

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | 19 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 35.0°C
Min: 25°C
RH: 32%
Rainfall: 3mm
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
35/25 °C

COVID-19 C

CASES (+99,627)
DEATHS (+1,275)
53,05,387 85,621

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,043) (+11)
TS: 1,67,046 1,016
(+8,096) (+67)
AP: 6,09,558 5,244

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

3,04,93,112
DEATHS 9,52,300
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

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ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana
Tithi: Adhika-Ashwayuja Shuddha Dwitiya till 9.11 am and then Tadiya till 5.38 am (Sunday)
Star: Chitta till 1.21 am (Sunday)
Varjyam: 11.11 am to 12.36 pm
Durmuhurtam: 6.08 am to 7.44 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 noon
HILIRI CALENDAR
Safar ul Muzaffar 1, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.25 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.06 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.56 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.38 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.37 PM

COUNTER POINT

CHINESE HACKERS HIT GOVT SITES

Thank God, there is no data!

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IN BRIEF

Paytm restored on Play store

New Delhi: Google on Friday restored the Paytm app on its Play store after removing it for a few hours for violating its policy on sports betting activities. The app was back on the Google Play store on Friday evening after the Softbank-backed Paytm removed the 'cash-back' feature from a recently-launched game on the application.

Monsoon might be over soon: IMD

New Delhi: The Southwest Monsoon is likely to start withdrawing by the end of next week, the IMD said on Friday, while Odisha is bracing for heavy rainfall due to a fresh low pressure area which is likely to form over the Bay of Bengal around September 20. Rains eluded Delhi for the eleventh consecutive day on Friday, despite a rain forecast,

AP bars reopen after 6 months

Amaravati: After nearly six months of closure due to the Coronavirus-induced lockdown, bars would be reopened in Andhra Pradesh from Saturday. The state government, however, decided to levy a 20 per cent 'Covid-19 fee' on the basic licence of bars and also a 10 per cent additional retail excise tax on liquor. **■ Report on Page 4**



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Chinese intel mounts pressure on Muivah



WORLD | 5
China flies 18 warplanes during US, Taiwan talks



SPORTS | 6
Duplantis breaks Bubka's 26-yr-old pole vault record



CORONAVIRUS AFFECTS ORGAN DONATION TOO

KANIZA GARARI I DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

The waiting list for organs like kidneys, livers, corneas and heart valves has lengthened to more than six months after the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Patients who had registered with Jeevandan, the government scheme, and with private hospitals face a long wait as it is difficult to carry out elective transplant procedures.

According to the guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research, only emergency cases where the patients are suffering from chronic failure of organs must be taken up.

Doctors are facing a challenge wherein brain dead patients are acquiring infections in the intensive care unit. These infections are leading to Covid-19 in most cases, making it difficult to harvest organs.

Those brain dead patients in facilities where infection control is upgraded can facilitate organ harvesting but their numbers are very low.

Dr Ch. Madhusudhan, head of the department of surgical gastroenterology and liver specialist at Osmania General Hospital, stated "The risk factors in brain dead donors are also high. Since they are in intensive care units, it has been noted that they are acquiring Covid-19 and that makes it difficult to harvest their organs. Those who are not infected by Covid, are very few. Infection control measures have been upgraded by all hospitals and we are only now, in the month of September, seeing a few cadaver donations."



Farmers raise slogans during a protest outside the residence of former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal against three agriculture related Bills, at Badal villagein Sri Muktsar Sahib in Punjab on Friday. — PTI

BJP lets Akalis quit govt with eye on Punjab polls

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

With less than two years to go for the Punjab Assembly elections, BJP leaders consider Prime Minister Narendra Modi's acceptance of Harsimrat Kaur Badal's resignation from the Union Cabinet over the farm Bills as a move to free the party from the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

For many years, the BJP's Punjab unit has been urging the central leadership to go it alone in the state as it felt that the party was not growing organisationally because it had to limit itself to urban areas as the villages are considered the SAD's stronghold.

While the central BJP is yet to react to Badal's resignation and to speculation about the continuation of the SAD in the NDA, the BJP's Punjab unit chief Ashwini

Sharma said Badal's resignation was the SAD's "political decision" and that the party was still part of the NDA.

Harsimrat Badal, who was holding the food processing industries portfolio in the Union Cabinet, resigned on Thursday and her portfolio has been allocated to agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday.

Speculation is rife that the BJP has started the groundwork for the 2022 Assembly polls and is in touch with former SAD leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and some state leaders are in touch with Navjot Singh Sidhu, the Congress leader.

According to the BJP's feedback, many urban voters, including youths, were unwilling to support the BJP in Punjab because of its alliance with the SAD. After the 2015 sacrilege controversy and the recent controversy over

the missing "swaroop" of Guru Granth Sahib, many Panthaks have been disappointed with the SAD. However, no prominent Sikh leader has joined the BJP because of its alliance with the SAD, stunting its growth in the state.

Showing up fault lines between the oldest allies in the NDA, the BJP enrolled a significant number of members in the Malwa region, considered to be the Badal family's stronghold, in spite of the SAD's objection.

On its part, the SAD was angry with the Modi government not heeding to its request to reconsider the introduction of agriculture Bills as its core supporters, primarily the Panthaks and farmers, have been opposing them. The ruling Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party have made the agriculture Bills a major political issue against the SAD, forcing the latter to act.

AP yet to clear medical oxygen supply dues

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN I DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Dealers supplying the life-saving medical oxygen to government hospitals for treating Coronavirus-infected patients are complaining that their financial dues running into crores of rupees are to be cleared by the state government. Some dealers allege they have not been paid for oxygen supplies right from the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic.

There are just a few medical oxygen suppliers located mainly in Visakhapatnam and Sriakulam. There are 10-15 dealers who collect oxygen cylinders from them and supply to various government hospitals in all the 13 districts where Covid-19 patients are being treated. Dealers are now saying that unless they pay manufacturers, they will be unable to get oxygen for making supplies to hospitals. A medical oxygen

14 docs die in Covid care, no relief given

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI I DC KURNOOL, SEPT. 18

At least 14 government doctors died of Covid-19 while rendering their services in Andhra Pradesh so far. Yet none of them received any compensation so far.

The Central government announced ₹50 lakh while it also said it will give another ₹50 lakh, said a doctor.

Doctors are risking their

lives for nothing.

In Kurnool district alone, three doctors died of Covid-19 while providing medical services, said a doctor.

One doctor worked continuously for seven days without taking a break during the height of the virus spread, when the case load was between 800-1000 per day in Kurnool district.

■ Page 4: Doctor lost his eye due to infection

supplier based in Visakhapatnam said, "We used to get medical oxygen from manufacturers at about ₹12.50 per cubic metre before Covid-19. At present, it costs ₹19-21. Though the Drugs Control Administration has fixed

its cost at ₹16.50, it is available to the end user at ₹17.49 including handling, transport and other costs. We supply medical oxygen to dealers on one-month credit basis. Some dealers complained of not receiving their payments from

government hospitals." Sources privy to this development say the state government owes ₹2 crore on an average to each dealer since the outbreak of Covid-19 in March.

A dealer from Guntur said, "We are borrowing money to pay suppliers of medical oxygen, so that we can continue the supply it to government hospitals, as it is essential for saving the lives of Covid-19 patients. As we were not paid for months, we are even planning to serve a notice that no medical oxygen supplies will be made unless dues are cleared."

Medical education director Dr. K. Venkatesh said, "We have no issues of payment with our long-term suppliers of medical oxygen, as they supply us on credit basis. We will pay them once we get a budget grant. However, there may be issues with short-term suppliers, whom collectors have roped in. Those dues will also be cleared after grants are released."

BUSES TO RESUME SERVICE IN VIZAG, VIJAYAWADA

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Given the examinations being conducted for the posts in the Village and Ward secretariats, the city buses would resume services from Saturday in Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam cities.

M.T. Krishna Babu, the principal secretary of transport and R&B addressing the media on Friday said that the city buses would run as per the Covid-19 guidelines issued by the health department making people sit on alternate seats in the buses.

He stated that no standing passengers would be allowed in buses.

■ Page 4: Temperature of passengers at every stop

Sea surge leads to panic in EG mandal

VADREVVU SRINIVAS I DC KAKINADA, SEPT. 18

There was a surge of sea waters near S. Yanam shore in Uppalaguptam mandal of East Godavari district on Friday. It breached the nearby sand dunes and flooded drains and aqua ponds besides paddy fields in the vicinity.

People fear that water may flood even villages. But, water went to the Kunavaram drain near Gachakalapora village, covering a distance of 20 km through S. Yanam, Challapalli and Pallipalem villages.

Fishing gear was damaged by sea waters even as some fishermen went

for the day's catch near the mouth of drains.

Uppalaguptam Mandal Tahsildar K. Padmavathi said that there was no need for any panic and such a surge is often witnessed during a high tide every fortnight. However, on Friday, the waters cut across the sand dunes and merged in backwaters. Later, it subsided and there was no problem. She said that people should not worry about the occasional surge of sea waters.

However, nearby villagers are on alert, apprehending another surge of sea waters in the next couple of days. They also appealed to the authorities to take necessary precautions.

Tirumala gears up for Brahmotsavams

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM I DC TIRUPATI, SEPT. 18

The traditional Ankurapnam ceremony for Srivari annual Brahmotsavams was held as per the tenets of Vaikhanasa Agama between 6 pm and 7 pm on Friday in the auspicious Kanya month as per Hindu Almanac.

As part of the customary Senadhipathi Utsavam, the Commander-in-Chief of Lord Venkateswara, Vishwakshena, was taken around in a ceremonious procession within the Sampangi Prakaram (inside the main shrine) in view of Covid-19 restrictions.

The holy earth where Goddess Bhoo Devi invoked was collected and filled in the mud Palikas kept in Yagashala and Navadhanyas were sown in the pots seeking the blessings of all the deities under the rays of moon by Acharya Purushas amid chanting of Vedic hymns.

Usually, well-grown seedlings signify the level of success of the event.

The nine-day grand event will begin with the unfurling of Garuda Dwaja, celestial flag on the temple pillar, on Saturday through Dwajaroohanam.

■ Page 2: Brahmotsavams to conclude Sept. 27

SHORT TAKES

Brahmotsavams to conclude Sept. 27

From Page 1: Brahmotsavams will conclude on September 27 with Chakrasnanam, which will be observed at Swamy Pushkarini in Tirumala in ekantham. Important events include Garuda Vahanam on September 23, Golden Chariot on 24, Rathotsavam on 26th and Chakra Snanam on September 27. All vahana sevas will be held inside the temple. TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, along with senior officials like Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal, Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy, JEO P. Basant Kumar and CV&SO Gopinath Jatti oversaw the preparations to ensure fool-proof celebrations amid the wonderfully illuminated landscape.

₹1 CESS ON PETROL, DIESEL PER LITRE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

The Andhra Pradesh government has issued an ordinance amending the AP Value Added Tax Act, 2005 to levy and collect a road development cess of ₹1 per litre of petrol and diesel in the state.

The Governor promulgated the ordinance here on Friday and, accordingly, all the proceeds of road development cess, estimated at around ₹500 crore per annum, are to be transferred to AP road development corporation for exclusive use in the development of road infrastructure in the state.

Revenue special chief secretary, Dr Rajat Bhargava, justified the levy of the one rupee cess on petrol and diesel by saying that the revenues of the state plummeted to ₹1,323 crore in April, 2020 against ₹4,480 crore in April, 2019 following the cessation of all economic activity due to the lockdown. He said that similar trends were observed in state revenues for the months of May, June, July, August, 2020 and added that the centre also had not released AP's share of GST compensation for 2020-21 so far.

EX-OFFICIAL ALLEGES ₹800-CR SCAM IN APSFL

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

A former official of APSFL alleged that an ₹800 crore scam was conducted during the previous Telugu Desam government.

K. Gouri Sankar, former ED, business operations, APSFL, alleged that about ₹800 crore was siphoned off in Andhra Pradesh State Fibernet Limited (APSFL) during the previous TD government. Addressing the media here on Friday he alleged that Vemuri Hari Krishna Prasad, former adviser APSFL, was involved in the scam and awarded contracts related to APSFL to companies related to his kith and kin.

Alleging that Prasad operated various illegal activities, giving contracts to his sister concerns like Terra Soft and Netops fiber solutions LLP, Carpus solutions and other companies, Mr Sankar stated that Mr Prasad gave a ₹320 crore phase 1 fiber laying tender to Terra Soft and got kick-backs. He further alleged that the eligibility clause for participating in the Phase I fiber laying tender was fabricated to clinch the order. He called for an open debate on the various scams in APSFL committed by Prasad.

YSRC DEMANDS CBI PROBE IN AMARAVATI SCAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

YSR Congress MPs continued their protest at the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Parliament for the second day on Friday, demanding a CBI probe into Amaravati land and AP Fibernet scams.

Speaking on the occasion, YSR Congress general secretary and MP V. Vijaya Sai Reddy said the High Court stay on SIT probe and gag order on the media were not in the true spirit of Constitution and democracy.

Citing Sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, Mr Reddy said the stay was not justified unless there were special and extraordinary circumstances. He was of the view that judiciary could order a CBI probe instead of staying the investigation by SIT.

Monsoon musings

Above: Irrigation officials open all crest gates of Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada on Friday

Left: Sudden rainfall in Vijayawada on Friday.

Right: Uppalaguptam tahsildar I. Padmavathi visits S Yanam seashore to inspect breaches on Friday.

**Arrest of BJP men creates tension in Amalapuram**

Chamber of Commerce gave a call to traders to voluntarily close shutters

VADREVU SRINIVAS I DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 18

Tension gripped Amalapuram in East Godavari district on Friday as BJP leaders and activists tried to lay siege of the RDO office in protest against chariot burning incident at Antarvedi in Sakshinipati mandal in Konaseema.

According to police, as many as 291 activists were arrested in the last two days. Of them, 70 were detained on Friday and released on bail by evening. The police seized all roads towards Amalapuram and Antarvedi and it looked like a curfew situation with people of the town preferring to stay indoors. Amalapuram Chamber of Commerce earlier gave a call to traders to voluntarily close their shutters.

According to sources, some leaders who eluded arrest came on to the streets and raised slogans. Meanwhile, party workers made an attempt to storm the office of the Revenue Divisional Office to register their protest against the chariot burning incident at Antarvedi temple.

Those who tried to storm the RDO office included MLC P.V.N. Madhav, state General Secretary Vetukuri Suryanarayana Raju, Amalapuram district president M. Ayyaji Vema, S. Yamini. The



Police drags the BJP activists at Amalapuram on Friday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

BJP'S PROTEST POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, SAYS VEDIKA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Brahmana Adhyana Vedika has termed BJP's protests politically motivated. YSR Congress leader and BAV member Konuri Satish Sarma on

Friday took exception to BJP's call for 'chalo Amalapuram' to protest burning of the chariot at Antarvedi temple. Even though the government ordered a CBI probe, the BJP was trying to stoke trouble. Addressing a

press conference at Guntur, he said that the chariot burning incident was unfortunate and the government swiftly responded by ordering a CBI probe and sanctioning funds for a new chariot.

stand, while Ms Yamini said that some unknown persons stoned a prayer house at Antarvedi and they were arrested.

Eluru Range DIG clarified that prohibitory orders under Section 144 and Section 30 were in force and therefore, the police did not allow groups of people and crowds of people to stage protests.

YSRC WELCOMES SC'S CALL FOR SPEEDING UP CASES AGAINST NETAS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Welcoming the Supreme Court's call for expeditious disposal of cases against those in public life, the YSR Congress claimed that there were many cases pending against TD leader Chandrababu Naidu and the High Court gag order on media became a subject of national debate.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, YSRC MLA and party official spokesperson Ambati

Rambabu said a disproportionate assets case was pending against Mr Naidu since 2005 and the cash-for-vote case did not reach its logical conclusion. "There is involvement of Naidu and his son Lokesh in insider trading in Amaravati lands. The AP HC order gagging media from reporting contents of an FIR registered by ACB against a dozen persons including former advocate general has drawn national flak," he said.

"There were cases against many public fig-

ures but never was such a gag order issued. What people are unable to understand is why the former advocate general and his associates including kin of a serving judge are so special that the court issued a media gag order. The case filed by Lakshmi Parvathi in 2005 seeking a probe into disproportionate assets of Naidu is still pending, so is the cash-for-vote case," he said.

Mr Rambabu claimed Amaravati land scam was one of the biggest in the country.

The figure for men committing suicide by both means is reasonably high, while more women are committing suicide by self-immolation.

The data also demonstrated that, on an average, every day (last year) at least 17 people committed suicide in the state. In terms of marital status, 4,572 (M- 3458, F- 1,114) married persons ended their lives, while unmarried persons were 1,453 (M- 996, F- 467) and widowed/widowers were 112 (M- 31, F- 80).

A worrying factor was that out of the total suicides, the number of victims involving farmers and farmhands in the state has increased to 1,029 from 664 in 2018 and the state stood third in the country in terms of such suicides.

Meanwhile, of the total suicide victims, majority have education. About 2,313 (M- 1,679, F- 634) victims have Class X or above education, while 1,005 (M- 748, F- 257) have mid-level education, 1,237 (M- 917, F- 321) have primary education and 1,700 (M- 1,199, F- 501) have no education at all.

BJP's 'chalo Amalapuram' plan foiled

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Police on Friday foiled BJP's 'chalo Amalapuram' plan by keeping party leaders under house arrest at various place. State BJP president Somu Veerraju expressed his anger over the house-arrest of the leaders and alleged that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was neglecting protection of Hindu temples. He warned that the YSRC government would facing dire consequences of public anger and demanded resignation of the endowment minister.

State BJP general secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy alleged that the police forcibly put him in their custody for 20 hours and released him on Friday night at Gudivada police station. He alleged that YSRC government was trying to create fear by using police. But BJP would not be daunted by these actions and would fight for the protection of temples. He expressed suspicion that the government was trying to shield the officials whose negligence led to attacks on temples.

Incidentally, about 2,061 men have committed suicide or by using poison or insecticide and 1,685 men by self-immolation, while for women the figures stand at 680 and 693 respectively.

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BCs DEMAND 50% GOVT CONTRACTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Backward Classes Welfare Association president Kesana Sankar Rao on Friday submitted a memorandum to BC Commission chairman Justice Sankara Narayana, stating that people belonging to BCs were being subjected to humili-

ation. The memorandum also spoke of growing atrocities against women. The leaders of 13 backward class associations met Justice Sankara Narayana here on Friday. He demanded allocation of 50 per cent of government contracts, house sites and houses and full fee reimbursement to backward classes.

The industrialists and the PCB complained at local police stations. Inquiry conducted by the police traced the phone signal to Kalloor village in Chittoor district and the payment account details to Tirupati.

The APPCB cited the example of one Shankar Reddy who called up some industrialists in Srikakulam and Guntur districts from the phone number 8008445437, claim-

ing to be from APPCB and demanded money. The caller asked them to transfer money on Googlepay through phone No 7093993736.

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Family disputes, illness remain top causes of suicide

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM I DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 18

Unable to bear the disturbances in her married life, a 26-year-old woman pushed her two children into a local water body and ended her own life by jumping into the same waters near Thalakona in Chittoor district last week.

Police investigation into the incident revealed that family disputes drove the woman to take the extreme step.

In another case, a 31-year-old man killed his four-year-old daughter and later hanged himself in a hotel room, last week in Chittoor city. In his last words recorded in a selfie video, he said, "I have no option but to take the extreme step as my ex-wife and her paramour were torturing my daughter. Though I have approached the court to get custody of my daughter, no justice was done to me."

These are not isolated cases of death by suicide and murder reported in the state last year. The latest report of the national crime records bureau (NCRB) show that family disputes account for 26.3 per cent and illness accounts for 28.5 per cent of total suicides reported in AP in 2019. The data demonstrate that these two issues alone drive more people to death by suicide.

Going by the NCRB's report, a total of 6,465 persons — 4,740 men and 1,725 women — have ended their lives in the state last year, accounting for 4.64 per cent of total suicides in the country (1,39,123). The report says

● Psychiatrists opine that suicides due to family disputes and illness have become an epidemic in the state. They suggest that a comprehensive public health approach is needed to prevent suicides

the state has recorded 21 per cent of increase in suicides during 2019 over 2018 (5,319).

In all, 1,706 persons (M- 1,187, F-519) and 1,845 persons (M-1,178, F-667), ended their lives due to family problems "not related to marriage" and illness respectively. These two causes consistently top the list of causes for suicides in the state.

Problems such as bankruptcy or debt accounted for 828 (M-773, F-55) deaths, followed by love affairs, 179 cases (M-125, F-54), marriage-related issues, 151 (M-73, F-78), failure in exams, 93 (M-54, F-39), poverty, 63 (M-42, F- 11), unemployment, 71 (M-62, F-9) are the main other causes separately in the list.

Psychiatrists opine that suicides due to family disputes and illness have become an epidemic in the state. They suggest that a comprehensive public health approach is needed to prevent suicides and teaching coping and problem-solving skills will also help people manage challenges. They also suggest the expansion of options in temporary assistance for those in need and connecting people at risk to effective and coordinated mental and physical health care.

Poison tops list in means for death

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 18

The annual data for "accidental deaths and suicides in India, 2019," by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveals that among the means adopted for killing oneself, consuming poison or insecticide tops the list. 2,741 cases of the total 6,465 suicidal deaths in Andhra Pradesh last year adopted this means.

This is followed by hanging — 2,378, jumping off heights/moving trains and vehicles, 594 (M- 520, F- 74), drowning, 358 (M- 219, F- 139), self-immolation - 125 (M- 64, F- 61) and other means, 269.

Out of the total suicides, about 4,740 i.e. 73.3 per cent of the suicides are committed by men, while women, 1,725, account for 26.6 per cent.

Incidentally, about 2,061 men have committed suicide or by using poison or insecticide and 1,685 men by self-immolation, while for women the figures stand at 680 and 693 respectively.

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mitting suicide by both means is reasonably high, while more women are committing suicide by self-immolation.

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The industrialists and the PCB complained at local police stations. Inquiry conducted by the police traced the phone signal to Kalloor village in Chittoor district and the payment account details to Tirupati.

The APPCB cited the example of one Shankar Reddy who called up some industrialists in Srikakulam and Guntur districts from the phone number 8008445437, claim-

ing to be from APPCB and demanded money. The caller asked them to transfer money on Googlepay through phone No 7093993736.

The industrialists and the PCB complained at local police stations. Inquiry conducted by the police traced the phone signal to Kalloor village in Chittoor district and the payment account details to Tirupati.

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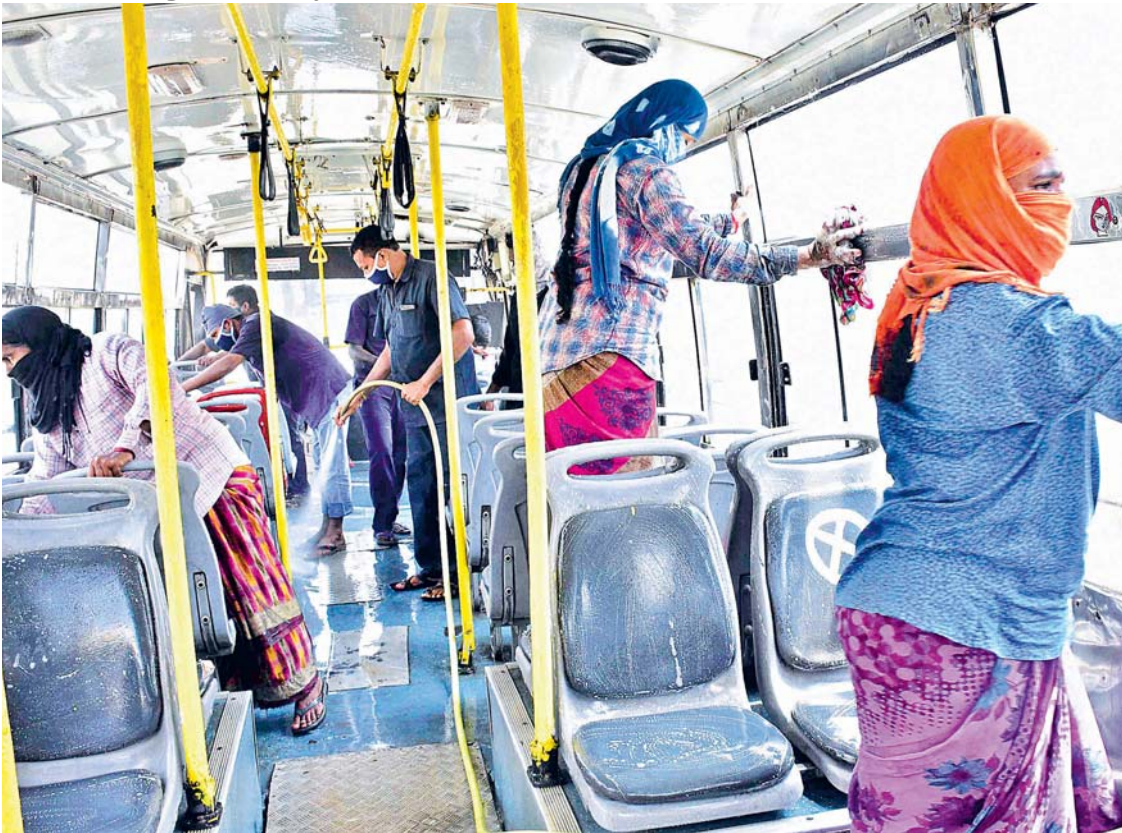
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OTHER STORIES

Aid for new moms raised to ₹5,000

Vijayawada: The state government on Friday increased financial assistance for parturitions (deliveries) under YSR Aarogya Aasra scheme from ₹3,000 to ₹5,000 for normal deliveries and from ₹1,000 to ₹3,000 for Caesarean. CM Jagan Mohan Reddy directed officials to provide free kits to those undergoing treatment for Covid-19 in home isolation.

Getting ready to move



RTC employees clean and sanitise a city bus at Governorpet depot in Vijayawada on Friday, ahead of the resumption of services after six months of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. — C. NARAYANA RAO

AP records 8,096 new Covid cases, 67 deaths

E. Godavari continues to lead with the highest new cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Andhra Pradesh has registered 8,096 new Covid-19 cases, raising the overall tally to 6,09,558, apart from 67 deaths, taking the death toll to 5,244 in the last 24 hours.

State health authorities have released the Coronavirus bulletin here on Friday reporting that out of 74,710 samples tested, 8,096 individuals have tested Covid-19 positive. Out of total 49,59,081 samples tested so far in the state, 5,19,891 patients have been discharged after recovery, while 84,423 patients are undergoing treatment for the virus in various hospitals across the state.

East Godavari continues to lead the state with the highest number of 1,405 new confirmed Coronavirus cases, followed by 1,035 in West Godavari, 902 in Chittoor, 713 in Prakasam, 513 in Guntur, 496 in Srikakulam, 487 each in Vizianagaram and Krishna, 468 in Nellore, 463 in Anantapur, 419 in Kadapa, 371 in Visakhapatnam, and 337 in Kurnool.

With regard to cumulative Covid-19 cases, East Godavari has been the worst-hit district with 83,852 cases, followed by 55,670 in West Godavari, 53,435 in Kurnool, 53,323 in Chittoor, 51,821 in Anantapur, 48,393 in Guntur, 46,590 in Nellore, 46,057 in Visakhapatnam, 40,156 in Prakasam, 38,744 in Kadapa, 34,983 in Srikakulam, 30,516 in Vizianagaram, 23,123 in Krishna district, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery among patients from Covid-19 has been good in East Godavari with 71,227 recoveries, followed by 49,280 in Kurnool, 48,104 in Anantapur, 46,503 in West Godavari, 44,929 in Chittoor, 42,763 in Nellore, 41,330 in Visakhapatnam, 40,934 in Guntur, 33,744 in Kadapa, 28,722 in Srikakulam, 28,055 in Prakasam,

Doctor lost his eye due to infection

From page 1

Another doctor lost his eye due to the coronavirus infection. The eye was removed as he was diabetic and his lungs had heavy infection, said a doctor. "We are risking our lived serving Covid-19 patients. But the government has not kept its promise of ₹50 lakh compensation," he said.

In a statement, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) alleged that the union health minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan's, statement to Lok Sabha had concealed the morbidity and mortality of doctors, nurses and health care workers. This indifference to the sacrifice of doctors and health care workers is the reality of Covid-19. It appears that they are dispensable.

The IMA further said, "No nation has lost as many doctors and health care workers as India. Doctor mortality is four times the mortality of ordinary citizens and private practitioners is eight times ordinary mortality on the same

scale."

A Kurnool district medical and health officer (DMHO) said that at least six government medical staff died due to Covid-19. One staff nurse, a lab technician, an ophthalmic assistant, a medical educator died. He said the details have been sent to higher authorities about their claim petitions for compensation. He said ₹50 lakh compensation would only be given to government staff and not private doctors.

The IMA found fault with Vardhan who said that public health and hospitals come under the state and so the insurance compensation data is not available with the Central government. This amounts to abdication of duty and abandonment of doctors who have stood up for patients. IMA finds it strange that after having formulated an unfriendly partial insurance scheme for bereaved families, a struggle with the ignominy of the government disowning them altogether stares at them.

21,681 in Vizianagaram, 19,724 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among new cases of deaths due to Covid-19, Kadapa has registered eight deaths, followed by seven each in Chittoor and Krishna, six each in East Godavari, Guntur and Visakhapatnam, five each in Anantapur, Nellore and Srikakulam, four in West Godavari, three each in Prakasam and Vizianagaram, and two in Kurnool.

With regard to cumulative deaths, Chittoor has recorded the highest number of 571 deaths, followed by 487 in Guntur, 478 in East Godavari, 437 in Kurnool,

434 in Anantapur, 416 in Nellore, 409 in West Godavari, 408 in Prakasam, 380 in Visakhapatnam, 374 in Krishna, 335 in Kadapa, 305 in Srikakulam, and 210 in Vizianagaram.

State health authorities have discharged 11,803 Coronavirus-infected patients after recovery from several hospitals in the state in the last 24 hours. AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 92,867 samples per one million population, recording a Covid-19 positive rate of 12.29, while Maharashtra has tested 44,875 with a positive rate of 20.44 and Telangana has tested 59,270 with a positive rate of 7.08.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

The state government has revised additional retail excise tax to 10% on IMFL, foreign liquor, beer, wine and ready-to-drink varieties supplied by the wholesale liquor depots to bars, from Saturday.

As the government has come up with a committed policy to introduce prohibition in phases, it has taken several measures to discourage consumption of liquor.

Accordingly, it has levied additional retail excise tax on various alcoholic beverages. As the commissioner of prohibition and excise has submitted a proposal stating that the issue prices of liquor and beer supplied to bars are very high when compared to those of other states and has requested to revise ARET to 10% of the issue price in suppression of the order issued earlier, the state government

8 NEW COVID-19 CONTAINMENT ZONES SET UP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

As many as eight villages were announced as Covid-19 containment zones in Krishna on Friday. The Krishna district collector A. Md. Intiaz said that Katrenipadu village of Musunur mandal, Velvadam and Pedapurupudi of Mylavaram mandal and Vinjarampudi of Pedapurupudi mandal were declared as containment zones.

He said that further Vanapamula, Appikatlana and Moparru villages of Pedapurupudi mandal and Choutupalli village of Veerulapadu mandal are declared as containment zones. He asked the public of these eight villages to follow the containment zone norms to restrain the spread of pandemic.

TEMPERATURE TO BE TAKEN AT EVERY STOP

From page 1

Mr Krishna Babu said that the staff would check the temperature of the passengers at every bus stop. He appealed to the people to cooperate with the APSRTC by following Covid-19 protocol to travel in the city buses.

Referring to the running of buses to the neighbouring Telangana state, Krishna Babu said that the Telangana RTC set three conditions to run the services as per the route permit.

He noted that it was not possible to give route-wise equal opportunity and said that soon a solution would be found to restore the APSRTC services to the Telangana state.

AP to register information of blood group in Aarogyasri cards

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Andhra Pradesh to register information of the blood group of the patient in Aarogyasri QR code cards. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy suggested keeping the information of blood groups of the patients in Aarogyasri QR code cards and using the services of village secretariats in the distribution of Aarogyasri QR code cards across the state.

He conducted a review meeting on Covid-19 and the health sector in CM camp office in Tadepalli on Friday.

The officials said that a total of 18,609 oxygen beds are available across the state and 5,723 patients are being treated with the oxygen facilities.

Of the 15,060 normal beds, 9,777 are being treated.

● **CM JAGAN** directed the officials to fill the vacancies in hospitals

● **ACCORDING TO** officials 12,014 people are recruited out of the 20,415 approved posts including nursing orderly, sanitation staff, data entry operators and training nurses.

Similarly, 2,246 people are being treated in 4,469 ICU beds, and 178 patients are on ventilators from the available 2,522 beds.

The state has so far conducted 48,84,371 Covid-19 tests, and now 94,453 cases are active, and the incident rate was 12.31 per cent, the recovery rate was 84.48 per

cent and the death rate was only 0.86 per cent, the officials said.

Officials said 11,01,625 samples were collected and tested as of September 16, and 1,56,323 cases turned out to be positive. The officials said that 36,232 beds are being used of the 38,025 total available beds and 17,924 patients are being treated in Covid-19 hospitals, whereas 15,625 people are in Covid care centres and 60,905 people in home isolation.

The officials said that 5,21,350 N-95 masks, 7,61,097 PPE kits are available in the state and 265 convalescent plasma has been used of the 308 collected for plasma therapy to treat the Covid-19 patients.

The 104, 108, 14410 call centres have been integrated to provide better facilities to the patients, the officials said.

RAMAYAPATNAM PORT WORK TENDER PAPERS SENT FOR JUDICIAL PREVIEW

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

The state government has submitted the tender documents for developing Ramayapatnam Port to be taken up at an estimated cost of ₹2,169.62 crore in Prakasam district, to judicial preview to ensure transparency.

The development of the port will be taken up under the landlord model at an estimated contract value of about ₹2,169.62 crore stretching to a length of 5.05 km of breakwaters, along with the construction of three multi-purpose berths for a height of about 900 meters, and a dredging quantity of 15.52 million cubic meters including the internal and external infrastructure.

The duration for completion of the project under

phase-I was fixed for 36 months.

Project management consultants AECOM have prepared tender documents for the port project under the supervision of AP Maritime Board, and they were submitted for judicial preview.

Accordingly, the tender documents were uploaded on the judicial preview website www.judicialpreview.ap.gov.in and in the AP Maritime Board website www.ports.ap.gov.in.

The Andhra Pradesh Maritime Board chief executive officer in a release said that the tender documents could be viewed on the websites mentioned above by the general public and also the interested parties and contractors to offer their comments or suggestions within seven working days through the website.

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
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EOI Notification No. : N/C310/Goods Sheds/EOI/2020 Date: 17-09-2020

NOTICE FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST. EOI FOR DEVELOPMENT OF GOODS SHEDS

Nanded Division of South Central Railway on behalf of President of India seeks Expression of Interest (EOI) from interested individuals/companies (customers/agencies and other entities for undertaking infrastructural development of five (05) Goods Sheds at **Maltekdi, Parbhani, Jalna, Aurangabad & Washim** for provision of facilities/services mentioned in the scope of work.

The EOI document containing all the details can be downloaded from the website scr.indianrailways.gov.in.
Last Date for submission of EOI along with details of the proposal to the office of undersigned is up to **15.00 Hrs of 15.10.2020**.

A1079 Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Nanded

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I, SHAIK DILSHAD BEGUM, D/o. SHAIK ABDULLA (Old Name), R/o. MIG-39/5, HB Colony, Bhavanipuri, Vijayawada, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh. My name has been changed to **ANURADHA ALOORI, D/o.RAMARAO ALOORI (New Name).** Here after my name known and called as **ANURADHA ALOORI.**

PUBLIC NOTICE

Under the instructions of my client ICICI Bank Limited and I gave this Public Notice. The below mentioned schedule property is the absolute property of Alluri Kavitha is the absolute owner to an extent of Ac. 3.26 Cents situated in Survey No. 293/1, 293/2, 293/3 & 293/4 of Kothapalli Village, who got the same under Regd. Gift Deed vide document No. 1312/2019 SRO, Ganapavaram. The original link documents i.e., Regd. Sale Deed and Regd. Agreement of Sale cum GPA vide document No. 2510/1991 & 198/2009 SRO, Ganapavaram pertaining to the schedule property were misplaced and the same were not yet traced. Now the said Alluri Kavitha approached my client to avail Loan Facility by offering the below mentioned schedule property. My client proposed to sanction Loan to the said Alluri Kavitha by mortgaging the below mentioned schedule property, if anyone having objections, send their objections to the below mentioned address within 15 Days, else the schedule property treated as the absolute property of Alluri Kavitha. **SCHEDULE:** West Godavari District, Ganapavaram Sub-Div, Ganapavaram Mandal, Kothapalli Minor Grampanchayat Area, Kothapalli Village, Survey No. 293/1, 293/2, 293/3 & 293/4 and as per 1-B Survey No. 293/1A, 293/2A, 293/3A & 293/4A an extent of Ac.3.26 Cents of Land is bounded by: East:Panta Bodi, South:Land belongs to Ch.Rajagopala Krishnam Raju, West:Panta Bodi, North:Land belongs to Indukuri Somaraju. Within these boundaries an extent of Ac.3.26 Cents of Land

K.N.M. KISHORE, Advocate
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Tender Notice

On behalf of the President of India, Sr. Division Signal & Telecom Engineer, Hyderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites open tenders for the following works through e-procurement up to 15.30 hours of 16.10.2020.

Tender Dated: 18.09.2020

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Chief Administrative Officer/Const./ Secunderabad

SHORT TAKES
COVID-19 DEATH
TOLL CLOSE TO
85,000-MARK

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

With 96,424 fresh cases, India on Friday recorded close to 52.15 lakh cases of Coronavirus. The number of deaths in a day was 1,174 taking the total number of fatalities due to Covid-19 to 84,372, as per Union health ministry figures. However, according to covid-19India.org, the total number of cases had crossed 52.50 lakh by Friday evening and deaths were close to 85,000.

Health ministry officials said India has recorded an “unprecedented high” of single day recoveries after 87,472 persons recovered and discharged in the past 24 hours. The Recovery Rate has reached 78.86% as total recovered cases touched 41.12 lakh. India’s Case Fatality Rate (CFR) currently stands at 1.62%.

“India has been consistently reporting a very high level of daily recoveries of more than 70,000 for the past 11 days. Recovered cases are 4.04 times the number of active cases as recoveries outnumber the latter by 30,94,797,” they said.

Officials said 90 per cent of the new recoveries are reported from 16 states and UTs. Maharashtra (19,522) contributed 22.31% of the new recoveries while Andhra Pradesh (12.24%), Karnataka (8.3%), Tamil Nadu (6.31%) and Chhattisgarh (6.0%) followed with 32.8% of the new recoveries.

In view of rising cases in the city, Delhi government has announced to continue closure of schools till October 5.

Meanwhile, ministry of health and family welfare has decided to depute a high level Central team to Jammu after a high number of cases were reported from there. Earlier, a special team had visited Srinagar Valley to review Covid management with the district collectors. The current Central team too will interact with the district collectors and health officers of Jammu and visit hospitals in Bakshinagar and Gandhinagar.

Army admits to killing of three J&K youths

Army finds evidence against its men in Shopian encounter

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 18

The Army on Friday admitted that three youths of Jammu and Kashmir’s frontier Rajouri district who had disappeared a day after their arrival in Shopian district in July to work as labourers in a local apple orchard to earn livelihood were killed by its troops during an “operation”.

It said that “disciplinary action” is being initiated by it under the Army Act against the officers and soldiers involved in the operation as the inquiry conducted by it “has brought out certain prima facie evidence indicating that, during the operation, powers vested under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1990 were exceeded and the Do’s and of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) as approved by the Hon’ble Supreme Court have been contravened”.

It has said that the slain men’s “involvement with terrorism or related activities is under investigation by the J&K police”.

According to the families of three labourers Muhammad Imtiaz, Abrar Ahmed Khan and Abrar Yusuf, the trio were killed by the troops in a fake encounter in Shopian’s Amshipora area on July 18. A night before, the youths had informed their respective families over the phone that they had reached Shopian where they had been hired by a local fruit grower to work in his apple orchard.

After their killing, the Army had passed them off as “terrorists”.

Earlier this month, the

‘Action taken must be transparent’

Srinagar, Sept. 18: National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Friday said the process of disciplinary action against those found guilty of killing three young men from Rajouri in an alleged fake encounter in Shopian should be transparent.

“The families of the three murdered men had continued to proclaim their innocence. Disciplinary action initiated by the army would suggest the army agrees

with the families. The process must remain transparent & the guilty must face the full weight of the law,” Omar tweeted. He was reacting after the Army said it has found “prima facie” evidence that its troops “exceeded” powers under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act during an encounter in Kashmir’s Shopian district in which three men were killed in July this year and has initiated disciplinary proceedings.

— PTI

● **ARMY SAID** that ‘disciplinary action’ is being initiated by it under the Army Act against the officers and soldiers involved in the operation as the inquiry conducted by it ‘has brought out certain prima facie evidence’.

families accused both the Army and the J&K police of dilly-dallying in the probes ordered by them separately into their complaint.

In a letter to J&K’s Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, they sought his personal intervention into the matter. They also demanded that an impartial and fair inquiry be held, the DNA reports made public and, if it is established that their kin are the same youth who were killed in the purported July 18 encounter at Amshipora, they be

allowed to exhume their bodies so that the victims are given a decent burial by them.

Sinha had while speaking to reporters here on September 14 assured that justice would be done with the families of slain youths.

He had said, “The Army has ordered its own inquiry and the administration is doing its own probe. I want to assure that justice will be done.”

J&K’s DG Police, Dilbag Singh, said on Thursday that the DNA reports in the case would be made public soon.

The DNA samples of the parents and siblings of the missing youth were collected from Rajouri under the aegis of Jammu and Kashmir Police in August and subsequently sent for matching with the trio killed on July 18.

Defence spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia, said

Chinese intel mounts pressure on Muivah

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, SEPT. 18

The Chinese government has not only been snooping on over 10,000 Indian individuals and organisations through a global database but its Intelligence agencies have been working in the northeast to rope in rebel leaders to create “internal” unrest and delay the ongoing peace-process in the region.

Disclosing that Chinese Intelligence agencies wanted NSCN (I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah to delay the settlement of ongoing Naga peace talks, authoritative security sources told this newspaper that the Union government had prior input about the ongoing attempt of China.

Informing that the action of Chinese agencies coincided with problem in Galwan Valley in June, security sources said that it was almost the same time when NSCN (I-M) general secretary after agreeing on all the major issues suddenly changed

his stand and started raising some of the irrelevant issues about the interlocutor.

Asserting that the ministry of home affairs had such inputs of China trying to create problems in the northeast, security sources claimed that Chinese agencies have been working in the northeast to rope in rebel leaders to create “internal” unrest and delay the ongoing peace-process in the region.

Claiming that intelligence inputs were corroborated with NSCN (I-M) general secretary taking hostage to Naga peace process by raising some rhetorical issues, security sources said that all these started in June. The NSCN (I-M) also started laying more stress on demand for a separate flag and constitution once again in June.

It is significant that the Centre had outrightly rejected the demand of a separate “flag and constitution” in October 2019.

Apart from the civil society groups, all the stake-

holders of Nagaland including NNPGs have said their discussion with the Centre has concluded and the “agreed position” has been signed.

The Forum for Naga Reconciliation, which is leading the voice for reconciliation between NSCN(IM) and NNPG, are also saying that it is time for these two Naga political groups to meet and take forward the unfinished task of reconciliation.

Meanwhile, NSCN (I-M) chairman Q. Tuccu, vice president Tongmeth Wangnao and 13 others have also reached New Delhi to join general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah in the ongoing informal talks but differences among the rank and file of the NSCN (I-M) was quite visible as its chairman Q. Tuccu and his team has been living at a separate location in New Delhi. However, the Centre has facilitated accommodation for both the chairman and the general secretary at one place.

Farm Bills are protection shield, Oppn misleading farmers: PM

New Delhi, Sept. 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday stoutly defended farm sector reform bills, asserting that they will act as a “protection shield” for farmers and accused those opposing the measures of standing with middlemen and “deceiving” and “lying” to peasants.

With Opposition parties dubbing three bills, passed by Lok Sabha and now to be tabled in Rajya

Sabha, as “anti-farmers” and the BJP ally SAD quitting his government to protest them, Modi refuted their criticism, and said these laws will unshackle farmers by allowing them to sell their produce anywhere by negotiating a better price.

He asserted that the government purchase of farm produce will remain, adding that the mechanism of minimum support price will continue in

the same way it always has.

At a virtual event to launch several rail projects in Bihar, Modi said his government is committed to providing farmers appropriate price through the MSP, and asserted that no government has done as much for the farming community as the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in its six years in power since 2014.

— PTI

WORLD

SHORT TAKES
POLISH PARLIAMENT
PASSES ANIMAL
RIGHTS LAW

Warsaw, Sept. 18: Poland’s Parliament on Friday passed an animal rights law that had angered fur farmers and kosher meat producers and divided the country’s right-wing governing alliance.

The junior partners in the three-party ruling coalition had refused to vote in favour, provoking the ire of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the powerful leader of the Law and Justice (PiS) ruling party that put forward the legislation.

Kaczynski, who is known for his love of cats, has threatened to exclude his coalition partners from the government during a planned Cabinet shuffle or even call snap elections.

PIO JUDGE TURNS DOWN H1-B PLEA OF INDIANS

Washington, Sept. 18: An Indian-American federal judge has turned down an appeal by 169 Indian citizens who had challenged the proclamation of President Donald Trump that barred foreign nationals on H-1B specialty occupation visa from entering the US till the end of the year. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

US District Judge Amit P. Mehta of US District Court for the District of Columbia in its order on Wednesday said that Indian citizens, who are now trapped abroad during trips to India when borders closed, are unlikely to win their case contesting the travel ban proclamation of Trump.

The 169 Indian nationals in their lawsuit had sought an order directing the Secretary of State and the United States consulates “to process, adjudicate, and render final decisions on Plaintiffs’ DS-160 visa applications. But requiring such swift processing would be an exercise in futility when the complainant would remain ineligible to enter the country until January 1, 2021, at the earliest,” Mehta said.

China flies 18 warplanes during US, Taiwan talks

Unusually large show of force in response to US envoy’s visit

Taipei, Sept. 18: The second high-level US envoy to visit Taiwan in two months began a day of closed-door meetings Friday as China conducted military drills near the Taiwan Strait after threatening retaliation.

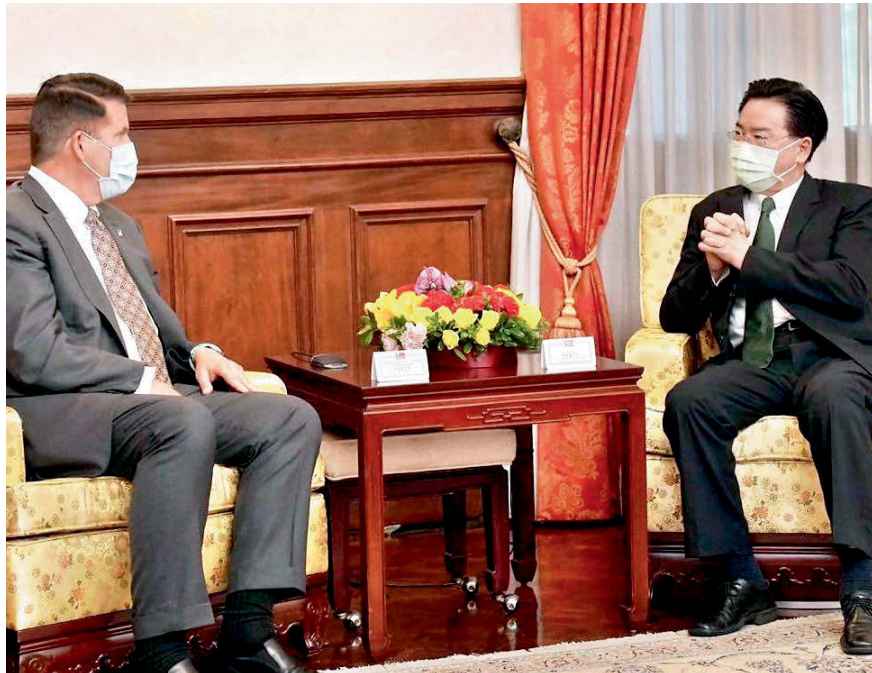
China’s military sent 18 planes including fighter jets over the Taiwan Strait in an unusually large show of force on Monday as a US envoy held a day of closed-door meetings on the self-governing island claimed by China.

Undersecretary of State Keith Krach, who handles the economic growth, energy and the environment portfolio, held talks with Taiwan’s minister of economic affairs and the Cabinet’s vice premier. He was due to meet with business leaders over lunch and dine with President Tsai Ing-wen later on Friday.

In response to Krach’s visit, the Eastern Theatre Command of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army held combat exercises near the Taiwan Strait, at least the second round of war games this month aimed at intimidating supporters of the island’s independent political identity.

“This is a legitimate and necessary action taken in response to the current situation across the Taiwan Straits to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” said China’s defense ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang. In a brief message on its microblog, the Eastern Theatre Command said the exercises involved naval and air force units in the Taiwan Strait aimed at gauging their ability to carry out joint operations.

China on Thursday condemned Krach’s visit and warned it could retaliate. It views Taiwan as part of its own territory and strongly opposes any type of formal interaction between other countries and the self-ruled island



Taiwans Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, meets with U.S. Undersecretary of State Keith Krach in Taipei, Taiwan on Friday.

— AP

● **IN RESPONSE** to Krach’s visit, the Eastern Theatre Command of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army held combat exercises near the Taiwan Strait, at least the second round of war games this month aimed at intimidating supporters of the island’s independent political identity.

democracy.

Krach’s trip follows a visit in August by US health secretary Alex Azar, the highest-level U.S. Cabinet official to make the trip since the U.S. switched formal relations from Taiwan to China in 1979. It is one of a series of moves by the Trump administration to strengthen relations with Taiwan, including stepped-up arms sales and support for the island’s participation in international forums. Before Krach’s arrival, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, had

lunch Wednesday with Taiwan’s top official in New York, in a meeting she called historic.

On Saturday, the last day of his visit, Krach will also attend a memorial service for former President Lee Teng-hui, who led the island’s transition to democracy and died at age 97 in July. Tensions between Washington and Beijing have already reached high levels as the governments spar over the coronavirus pandemic, trade, technology, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.

The frequency of Chinese exercises near Taiwan recalls the last major crisis between them in 1995-96, when China fired missiles near the island and held war games in a bid to intimidate voters in Taiwan’s first direct presidential election. Those actions were largely seen to have backfired. Taiwan said Chinese warplanes entered its airspace over two days last week during large-scale war

games that it called a “serious provocation to Taiwan and a grave threat to regional peace and stability.”

Such actions by the PLA threaten the entire region, it said, calling on the international community to respond. China has increasingly relied on military threats and diplomatic isolation to pressure Taiwan.

That follows the apparent failure of its efforts to win over the island’s 23 million people to the prospect of political unification under the “one country, two systems” framework in place in China, with a large majority of Taiwanese favoring maintaining the status quo of de facto independence. China cut contacts with Taiwan’s government following Tsai’s 2016 election.

She was reelected by a large margin this year while her Democratic Progressive Party maintained its majority in the legislature.

— AP

FBI chief warns Russia actively targeting Biden

Washington, Sept. 18: FBI Director Christopher Wray on Thursday warned that Russia is interfering in the 2020 US presidential elections with a steady stream of misinformation aimed at Democrat Joe Biden as well as sapping Americans’ confidence in the election process.

Moscow is also attempting to undercut what it sees as an anti-Russian US establishment, Wray told the Democratic-led House of Representatives’ Homeland Security committee.

He said his biggest concern is a “steady drumbeat of misinformation” that he said he feared could undermine confidence in the result of the 2020 election.

Wray’s testimony follows an August 7 warning by the director of the National Countereintelligence and Security Center that Russia, China and Iran were all trying to interfere in the November 3

election.

Wray said the FBI is increasingly worried about possible violent clashes between ideologically-motivated extremist groups before the November election. The FBI is keeping a close eye on groups who have faced off in protests in cities such as Portland, Oregon, and Kenosha, Wisconsin.

In those places, anti-racism and anti-police groups have squared off with right-wing and white nationalist activists who are often armed. Wray also told lawmakers that antifa is an ideology, not an organisation.

Wray did not dispute that antifa activists were a serious concern, saying that antifa was a “real thing” and that the FBI had undertaken “any number of properly predicated investigations into what we would describe as violent anarchist extremists,” including into individuals who identify with antifa.

— Reuters/AFP/AP



Mick Mulvaney

TRUMP ENVOY WARNS UK OVER HARD BORDER

Washington, Sept. 18: US president Donald Trump’s special envoy to Northern Ireland, Mick Mulvaney, has warned against creating a “hard border by accident” on the island of Ireland.

British prime minister Boris Johnson is proposing new legislation that would break the Northern Ireland protocol of the Brexit divorce treaty that seeks to avoid a physical customs border between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

“The Trump administration, State Department and the US Congress would all be aligned in the desire to see the Good Friday Agreement preserved to see the lack of a border maintained,” Mr Mulvaney said, in an interview on Friday.

— Agencies

US bans WeChat, TikTok citing risk

Washington, Sept. 18: The US will ban the use of WeChat Sunday to “safeguard the national security of the United States.”

The Chinese app TikTok will also be banned by Nov. 12, but Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said on early Friday on CNBC that access to that app may be possible if certain safeguards are in place.

“At the President’s direction, we have taken significant action to combat China’s malicious collection of American citizens’ personal data, while promoting our national values, democratic rules-based norms, and aggres-

sive enforcement of US laws and regulations,” Ross said in a prepared statement.

The government said its order, previously announced by Trump in August, will “combat China’s malicious collection of American citizens’ personal data.”

The government previously said that using and downloading the app to communicate won’t be a banned transaction, although messaging on the app “could be directly or indirectly impaired” by the ban, and people who use it for messaging won’t be subject to penalties.

— AP

GLOBAL COVID-19 CASES TOP 30 MN

London, Sept. 18: Confirmed cases of the Coronavirus have topped 30 million worldwide, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

The worldwide count of known Covid-19 infections climbed past 30 million on Thursday, with more than half of them from just three countries: the U.S., India and Brazil, according to the tally kept by Johns Hopkins researchers. The number increased by 10 million in just over a month; global cases passed 20 million on August 12.

— AP

SHORT TAKES

Hari goes down, stays in 5th place

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna maintained his joint fifth place in the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tournament even as American Wesley So climbed to the top spot ahead of world champion Magnus Carlsen.

Competing in the last three rounds of the Rapid event, Harikrishna started well with a win over American player Jeffery Xiong in 66 moves. After a draw against another US player Hikaru Nakamura, the India number was outlasted by So in 69 moves on Thursday. The win allowed So to take the lead after nine rounds of the Rapid competition with two days of Blitz events to come. After a bright start to his campaign with two victories on the opening day, Harikrishna could manage only one more win in his other six games. — PTI

Injured Osaka out of French Open

Paris: US Open champion Naomi Osaka has pulled out of the French Open because of an injured left hamstring. Osaka joins defending champion Ash Barty in skipping the French Open, which opens on September 27 in Paris.

In another blow to the clay Grand Slam, tournament organisers announced a further reduction in crowd sizes, because of France's worsening Coronavirus epidemic.

The new limit is 5,000 spectators per day, organisers said in a statement late Thursday. They'd previously been planning for 11,500 spectators, split among three sites at Roland Garros. It is important for the sporting, social and economic life of the country that a major event like Roland-Garros can be put on while respecting health imperatives, organisers said. — AP

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CLASH OF TITANS

Dhoni fresh and determined as IPL begins today

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 18: His sabbatical from the game has done Mahendra Singh Dhoni a world of good, Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming said on Friday, asserting that the enigmatic skipper is "mentally engaged and determined" to encounter the challenges of a "tactically different" IPL.

Dhoni's CSK will take on Rohit Sharma's Mumbai Indians in the tournament opener on Saturday. Fleming, a former New Zealand captain, stressed that his team's experience of winning big matches will come in handy during the next 53 days.

Dhoni retired from international cricket last month after being on a break for over one year and when asked about the 39-year-old's preparedness for the IPL, Fleming said, "It has been no different. He's very fit and mentally, he's been very engaged and determined."

"In some ways the break can work for the experienced and older players that we have. MS is fresh and ready to go," Fleming said in a pre-tournament interview to CSK's official website.

The three-time champions are banking heavily on their 35-plus players, including Dhoni himself, Shane Watson, Dwayne Bravo, Kedar Jadhav, and Imran Tahir to name a few.

"...experienced players identify key times and that's why they've done so well in their careers. They can turn games, absorb pressure or just sum out the situation. That's what experience is about and that's why we value it so highly. And that's why we've been able to get over the line in so many close games because the key player has been one with a



Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (left) and Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma in this file photo.

NUMBERS GAME – MI vs CSK

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:

- Matches: 28
- Mumbai Indians won: 17
- Chennai Super Kings won: 11

MEETING IN 2019

- Mumbai Indians defeated Chennai Super Kings by 37 runs at Mumbai (League)
- Mumbai Indians beat Chennai Super Kings by 46 runs at Chennai (League)
- Mumbai Indians beat Chennai Super Kings by 6 wickets at Chennai (Qualifier 1)

- Mumbai Indian beat Chennai Super Kings by one run at Hyderabad (final)

FOR THE RECORD

- Rohit Sharma who scored 4898 runs at an average of 31.60 in 183 innings of 188 matches for Deccan Chargers and Mumbai Indians is the third highest scorer in IPL behind Virat Kohli (5,412 runs in 177 matches) and Suresh Raina (5,368 runs in 193 matches).
- Dwayne Bravo who claimed 147 wickets in 131 innings of 134 matches, needs just three wickets to become the fifth bowler to take 150 wickets in IPL.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

lot of experience," the CSK coach Fleming further said.

BRETT BETS ON CSK

Former Australian speedster Brett Lee has tipped three-time champions Chennai Super Kings to win the 13th IPL, saying

the variety in their spin department gives them an advantage in the UAE conditions.

"They (CSK) are up there. I have picked them to win and I think CSK have a good chance because of their spin attack. With Santner,

Jadeja needs to step up and be the No.1 spinner and CSK have got great variety and none of the spinners are same, so they are at an edge for the conditions in the UAE as the tournament progresses," Lee said on Star Sports' show *Game Plan*. — PTI

CAPITALS TO HONOUR COVID WARRIORS

New Delhi, Sept. 18: IPL team Delhi Capitals on Friday said its players will don jerseys bearing the message "Thank You Covid Warriors" during the entire tournament in UAE, calling the initiative a "small token of gratitude" towards the frontline workers fighting the pandemic.

Delhi Capitals' senior India pacer Ishant Sharma, spinner Amit Mishra and Mohammad Kaif interacted with a few frontline workers, including doctors and police officers, in a virtual meet apart from sending them personalised team jerseys under the 'Salaam Dilli' initiative.

"To all the sanitation workers, doctors, security forces, blood donors, social workers, drivers, and their respective families — this small token of thanks from our team is testament of your service towards humanity," Ishant said.

The workers honoured by the franchise included those who distributed home-made masks for free, installed mask-vending machines in public places, donated personal savings to buy air tickets for migrant workers and ran a plasma donation network.

Amit Mishra said, "Words are not enough to thank these Covid warriors. As our world continues to battle and survive this pandemic, it's efforts like yours that will continue to inspire, and make a difference." — PTI



Armand Duplantis of Sweden clears 6.15 metres to set a new men's pole vault world record during the IAAF Diamond League competition in Rome on Thursday. — AFP

Duplantis high over Bubka bar

Rome, Sept. 18: Swedish pole vault star Armand Duplantis eclipsed Ukrainian legend Sergey Bubka's 26-year mark, setting a outdoor new pole vault world record of 6.15 metres (20 feet, 2 inches) at the Diamond League meeting in Rome on Thursday.

Duplantis bettered the mark of 6.14m (20 feet, 1 1/2 inches) set by Bubka in Sestriere, Italy, in July 1994.

The 20-year-old succeeded on his second attempt in a competition he dominated in perfect warm and windless conditions, but without spectators to celebrate in an empty Stadio Olimpico.

Duplantis already holds the world indoor record of 6.18m (20 feet, 3 1/4 inches).

"I think I'm still up in the clouds right now. It's a surreal, super crazy feeling," said the US-born athlete.

Ukrainian Bubka broke the world record on 17 occasions in the 1980s and 1990s, famously edging the mark up by one centimetre on no fewer than nine occasions between 1988 and 1994 so he could collect a bonus each time.

Duplantis was a child prodigy who broke age-group records on his way to joining the pole vaulting elite. He chose to compete internationally for Sweden, his mother's home country. He won the silver medal at last year's world championships.

Born and raised in Louisiana, Duplantis is a photogenic new star in a sport searching for star quality since the retirement of Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt in 2017.

His exuberant celebrations and looks straight out of a romantic film mean he fits the bill. — AFP

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