UT's business community welcomed the relief package but said it was "too little" given the magnitude of losses it has suffered, particularly since August 5 last year, yet a "good beginning."

According to Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the

J&K police, Army seize arms, cash dropped by Pakistani drone; 3 held

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police on Saturday claimed arresting three Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants from frontier district of Rajouri and said that the weapons and cash recovered from them were sent from across the border and dropped by a drone in an area close to the Line of Control (LoC). DG police, Dilbag Singh, who was on a visit to Rajouri, told

Valley's economy alone suffered losses to the tune of over Rs 42,000 crore in the past 13 months. "This is just a good beginning, may not be all that's needed to salvage J&K's economy which fell off a cliff due to the post-August 5, 2019, lockdown and then 'lockdown within lockdown' (due to Covid-19) left it in a complete shambles. It is for the first time

in about 14 months that something good is being done. Let us appreciate it and hope that the Centre will also come up with a good package to bail out J&K's economy," said Sheikh Ashiq, the outgoing president of KCCI.

The main component of the package is 5 per cent interest subvention to all borrowers, which would cost about ₹950 crore. For tourism sector, financial assistance will be extended to about 19,914 shikara and houseboat owners, tourist guides, pithuwalas, dandiwalas, sledge walasm pony, camel riding operators and cash assistance of Rs 1,000 to all of them given in the last three months will be extended for another six months, ending December 31, 2020.

my which fell off a cliff due to the post-August 5, 2019, lockdown and then 'lockdown within lockdown' (due to Covid-19) left it in a complete shambles. It is for the first time

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Recovery outstrips number of Covid-19 infections in single day

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

India's single-day recovery outstripped the number of new infections as nearly 96,000 people recuperated from the novel coronavirus infection, even as the total caseload went past 53 lakh. According to the Union health ministry data, 95,880 people recovered from Covid-19 in a span of 24 hours, 93,337 new infections were recorded during the period. "India has overtaken the US and become the top country in terms of Covid-19 recoveries," said the

■ [According to the Union health ministry data, 95,880 people recovered from Covid-19 in a span of 24 hours, 93,337 new infections were recorded during the period.](#)

health ministry on Saturday. Cabinet secretary chaired a high level review meeting with chief secretaries of the 12 state/UTs, with 80 per cent total caseload, for effective containment and management of the Covid-19 pandemic. Minister of commerce and

industry also addressed the states and reviewed the oxygen availability. He specifically requested them to focus on analysing district level and health facility level status and effectively plan and manage logistical issues related with Oxygen availability.

With the latest inclusions, the total number of cases mounted to 53,08,014 and the recoveries to 42,08,431, pushing the recovery rate to 79.28 per cent. The death toll, meanwhile, climbed to 85,619 with the virus claiming 1,247 lives in a span of 24 hours.

MONSOON SESSION

Most political parties back move at meeting with Speaker

Parl session to end early amid Covid rise

AGE CORRESPONDENT
With agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Faced with a surge in Covid-19 cases country-wide and more than two dozen MPs testing positive, including Nitin Gadkari, the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament might be curtailed, with both Houses likely to wrap up by the middle of next week.

This decision was taken at a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee of the Lok Sabha called by Speaker Om Birla on Saturday where floor leaders of most parties backed the move, sources said. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, however, would take a final call.

The session in Lok Sabha is likely to wrap up by Wednesday next week, and Rajya Sabha is expected to follow suit.

Farmer kills self while protesting against new Bills

Chandigarh, Sept. 19: A 70-year-old farmer has died after consuming some poisonous substance during a protest against the new farm Bills in Muktsar district of Punjab, police said on Saturday.

Pritam Singh, a resident of Akkanwali village of Mansa district, consumed the poisonous substance Friday morning and died at a hospital later in the day, they said. Singh had been participating in the protest since September 15 which is being organised by the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bkta Ugrahan) at Badal village, the native of former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal. The reason behind the farmer taking the extreme step is still not known, said the police.

— PTI

▶ The Monsoon Session began on September 14 and was scheduled to conclude on October 1

▶ 17 Lok Sabha members and 8 from Rajya Sabha tested positive for coronavirus in the mandatory tests carried out before the Monsoon Session of Parliament

▶ During the session, Union ministers Nitin Gadkari and Prahlad Patel tested positive

The monsoon session began on September 14 and was scheduled to conclude on October 1.

More than two dozen MPs have tested positive for Covid-19 since the time the session began and daily tests are being carried out within Parliament premises.

Seventeen members of the Lok Sabha and eight from the Rajya Sabha tested positive for coronavirus in the mandatory tests carried out before the monsoon session. Among the infected Lok Sabha MPs, the BJP had the maximum

number — 12. The YSR Congress had two MPs, the Shiv Sena, DMK and RLP had one each.

Over the last two days, some other MPs, including Union ministers Nitin Gadkari and Prahlad Patel, tested positive for Covid-19 during the session. Following this, some Opposition parties had conveyed to the government that conducting the full 18-day session could be a risky affair.

In order to prevent the spread of coronavirus within the Parliament complex, reporters and

parliamentary staff entering the premises now have to undergo the rapid antigen test on a daily basis. This is apart from the RT-PCR tests that members of both Houses are undergoing on regular intervals, but on voluntary basis.

Officials accompanying ministers during discussions on Bills have to show a negative report of RT-PCR test taken within the last 72 hours of their visit to the complex.

So far, the Lower House has passed three Bills to replace agriculture sector related ordinances. Also, both the Houses have cleared a Bill to replace an ordinance for cutting by 30 per cent the salaries of MPs to ramp up funds in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Budget Session had also been curtailed in March after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

TRS to oppose Farm Bills in Rajya Sabha

Hyderabad: Alleging that the farm bills introduced by the NDA government would cause great injustice to farmers in the country, TRS president and Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu Saturday asked the MPs of his party to vote against them in the Rajya Sabha. Mr Naidu observed that the bills would benefit corporates and hurt farmers.

ment does, but resisting it after being voted to the Opposition.

Defending the Congress' promise of repealing the APMC Act, P. Chidambaram said in a

statement, "The Prime Minister and the BJP spokespersons have deliberately and maliciously distorted the Congress manifesto. We promised to promote farmers', producer companies/organisations to enable farmers to access inputs, technology and markets; and to establish farmers' markets with adequate infrastructure and support in large villages and small towns... Today, our farmers produce huge surpluses in many agricultural produce — notably wheat and rice. On the strength of our farmers, successive Congress governments built, brick by brick, a food security system, that culminated in the National Food Security Act, 2013."

INS VIRAAAT SAILS ON ITS LAST VOYAGE



Decommissioned aircraft carrier of the Indian Navy, *INS Viraat* during its last journey from Naval Dockyard to Alang in Gujarat, where it will be

dismantled and sold as scrap, in Mumbai, on Saturday. It served the Indian Navy for 29 years before being decommissioned in March 2017. It

had served in the UK's Royal Navy as *HMS Hermes* and was named *INS Viraat* after being inducted in the Indian Navy in 1987. — PTI

■ [Report on Page 4](#)

■ Republicans vow to replace her with President Trump's pick US SC Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg dies at 87

Washington, Sept. 19: US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a towering women's rights champion who became the court's second female justice, died Friday at her home in Washington. She was 87.

Ginsburg died of complications from metastatic pancreatic cancer.

Her death just over six weeks before Election Day is likely to set off a heated battle over whether President Donald Trump should nominate, and the Republican-led Senate should confirm her replacement, or if the seat should remain vacant until



Ruth Bader Ginsburg

▶ RBG's small stature (she stood 5-foot, 1-inch tall) and frailty in later years belied an outside persona and clout. "I ask no favour for my sex. All I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks," Ginsburg said in a documentary on her, summing up her lifelong work toward gender equality.

the outcome of his race against Democrat Joe Biden is known. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said late Friday that the Senate will vote on Mr Trump's pick to replace Ginsburg, even though it's

an election year. Ruth Bader Ginsburg became a heroine to the American left after overcoming entrenched sexism in the legal profession to ascend to the US Supreme Court, where she champi-

oned gender equality and other liberal causes during 27 years on the bench.

Ginsburg was a fierce advocate for women's rights — winning major gender-discrimination cases before the Supreme Court — before being appointed to the top US judicial body by President Bill Clinton in 1993. During her final years on the court, Ginsburg became something of a pop icon for American liberals, the subject of the 2018 feature film, *On the Basis of Sex* and the 2018 Academy Award-nominated documentary *RBG*.

— Agencies

■ [More on Page 4](#)

IN BRIEF

Man kills self in Dilshad Garden area

New Delhi: A 50-year-old man allegedly shot himself dead in his car on Saturday in Dilshad Garden area of Shahdara district, police said. The deceased has been identified as Manish Taneja, a resident of Pocket-A, Dilshad Garden, they said. He was a postal assistant in Jhilmil Industrial Area, police said. The information regarding the incident was received on Saturday morning, they said. Police reached the spot and found the body of Taneja lying on the driver's seat of the car parked near his flat, a senior police officer said. "A country-made pistol was found lying on his chest and there was a gunshot wound to his head. 'Taneja was suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) for almost last 15 years,' the officer said. Police said he was getting treatment from a hospital for the mental health condition. No suicide note has been recovered, police said. The statements of relatives and neighbours have been recorded where no foul play has been suspected, police said.

Bike-borne snatchers held after encounter

Noida: Two alleged mobile phone snatchers were arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Noida following an encounter with police on Saturday, officials said. The two bike-borne men were fleeing after snatching a man's mobile phone near D Park and were chased down by the local police in the morning, additional deputy commissioner of Police, Noida, Ranvijay Singh said. "The accused had done a similar act on Friday evening in Sector 58 police station area also after which an FIR was lodged for mobile snatching and the police teams were asked to be alert. This morning they targeted another man but police patrol teams were alert and the miscreants were chased down," Singh said. "When the accused found themselves being surrounded by policemen, they opened fire in a bid to escape but got injured in retaliatory firing. They were held and taken to a hospital

Baboon dies of 'infection' in zoo

New Delhi: An adult female hamadryas baboon died due to "severe infections" in the Delhi zoo on Saturday, officials said. The African monkey was not keeping well since September 10. "Best possible treatment was given to the animal. Her condition was monitored round the clock," Delhi Zoo director Ramesh Pandey said. The viscera of the animal has been sent to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly, for further investigation, he said. Another female baboon had died on September 8. The zoo has only three baboons left now. An 11-year-old lion, Sundaram, is also not fully fit. "The animal had developed a certain infection and nervous disorder on August 23 which was intensively monitored and treated in the veterinary hospital of the zoo, with the help of medical experts from Lion Safari, Etawah, and IVRI, Bareilly," Pandey said. The feline recovered significantly and is able to walk after the treatment. The animal is still under observation, monitoring and intensive care, he said.

Auto-rickshaw driver hangs self in Noida

Noida: The body of a 27-year-old man was on Saturday found at his rented accommodation in Uttar Pradesh's Noida in a case of suspected suicide, police said. The man worked as an auto-rickshaw driver and lived with his wife in Salarpur village under Sector 39 Police Station limits of Uttar Pradesh, they said. "The body of the man was found hanging from a ceiling fan in the house this morning. His family members told the police that he had a fight with his wife last night," a local police officer said. The exact cause behind the man taking the extreme step is yet to be ascertained, the official said, adding that the man hailed from Jalaun district of the state. The body has been sent for post mortem and further proceedings are underway, local police officer said.

Coronavirus tally crosses 2.42L with 4,071 cases in a day**Over 190% rise in active Covid cases in city in a month: Govt**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The number of active Covid cases in Delhi increased by around 190 percent in a month with 84,087 people contracting the disease during the period, according to government data. There were 11,068 active Covid cases on August 18. The number increased to a record 32,250 on Friday, an analysis of Delhi government's health bulletins showed. A similar trend was witnessed in June, when the number of active Covid cases rose from 11,555 on June 1 to 28,329 on June 27. It, however, tapered off to 10,705 active cases by July 31. On August 4, it dropped below the 10,000-mark for the first time since May 30 and stood at 9,897, owing to a good recovery rate and less new cases.

But just when it seemed the number might drop further, it started rising again with an increase in new cases. The city reported 14,040 active Covid cases on August 29. The number increased to 15,870 on September 1.

Centre or ICMR should admit to community spread in Delhi: Jain

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

As Covid cases continue to increase in the national capital, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain, on Saturday, said he feels community spread of coronavirus is taking place in the city and it should have been admitted. Mr Jain, however, said that only experts or the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) can comment on the community spread of coronavirus in Delhi.

Delhi recorded 4,071 fresh Covid-19 cases. Of the total 2,42,899 patients, 32,074 are active and 2,05,890 patients have

recovered. With 38 deaths in the last 24 hours, the total death count rose to 4,945.

The positivity rate stands at 6.57 per cent and the fatality rate is 0.74 per cent. A total of 61,983 tests have been conducted in the last 24 hours. 4,219 patients have recovered during the same period.

Mr Jain pointed out that there has been a downward trend in the Covid-19 positivity rate in the national capital and it will lead to good results by next week.

"The positivity rate was 6.76 per cent on Friday. It has remained below 7 per cent in the last two-three days. Last week, it was around 8 per cent," he said.

The upward trend in active cases continued and the count stood at 20,909 on September 6. The number rose to 25,416 on September 10. It crossed the 30,000-mark for the first time on September 16 (30,914).

The national capital has recorded 84,087 Covid cases since August 18 — 2,712 cases a day on an average.

Since September 1, the city has recorded 61,768 cases — 3,431 cases a day on an average. According to

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain, the increase in testing has led to the rise in the number of new coronavirus cases. As many as 61,037 tests were conducted on Thursday, 60,014 on Wednesday, 62,593 on Tuesday and 62,669 on Monday. Around 12,000 tests a day were being conducted in June. The authorities reported 4,127 new cases on Friday, 4,432 on Thursday, 4,473 — the highest single-day spike so far — on Wednesday, and 4,263 on Tuesday. The rise in the number of new cases has also led to a 35 percent increase in the demand for beds in hospitals in the city.

The occupancy of beds reserved for Covid patients was 25 percent on August 18, with only 3,539 out of 14,121 beds being occupied. It increased to 45 percent on Saturday, with 7,022 out of 15,321 beds being occupied, according to data shared by the hospitals on Delhi Corona app.

Jain on Saturday said there has been a downward trend in COVID-19 positivity rate in the national capital and it will lead to good results by next week.

174 new corona cases recorded, recovery rate 83% in Noida

Noida, Sept 19: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar on Saturday recorded 174 new Covid cases that pushed the district's infection tally to 11,217, official data showed.

The number of active cases, however, came down to 1,840 from 1,868 on Friday and 2,004 on Thursday, according to the data released by the UP health department.

As many as 202 more patients were discharged and the total number of recoveries in the district reached 9,329, the data showed.

The district, adjoining Delhi, has so far recorded 48 deaths linked to the pandemic and has one of the lowest mortality rates in the state at 0.42 per cent, it showed.

The state's average fatality rate due to Covid is 1.42 per cent, according to government officials. The recovery rate of patients, which saw a steady rise over the week, stood at 83.16 per cent on Saturday. This is higher than the state's average recovery rate of 79.39 per cent, the data showed.

The district's recovery rate was 82.64 per cent on Friday, 82.18 per cent Thursday and Wednesday, 81.14 per cent on Tuesday, 80.38 per cent on Monday and 79.82 per cent on Sunday, it showed. Gautam Buddh Nagar now ranks ninth among UP's 75 districts in terms of active cases, seventh in recoveries and 29th in death toll, according to the official figures. — PTI



Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad addresses sanitisation workers during a protest in Noida on Saturday.

— PTI

74-year-old shot dead by son over property dispute

Ghaziabad, Sept. 19: A 74-year-old woman was shot dead by her younger son over a family dispute on her insistence to partition her agricultural land equally among her two sons and two married daughters, police said on Saturday.

Savitri Devi, who had lost her husband a month ago, was shot at by her younger son Harendra from point-blank range at their residence in Govindpuri area of Modi Nagar on Friday night, with the bullet hitting the victim's temple and killing her at the spot, said superintendent of police (Rural) Neeraj Kumar Jadaun.

▶ **SAVITRI DEVI**, who had lost her husband a month ago, was shot at by her younger son Harendra from point-blank range at their residence in Govindpuri area ▶ **ON BEING** informed about the incident, the police rushed to the spot and sent the body for the postmortem, he said, adding police also recovered a country-made pistol from the scene of the crime

On being informed about the incident, the police rushed to the spot and sent the body for the postmortem, he said,

adding police also recovered a country-made pistol from the scene of the crime.

According to the complaint, lodged by women's elder son Dharmendra, his younger brother was opposed to the mother's plan to divide the farming land also among the two married sisters, one of whom had been living at their house for the last few days, said superintendent of police.

On Dharmendra's complaint, police arrested Harendra and launched a probe into the roles of his wife and some other unknown persons in the murder conspiracy.

Padma Shri awardee undergoes surgery at 94

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Through a 15-minute procedure, doctors saved 94-year-old Padma awardee Shila Jhunjhunwala from a heart collapse by implanting a leadless pacemaker. Initially, Mrs Jhunjhunwala (Padma Shri recipient) was admitted with brain haemorrhage requiring a complex brain surgery.

On her way to recovery, she developed complications while still hospitalised. Her heartbeat fell to very low levels. With a history of atrial fibrillation (heart rhythm disorder) and with episodes of her heartbeat falling below 30 beats per minute, she was critically ill and needed a pacemaker implant.

According to doctors, while Mrs Jhunjhunwala was just recovering from

the brain surgery she was reluctant to undergo another invasive procedure. However, upon explaining the urgency and importance of implanting a leadless pacemaker, she relented.

"This leadless pacemaker weighs only five grams and needs no stitches or cuts. We finished the procedure in 15 minutes with the patient soon well enough to go home. She recently came for a follow-up and the pacemaker was functioning well to our as well as her delight. Pertaining to her tender age, the outcomes are great," said Dr Balbir Singh, the chairman of cardiac sciences at Max Hospital Saket.

Doctors pointed out that in this case, in addition to her irregular heartbeats, she had spells where the heart rate would come to very low levels that could lead to potential collapse.



YSR Congress leaders display placards during a protest over Amravati land scam in the premises of Parliament House in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

Cops arrests 3, claim they were passing info to China

Chinese woman, Nepalese man, journalist in custody

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The Delhi police on Saturday claimed that arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma was allegedly passing sensitive information about India's border strategy and Army's deployment and procurement to Chinese intelligence agencies. However, the police is yet to ascertain what secret information Sharma had passed to China, it said.

At a press conference, DCP (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said that the police is investigating the information Sharma allegedly passed on to Chinese intelligence officers through his social media accounts and email ID. Further, based on Sharma's statement during interrogation, a Chinese woman and her Nepalese associate were arrested on Saturday morning.

During Sharma's police custody remand, one Chinese lady, Qing Shi, and her Nepalese partner Sher Singh @ Raj Bohra have been also arrested, who were found supplying him huge amounts of money routed through hawala channels for conveying sensitive information to the Chinese intelligence. "Both the Chinese woman and her associate were directors of shell companies in Delhi's Mahipalpur area. They



(From left) Qing Shi, Rajeev Sharma, Sher Singh

exported medicines to China and in return would get huge money which they gave to their agents here," Mr Yadav said. Sharma was allegedly contacted by Chinese intelligence officer Michael in 2016 and the scribe allegedly shared sensitive information with him till 2018, the DCP said.

He came in contact with Michael through a social media platform and later also visited China where lucrative offers were made, the police officer said, adding that Sharma allegedly started giving out sensitive defence information to Chinese intelligence. "In 2019, Sharma came in contact with another Chinese intelligence officer, George, and continued to share Indian defence related information," Mr Yadav claimed. According to the police officer, Sharma has been in the field of journalism for 40 years and since 2010 he has been working as a freelancer. He was writing for China's *Global Times* newspaper.

During the press conference, the police said that as Sharma had an accreditation card of the Press Information Bureau, he had easy access to the ministries.

"Sharma was continuously giving information to Chinese intelligence about India-China border dispute, current border problem with China, Indian Army's deployment and procurement, and Indian government's border strategy," Mr Yadav said.

Upon being asked whether any officer of any ministry was involved, deputy commissioner of police Yadav said that after accessing Sharma's social media accounts and email ID it can be ascertained from where secret documents have been leaked.

"When Sharma was arrested on September 14 by the special cell based on Indian intelligence inputs, the police seized some defence classified documents from his house," he said.

Submit status report of all projects: PWD asks officials

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The public works department of the Delhi government has directed officials to submit the status report of all ongoing construction projects through its website, a move that is aimed at ensuring timely completion of projects.

In a letter to all superintendent engineers, the department said the status report of sanctioned projects should also be uploaded on the PWD's website on priority basis. "All superintendent engineers in PWD are requested to ensure that status of all ongoing and sanctioned works be

updated on priority by respective executive engineers under their control," the letter stated.

An official said that the move intends to ensure that every construction project meets its deadline.

The PWD is a prime construction agency of the Delhi government. It carries out major projects and looks after the maintenance work of state-owned buildings.

Besides, the Delhi PWD, which maintains around 1,260-km roads, is responsible for roads over 60-metre in width while roads less than 60-metre wide broadly fall under the jurisdictions of the civic bodies.

Review meet focuses on air pollution in Delhi-NCR

New Delhi, Sept. 19: Aiming to curb air pollution in the NCR, a high-level task force led by P.K. Mishra, the principal secretary to the PM, met to review action taken by various agencies and to firm up plans, the PMO said on Saturday.

In the meeting held on Friday, Mishra told all members that the objective of holding meeting early is to ensure timely action on stubble burning and other interventions to reduce pollution.

"A review of the main sources of air pollution, measures taken and the progress made by state governments and various ministries was carried out. It was noted that the incidence of stubble burning has reduced by more than 50% in last two years and the number of good AQI days has gone up," it said.

While assessing the overall situation, it was noted that crop burning incidents in neighbouring states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were still high last year, the statement said, adding Mishra issued a number of directions to intensify the planned actions to ensure that stubble burning is discontinued.

Chief secretaries of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and UP and secretaries of different department and ministries were among those present in the meeting. To control stubble burning, it was stressed that adequate number of teams should be deployed and they should ensure that no stubble burning takes place,

HC asks govt, DDU college to look into 'pending dues' on priority basis

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The Delhi High Court has directed the Delhi government, and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya (DDU) College to look into the matter of the pending salaries of Delhi University (DU) professors since May 2020. Justice Jyoti Singh said that since it is a serious matter, the government and the college must look into it and listed the matter for further consideration on October 6.

"In my view, this is a serious matter and needs to be looked into by the government of NCT of Delhi as well as the College without any delay and on priority," said Justice Singh. "Contentions made by the college and the government of NCT of Delhi only prima facie give an impression to the court that both the authorities

▶ **JUSTICE JYOTI** Singh said that since it is a serious matter, the government and the college must look into it and listed the matter for further consideration on October 6

are blaming each other, instead of ensuring that the salary and the other emoluments of the employees are released on time," the court said.

"Thenet result, however, of this blame game is that the petitioners have been deprived of not only their salary and other emoluments with effect from May 2020 but also other essentials such as reimbursement of medical bills, etc," the court added. The court was hearing a petition filed by various associate professors and professors working at DDU College including

Anurag Mishra. Advocate M. Dutta, Pawan Kumar Chaturvedi, and Aditya Guha, appearing for the petitioners said that the DDU college is a constituent college of the University of Delhi receiving 100 per cent grant-in-aid from the Government of Delhi.

The council said that the principal contention of the petitioners in the present petition is that their salaries, including medical bills and other retirement benefits wherever due have not been disbursed since May 2020.

Advocate Jawahar Raja, additional standing counsel appearing for the Delhi government submitted that there is no doubt that the college receives 100 per cent grant-in-aid from the government but a special audit for the college is underway at present.

SHORT TAKES

Tiger kills woman in Maha district

Nagpur: A 60-year-old woman was killed by a tiger at a village in Pandharkawda forest division in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district on Saturday, an official said. The woman was attacked by the big cat while she was working in a field at Mouza Andharwadi village at around 12 pm, the official from Pandharkawda forest department said. The tiger from Tipeswar reserve has allegedly been on the move in farms of Andharwadi, Kopamandhvi, Vasri and Kobai villages since the last two months and has preyed on cattle, he said. Personnel from the Special Tiger Protection Force from Melghat and forest staff of Pandharkawda have been tracking and monitoring the big cat, the official said. The forest department has already alerted villagers about the movement of the tiger in farms, he added.

Mantri: No shortage of oxygen in K'taka

Bengaluru: Karnataka is not facing shortage of medical oxygen for Covid-19 patients, state medical education minister K. Sudhakar said on Saturday. To ensure that the state does not run out of supplies, the government is sourcing oxygen tanks from Gujarat, the minister said. Oxygen would be supplied to not only government hospitals but also private hospitals, an official press release quoted him as saying after inaugurating Covid Molecular Lab at Siddhartha Medical College and Research Centre in Tumakuru, nearly 70 km from Bengaluru. The lab can conduct 2,000 coronavirus tests per day, the release said. Recently, a few hospitals faced a shortage of oxygen but the demand was addressed with cooperation from industrial zones at respective districts, he said. The government is taking measures to make sure there won't be shortage in the future. — PTI

Many injured at Modi b'day event

Chennai: A huge bunch of balloons burst into a ball of fire after sparks from firecrackers punctured them just before release during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's weeklong birthday celebrations injuring a number of people, the police said on Saturday. The incident occurred when BJP members, all set to release the balloons, burst firecrackers while garlanding a farmers wing state level office-bearer, Muthuraman at Padi on Friday. The BJP is celebrating Modi's birthday (September 17) as "Seva Diwas" for a week. — PTI

Student body warns of stir over fuel cess

Kohima: The Dimapur Nagas Students Union (DNSU) on Saturday threatened to shut down petrol pumps if the Nagaland government does not revoke the Covid-19 cess on fuel by September 23. The Nagaland government imposed a COVID-19 cess of ₹5 per litre of diesel and ₹6 per litre of petrol and other motor spirits on April 28 amid a crunch in the state's finances in the wake of the lockdown triggered by the coronavirus outbreak. The government had said that it would withdraw the cess once normalcy returns. The DNSU said it has already submitted two representations to the government, urging it to withdraw the cess. — PTI

Lockdown in Raipur dist as cases spike

Raipur: Amid a spike in Covid-19 cases in Chhattisgarh's Raipur, the local administration on Saturday announced lockdown in the district between September 21-28. Raipur collector S. Bharathi Dasan issued an order declaring Raipur district as a containment zone and restricted several activities from 9 pm on September 21 till midnight of September 28, a state public relations department official said. "Raipur district has so far reported over 26,000 cases and 900-1000 cases are being recorded daily. To break the chain of transmission, it has become necessary to declare the entire district a containment zone," the order said. — PTI

Akalis misleading people: Capt

Chandigarh, Sept. 19: Punjab chief minister Capt. Amarinder Singh on Saturday asked Akalis to stop "lying and misleading" the people of the state by "picking selective portions" of the Congress manifestos, saying it did not even remotely propose any of the anti-farmer moves that the BJP-led Central government was trying to push on poor farmers to promote the interests of their rich corporate friends.

Instead of flashing the copies of manifestos at journalists, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) should have made efforts to read their relevant parts first, said the chief minister, taking on the Opposition parties over their alleged unsubstantiated and blatantly false allegations against the Congress on the issue.

Referring to the Congress manifestos for the Lok Sabha as well as the last Punjab assembly elections, the chief minister said nowhere had the party spoken about bringing any of the changes that the Centre was trying to impose on the



Members of various farmers' organisations on their way to stage a protest against the Centre over agriculture related ordinances in Patiala on Saturday. — PTI

nation with its ill-intentioned legislations.

In fact, the manifestos had clearly talked about strengthening the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) system to make it even more beneficial to the farmers, he said in an official statement here.

The state Congress manifesto of 2017 had stated that the update of the APMC Act would be done to ensure direct access of farmers to the national

and international markets through digital technology without tinkering with the existing MSP system, he said.

The LS manifesto, on the other hand, had gone a step forward to talk of further strengthening the marketing system by repealing the existing Act and bringing in new provisions that would provide for the establishment of thousands of Kisan markets to provide easy access to farmers

within 2-3 km range, he said.

Only liars could interpret this to mean that the Congress had meant to abolish the APMC Act, said the chief minister.

When and where did the Congress ever talk of replacing APMC with contract farming and private procurement? the chief minister asked, lashing out at the Akalis and AAP for "blatantly misleading" the people on the issue. — PTI

'Harsimrat's resignation historic stand'

Chandigarh, Sept. 19: Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) patriarch Parkash Singh Badal on Saturday described the resignation of Harsimrat Kaur Badal from the Union Cabinet as "bold, historic and a principled stand", and said the Akalis could never be a party to anything which harms the interests of farmers.

Harsimrat Kaur Badal, the sole SAD member in the Narendra Modi government, resigned from the Union Cabinet on Thursday in protest against three farm sector bills.

Hailing his party for keeping "aloft the flag of justice for farmers", Parkash Singh Badal said if farmers and agricultural economy suffer, the whole economy, including trade and industry, of the country will suffer too. "Lure of office means nothing to an Akali," the five-time former chief minister said. — PTI



Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar arrives to attend the ongoing Monsoon Session at Parliament House in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

Epidemic Bill to protect health staff gets RS nod

Support for Bill across party lines

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The Rajya Sabha passed the Epidemic Diseases Amendment Bill, 2020 on Saturday. Speaking in the Upper House, Union health minister Harsh Vardhan said that the Bill was required to prevent offences against healthcare professionals.

"Many healthcare workers, including doctors, paramedics, were insulted in some form or the other due to the stigma attached to Covid-19. The Centre found that there was a need for a law, a prohibitory mechanism against such incidents," he said.

He added that the Centre had passed the ordinance to make injury of any nature or insult to medical professionals a cognizable offence.

Though there was support for the Bill across party lines. However, Trinamul Congress (TMC) MP Derek O'Brien termed the Bill an attempt to encroach states' constitutionally assigned functioning. "You thought of healthcare workers now? Bengal has Medicare Service Prevention of Violence and Damage to Property Act 2009. What happens to it? Bill is an attempt to encroach states' constitutionally assigned functioning," Mr O'Brien said. The TMC leader said that his state had passed the bill for healthcare workers' safety as far back as in 2009. "You cannot cross the constitutional bar, you do your work and let the chief ministers do their work. There are sinister provisions also present in this Bill," he added.

Binoy Viswam of the

Govt must seek G-8 help to build pressure on Pak

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

BJD's Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra on Saturday suggested that Indian government should engage other G-8 countries like UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada for building global opinion and increasing international pressure on Pakistan for sponsoring cross-border terrorism and harbouring terrorists, including Dawood Ibrahim, like it did with the recent Indo-US joint statement asking Pakistan to stop allowing its territory as terror launchpads.

The BJD MP also suggested that Indian government should engage international media, which is hardly seen publishing India's version on terrorism issue, and engage MPs to push its version on issues just like the US government, which uses senator and Congressmen.

Communist Party of India, who moved a statutory resolution on the Bill, said there are serious lapses in it as it does not address the issue of violence on health professionals within the hospitals. Many hospitals are not paying the salaries to doctors and nurses, PPE kits are not being given and safety concerns are being ignored these issues have not been addressed by the Bill, he added.

■ Ex-defence secy not named as accused in VVIP copter scam

CBI files charges against Michel

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The CBI has filed a supplementary chargesheet in the multi-crore AgustaWestland helicopter deal case. The latest chargesheet, filed against 15 persons, details the role played by British national and alleged middleman in the deal, Christian Michel James, Rajiv Saxena and others in delivering bribes to politicians, bureaucrats

and Indian Air Force (IAF) officials.

The chargesheet was filed before special judge Arvind Kumar in Delhi's Rouse Avenue court, who listed the matter for consideration on September 21. Sources said the agency, which recently sought sanction from the concerned authorities to prosecute former defence secretary Shashi Kant Sharma, has not named him as an accused since the request is not granted

yet. The agency told the court that it may file another supplementary chargesheet in the matter later.

The first charge-sheet in the case was filed in September 2017 naming former IAF Chief S.P. Tyagi and others. Besides, the second charge-sheet doesn't name any politicians also.

Michel, the alleged middleman and accused in the ₹3,600 crore AgustaWestland VVIP

choppers deal case, was extradited from the UAE in December 2018. He is currently lodged in Tihar Jail in connection with alleged irregularities in the multi-crore chopper deal. While the CBI is probing his alleged role as a "middleman" in the deal, the ED is investigating money laundering charges against him. Rajeev Saxena, a Dubai-based businessman, was also extradited from the UAE in January last year.



Members of various organisations, protesting against the CAA and NRC, demand the immediate release of Umar Khalid in in Kolkata on Saturday. — PTI

4 of family end lives over financial crisis

Jaipur, Sept. 19: In a shocking incident, the bodies of a bullion trader and all three members of his family, including his two sons in their early twenties, were found hanging in separate rooms of their house in Jamdoli area, the police said on Saturday.

Trader Yashwant Soni, 45, his wife Mamta, 40, and their sons Ajit, 23, and Bharat, 20, allegedly committed suicide amid their worsening financial condition in last six months during the

Covid-19 lockdown, they said.

They committed suicide in their house at Radha Vihar colony in Jamdoli area under the Kanota police station and the matter came to light on Saturday morning when Soni's brother visited them, the police said.

When the Soni's family members did not respond to the repeated doorbell rings, his brother informed the police, it said.

Soni had taken money on interest from some

people but was not in a position to return it, the police said, adding he had also lent some money to others but was not able to recover it either.

Additional DCP Manoj Chaudhary said a suicide note was found in the house in which Soni said he was disturbed because of the financial issues. Soni and both of his two sons were found hanging from ceiling fans in a hall while Soni's wife Mamta was found hanging in her room, he said. — PTI

‘Those who can must pay for Covid-19 care’

Bhopal, Sept. 19: Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday said people who had the capacity must voluntarily pay their Covid-19 bills so that medical infrastructure in the state gets support.

Treatment for the infection is free across the state.

The Madhya Pradesh chief minister also urged shopkeepers to shut their establishments partially on weekdays to check the novel coronavirus spread.

"No money is being charged for the treatment of Covid-19 as a large section of society cannot pay this amount."

"Those capable should voluntarily pay medical bills after receiving treat-



ment," Mr Chouhan said in a meeting he held to review the coronavirus situation in

the state. Mr Chouhan added he would pay bills run up during his treatment for Covid-19 at Chirayu Medical College Hospital.

Medical education minister Vishwas Sarang, who was present in the meeting, said he too would pay for his coronavirus treatment bills.

Madhya Pradesh on Saturday witnessed a record single-day spike of 2,607 cases, taking its Covid-19 count to 1,03,065, as well as 42 deaths.

— PTI

Priyanka, UP BJP spar over 4,000 Urdu teachers

Lucknow, Sept. 19: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday accused the Yogi Adityanath government of obstructing the appointment of over 4,000 Urdu teachers who have already cleared the test for the job.

"Had a conversation with 4,000 Urdu teacher aspirants. All the aspirants came in the merit list, and are eligible to get jobs. But, the government is putting up obstructions in their way of getting jobs. The BJP Government in UP should be in the role of providing jobs, but it is working to obstruct appointments," Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. Reacting to her tweet, UP BJP media co-convenor Navin Srivastava, said, "Some of the recruitment processes have been held up because of technical reasons. But the government is trying to remove all obstruc-

tions and resolve them at the earliest."

He also said the recruitments made during the BJP regime under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath may have been at a slow pace, but transparent and free from corruption.

Srivastava also asked Gandhi if she supports the way appointments were made by the Congress-backed Akhilesh Yadav government and which later came under the scanner.

"Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and her party had given a slogan before the 2017 UP Assembly polls — 25 saal, UP behaal' (25 years, UP in poor condition). And, later they contested the polls with the so-called 'vikaas purush' (Akhilesh Yadav). Many of the recruitments made during that government came under the scanner," she said. — PTI

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SHORT TAKES

Sarpanch held for misutilising power

Bhubaneswar: A woman sarpanch who mistook delegation of Collector's power transferred to her for dealing with the Covid-19 situation in her gram panchayat, has been arrested and placed under suspension for misutilising the authority for forcibly demolishing Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) houses of tribals in the name of unauthorised evictions. Hemakanti Munda, the lady sarpanch of Salveta panchayat in Bolangir, was on Saturday under suspension based on a report submitted by the district administration with regard to bulldozing houses being constructed under PMAY. In August, local newspapers had highlighted how Munda, her husband and few others razed several under-construction houses in the pretext that the houses were built in government land. Surprisingly, when the sarpanch was asked about this, she said she demolished the houses by exercising the Collector's powers she has been empowered with by the Odisha government - reportedly for Covid exigencies.

Heavy rain alert in 3 Kerala districts

Thiruvananthapuram: Extremely heavy rains have been forecast in Kerala's Idukki, Kannur and Kasaragod districts on Saturday and Sunday, prompting the IMD to sound a "red alert" and authorities to take precautionary steps to shift people staying in disaster prone areas to safer places. According to the India Meteorological Department, a low pressure area is likely to develop over the North East Bay of Bengal and neighbourhood around September 20 and under its influence widespread rains with isolated heavy to very heavy falls are likely over Kerala during September 19-21. Several parts of the state have been receiving heavy rains in the past few days. Vadakara in Kozhikode received 10 cm rain, while Hosdurg (kasaragod) recorded 9 cm and Taliparambu in Kannur and Kudulu in Kasaragod received 7 cm each. — PTI

Woman gangraped in Rajasthan, 3 held

Jaipur: A 45-year old woman was allegedly gangraped in front of her nephew who was also forced to sexually assault her in Rajasthan's Alwar district, police said on Saturday. The accused also shot a video of the incident and circulated it following which an FIR was registered, they said. According to police, six to seven people were involved in the crime and they have arrested two and detained one. The incident occurred in Tijara Police Station area of Bhiwadi on September 14 when the woman along with her nephew was returning home. — PTI

Man jumps to death from Maha hospital

Palghar: A 42-year-man jumped to death from the second floor of a hospital in Boisar of Maharashtra's Palghar district on Saturday, police said. The incident took place in the early hours of the day, when Chandrakant Chowdhary jumped out of a window on the second floor of the hospital, the station house officer of the Boisar police station said. Chowdhary, a factory worker, was admitted to the hospital for the treatment of kidney stones, a couple of days ago, the official said. The victim died on the spot and his body has been sent for post-mortem, he said, adding that a case of accidental death was registered. The deceased lost his wife 10 years ago. — PTI

Rifle snatched from bank security guard

Srinagar: Three unidentified men snatched a 12-bore rifle from a security guard at a private bank in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, police said. They entered the bank at Dadsara in the South Kashmir district on Saturday morning and attacked a security guard, identified as Showkat Ahmad Hajam, a police official said. The three men decamped with a 12-bore rifle of the private security guard, he said. The video footage of the incident has been taken as the evidence by police and efforts are on to identify the culprits involved in the commission of the crime, the official said. — PTI



An army convoy on its way to Ladakh amid border tension with China at Manali-Leh highway on Saturday. — PTI

NIA attaches house, land of Jaish outfit worker's father

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19

National Investigation Agency (NIA) has asked for attaching a property of the father of a local youth of Kakapora area in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Pulwama district accused of being an 'Over Ground Worker (OWG)' of Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) outfit.

The NIA claimed the youth identified by it as Irshad Ahmad Reshi was involved in a terror attack at the CRPF Group Centre in Pulwama's Lethpora area in 2017.

Five CRPF personnel were killed and three others grievously injured in the attack carried out during the intervening night of December 30-31, 2017. The Centre is located at less than fifty yards from the place where a JeM bomber Adil Dar hit a CRPF convoy on February 14 last year, killing as many as 40 jawans.

According to the NIA, Reshi before his arrest in April last year was an active OGW of JeM, a close associate of its slain commander Noor Mohammad Tantray alias Noor Trali. "The attack on CRPF Group Centre, Lethpora was executed under a conspiracy to avenge the death of Noor Trali, who was killed in an encounter with security forces in December 2017," it said.

AJP prime target of BJP for next Assembly polls

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, SEPT. 19

The fate of new political party—Assam Jatiya Parishad, floated by two frontline students organisations—All Assam Students Union (AASU) and Asom Jatiyabadi Yuba-Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), may be decided in the assembly polls next year but they have become the first target of ruling BJP led alliance in Assam.

This was more visible with the key strategist of the BJP in northeast and finance, health and PWD minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launching a frontal attack on Assam Jatiya Parishad claiming that the

Weapons, cash dropped by Pak drone on LoC seized, 3 arrested

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19

Jammu and Kashmir police on Saturday claimed arresting three Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants from frontier district of Rajouri and said that the weapons and cash recovered from them were sent from across the border and dropped by a drone in an area close to the Line of Control (LoC).

DG police, Dilbag Singh, who was on a visit to Rajouri, told reporters that the arrested LeT cadres were residents of Kashmir Valley who had travelled all the way to the frontier region to receive a weapon and cash consignment from across the LoC. "Yesterday (Friday), the trio was chased by the

jawans of J&K police and the Army's 38 Rashtriya Rifles unit, after which one of them hurled a grenade at the forces which luckily didn't explode. They were subsequently caught alive", he said. He added, "All the three are affiliated with the Lashkar outfit and were in touch with their handlers from across and had received weapons and cash through drones."

The weapons seized from the accused identified as Rahil Bashir, Amir Jaan and Younis Wani include two AK 56 rifles, two pistols, four grenades and Rs. 100,000 cash, the police said.

The police chief reiterated that charge that Pakistan "is trying hard to keep the pot of militancy

boiling in Rajouri and Poonch districts". He said "Also, this weapon consignment and cash were aimed at fuelling militancy in Kashmir Valley." He further said that this was the first attempt of aerial weapon drop on the LoC and second in the recent past as earlier one drone was shot along with weapons by the BSF on the International Border in Samba district. "We are aware of the challenge and will evolve a counter strategy to foil these bids," he said in reply to a question.

IGP (Jammu range) Mukesh Singh said that a huge consignment of heroine weighing 7 kilograms and worth ₹7 crore was seized by the police on September 14.

‘State has potential to unsettle democracy, people at helm can't escape accountability'

Bengal home to illegal bomb making: Dhankar

Kolkata, Sept. 19: West Bengal has become "home to illegal bomb-making" and the state administration cannot escape its accountability for the "alarming decline" in law and order, governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Saturday.

The governor's comments came after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested nine terrorists associated with a Pakistan-sponsored module of the al-Qaeda from several locations in West Bengal's Murshidabad and Kerala's Ernakulam early on Saturday.

How far distanced is DGP @WBPolice from reality is cause of worry. His "Ostrich Stance" is very disturbing. Appreciate the role of policemen in general-they r working in difficult situations. Problem is with those at the helm who r unmindful of conduct and r politically guided.

— Jagdeep Dhankar, Governor, West Bengal



"State has become home to illegal bomb making that has the potential to unsettle democracy. Police @MamataOfficial busy in carrying out political

errands and taking on the opposition. Those at helm @WBPolice cannot escape their accountability for this alarming decline in law and order," Dhankhar

tweeted.

The governor alleged the state director general of police is distanced far from reality and his "ostrich stance" is "very disturbing."

"How far distanced is DGP @WBPolice from reality is cause of worry. His 'Ostrich Stance' is very disturbing.

Appreciate the role of policemen in general-they r working in difficult situations. Problem is with those at the helm who r unmindful of conduct and r politically guided," Dhankhar said in another Twitter post.



Manduadih railway station in Varanasi was renamed as Banaras on Saturday. Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel approved the name change of the railway station after a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Central government. The notification in this regard was issued on Wednesday. Earlier in UP, names of Mughalsarai and Allahabad railway stations were changed to Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Junction and Prayagraj Junction, respectively. — PTI

97 died on board Shramik Special trains: Goyal

New Delhi, Sept. 19: The government has informed the Rajya Sabha that 97 people died on board the Shramik Specials, admitting for the first time that migrant labourers lost their lives in the trains which were run to ferry them during the Covid-19 lockdown.

In a written answer to a question posed by TMC MP Derek O'Brien on Friday, railway minister Piyush Goyal provided the statistics to the upper house of parliament.

"Based on the data provided by State Police, 97 persons have been report-

ed dead till 09.09.2020 while travelling on board Shramik Special Trains during current Covid-19 situation/crisis," the minister said.

"The state police registers case under Section 174 of Cr.PC in cases of unnatural deaths and follows further legal process," the minister said.

Out of the 97 cases of death, the state police sent dead bodies for post-mortem in 87 cases, the minister said. A total of 51 post-mortem reports have been obtained from respective state police

OUT OF THE 97 cases of death, the state police sent dead bodies for post-mortem in 87 cases, the minister said. A total of 51 post-mortem reports have been obtained from respective state police forces so far

forces so far, in which the reasons for deaths have been shown as cardiac arrest / heart disease/brain hemorrhage/pre-existing chronic disease/chronic lung disease/chronic liver disease etc, the minister

said.

The statement of the minister comes after the government came under criticism when the labour ministry earlier this week informed parliament that no data is available on the number of migrant workers who lost their lives during the 68-day lockdown enforced on March 25 to curb the spread of the Covid-19.

Shramik Special trains began operation on May 1 to ferry migrant labourers back to their home states during the lockdown period. In all, 4,621 Shramik Special trains

were operated between May 1 and August 31, carrying 6,319,000 passengers to their home states, the ministry said.

Policing on Railways being a state subject, prevention of crime, registration of cases, their investigation and maintenance of law & order in Railway premises as well as on running trains are the statutory responsibility of the state governments, which they discharge through Government Railway Police (GRP)/District Police," Goyal said. — PTI

Smuggling impossible due to Ladakh standoff

Chinese deprived of 'Himalayan Viagra'

VIKRAM SHARMA HYDERABAD, SEPT. 19

This year, the Chinese have been deprived of a rare herb — Cordyceps Sinensis — also known as Himalayan Viagra, which cures ailments including impotence and fatigue.

Found in Uttarakhand between May and September, Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing tension between India and China, made smuggling the herb through Nepal to Chinese markets impossible. Studies show that about 45 per cent of Chinese men over 40 have erectile dysfunction. A concern for decades, it was at one point called a contagion.

Though the Chinese are a leading consumer of Viagra, they still rely on traditional medicine which is now a billion-dollar industry.

"They look at long-term cures instead of quick fixes. Studies have shown an increasing number of Chinese suffer from

impotence," an Uttarakhand-based researcher said.

In the international market, one kilogram of Cordyceps Sinensis (called Keeda Jadi locally) fetches more than ₹20 lakh. China is the biggest buyer, with business of ₹150-200 crore.

Singapore and Hong Kong are among other buyers. As the snow starts melting in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh, Chamoli and Bageshwar in May, groups flock the mountains to hunt for the herb. This year was no different.

"We picked the herbs but could not deliver due to the pandemic and the tension. This led to a shortage in China where demand is huge," said Anup (name changed) of Dharchula.

Like thousands in the region, he has been in the trade for a decade. The arduous trek in search of the herb has even led to deaths due to freezing temperatures and treacherous routes. The best-

known route for smuggling the herb is through Nepal, where there now is heightened vigil.

Uttarakhand tries its best to regulate the trade, but unsuccessfully. A mafia pays locals to supply the herb, as well as its transportation and sale in the black market. Officially, sale is banned in India.

"As per some estimates, Uttarakhand supplies over 400 kg of Cordyceps Sinensis in the global black market," administration officials said, adding that it also goes to pharmaceutical companies in China and India, and is used in cancer treatment.

The yellow-brown mummified Cordyceps Sinensis is a parasitic fungus that penetrates the caterpillar of the Swift moth and bursts from it. Though it grows in Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal, it has been on the decline lately due to the changing weather conditions though Chinese demand keeps increasing.

Nepal fails to lure U'khand villagers

AGE CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, SEPT. 19

Even as Nepal is making constant efforts to lure people of three villages in Dharchula of Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand district so as to stake claim over them, the residents on Saturday informed the local administration that they stood firmly with India and would not allow the nefarious designs of the neighbour to succeed.

They, however, wanted the Centre and state government to come to their rescue and provide employment and other basic facilities in the border villages.

A group of residents led by Virendra Singh Nabiya, president of Dharchula Bachao Abhiyan, submitted a petition to the sub-divisional magistrate of Dharchula. "Nepal is offering more than ₹2 crore to each family and wants the people of these three villages to

hoist Nepal flags. We will not allow it to happen," the locals said.

In the petition, also signed by other residents, they highlighted the problems being faced by the people living in border villages, particularly unemployment. They demanded that with increasing deployment of forces, the locals be used as porters or for doing other jobs and assist the Army and ITBP instead of bringing outsiders to do the job.

Assam Rifles apprehend 96 drug-peddlers in Mizoram

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Assam Rifles has apprehended 39 Myanmar nationals and 96 drug peddlers involved in smuggling of illegal drugs and other contrabands in Mizoram since March 2020.

During this period Assam Rifles has recovered illegal goods worth ₹50 crore which include heroine worth ₹3.5 crore, banned drugs (tablets) worth ₹2 crore and 3,600 kilograms of poppy seeds among others, said a senior official.

Yaba tablets, produced in the Wa state of Myanmar and which are in high demand in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, are also smuggled through Mizoram, said the official.

These drugs have also impacted the youth in the state. In 2019 alone, 54 people have died due to drug abuse in Mizoram.

Apart from drugs, Mizoram has also become a hub for trafficking various metals and other products. It is one of the fastest growing hubs of gold smuggling from China.

More than 800 kg gold has been recovered in the last two years.

Dried betel nut is also trafficked through Mizoram with an annual turnover of ₹3,500 crores.

INS Viraat sets sail for Gujarat to be dismantled

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, SEPT. 19

The longest serving warship INS Viraat began its last journey on Saturday from Mumbai's Naval dockyard to reach Alang in Gujarat's Bhavnagar, where it will be dismantled. As the ship started, a Navy helicopter circling overhead provided a majestic backdrop to the vessel's last voyage.

The aircraft carrier served the Indian Navy for 30 years before being decommissioned in March 2017. It had served

in the UK's Royal Navy as HMS Hermes and was named INS Viraat after being inducted in the Indian Navy in 1987. There were attempts to convert Viraat into a museum or a restaurant, but none of the plans fructified.

For Navy veterans who watched the huge vessel being towed away by a tug boat, it was an emotional moment as they stood near the Gateway of India, waving at the once 'floating town', aboard which they spent the best years of their career.

THE ASIAN AGE

20 SEPTEMBER 2020



Shreevatsa Nevatia

Off the beaten track

Beauty no antidote to Beirut's legacy of loss

I have developed a strange habit of late. An hour before I sleep, I tune into either BBC or CNN. Having caught up on the day's news, I wait for the foreign voices of TV anchors to first turn into a drone, then into lullaby. I often wake up in the middle of the night to fresh updates of Donald Trump's dangerous shenanigans, but on most days, I do not mind these rude interruptions. Even though my subconscious mind isn't well put together, it is, I tell myself, well informed. On occasion, however, my plans backfire.

A little over a month ago, on August 4, I couldn't fall asleep, no matter how hard I tried. Both the BBC and CNN had begun to flash breaking news, pictures of Beirut's historic port exploding. The television didn't make the blast any less deafening or scary. Hours before the Lebanese government could wrap its head around the cause of the explosion — a large, volatile consignment of ammonium nitrate — reports of devastation had begun trickling in. Houses, storefronts and bystanders had been blown to pieces. The CNN bureau had been destroyed. I was anguished. Beirut is my favourite city in the world.

In 2006, when Israel began pounding Lebanon with bombs, my editor called me and said, "You're going to Beirut." I was only 22, but my boss was one of those rare men who did not see inexperience when he looked at youth, he saw hunger. He was also one of those rare editors who believed that one could only make sense of affairs at home when one understood the world. A war, even if being fought between Israel and a terrorist Hezbollah, had ramifications for us all. To show that violence is futile, he believed, it needed to be widely reported. As I was parachuted into Lebanon, I knew he was right.

For my first few days in Beirut, I embedded myself with the Red Cross. I was asked to shadow Sana'a, a volunteer not much older than me. She translated the Arabic I heard and read. She spoke English with a delectable accent. She was the most beautiful woman I had seen. Even when she took me to meet Fadiya Al Ahmar, I spent more time looking at her than a nearly nine-months pregnant Fadiya, who had been caught in Israeli-Hezbollah crossfire just a few days ago. "I am taking pills to calm myself, knowing they could be dangerous in my present state. I am so frightened my milk will be poison for my baby," the 30-year-old told us. After my interview, Fadiya hugged me tight and cried inconsolably.

Driving into Dahieh, a predominantly Shia suburb in Beirut, the windshield of my car would sometimes be hit by pamphlets that Israeli aircraft would drop from the skies. "Get out or get killed," the flimsy papers would read. Lebanon's youth had begun to take this message seriously. Mohammad, a man I met in Dahieh, a Hezbollah stronghold, said he didn't want take sides in the war: "I like sitting on the fence, it takes less place." Checking into a hotel with his family, Mohammad confided he wanted to move to Europe. Bilaal, a 14-year-old, watched Macaulay Culkin's *Home Alone* once every month. All he wanted was a life in the US. Even in 2006, Lebanon was, sadly, a country you survived or escaped.

Fourteen years ago, Beirut still had wounds that hadn't healed. A 15-year long (1975-1990) civil war had left its people scarred and distrustful. Rafic Hariri, one of Lebanon's beloved prime ministers, had been assassinated in 2005. Israel and Hezbollah were only compounding Lebanese trauma. All of 1,191 civilians are believed to have died in the 2006 Lebanon War, but the number of people who left the country as a result of it is estimated to be much, much higher. In recent years, a financial crisis has brought Lebanon to its knees. With inflation above 50 per cent, the life savings of several Lebanese people have now been erased. A banking scandal has made it difficult for many to access funds or take loans.

The nostalgia of tourists and travellers is inevitably myopic. It misrepresents both the past and present. When I think of Beirut, I remember the Rauouche Rocks that I could see from the city's exquisite beach. I long to return to the Roman Baths in downtown Beirut and walk past the Parisian cafes that surround Nejme Square. When I was 22, I believed that beauty and disaster could coexist, but watching the Port of Beirut being blown to smithereens, I knew that beauty is only a ruse. Rather than help us ease another's pain, it only tries to make us forget their suffering altogether. Sana'a had told me, "I don't care how bad it gets. Beirut is my home. I'll do all that I can to protect it." I imagine her fighting alone.

Shreevatsa Nevatia is a Kolkata-based journalist and the author of How to Travel Light: My Memories of Madness and Melancholia



Hope was never easy to find in Beirut, but the destruction of its port might make it extinct altogether

Subhani

SEAT SHARING...



How a 'friendly' media hurts govt's credibility



Pavan K. Varna

Chanakya's View

Rajat Sharma, who runs India TV, once told me a story about Atal Behari Vajpayee. The story deserves to be known more widely, so I hope that Rajat, who is a friend, will not mind if I share it. India TV has a very popular show called "Aap Ki Adalat", which Rajat anchors. A prominent personality from any walk of life is invited to the show, and literally put in the dock to be interrogated. Once, Atalji, as Prime Minister, agreed to be in the dock.

The interaction went off very well, or so Rajat thought. But as Atalji was leaving, he said, "Main aapse naraaz hoon: I am not very happy with you. Come and see me at my residence." Rajat was apprehensive that he had perhaps been too aggressive in his questioning, or said something that the PM did not like. In any case, at the first opportunity, he took an appointment, and was promptly given one. When they met, Atalji was gracious as ever, but told Rajat bluntly the reason for his *naraazgi* or unhappiness. "Aapne mujhe bohat aasani se chhod diya. You did not ask me the tough questions, and let me off lightly. That was not good of you."

There is a moral in this story, both for our current ruling party, and for some parts of our media. I don't think that leaders who welcome a more open interaction with the media, including sometimes unscripted — even hostile — questioning, lose their believability.

In fact, they enhance it. Similarly, if the media stops being blindly supportive of the ruling party's agenda, it does not lose its credibility. It only increases it.

I often wonder why the BJP's media managers don't understand this simple truth. It is said — apocryphally perhaps — that the BBC has a maxim: You must admit your minor truths if you want your major lies to be believed. With so many "pliant" channels openly toeing the ruling party's line, the BJP is soon going to ensure that no one anymore fully believes what these channels are saying. Intelligent media management requires the ability to propagate your point of view in the midst of a counter-viewpoint, not flat footedly have that viewpoint muted or shouted over. People from one generation before would remember when nobody believed what Doordarshan said. To get the "real" news they would tune in to BBC. But, Doordarshan was a government run broadcaster. What else could it do? That certainly is not the constraint of our non-governmental

When open bias crosses a certain threshold it endangers its own outreach. We saw this happening in the ongoing case of Sudarshan TV's 'Bindas Bol'. The channel was rightly hauled up by the Supreme Court.

Nothing is worse for media management than to have a situation where even your truths are discounted or dismissed because of the lack of credibility of those disseminating it.

media. In fact, the PM would do well to be a little more accessible to the public through interactions with the independent media, interactions that are not a one-way monologue.

When open bias crosses a certain threshold it endangers its own outreach. We saw this happening in the ongoing case of Sudarshan TV's "Bindas Bol" programme which alleged a "jihadi" conspiracy in the supposed increase of Muslim candidates qualifying for the civil services. The channel was rightly hauled up by the Supreme Court for its hateful, hurtful and dubious findings. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said: "While we respect freedom of media, let this message go to the media as well that any community shouldn't become a target. Ultimately we all exist as a nation, which must be cohesive and not against any community." The SC imposed an injunction on the broadcast of the programme, and called for a more robust mechanism for self-regulation in the media. Referring to several provisions under the law that are against hate speech and incitement of religious hatred, the Court specifically asked the regulatory powers of the News Broadcasters Association to be strengthened. At present, it felt, the NBA is "toothless", with several channels not its member and,

therefore, not under its jurisdiction.

Freedom of speech is a sacrosanct right guaranteed under the Constitution. But this freedom is neither limitless, nor is it one-sided. In a democracy, there must be space for those who wish to dissent, disagree or interrogate the viewpoint of the government. The media is a vital instrument in ensuring that such a liberal milieu of free debate and questioning exists. The BJP's proclivity to encourage and patronise only those "friendly" media outlets that unreservedly espouse its point of view, is counterproductive. I have been the official spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs, the Press secretary to the President of India, and the national spokesperson of the JD(U). Nothing is worse for media management than to have a situation where even your truths are discounted or dismissed because of the lack of credibility of those disseminating it.

Atal Behari Vajpayee was, I am sure, not averse to good media coverage of his government. All leaders, and all governments, want that. But, he was intelligent enough to understand that "good" coverage means very little if it lacks credibility. If the perception is that certain media outlets just blindly eulogise the government, more and more people will devalue what they say. Such outlets may be watched, but may not be believed. That is why he told Rajat Sharma that he should have been a little tougher in his questioning. It is something that the BJP would do well to ponder about.

The writer, an author and former diplomat, is in politics. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS

IRANIAN REVOLUTION

Iran is going through a dating revolution. As more and more young people, unable to reconcile the strict Islamic rules of engagement and the wishes of their parents opt to stay single, the government has stepped in to open dating websites, sans photos and with parental guidance, of course, to play matchmaker. Iran now has 30 million people of marriageable age. But parents of women hold men to very high standards of wealth and prosperity to be enforced by the Islamic custom of mehr, which is a form of reverse dowry, while the women, themselves, lead a circumscribed existence and are subjected to rules that are both subtle and restrictive. Let a thousand roses bloom in Iran when its young define the course of their lives and set their society free.

Priyanka Mathur
Kolkata

BOLD INITIATIVE

BY PASSING THE agriculture bills in the Lower House of Parliament, the government has shown its commitment to the welfare of farmers which was overdue since 1991 when economic reforms were started but bypassed the agriculture sector which remain untouched. Its turn has now come though the government will have to do extra work to allay the fears of farmers. The agitation going on in different parts of the country are but part of a temporary phase. Perhaps, a new mechanism to regulate the MSP and institute safeguards for farmers are the need of the hour.

Yash Pal Ralhan
Jalandhar

SNAP TIES

THIS REFERS TO The editorial, "Does the govt wish grief upon farmers?" (Sep. 19). Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Shiromani Akali Dal leader and Union minister, resigned from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet over the farm sector bills benefiting private sectors. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill will destroy five decades of hard work put in by various governments and farmers to build the agriculture sector. The bills passed by the Lok Sabha are going to affect 62 crore farmers. If the Shiromani Akali Dal truly respects the suffering farmers, it must snap ties with the BJP.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

WFH HEARTBREAK

HOW EXPLOITATIVE IS the corporate world. After imposing of lockdown, many IT companies switched to Work From Home mode in order to stay afloat. Employees thought the WFH culture will prove to be an unasked boon, as now their commute time and expenses will be saved and they can spend more time with their families. But that hope was in vain. Their lives soon turned hellish as employers and managers chased them with assignments round the clock and they found themselves working all hours with no holidays or weekends. Lack of payments and job insecurity, both results of the lockdown, had made them succumb to these unfair demands, and now there is no turning back from the anxiety, helplessness and agony.

V. Nagendra Kumar
Hyderabad

RIP, PURBA DAM

THE DEATH OF veteran Rabindra Sangeet exponent Purba Dam due to cardiac arrest at her residence in south Kolkata on Saturday is shocking. A true disciple of legendary Rabindra Sangeet singer Suchitra Mitra, Dam regaled listeners with her rendition of songs like "Bhuban jure roilo lege anand abesh", "Ami phirbo na re" in her distinctive *gayaki* and became a known face in the 80s. Adieu.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

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

Kangana's vitriol corrodes Bollywood reputation

Avenging angel

The Kangana Ranaut saga has upset and demoralised Bollywood. Already badly hurt by the Covid-19 pandemic that is depriving lakhs of their livelihood, the "drugs society" charge is hurting the entertainment industry further. Some former stars wonder why Kangana, an accomplished actress, is speaking with vengeance and making it look as if the drug menace is confined to film industry wallahs. Does it have to do with an ugly episode from Kangana's own life when a superstar and other A-listers had cornered her badly?

Desperately seeking 'Suzy'

Others acknowledge that Bollywood cliques have occasionally concocted their own narcotic for personal consumption. These concoctions are given informal names. One mild drug was reportedly called "Suzy". Who is Suzy? Is she some style trendsetter who habitually hangs out with other A-listers? Nobody knows for sure.

Rajnath comes second

Kangana Ranaut's Mumbai visit was followed by her war of words with co-actress-

es such as Urmila Mantondkar. The media frenzy was so extraordinary that it even rattled BJP communication personnel who struggled to make space on TV news for defence minister Rajnath Singh's important statement on China. Even some anchors and channels considered sympathetic to the ruling establishment were reluctant to run political news in place of the saucy Jaya Bachchan-Kangana-Urmila saga.

They still love Sidhu

Shiromani Akali Dal minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal's resignation from the Narendra Modi government over the new farming bill is sought to be underplayed. But informed sources say there is much more happening as part of the run-up to the early-2022 Punjab Assembly polls. While both the Akalis and the BJP have gone on record to say that all is well and that the SAD would continue in the NDA, in private conversation some BJP leaders say the SAD has become a political liability for the BJP in Congress-ruled Punjab. They recall that even in 2016, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah had contemplated breaking ties and going at it alone in the 2017 Assembly polls but Arun Jaitley had argued in favour of the SAD. Interestingly, some BJP leaders view Navjyot Singh Sidhu — who had left the BJP



By WAQYANAWIS

and is currently a disgruntled MLA in the Captain Amrinder Singh-led Congress in Punjab — as an asset for 2022. You heard this here first.

No more corridor scoops

For journalists covering the Parliament of India, Covid-19 is posing problems.

Incredible as it may sound, they and officials have to get their nose drilled for RT-PCR and antigen tests on a daily basis, or each time they enter Parliament. At the functional level there are many handicaps. Senior scribes cannot meet (or run into in Parliament's corridors) leaders who used to provide valuable information, leads or just gossip.

Waiting for Sonia

During the UPA era, Gurdeep Singh Sappal was everywhere. A political aide of former Vice-President Hamid Ansari and heading Rajya Sabha TV, Mr Sappal had wide access. Today, his independent TV venture, Swaraj Express, has conked without a trace. Mr Sappal has not given up hope. He, like many others, is anxiously waiting for Sonia Gandhi to return and looking for a meaty role in the AICC media department or party's "War Room" at 15, Gurudwara Rakabgunj Marg. Some Congress leaders feel that if failure and insignificance act in Mr Sappal's favour then he may bounce back.

The writer is a keen observer of the goings-on in backrooms of power

SHORT TAKES

THOUSANDS JOIN DEMOCRACY RALLY IN THAI

Bangkok, Sept. 19: Tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters massed close to Thailand's royal palace on Saturday, in a huge rally calling for PM Prayut Chan-O-Cha to step down and demanding reforms to the monarchy.

The kingdom has seen nearly daily gatherings of youth-led groups since mid-July calling for the resignation of Prayut, the former army chief behind the 2014 coup, and a complete overhaul of his administration. Some are also demanding reforms to Thailand's ultra-wealthy and powerful monarchy — a once-taboo topic in the country due to its tough royal defamation laws.

The burgeoning movement, partly inspired by Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests, remains largely leaderless.

But the weekend's demonstration is organised by students of Bangkok's Thammasat University — a group that has been among the most vocal about the royal family's role in Thailand.

2 KILLED, 14 HURT IN SHOOTING AT U.S. PARTY

Washington, Sept. 19: Two people were killed and 14 wounded early on Saturday in a shooting at a backyard party in Rochester, New York state, police said.

Officers responding to reports of gunfire in the area found a "chaotic scene" with about 100 people running in various directions, interim police chief Mark Simmons told reporters.

"In total we have 16 confirmed victims of shooting. And I'm sad to announce that two of the 16 received a fatal wound," he said.

Those killed — one man, one woman — were both between 18 and 22 years of age, and had not been formally identified, he said.

The 14 wounded had been taken to hospital and were not in a life-threatening condition, he said. No arrests have been made so far and police could not say if more than one shooter was involved. "For our community to have to deal with this tragedy ... is unfortunate and shameful," Simmons said.

FIREFIGHTER DIES BATTLING BLAZE

Juniper Hills (US), Sept. 19: The death of a firefighter on the lines of a wildfire east of Los Angeles was under investigation on Friday as another blaze to the north burned homes in a small community on the edge of the Mojave Desert.

The death occurred Thursday in San Bernardino National Forest as crews battled the El Dorado Fire about 75 miles (120 kilometers) east of L.A., the US Forest Service said in a statement.

The fire erupted earlier this month from a smoke-generating pyrotechnic device used by a couple to reveal their baby's gender, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, said. The name of the firefighter was being withheld until family members are notified. "Our deepest sympathies are with the family, friends and fellow firefighters during this time," Forest Service spokesperson Zach Behrens said in the statement.

TORRENTIAL RAIN HITS SOUTHERN FRANCE

Marseille, Sept. 19: One person was reported missing on Saturday and dozens faced evacuation from their homes after torrential rain hit southern France, authorities said.

The Gard region, where firefighters reported the missing person, was on red alert after as much as 350 millimetres (13.5 inches) of rain fell in parts of the Cevennes mountain range on the edge of the Massif Central.

Helicopters carried out two rescue missions and some 300 firefighters were mobilised for three further operations as some 200 people were led to safety in two villages.

The mayor of one commune, Anduze, some 70 kilometres (45 miles) north of Montpellier, told AFP around 100 houses on low ground would have to be evacuated.

The adjacent region of Languedoc was also hit by severe storms as meteorological authorities warned of more downpours to come come across much of the deep south.

US Liberal icon Ginsburg dies at 87

Flags fly at half-mast as crucial vacancy expected to set off pitched political battle during Prez polls

Washington, Sept. 19: US Supreme Court Justice and liberal icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg died Friday, opening a crucial vacancy on the high court expected to set off a pitched political battle at the peak of the presidential campaign.

Affectionately known as the Notorious RBG, the 87-year-old Ginsburg was the oldest of nine Supreme Court justices.

She died after a fight with pancreatic cancer, the court announced, saying she passed away "surrounded by her family at her home in Washington, DC." Coming just 46 days before an election in which President Donald Trump lags his Democratic rival Joe Biden in the polls, the vacancy offers the Republican a chance to

lock in a conservative majority at the court for decades to come.

Trump issued a statement praising Ginsburg as a "titan of the law," but gave no indication whether he intended to press ahead with a nomination. Accolades flowed in for the pioneering Jewish justice.

"Our Nation has lost a jurist of historic stature," said Chief Justice John Roberts.

Trump's predecessor Barack Obama said in a tweet that Ginsburg "fought to the end, through her cancer, with unwavering faith in our democracy and its ideals." Biden said she was "an American hero, a giant of legal doctrine, and a relentless voice in the pursuit of that highest American ideal: Equal



Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Justice Under Law." In Washington, hundreds of tearful mourners laid flowers in front of the Supreme Court, where the diminutive Ginsburg sat for 27 years — even taking arguments and issuing opinions from her hospital bed after repeated bouts of illness over the past two years.

US flags flew at half-mast on each side of the court building. People lit candles on the steps of the court while others held rainbow flags.

Among the notably young crowd was Erin Drumm, a student at the Catholic University of America.

"I came here because I think RBG represents everything that America should stand for," the 19-year-old said. "She represents the freedom to choose and respect for science and other people regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity or religion."

Taylor Gutierrez, 26, said he wanted to celebrate Ginsburg's achievements, "especially as a gay man knowing that she helped create a more equitable society for us." — *AFP*

McConnell vows Sen. will hold vote on Ginsburg replacement

Washington, Sept. 19: US Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell vowed on Friday to hold a vote on a nominee that President Donald Trump names to replace late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, despite the looming November election.

Her death sets up a mammoth battle for the seat she left behind, with Trump potentially moving to nominate a new justice just weeks before the November 3 vote, and challenger Joe Biden demanding the election be held first, and the winner to

pick Ginsburg's successor. "President Trump's nominee will receive a vote on the floor of the United States Senate," McConnell, a chief ally of the president in Congress, said in a statement shortly after Ginsburg's death was announced by the court.

The move would be in direct opposition to Ginsburg's reported dying wish that she not be replaced "until a new president is installed" in January 2021.

Such a step would be unprecedented in modern times — and is certain to infuriate Democrats who

have already called for McConnell to wait to bring a nomination to the floor until at least January, when control of the White House and Senate could change. "The voters should pick the president, and the president should pick the justice for the Senate to consider," Biden told reporters after learning of Ginsburg's death.

"This was the position the Republican Senate took in 2016 when there were almost 10 months to go before the election. That's the position the United States Senate must take today." — *AFP*

UK FOREIGN MIN'S BODYGUARD AXED AFTER LEAVING GUN ON PLANE

London, Sept. 19: A bodyguard who was traveling with Britain's foreign secretary has been suspended from duties after he reportedly left a loaded gun on a plane.

British media reported on Saturday that the police protection officer traveling with Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on a visit to the United States left the pistol on a plane at London's Heathrow Airport on Friday. A cleaner found the weapon, media reports said.

London's Metropolitan Police said the force was aware of "the incident on a flight into the UK on Friday" and "taking this matter extremely seriously."

"The officer involved has since been removed from operational duties whilst an internal investigation into the circumstances is taking place," the police department said on Saturday in a statement. Raab visited Washington this week to speak with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other officials about Brexit. — *AP*

PAK'S FORMER-PM NAWAZ SHARIF MULLING POLITICAL COMEBACK

Islamabad, Sept. 19: Pakistan's deposed premier Nawaz Sharif is set to make a comeback in active politics following a year-long absence after PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari invited him to virtually attend the Opposition-led multiparty conference aimed at launching a protest movement against the Imran Khan-led government on Sunday.

Sharif, 70, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo, has been living in London since November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him permission to go abroad for four weeks for treatment. — *PTI*

Water area festival



A flyboarder performs in Moscow River Channel during a SUP (Stand Up Paddle), Water area festival in Moscow, Russia, on Saturday. — *AFP*

US envoy wraps up Taiwan visit as China sends more warplanes

Taipei, Sept. 19: A top US diplomat attended the funeral for former Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui Saturday which featured a eulogy by Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama before wrapping up a visit overshadowed by Chinese military exercises.

China sent more warplanes toward Taiwan for the second day on Saturday.

Keith Krach, undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, was the highest-ranking State Department official to visit Taiwan since 1979 when Washington switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing.

The trip, the second high-ranking US visit in as many months, sparked an immediate rebuke from China, which balks at any recognition of Taiwan and has mounted a decades-long policy of marginalising the democratic island.

US Secretary of State

China protests US ban on tech giants, warns of counteraction

Shanghai, Sept. 19: China said on Saturday it had launched a mechanism enabling it to restrict foreign entities, a much-anticipated move seen as retaliation to US penalties against Chinese companies such as telecom giant Huawei.

An announcement by the Ministry of Commerce did not mention any specific foreign entities, but broadly spelled out the factors that could trigger punitive measures, which may include fines, restrictions on import-export business or investment in China, and

the entry of personnel or equipment into the country.

It covers "foreign enterprises, other organisations and individuals", it said. The launch of the "unreliable entities list" ups the ante in the escalating commercial fight with the Trump administration, which has used its own "entity list" to bar Huawei from the US market on national security grounds.

The announcement also came a day after the US ordered a ban on downloads of popular video app TikTok and effectively

Mike Pompeo accused China of "military blustering" as Beijing conducted military exercises on Friday near the Taiwan Strait during

Krach's visit.

Chinese fighters and bombers crossed the so-called median line dividing the Strait and entered Taiwan's southwest air

blocked the use of the Chinese super-app WeChat on similar grounds, which prompted a threat by China to strike back.

Beijing would consider sanctions on entities whose activities "harm China's national sovereignty, security, and development interests" or violate "internationally accepted economic and trade rules".

That language closely tracks wording that Beijing has used to repeatedly denounce US actions against Chinese companies. — *AFP*

defence identification zone (ADIZ) for a second straight day on Saturday, Taiwan's defence ministry said as it scrambled fighters in response. — *AFP*

Iran vows 'hit' on all involved in US killing

Tehran, Sept. 19: The chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened on Saturday to go after everyone who had a role in a top general's January killing during a US drone strike in Iraq.

The guard's website quoted Gen. Hossein Salami as saying, "Mr. Trump! Our revenge for martyrdom of our great general is obvious, serious and real."

US President Donald Trump warned this week that Washington would harshly respond to any Iranian attempts to take revenge for the death of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, tweeting that "if they hit us in any way, any form, written instructions already done we're going to hit them 1000 times harder."

The president's warning came in response to a report that Iran was plotting to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa in retaliation for Soleimani's killing at Baghdad's airport at the

beginning of the year. "We took out the world's number one terrorist and the mass murderer of American troops and many, many troops and many people all over the world," Trump said.

"Qasem Soleimani is dead. He's dead. Bad guy. Bad guy. Very bad guy." Salami rejected the report of an Iranian plot to assassinate Ambassador Lorna Marks, but made clear that Iran intends to avenge the general's death.

"Do you think we hit a female ambassador in return to our martyred brother?" the general said. "We will hit those who had direct and indirect roles. You should know that everybody who had role in the event will be hit, and this is a serious message. We do prove everything in practice." In January, Iran launched a ballistic missile attack targeting US soldiers in Iraq in response to the fatal drone strike. — *AP*

Don releases \$13 bn aid for Puerto Rico

Washington, Sept. 19 (AP) President Donald Trump announced the release Friday of \$13 billion in assistance to repair years-old hurricane damage in Puerto Rico and pledged to restore its economy, setting aside his past bitter treatment of the island and its leaders as he courts Puerto Rican voters in the US, particularly in the crucial swing state of Florida.

Trump has spent much of his administration blasting Puerto Rican officials as corrupt and inept, and he has opposed spending to rebuild a power grid and other infrastructure that was wiped out by the Hurricane Maria in September 2017. He's now portraying himself as the territory's best friend.

"I'm the best thing that ever happened to Puerto Rico," he said at a White House press conference, "no one even close." Residents of Puerto Rico, a US territory of more than 3 million people, cannot vote in the general election.

But there are more people of Puerto Rican descent on the mainland than on the island, and they could play a key role in the November 3 vote.

Former Vice President Joe Biden has also sought support from Puerto Ricans, recently releasing a recovery plan for the territory and visiting central Florida.

The region has one of the largest concentrations of people from the island on the US mainland, including many who fled the devastation of Hurricane Maria. — *AP*

FILM | FESTIVAL Lindon's French love story, *Spring Blossom*, captures the shine & bounce that first love brings

What is life? It's that youthful first love, a funeral and a party

SUPARNA SHARMA
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

"What is youth? A dream. What is love? The content of the dream." These unforgettable lines, by Soren Kierkegaard, appear at the beginning of director Thomas Vinterberg's Danish film, *Another Round*, which is playing at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). But it's almost as if they were written after watching another film that's playing at TIFF — 20-year-old Suzanne Lindon's French love story, *Spring Blossom*.

Lindon is the star of her film. She plays Suzanne, a bored 16-year-old girl in Paris who, on her way to

and from school, lingers a bit in a cobbled, cafe-lined square, her eyes peeled for a 35-year-old dashing actor, Raphaël (Arnaud Valois).

Boys and girls her own age don't interest Suzanne. She wants to be seen, by him.

Raphaël's parked red scooter is an indicator that he's inside the small theatre rehearsing a play. She doesn't know that he too is bored. She doesn't know that sometimes he is asked to play an Oak tree.

Spring Blossom follows Suzanne everywhere — when she's with her friends, at home with her parents, or out with Raphaël.

The film's story, which Lindon wrote when she was 15, celebrates the



A still from the movie *Another Round*.

heady concoction of uncontrollable joy, chuckles and tingles in a young mind and body while negotiating first love. It captures the shine and bounce that love brings, as well as the overwhelming confusion before that first breakfast date, and the shy, awkward moments at that date with the sort of lyrical swaying that the young in love are prone to.

As Raphaël too begins to fall in love with Suzanne, they are locked in a moment. And just as she likes to linger in that square, Suzanne wants to linger in that moment too, sipping grenadine and lemonade.

Usually, love stories have trauma, drama, villains, loss. There is no turmoil, loss in *Spring Blossom*. Just the fear of losing that



A still from the movie *Spring Blossom*.

moment, that love.

Vinterberg's *Another Round* is about having lived those moments and then lost them to a job, a family, a house.

The film tells the story of four high school teachers of whom Martin (Mads Mikkelsen) is most obviously struck by a sadness that's taken hold of his soul.

"Am I boring?" Martin

asks his wife, and breaks down at a dinner with his friends. That's when Nikolaj (Magnus Millan), a psychology teacher, talks of Norwegian psychiatrist Finn Skårderud's claim that humans are born short of 0.05% Blood Alcohol Content, and to function at our best — physically, intellectually and emotionally — we must drink.

Martin tests this theory and his dull, confusing, rambling history classes become engaging, fun.

He tells the others, and on Nikolaj's suggestion and pretence of taking notes for research, they all begin taking a few swigs before and during work. It helps initially, to smile, to take more interest, to reconnect with themselves, and to connect with others. But there's temptation to drink more, and soon some relationships, lives begin to capsize.

Another Round is funny, sad, real, bizarre, scary, warm. And it's message is simple — life is both, a funeral and a party. That's why it ends on a glorious note, with a dance sequence by Mads Mikkelsen that will add two years to your lifespan.

CRITIC'S

RATING

Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

Jude Law, Carrie Coon on the moody marital drama, *The Nest*

LINDSEY BAHR

Carrie Coon so badly wanted the slow-burn familial drama *The Nest* to be made, she told its director that she'd step aside so that he could cast "someone more famous" in her role.

The Nest, which is now playing in select theaters nationwide, is writer-director Sean Durkin's first in almost 10 years. His debut, "Martha Marcy May Marlene," was a critical darling and had a breakout role for Elizabeth Olsen, but in the years since the "mid-budget" films that he wanted to make became even rarer in a franchise-obsessed ecosystem.

"It just goes to show how you can be successful and make a very fine and compelling and critically well-received film and still not be able to get something made," Coon said.

Coon had signed on early to play Allison, one half of a married couple who leave their happy life in the U.S. for the promise of a grander one in the U.K. in the mid-1980s. The "Leftovers" and " Fargo" actor has a devoted base, but she also knew that it would take a star to get "The Nest" made. She said to Durkin and his producer that they may need to "let her go."

Durkin, for his part, declined her offer. And thankfully Jude Law entered the picture not too long after.

"Like most people, I was just curious to know what Sean was going to do next," Law said.

In Durkin's script, he found an intriguing challenge in the character of Rory, an entrepreneur whose dreams of a high society life have started to curdle into delusion. When



he moves his wife, step-daughter and son to a stately old mansion in Surrey, the veneer on their yuppie life starts to fade.

"I kept trying to color him so that he was attractive before he became destructive," Law said.

Although Law and Coon were strangers coming into "The Nest," they quickly found that they shared a common language in the theater. And Durkin's style of filming, long takes from a distance, complimented their stage backgrounds.

"We of course enjoyed that aspect of playing a scene in its entirety and knowing where you go in isn't where

you're going to come out," he Law said. "You're going to let the scene affect you and carry you."

Coon was excited to discover that her co-star was a "delightful" and "unguarded," which she said can be rare for someone so famous.

"So much of the tone is going to get set by him. And it was such a great energy. He's such a generous and open person," she said. "And

he was so lovely with the kids (Oona Roche and Charlie Shotwell).

He wanted to make sure the kids understood that they were just as much a part of this film, that they should feel free to make choices, that their choices were valid."

The *Nest*, which has been described as a ghost story without ghosts, is a work of fiction, but Durkin did draw some inspiration

The Nest, described as a ghost story without ghosts, is a work of fiction.

The Nest

CAST: Jude Law, Carrie Coon, Oona Roche
DIRECTOR: Sean Durkin
RATING: ★★★

much fun with it," Durkin said. "If you look at the real references in family pictures and pictures from the street that aren't the pop references, it doesn't look very different from today."

Law said the set and costume design kicked back memories from the time, like a particular pair of shoes he coveted as a young teen

"But I'm at the age where I still can't believe how far away the '80s are," Law laughed. "A piece in the '80s is like a piece in the 1880s."

Coon, who was a child in the mid-'80s, dyed her hair a honey blonde shade that was specific to the era and said that she got to wear "better clothes" than she remembered from the time. "I got the best of the '80s palette," she said, including a reproduction of a stunning black and white suit inspired by a Chloe advertisement. But at the heart of it, behind the wealth signifiers, the chinchilla coats and the earnest class climbing, is a marriage and a family that's being redefined under the societal pressures of a new environment.

"It was a really egalitarian marriage in a time when that was unusual and she's thrust into a position of being more of a housewife than she's ever been. She feels uncomfortable in this new arrangement because it doesn't suit her," Coon said.

"I've never seen marriage dealt with in a film this way. It felt like a very truthful look at the tacit agreements we make. And marriages are built on much less than these two have."

— AP



Masterson lawyer denounces rape charges

ANDREW DALTON
LOS ANGELES

That '70s Show actor Danny Masterson, charged with raping three women, made his first appearance Friday in a Los Angeles courtroom, where his attorney declared his innocence and denounced the charges against him as "politicized."

Masterson, 44, who has been free on bail since his June arrest, stood in court in a blue suit and face mask next to attorneys Tom Mesereau and Sharon Appelbaum, as the three women sat in the gallery.

Masterson did not enter a plea, but Mesereau said the charges, based on events nearly 20 years old, were the result of unfair hype from media outlets and pressure to prosecute his client as Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey faces an election.

"There have been repeated attempts to politicize this case," said Mesereau, who also represented Bill Cosby and Michael Jackson in their sexual misconduct cases. "He is absolutely not guilty and we're going to prove it."

Deputy District Attorney Reinhold Mueller called the statements "pure speculation, with no basis in fact."

Mesereau spoke as the judge was considering media requests to allow cameras in court, which he approved. Mesereau argued that the media presence would be unfairly prejudicial to Masterson and taint potential jurors.

"We want to do anything we can to tone down the cameras and the circus-like atmosphere that have pervaded this case," the attorney said. "We're just trying to protect his rights."

Superior Court Judge Miguel T. Espinoza also denied a request for the defense for a protective order sealing case files and preventing police, prosecutors and potential witnesses from revealing case information to the media, but said he would reconsider similar request later.

The defense has filed documents asking the criminal complaint against Masterson be thrown out as insuffi-

cient. A hearing on the issue will be held before Masterson is asked to enter a plea.

Masterson's arrest came after a three-year investigation that resulted in the rare prosecution of a famous Hollywood figure in the #MeToo era. Despite dozens of investigations, most have led to no charges based on lack of evidence or too much time passing.

About 20 friends and supporters accompanied Masterson to court, standing in the courthouse hall with him as he awaited the hearing, but only a few were allowed inside the courtroom because of coronavirus distancing requirements.

He spoke only to answer "yes" to the judge's questions.

Masterson is charged with three counts of rape by force or fear. Prosecutors allege that he raped a 23-year-old woman

Masterson's arrest came after a three-year investigation that resulted in the rare prosecution of a famous Hollywood figure in the #MeToo era

sometime in 2001, a 28-year-old woman in April of 2003, and a 23-year-old woman between October and December of 2003. Prosecutors said all of the alleged attacks happened in his home. He could face up to 45 years in prison if convicted.

Neither Masterson and his attorneys nor the three women spoke to reporters outside of court.

The women, who are not named in the charging documents said in a statement through their attorneys when Masterson was arrested that they had suffered "harassment, embarrassment and re-victimization" since they began cooperating with authorities and that they are "thankful that the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office is finally seeking criminal justice." The alleged rapes came at the height of Masterson's fame as he starred as Steven Hyde on the ensemble retro sitcom "That '70s Show" alongside Ashton Kutcher, Mila Kunis and Topher Grace. The series ran on Fox TV from 1998 to 2006 and has had a long afterlife in reruns.

He was removed from the Netflix show *The Ranch* in 2017 over the allegations that would eventually lead to the charges.

— AP

Antebellum: A provocative idea that doesn't work

LINDSEY BAHR

The new film "Antebellum" begins with a famous William Faulkner quote: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

This is a very literal introduction to a film about the evils of de facto and de jure oppression of Black people in America that's crafted as a high-concept nightmare. Essentially, a modern-day woman finds herself trapped and enslaved on a plantation and must find a way to escape and reclaim her identity. Perhaps the overused quote was a warning about the journey we were about to go on. Because while the concept is certainly intriguing, the execution falls woefully short of its potential. In other words, this is no "Get Out," although it would like to be.

Written and directed by Gerard Bush and Christopher Renz (in their feature debut) the film begins on the plantation. The camera floats over familiar images of Southern hypocrisy as a little white girl in a sunny yellow dress skips over to her mother on the steps of their grand estate while enslaved Black people work around them and Confederate soldiers march through the grounds. Janelle Monae is introduced as one of these



A scene from the film *Antebellum*

enslaved people, Eden. And it's not long before the brutality starts — branding, lynching, assault (verbal, sexual and physical).

We're in this "past" for over 30 minutes before the film essentially stops and reboots itself in a modern setting where Monae is now Veronica Henley, a famous and wealthy writer and public intellectual who is going on a work trip. She has a picture-perfect life: A loving husband and a beautiful daughter, a magazine-worthy apartment, profes-

sional success and confidence. She's the kind of notable author who gets asked to speak on television and at conferences about racism and empowerment. In an alternate reality, this could be the beginning of a rom-com.

But things are a little off here and the audience, along with Veronica, begin to see the cracks in this so-called progressive society where she is subjected to dehumanizing microaggressions and bigger slights over the course of a day.

There's the concierge at the hotel who takes a call instead of helping her. There's the host at the restaurant who seats her and her friends by the kitchen when other tables are open.

And there's the woman (Jena Malone) whose compliments of Veronica ooze with degrading condescension.

Malone is in the "past" too, perusing the slaves for purchase. And the film comes to reveal (as the trailer does in just a few min-

utes) that the plantation is neither the past nor a dream, but a very real place where Black people are kidnapped and taken so that white supremacists can "play" at living in the antebellum South, kind of like Westworld but without the pretense of robots.

The machinations of the plot are not subtle and the film seems more interested in showcasing torture rather than illuminating the racism that lives on today.

Monae said in an inter-

Antebellum

CAST: Janelle Monae, Gabourey Sidi, Kiersey Nicole Clements
DIRECTOR: Christopher Renz
RATING: ★★

view with Entertainment Weekly that most films about racism are white savior films — even some that she's been part of. It is a failing of cinema and storytelling when an experience is only shown through a certain lens that helps absolve and even make the oppressors feel good. *Antebellum* is supposed to be a rebuke to that. But it just doesn't come close to delivering on all its big ideas, despite Monae's powerful performance. The movie is strongest in the modern setting and full of cliches on the plantation.

And this is fine. Part of leveling the playing field is allowing for failure from all areas.

Besides, a big swing and a miss is always more interesting than a safe approach. In the end, *Antebellum* will inspire conversation, just probably not the one the filmmakers anticipated.

"Antebellum," a Lionsgate release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "disturbing violent content, language, and sexual references."

— AP

Emmy Awards to help fight child hunger

Los Angeles: Every Emmy Award handed out Sunday will come with something extra — a \$100,000 donation to fight child hunger.

The Television Academy announced Friday that each network and streaming service competing on the telecast has pledged

the donation for every Emmy they win. With 23 Emmys being handed out and the academy committing \$500,000, that will mean a donation of \$2.8 million to No Kid Hungry, a group working to relieve child hunger brought on by the coronavirus crisis. The 72nd Emmy Awards

air Sunday at 5 p.m. on ABC. Jimmy Kimmel is hosting from Staples Center in Los Angeles and winners will accept their awards from remote locations, but little beyond that has been revealed about what will happen during the show that is being put on under

unique pandemic circumstances. The HBO limited series "Watchmen" is the top nominee. Guests set to appear include Anthony Anderson, Mindy Kaling, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Patrick Stuart, RuPaul and Oprah Winfrey.

— AP

The Television Academy announced that each network and streaming service competing on the telecast has pledged the donation for every Emmy they win.

SHORT TAKES

Hari stuns Carlsen before four losses

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna pulled off a stunning win over world champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway but suffered four losses later in the day to slip to overall sixth place in the St Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tournament.

Harikrishna defeated world number one Carlsen in round three of Blitz 1 in 63 moves with white pieces. He also beat lower-rated American Jeffrey Xiong but save for the two wins, he had a forgettable day as he suffered four defeats, apart from three draws. Harikrishna shares the sixth place with Armenian GM Levon Aronian with 3.5 points after the nine rounds of Blitz 1. Carlsen, who had dropped to second place behind So at the end of the Rapid event, leapt to the top spot in the standings with 18.5 points. — *PTI*

Tvesa lies T-2nd at French Open

Bordeaux, France: Indian golfer Tvesa Malik put herself in contention with a solid three-under 68 to lie tied second after round two of the 2020 Lacoste Ladies Open De France.

As Tvesa carded 68 to get to four-under 138, Sweden's Julia Engstrom had a memorable day with a hole-in-one en route to a second round 64 (-7) which put her on top the leaderboard heading into the third and final round.

Things were, however, rather disappointing for another Indian Diksha Dagar, who after 89 in the first round, carded 85 and missed the cut by a big margin.

Tvesa shares the second place with local French golfer and the 2015 champion Celine Herbin at four-under and they are four behind Julia Engstrom. — *PTI*

Djoker loses cool again during win

Rome: Less than two weeks after getting defaulted from the U.S. Open, Novak Djokovic lost his cool again midway through a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 win over German qualifier Dominik Koepfer in the Italian Open quarterfinals Saturday.

When Djokovic was broken at love to end the second set at 3-3, he slammed his racket to the red clay in anger.

With the frame broken and the strings all mangled, Djokovic was forced to get a new racket and received a warning from the chair umpire.

Djokovic had already appeared frustrated the previous game, when he glared toward the umpire following a couple of overrules and a point that was ordered to be replayed. — *AP*

Lakers dominate Nuggets in Game 1

Miami: Anthony Davis scored 37 points and pulled down 10 rebounds as the Los Angeles Lakers dominated the Denver Nuggets 126-114 on Friday in game one of the NBA Western Conference finals.

LeBron James added 15 points with 12 assists and six rebounds for the Lakers, who shot out of the gate after dropping their opener in each of their previous two playoff series in the NBA's coronavirus quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

After a close first quarter ended with the Nuggets up by two, the Lakers seized control in the second quarter, out-scoring Denver 34-21 to take a 70-59 lead into halftime.

"It took a quarter for us to kind of figure it out," James said. — *AFP*

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Southampton vs Tottenham Hotspur from 4.30 pm; Newcastle vs Brighton from 6.30 pm; Chelsea vs Liverpool from 9 pm; Leicester City vs Burnley from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

Spanish League: Huesca vs Cadiz from 7.30 pm; Granada vs Deportivo Alaves from 10 pm; Real Betis vs Real Valladolid from 10 pm; Real Sociedad vs Real Madrid from 12.30 am (Monday) on LaLiga page on Facebook

TENNIS

Rome Masters: Semifinals in two sessions from 5.30 pm and 9.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

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DAZZLING DUET

Century stand between Rayudu, Du Plessis help CSK pull off incredible win

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 19: Ambati Rayudu smashed a 48-ball 71 to guide Chennai Super Kings to a comprehensive five-wicket win over defending champions Mumbai Indians in the opening match of the 13th IPL here on Saturday.

Chasing 163 to win, Rayudu blasted six fours and three sixes in his blistering innings, while Faf du Plessis cracked 58 off 44 balls as CSK romped home with four balls to spare.

Earlier, Mumbai Indians posted a challenging 162/9 after Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni won the toss and elected to bowl.

The highlight of Mumbai's innings was Saurabh Tiwary's 42 off 31 balls and Quinton de Kock's 20-ball 33 at the top.

For CSK, Lungi Ngidi (3/38) was the most successful bowler while Ravindra Jadeja (2/42) and Deepak Chahar (2/32) captured two wickets apiece and Sam Curran (1/28) and Piyush Chawla (4/21) picked one each.

The shrewd Dhoni introduced Chawla into the attack and he right away dismissed Rohit Sharma (12) who always have had a problem with wrist spinners. It was a straight delivery that Rohit was trying to hit

inside out but couldn't get past Curran at the mid-off circle. — *PTI*

SCORECARD

Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma c Sam Curran b Chawla 12, Quinton de Kock c Watson b Sam Curran 33, Suryakumar Yadav c Sam Curran b D. Chahar 17, Saurabh Tiwary c du Plessis b Ravindra Jadeja 42, Hardik Pandya c du Plessis b Ravindra Jadeja 14, Kieron Pollard c Dhoni b Lungi Ngidi 18, Krunal Pandya c Dhoni b Lungi Ngidi 3, James Pattinson c du Plessis b Lungi Ngidi 11, Rahul Chahar (not out) 2, Trent Boult b D. Chahar 0, Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 5. **Extras: (w-4, lb-1) 5. Total: (for 9 wkts, in 20 Over) 162.** **FoW:** 46-1, 48-2, 92-3, 121-4, 124-5, 136-6, 151-7, 156-8, 156-9. **Bowler:** Deepak Chahar 4-0-32-2, Sam Curran 4-0-28-1, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-38-3, Piyush Chawla 4-0-21-1, Ravindra Jadeja 4-0-42-2.

Chennai Super Kings Innings: Murali Vijay lbw b James Pattinson 1, Shane Watson lbw b Boult 4, Faf du Plessis (not out) 58, Ambati Rayudu c and b Rahul Chahar 71, Ravindra Jadeja lbw b Krunal Pandya 10, Sam Curran c James Pattinson b Bumrah 18, M.S. Dhoni (not out) 0. **Extras: (w-3, nb-1) 4. Total (for 5 wkts, in 19.2 overs) 166.** **FoW:** 5-1, 6-2, 121-3, 134-4, 153-5. **Bowler:** Trent Boult 3-2-0-23-1, James Pattinson 4-0-27-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-43-1, Krunal Pandya 4-0-37-1, Rahul Chahar 4-0-36-1.



Ambati Rayudu of Chennai Super Kings plays a shot against Mumbai Indians in their Indian Premier League match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. — *Sportspics for BCCI*

DC, KXIP in battle of power-hitters

Dubai, Sept. 19: Two greats will pit their wits against each other in the background as their captains, with an ability to achieve greatness, lead their power-hitters out for an IPL match between Delhi Capitals and Kings XI Punjab here on Sunday.

Ricky Ponting and Anil Kumble are arguably two of the biggest names in cricket and the dazzling array of talent in both the teams would seek to draw inspiration from their respective heavyweight coaches in their tournament opener.

Man-to-man, Delhi Capitals seem to have a slight edge, more so in the spin department, with the trio of R. Ashwin, Amit Mishra and Axar Patel streets ahead of their counterparts from the Mohali-based side.

Spin is expected to play a big role on the UAE pitches.



Delhi Capitals captain Shreyas Iyer (left) and coach Ricky Ponting at a training session in Dubai on Saturday.

The match, at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, will also be a face-off between skipper K.L. Rahul and Shreyas Iyer, both seen as future India captaincy material.

Shimron Hetmyer.

In this scenario, Ajinkya Rahane (strike-rate below 120), who was bought from Rajasthan Royals, may be left out.

The KXIP also boast of some of the finest clean hitters in the form of Chris Gayle, Glenn Maxwell and Rahul himself.

Maxwell's confidence must be sky high after his ODI series-winning century (108) against England. He also had a memorable run the last time the IPL was held in UAE, albeit partially, in 2014 when he hammered 552 runs in 16 games.

The KXIP have a dangerous opening pairing in Gayle and Rahul with Mayank Agarwal to follow. But it remains to be seen whether the 40-year-old Gayle will continue to be a regular feature at the top of the order this time around. — *PTI*

NUMBERS GAME — KXIP vs DC

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:
● Matches: 24
● Kings XI Punjab won: 14
● Delhi Capitals won: 10

MEETING IN 2019

● Kings XI Punjab defeated Delhi Capitals by 14 runs in Mohali
● Delhi Capitals beat Kings XI Punjab by 5 wickets in Delhi

FOR THE RECORD

● Shikhar Dhawan, who scored 4579 runs at an average of 33.42 in 158 innings of 159 matches for Deccan

Chargers, Mumbai Indians, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Capitals is the fourth highest scorer in IPL behind Virat Kohli (5,412 runs in 177 matches) and Suresh Raina (5,368 runs in 193 matches) and Rohit Sharma (4,898 runs in 188 matches).

● Chris Gayle is the only batsman to hit over 300 sixes in IPL. He smashed 326 sixes in 124 innings of 125 matches for Kings XI Punjab, Kolkata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bangalore. — *S. PERVEZ GAISER*

Rahul vows to make it memorable

Dubai, Sept. 19: Kings XI Punjab skipper K.L. Rahul on Saturday said the side is motivated to making this IPL season a memorable one by playing a good brand of cricket.

The Rahul-led side will open their campaign against Delhi Capitals at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday.

"The team has been fantastic, we've been getting along great and are looking forward to playing a good brand of cricket and making this season a memorable one," Rahul said.

"We're confident, we're motivated and we are really excited to be a part of this edition of the



Indian Premier League," he added. Rahul, who has been handed the Kings XI Punjab captaincy after two stellar seasons with the bat at the top of the order, said it will be a

challenging experience playing in the UAE without the fans but the team is ready for it.

"It is going to be a different experience this year, but we as a team are up to the challenge and

are playing for all the fans who continue to support us," Rahul said.

KXIP, who have never won the IPL, are aiming to go all the way this time with a strong squad at their disposal with the likes of Mayank Agarwal, Mohammad Shami and overseas recruits Chris Gayle, Glenn Maxwell, Sheldon Cottrell, Jimmy Neesham, the in-form Nicholas Pooran and Mujeeb Zadran.

"The team looks great and we have a top-notch line up this season. The boys have been working really hard and we have a nice balance of youth and experience in our squad," head Coach Anil Kumble said. — *PTI*

SMITH, ARCHER, BUTTLER CLEAR COVID-19 TESTS

Dubai, Sept. 19: Captain Steve Smith along with star players Jofra Archer and Jos Buttler have cleared the mandatory Covid-19 test on arrival and are available to play Rajasthan Royals' IPL opener against Chennai Super Kings at the Sharjah Cricket ground on September 22.

The trio were part of the 21-strong contingent of Australia and England players, who arrived in the UAE from UK by a special chartered flight on September 17.

"Smith, Buttler and Archer underwent Covid-19 tests on Friday and

results are negative. So they are available for selection with quarantine duration being reduced to 36 hours," an IPL source said on conditions of anonymity.

Former Australia skipper Smith has had concussion problems and missed all three ODIs against England and his participation in the opening game is subject to clearance from both franchise and Cricket Australia's medical team.

If Smith misses the first game, Buttler could lead the side as he is one of the senior most players in the team. — *PTI*

EVERTON FIRE 5 PAST WEST BROM

London, Sept. 19: Dominic Calvert-Lewin hit a hat-trick and James Rodriguez bagged his first Premier League goal as Everton crushed 10-man West Bromwich Albion 5-2 to extend their perfect start to the season on Saturday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side fell behind to Grady Diangana's early goal at Goodison Park.

But Calvert-Lewin equalised and James put them ahead before West Brom imploded.

Kieran Gibbs was dismissed for pushing James in the face in first half stoppage-time.

Then Albion boss Slaven Bilic was sent to the stands after storming onto the pitch for a furious rant at referee Mike Dean.

Matheus Pereira equalised for Albion after the interval, but Michael Keane restored Everton's lead and Calvert-Lewin sealed the points with his second and third goals.

Ar 23, Calvert-Lewin is the youngest Englishman to score a Premier League hat-trick for Everton.

After a summer spending spree, Ancelotti is under pressure to deliver a big improvement on last season's 12th place finish and the early signs are promising. — *AFP*

THE RESULT

Everton 5
(Calvert-Lewin 31, 62, 66, James 45, Keane 54)
West Brom 2
(Diangana 10, Pereira 47)

BAYERN RUN RIOT IN OPENER

Munich (Germany), Sept. 19: Leroy Sane said all-conquering Bayern Munich crave even more silverware after the Germany winger scored on his debut in Friday's historic 8-0 thrashing of Schalke in the opening game of the new Bundesliga season.

"We're still hungry, even though we won the treble last season," said Sane after creating two goals for Serge Gnabry, who claimed a hat-trick in the goalfest.

"Winning our first game at home 8-0 is obviously super.

"It felt really, really good finally to be able to play with the lads," said Sane. Just 26 days after winning the Champions League final, Bayern picked up where they left off last season with their 22nd-straight win.

The jaw-dropping result is the highest win in an opening game of a new Bundesliga season — five weeks to the day after Bayern's 8-2 thrashing of Barcelona in the quarter-finals of the Champions League. — *AFP*

THE RESULT

Bayern Munich 8
(Gnabry 4, 47, 59, Goretzka 19, Lewandowski 31-pen, Mueller 69, Sane 71, Musiala 81)
Schalke 0



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

After months of suspense, apprehension and anticipation, the IPL is finally underway. The circumstances are unusual. The tournament has been played overseas earlier too, so that it not such a severe setback, though it could impact the teams in sundry ways since players were chosen, retained or dumped based on the tournament being played in India.

What's starkly different this time is that this high-

octane tournament will be without spectators, and with a stringent protocol in place to counter the looming threat of Covid19. It remains to be seen what impact this has on the players' mood and mind.

Barring players from West Indies, England and Australia, others are also shorn of match practice since the lockdown began in March. How rusty will they be? Other factors that could have a bearing on team and individual performances are the heat

and humidity in the UAE, at least for the first half of the tournament, and the character of pitches which is unknown.

None of this, however, can subdue the excitement of the tournament being played. The IPL is a platform where talent can be showcased and careers made or consolidated. The *creme de la creme* of the world's players (barring from Pakistan) will be in action.

No player's worth can be undermined, but this season my attention will be on five Indian players, at different stages in their careers, for whom this IPL could be decisive in one way or another.

M. S. Dhoni: Recently retired from international cricket, he still remains

perhaps the biggest draw-card in the IPL. Pushing 40, how fit is he for the demanding schedule of the league? Does he still have the form to win matches off his own bat? Most important in Dhoni's case is captaincy. He commands loyalty, of that there is no doubt. But with seasoned pros Raina and Harbhajan missing, how he deploys his resources will be key. And how CSK fares this season could well determine whether Dhoni will wear the yellow jersey next season.

Virat Kohli: India's most successful captain in international cricket has been floundering to win the IPL title, though he's been spectacular with bat and is the league's highest rungetter. This is his 10th

season in the leadership role. The best RCB have achieved under him was runner up in 2016. Since then, RCB's results have been poor: bottom placed in 2017 and 2019, 6th in 2018, raising queries about Kohli's captaincy in this format. Harsh considering his captaincy record in the same format in internationals. But Kohli has certainly something to prove.

R. Ashwin: Picked for international cricket on the strength of IPL performances, became a certainty in all three formats, before losing his place in ODIs as well as T20is. A productive IPL season could bring Ashwin back in the reckoning for India in limited overs cricket. Move from Kings XI Punjab cost him the cap-

taincy as Delhi Capitals have preferred to retain Shreyas Iyer in the top position. Crafty and strong-minded, how well and swiftly he strikes rapport with Iyer and coach Ponting could define DC's fortunes as well as his own future.

K. L. Rahul: Made captain of Kings XI after Ashwin's departure, faces multiple challenges as the team seeks its first IPL title. Rahul's batting ability is hardly doubted. He's mauled the best bowlers with his rich and powerful strokeplay. Under scrutiny now to see how he tackles burden of captaincy. Managing individuals with different skillsets and temperaments can be hugely demanding. Several fine players who

have suffered under the pressure. But this is also an opportunity which can take Rahul higher in Indian cricket.

Hardik Pandya: Broke down during the ODI World Cup in 2019, Pandya's comeback to Indian cricket — in all formats — depends on how well he survives this IPL season. His all-round skills and aggressive instincts make him a matchwinner: with bat or bowling fast medium with clever variations. Add to that brilliant fielding, and it is easy to see why Hardik is so coveted by Mumbai Indians, as well as the Indian team. Whether his career graph resumes its upward trajectory, stagmates or slumps depends on his form and fitness in this tournament.