


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAHMUNDRY | FRIDAY | 18 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 32.0°C
Min: 25.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: 10.1 mm
Forecast: Humid and Mostly Cloudy.
Max/Min temp. 32/25 °C

COVID-19 COUNT


CASES	DEATHS
(+93,332)	(+1,138)
52,05,760	84,346

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,159)	(+9)
TS: 1,65,003	1,005
(+8,702)	(+72)
AP: 6,01,462	5,177

CASES AROUND THE WORLD



3,02,30,511

DEATHS

9,48,226

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Adhika-Ashwayuja Shuddha Padyami till 12.50 pm

Star: Uttaraphalguni till 6.59 am; Hasta till 4.06 am (Saturday)

Variyam: 2.22 pm to 3.47 pm

Durmuhurtam: 8.33 am to 9.21 am; 12.34 pm to 1.22 pm

Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HJRI CALENDAR

Muharram 29, 1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5:00 am

Zohar: 1:30 pm

Asar: 5:00 pm

Maghrib: 6:35 pm

Isha: 8:30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.02 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.51 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 7.45 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 6.32 PM

COUNTER POINT



What can I do?
It's an act of God!

IN BRIEF

Harsimrat quits over farm bills

New Delhi: In a major embarrassment to the NDA at the Centre, Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the Cabinet over two contentious farm Bills passed in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. "Proud to stand with farmers as their daughter and sister," Harsim-rat Badal, who held the food processing industries portfolio, said in a post on Twitter. Harsimrat Badal is the only representative of the Shiromani Akali Dal in the Modi government.

■ Report on Page 4

New RS member dies of Covid-19

Bengaluru: Newly elected Rajya Sabha member Ashok Gasti, who was admitted to a private hospital after testing positive for the novel coronavirus, died on Thursday night, the hospital said. Fifty-five-year-old Gasti, who was admitted to Manipal Hospital on Old Airport Road on September 2 and diagnosed with severe COVID-19 pneumonia, passed away at 10.31 pm, hospital director Manish Rai said in a statement. Condoling Gasti's demise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was passionate about empowering the poor and marginalised sections of society.

— PTI

NATION | 4

BSY in Delhi to discuss Cabinet expansion





WORLD | 5

Trump names India as big drug transit centre

SPORTS | 8

Only 36-hour quarantine for IPL players from UK



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Battleground Srinagar



Kashmiri protesters clash with the police after a gun battle between militants and security forces at Batamaloo of Srinagar on Thursday. Police used tear gas shells and pellet guns to disperse protesters.

— H.U. NAQASH

YSRC to use Parliament's immunity to attack courts

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 17

In an unprecedented manner the executive and judiciary in AP are on a collision path. An uneasy calm that prevailed for months has ended and the ruling YSR Congress on Thursday launched a direct attack against the AP High Court.

Apparently following instructions of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the ruling party floor leaders in both Houses of Parliament, P. Mithun Reddy and V. Vijayasai Reddy, sought to draw the highest law-making body's attention to what they described as injustice meted out in the hands of judiciary. "The

NAIDU DEFENDS HOUSE SITES GIVEN TO HIGH COURT JUDGES IN AMARAVATI

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 17

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday defended his government's decision to allot house sites to 11 serving AP High Court judges in the proposed Amaravati capital region. Naidu was reacting to a

AP judiciary is not impartial and it has to be stopped," said Vijayasai Reddy in Rajya Sabha. Though he was taking part in a debate on Covid, the Parliamentary party

startling revelation on social media that 13 judges, of whom two have retired and 11 are serving in the HC, were allotted house sites of 600 square yards each in April, 2019, a few weeks before he stepped down.

■ Page 2: Jagan source of viral video: Naidu

leader went on to describe the "onslaught of judiciary" on his party's government.

■ Page 2: MPs seek CBI probe on land deal

1.16 crore people lose jobs after Covid-19 lockdown

SANGEETHA G. | DC CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Around 1.16 crore people — 66 lakh white-collar professionals and 50 lakh industrial workers — have lost their jobs post lockdown, as per the data from private think-tank CMIE. The government, however, has not yet come out with data on job losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. As per the analysis of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), based on the data from its 20th wave of Consumer Pyramids Household Survey, white-collar professional employees witnessed the biggest loss in terms of jobs among the salaried class. These include engineers including software engineers, physicians, teachers, accountants among others.

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● WHITE-COLLAR professional employees witnessed the biggest loss in terms of jobs among the salaried class.

● THESE INCLUDE engineers including software engineers, physicians, teachers, accountants among others.

● IT DOES not include qualified self-employed professionals.

● WHITE COLLAR jobs rose since 2016

This does not include qualified self-employed professionals.

Employment in the category of white-collar professional employees and other employees had been rising steadily since 2016 when the survey began tracking them. An estimated 1.25 crore professional employees were employed during the survey of January-April 2016. During May-August 2019, their employment peaked at 1.88 crore. It remained almost stable at 1.87 crore in the next survey of September-December 2019 and then fell to 1.81 crore during January-April 2020. This survey contained a partial impact of the lockdown.

Professional jobs fell steeply to 1.22 crore during the survey of May-August 2020. This is the lowest employment of the professionals since 2016, wiping out all jobs created in the past four years.

TESTING | TIMES

6,450 students did not attend, Krishna district sees most students

16% students skip Eamcet in state

SEVERAL STUDENTS MISS EAMCET DUE TO 'ONE MINUTE LATE' RULE IN STATE

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, SEPT. 17

The stipulation that students will not be allowed to write AP Eamcet — 2020 examination even if they are late by "one minute" has left many aspirants

heartbroken. The exams started on Thursday and will continue till Sept-ember 25. Because of Covid-19 curbs, many students arrived late.

■ Page 3: Students who just missed exam unhappy

regional centres. The highest number of students, 4496, appeared from Kris-

hna district and the lowest number, 1154, were from Vizianagaram.

Srisaillam gates open



10 crest gates of Srisaillam dam lifted to a height of 15 metres to discharge 4,12,345 cusecs of water into Nagarjunasagar. Heavy rains in the upper reaches led to inflows of 3,38,820 cusecs on Thursday.

— DC

6,450 students did not attend, Krishna district sees most students

As many as 6,450 students did not attend the examination. The Eamcet-2020 chairperson and JNTUK vice chancellor, M. Ramalinga Raju, said that 228 observers have been appointed and 102 students are appearing for the exam in the Urdu language. AP Eamcet-2020, convener, Prof. V. Ravindra, said that two Covid-19-positive cases from Krishna and Prakasam districts were not allowed to write the examination and were sent back in accordance with

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Covid-19 guidelines. He said that a blind candidate engaged a scribe who is an Intermediate student but the scribe was not allowed since the rules stipulate only Class X-level scribes are allowed. He said that the centre has provided a scribe to the student to write the exam. He said that the exam was held in a peaceful atmosphere without any disturbances and all Covid protocols are followed.

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Covid-19

SHORT TAKES

SPEAKER SAYS AP
AHEAD IN WELFARE
SCHEMESDC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM, SEPT. 17

The state is leading in the country in implementation of various kinds of welfare schemes, particularly for women, said Speaker Tammineni Sitaran, who was the chief guest at the concluding function of the weeklong celebration of Aasara scheme on Thursday.

Appreciating the efforts of the Chief Minister, the Speaker said that Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is aiming at achieving financial independence for women. He said the CM has been fulfilling all the promises he made during his padayatra and completed 90 per cent of the Navaratri schemes which were announced.

CONGRESS BATS
FOR AP STUDENTS
FOR SEATS IN IIITNAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDIA | DC
KADAPA, SEPT. 17

Congress committee working president, Dr N. Tulasi Reddy, asked the state government to discuss with the Telangana government in filling the 150 non-local category seats allotted to Andhra Pradesh at IIIT, Basara.

The students from Andhra Pradesh not allotted grade points in the SSC examination results are facing problems applying to IIIT, Basara. Dr Reddy held a press conference at Vempalli on Thursday where he said that the Congress government had setup IIITs at Idupulapaya, Nuziveedu and Basara to promote technical education among rural students in undivided AP.

After the division of state, the government started two more IIITs in the state at Ongole and Srikakulam. The AP government has announced its schedule for admissions in the state IIITs. He urged the government to take the necessary steps to assure the students in the state of the non-local seats.

ACB TRAPS
DEPUTY
TAHSILDARAVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 17

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths caught a deputy tahsildar red-handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹3,000 for rendering official favours at the tahsildar office of Kalakada mandal headquarters in Chittoor district on Friday.

According to reports, the deputy tahsildar G. Srinivasa Rao demanded the bribe from the complainant S. Sugbathulla, a fertiliser shop owner from Kalakada mandal, for releasing a bill amount of ₹1,66,932. He complained to ACB officials about the corrupt officer and as per their instruction he held consultations with the officer and agreed to give ₹3,000.

On Thursday, the victim handed over the bribe in the deputy tahsildar's chambers and ACB officials caught him red-handed for accepting the bribe amount. They took him into custody and produced him before the ACB court in Nellore.

CPI DEMANDS
COMPENSATION
FOR CROP DAMAGEDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, SEPT. 17

General secretary of CPI district committee, Kadapa, Gujjula Eswaraiah demanded that the state government should pay the compensation to the crops, which are submerged with rain water in the district.

Thousands of hectares of paddy and other crops were damaged due to rains, he said.

He held a press conference at his office on Thursday and said that, more than 2,000 hectares of paddy, groundnut, turmeric, onion, chilly and flower gardens were completely damaged due to heavy rains.

He demanded that the authorities should immediately collect details of damaged crops and take steps to compensate farmers for crop insurance investment subsidy.

Kundu river catchment area is badly damaged due to flood water, he said. He requested the officials to take immediate steps to survey the crop damage.

Idol damaged in yet
another temple in state

Opposition demands dismissal of endowments minister

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 17

In a fresh incident on Thursday, the ear of a Nandi idol in Kasi Visweswara temple at Makkapeta of Krishna district was damaged. While YSRC sees a Telugu Desam conspiracy, TD is alleging that YSRC is promoting such attacks to suppress Hindu religion.

Kasi Visweswara temple priest and locals of Makkapeta said that they observed that the lock of the main door was broken open and found that the ear of the Nandi idol was damaged, although other idols and items were untouched. They lodged a complaint with the police and endowment department officials. The police rushed to the temple and enquired about the incident.

The spate of incidents across temples has come as fodder for TD, BJP and Jana Sena, who are appearing as Hindutva saviours. TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed suspicion over the absence of a police complaint in the silver lions missing incident. He stated that endowment minister Velampalli Srinivas Rao lives near the temple but totally failed to provide protection to the Durga temple and demanded his dismissal.

However, the minister alleged that the three lions were missing during the TD tenure. He urged Opposition parties to stop playing politics with Hindu religion as it was not good for society.

Former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao, Alapati Rajendra Prasad, Varla Ramaiah, Bonda Umamaheswara

DURGA TEMPLE OFFICIALS LODGE COMPLAINT
WITH POLICE ABOUT 3 MISSING LION IDOLSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 17

The Kanaka Durga temple officials lodged a complaint with the police over three silver lion idols on the silver chariot on the Indrakeeladri going missing.

Temple's executive officer Suresh Babu lodged a complaint in one town police station seeking an investigation on Thursday.

In his complaint, Babu stated that the silver chariot was not used for the past 17 months after being used during the Ugadi festival last year. He said that

recently, during inspection, it was found that the three silver lions from the chariot were missing. The one town police started its investigation.

Durga temple committee chairman, P. Somi Naidu, said that the chariot was kept on the ghat road in 2016 and shifted to Mahamandapam in 2019, during the Telugu Desam government. He said that the chariot was used by the TD government in the Ugadi festival and not used by this YSRC government due to the pandemic. The temple committee decided to make three new silver lions.

COPS DENY PERMISSION TO BJP'S 'CHALO
ANTARVEDI' PLAN, SECTION 144 IMPOSEDVADREVA SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 17

East Godavari sub-collector Himanshu Koushik on Thursday announced that Section 144 has been imposed in Amalapuram division of East Godavari district. As such no processions or gatherings will be allowed in the region.

Imposition of Section 144 comes in the wake of Bharatiya Janata Party calling for a "Chalo Antarvedi" programme on Friday to protest against the gutting down of a chariot belonging to Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple at Antarvedi in Sakshinetipalle

Rao and Buddha Venkanna are blaming YSRC government for the attacks on temples and

mandal of EG district. Eluru Range DIG K. V. Mohan Rao explained that burning of the temple chariot on September 5 had been investigated with police deploying a dog squad and clues team. Some of the witnesses had also been questioned. Since then, the state government has decided to hand over the case to the CBI.

The DIG pointed out that the state government has taken steps to build a new chariot at a cost of ₹95 lakh. Some RSS activists, who had been arrested for agitating against the Antarvedi incident, had also been released on bail.

demanded Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to break his silence and come clear on the subject.

BJP CHIEF
VEERRAJU PUT
UNDER HOUSEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 17

State BJP president Somu Veerraju and several of his party leaders were put under house arrest to prevent them from undertaking 'Chalo Amalapuram' protest on Friday.

When Veerraju started off for Amalapuram from his house here on Thursday, police foiled his attempt and put him under house arrest.

Mr Veerraju criticised the CM for 'denying' him to exercise his democratic right.

BJP FORMER MLA
PUT UNDER
HOUSE ARRESTK.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 17

The Dwarakanagar police put former BJP MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju under house arrest on Thursday. The arrest was made to prevent him from going to Amalapuram in East Godavari where the State unit of the party staged a dharna to demand withdrawal of cases against 37 BJP activists leaders at Antarvedi where they protested against the burning down of the sacred chariot. Mr Vishnu Kumar Raju said the preventive arrests were made all over the state.

Repair roads using cess money: CM

from page 1

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy gave instructions to the officials concerned to take up road repair works across the state using the sum. He is believed to have commented that the people wouldn't appreciate delay in road repairs and that the image of his government would be affected despite doing extremely well in

the welfare sector.

The officials blamed it on the empty coffers and suggested levying road cess and a mechanism wherein the fund raised would be exclusively spent to repair roads.

The AP Road Development Corporation had borrowed ₹3,000 crore in February last year but the amount was diverted for Chandrababu Naidu government's poll-time Pasu-

pu Kunkuma scheme.

Sources said it is doubtful if the amount pooled through the road cess could be used for repairs as the Road Development Corporation has to fulfil its debt service obligations for the loan raised last year. "The additional amount we intend to raise through the cess will be more or less equivalent to the debt servicing," a senior official said.

YSRC MPs SEEK CBI PROBE
ON AMARAVATI LAND DEAL

From page 1

Party MPs also staged a dharna in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue on Parliament premises,

demanding a CBI probe into the Amaravati scam, a plea that had been rejected outright by the High Court.

"It is unfortunate that courts are hindering the investigation into scams. As law-makers, we have the right to raise the issue in Parliament and speak about the functioning of the judiciary in AP," he told mediapersons.

Back in Vijayawada, senior YSRC leader and municipal minister Botsa Satyanarayana termed the gag order of the High Court as unfair and wondered how courts could announce that incumbent governments have no right to probe the policy decisions their predecessors

sors particularly when the people in power had got pecuniary benefits out of those decisions.

The ruling party outbursts came a day after the High Court stalled the probe into the alleged Amaravati land scam in which some influential people, allegedly privy to confidential information, had acquired lands in the proposed capital region for a cheaper price.

The AP High Court was unhappy over the ruling party leaders criticising its judgments and even its sympathisers hurling abuses against judges. At one stage, the Registrar General highlighted in her affidavit in a case that the state government was not happy with the judgments. Later, she amended the affidavit replacing the word "government" with "some ruling party leaders".

JUDICIARY SHOULD NOT CROSS LIMITS: BOTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 17

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana said the stay on SIT probe was not in tune with the spirit of natural justice and constitution.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, he said the HC interim order staying the SIT investiga-

tions into irregularities in projects started by the previous Telugu Desam government between 2014 and 2019 was unfair. He stated that in democracy, there were instances of Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers and Ministers being named and tried by courts. He said it was Mr Chandrababu Naidu, Mr Lokesh and TD leaders who exploited farmers.

BALINENI ACCUSES TD LEADERS FOR
FLARING UP COMMUNAL PROBLEMSDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 17

Energy minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy rebuked TD leaders for attempting to flare up communal problems scared over the welfare schemes of CM Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Speaking to media persons at Ongole on Thursday, he suspected TD leaders' role behind the torching of the chariot at Antarvedi and

slammed the leaders for accusing the government.

Alleging that TD supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu was responsible for the death of 30 pilgrims during Godavari Pushkarams, he found fault with the outcome of the enquiry report.

He struck down the allegations over attacks on Hindu temples in the state while blaming the Opposition for disturbing the law and order.

MLC MADHAV PARTICIPATES IN
'BJP SAPTAH' PROGRAMMEDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, SEPT. 17

BJP MLC P.V.N. Madhav said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is one of the tallest leaders in the world today and he has taken many landmark decisions to alter the course of history.

He participated in several programmes in 'Saptah' on the occasion of Mr Modi's birthday, in Kakinada on Thursday. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi

had scored many historic victories during the past six years. He said that world leaders are lauding Mr Modi and he sorted out many of the pending issues in the country.

He said that Mr Modi also ensured that the benefits of the welfare scheme reached even the last person among weaker sections of society and therefore paved the way for social justice. BJP Kakinada Parliamentary district chief Ch. Ramkumar and others were present.



A fish flies in gushing out water in heavy floodwater in Vijayawada on Thursday. People crowded on Prakasam Barrage to see the sight.
— C. Narayana Rao

SOMASILA GATES JAMMED DUE TO POOR MAINTENANCE: SOMIREDDY

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 17

Former minister and TD senior leader Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy blamed ill maintenance by the irrigation officials for malfunctioning of the gates of Somasila project.

Reacting to reports over jamming of some gates when the project officials tried to release water two days ago following heavy inflows.

Referring to sharp increase in inflows from 20,000 to 80,000 cusecs within a short period and

urgent need to release the water, he criticised the officials for repairing the jammed dam gates at the eleventh hour and putting the blame for the problem on transformer glitch.

"What would have been the fate of the people of the district and the dam if

there was further delay in releasing water," Mr Chandramohan Reddy asked.

He said cases were booked against farmers at Sangam town for demanding that government pay them MSP for paddy procurement.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Government fails to recruit sanctioned number of teaching and non-teaching staff in varsities

Faculty shortage in JNTUA, Central Varsity and SKU

NAGABHUSHANAM
HOSKOTE | DC
ANANTAPUR, SEPT. 17

Faculty shortage in technical, Central and state universities is a big problem providing a glimpse into the broken state of India's higher education.

While the new Central university for AP was set up three years ago, it is still functioning with only around 35 per cent of the sanctioned faculty strength. The Central university was sanctioned in Anantapur as part of state bifurcation packages to AP.

University of Hyderabad (UoH) is operating as its mentor and it is running in a temporary building of Jawaharlal Nehru technical university, Anantapur (JNTUA). The Central uni-

versity has no permanent buildings even after the district administration allotted enough lands near BK Samudram for the prestigious university.

Only four courses are being conducted under the aegis of UoH. The staff has been deputed from Hyderabad and no new courses have been introduced so far.

Dr Geyanand, convenor of the Rayalaseema intellectual forum, alleged there was no interest from the Centre to build up the central university of AP to meet national and international standards. It has been six years since the state bifurcation but the major educational institution in AP appears in poor condition," he observed.

Recent studies by the All India State of Higher Edu-

cation (AISHE) revealed the poor condition of universities in the state in general. JNTUA has 46 per cent vacancies and Sri Krishnadevaraya university has 63 per cent vacancies, most of them in important and key departments.

Studies reveal that the number of institutions increased manifold from 2000 onwards, with about 10 degree colleges under Sri Krishnadevaraya university and five engineering colleges under JNTUA each year since 2008. However, several colleges, notably engineering and management institutions, close down every year.

A private engineering college on outskirts of Anantapur closed down and changed into an upper primary school with interna-

tional standards.

Overall, the total vacancies in new Central universities are nearly 51 per cent and the older universities are only marginally better off with 39 per cent vacancies. These universities manage to barely do just about enough in terms of teaching by using large armies of ad hoc or part-time faculty. Indeed, all government universities make generous use of part-time faculty out of necessity because they do not have budgets to hire full-time faculty.

Faculty positions must first be sanctioned by the state government and since nearly none of the governments are keen on improving higher education, the universities cope with depleted numbers of faculty members as older

ones continue to retire. Hiring ad hoc faculty - who are poorly paid - is the only affordable option but over time, if not absorbed into the system, they lose all motivation to do the job well.

Ad hoc faculty allows the institution to continue offering courses and programmes but it is well-established that institutions with relatively higher numbers of such faculty do a less-than-satisfactory job in classroom instruction. Students suffer as a result.

If things are bad at elite institutions such as a central university, they are much, much worse at state universities. Given that faculty shortages are just one of the many gaping holes in the higher education sector, it is not hard to imagine just how dire the

situation really is. "More worryingly, faculty shortages seem to have become a permanent feature of India's universities. The problem of faculty shortages and large numbers of part-time faculty is nothing new. They have been there at least since the 1980s, whether due to financial, legal, technical/administrative or other reasons," Dr Sadashiva Reddy from Sri Krishnadevaraya university observed.

However, faculty shortages have certainly become worse over time with the exponential growth — especially since the 2000s — in the number of higher education institutions and the college-going population which successive Indian governments did not adequately anticipate and prepare for.

Dr M. Suresh Babu, state president, Praja Science Vedika, stressed the need to fill vacancies in universities to improve quality.

With the gross enrolment ratio (GER) expected to increase from 30 per cent (2020) to 50 per cent (2035), the country's colleges and universities will be spilling over more than ever before with students in the coming years. It is highly improbable that there will be sufficient numbers of faculty for these students if this situation persists.

Further, it is curious that little is known and written about faculty shortages at private institutions even though many more students are enrolled there than at public institutions. In fact, the problem of faculty shortages overall is due to poor supply.

SHORT TAKES

2 BOYS BEAT MOTHER TO DEATH IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 17

Two minor boys, apparently fed up with continuous torture, beat their mother to death in an apartment at Sundarpada under Airfield police station here on Wednesday night. The deceased was identified as Binodini Mishra. An altercation reportedly broke out between the mother and her sons late Wednesday night over some family issue. In a fit of rage, the two minor boys aged 12 and 15 years started beating Binodini, 40, with an iron rod killing her on the spot. Later, they kept the body in the bathroom and went outside after locking the flat. On Thursday morning, the security guard of the apartment called up Airfield police, who reached the spot and found the body lying in the bathroom. The police seized the body and sent it for post-mortem. The cops also detained the two accused for interrogation. Police sources, quoting the boys, said the deceased had been torturing her children under the influence of liquor. Fed up with this, the two children beat their mother to death. The deceased's husband, an employee posted in Rourkela, was informed about the incident.

BSY IN DELHI TO DISCUSS CABINET EXPANSION

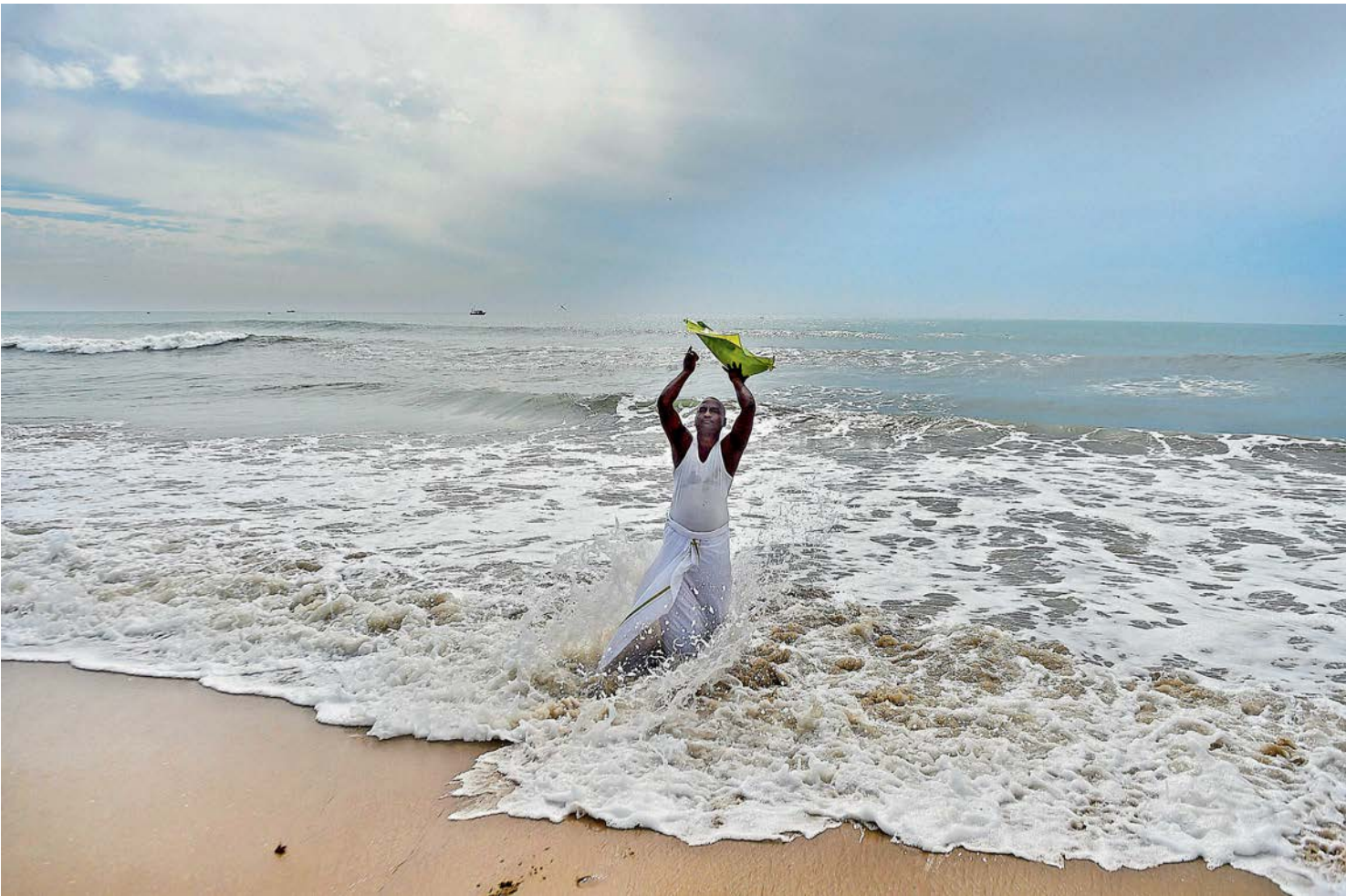
New Delhi, Sept. 17: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa arrived in the national capital on Thursday to discuss cabinet expansion in the state with the BJP top brass. During his two-day visit, the chief minister is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP national president J.P. Nadda as well as Union Ministers to discuss the state's issues. "I have come to Delhi to discuss with several Union Ministers about developmental works of the state. At the same time, I will also discuss the cabinet expansion with the party leaders to ascertain their views," Yediyurappa told reporters here. He is likely to meet Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday, and Modi, Nadda and other Union Ministers on Friday. The chief minister's son and BJP state vice-president BY Vijayendra is accompanying him. Yediyurappa is under pressure to expand Karnataka's cabinet at the earliest to appease disgruntled legislators although he is not keen to make any such changes right now.

MP MANTRI THRASHES CONGRESSMAN

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 17

A video showing a senior minister in Shivraj cabinet thrashing a Congress worker in Gwalior on Thursday went viral causing huge embarrassment to the ruling BJP. State energy minister Pradyumna Singh Tomar was caught on camera advancing menacingly towards a group of Congress workers who were shouting slogans against BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia at Phulbag square in Gwalior. He was then seen in the video clip delivering punches on a Congress worker. The incident took place on Wednesday. According to official sources, the Congress workers were staging a demonstration in Gwalior to protest against the move by Gwalior Municipal Corporation to remove hoardings featuring Congress veteran and former chief minister Kamal Nath erected at some places in the city. The demonstrators stopped the minister's cavalcade and then started shouting slogans against Mr Scindia provoking Mr Tomar to disembark from his vehicle and confront the Congress workers. He first had heated exchanges with them and later gave blows to Mr Khan while snatching the Congress flag from him. Mr Tomar was known to be a staunch loyalist of Mr Scindia. He was among 22 former Congress MLAs who resigned from assembly as well as Congress in March to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government.

A bit different this time



A devotee performs rituals on the occasion of Mahalaya Amavasya at Marina Beach in Chennai on Thursday. Mahalaya is an auspicious occasion celebrated at the end of Pitri Paksha, a 16-day period when Hindus pay homage to their ancestors. It is believed that it is the time when goddess Durga descends from Kailasha to the earth, her maternal home. On Mahalaya, the sculptors usually draw the eyes of Devi Durga, a ritual known as 'Chokkhu Daan'. However, it did not happen this year as Durga Puja starts over a month later. Durga Puja will begin on October 22 instead of the traditional seven-day gap from Mahalaya as the Bengali month of Kartik starting on Friday is a 'mala mash' or lunar month, considered inauspicious for any religious or social festivity.

— PTI

Old trick: PLA borrows leaf from 2,200 years old battle

Chinese troops play Punjabi songs on loudspeakers at the LAC

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17:

While Indians are amused over Chinese troops playing Punjabi songs on loudspeakers at Line of Actual Control (LAC) at Eastern Ladakh where for the first time in 45 years shots have been fired, it seems PLA is using the tactics employed by Chinese Han generals some 2,200 years ago during so called "Battle of Gaixia". In this battle, Han King Liu Bang beat his Chu rival Xiang Yu and established the Han Dynasty in China. Chinese state run *Global Times* on Thursday talking about Chinese army playing Punjabi songs at LAC said that the Indian army is in a situation of "hearing the Chu songs on four sides." The *Global Times* said that the move of playing Punjabi songs sends a message to India that the Indian army is isolated and besieged on all sides. "Hearing the Chu songs on four sides" is a Chinese idiom, which is said to have originated from the supposed "Battle of Gaixia". After the fall of the Qin Dynasty, the state of Chu and the State of Han fought for control of China around 206 BC to 202 BC. As per the legends around 202 BC, Chu king Xiang Yu was trapped and surrounded by the rival Han forces in hills at Gai Xia. The legends say to weaken the morale of the Chu forces and King Xiang

● IT SEEMS foolish if PLA assumes that Punjabi songs played at the LAC will have the same impact on a professional and battle hardened Indian Army as what happened with Chu soldiers some thousands of years back.

who was a ferocious fighter, Han soldiers started singing Chu songs from all sides. After listening to these songs, Chu soldiers thought that Han people had captured their homeland and brought Chu people to the battlefield. As per these stories, Chu soldiers became worried about their family members, homesick and lost the will to fight. Many Chu soldiers deserted. Even Chu King is said to have become desperate after listening to the Chu songs and is said to have cried. Xiang Yu committed suicide after his forces tried to break the trap. However, it seems foolish if the PLA assumes that Punjabi songs played at the LAC will have the same impact on a professional and battle hardened Indian Army as what happened with Chu soldiers some thousands of years back. Only last week Indian army's Sikh Regiment observed the 123rd Saragarhi Day where 22 soldiers of 4 Sikh in a famous 'last-stand' fought thousands of Pathans in North West Frontier Province on September 12, 1897.

Men have decided to stay back and assist the Army

From Page 1

The move comes even as the Army and ITBP soldiers are being deployed ahead of these villages in large numbers. The villages, located at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, are not very far away from Mount Kailash, close to where the People's Liberation Army of China is said to have deployed surface-to-air missiles. People belonging to these villages live there for about six months, between May and November. Once the winter gets harsh when temperatures fall below minus-20° Celsius, they move to the lower reaches in Dharchula town by November or December. The five villages are located a few kilometres from the tri-junction between India, China and Nepal. "The villagers have been informed about the advisory and some of them are packing up and will leave soon. We have requested that women and children be sent down as early as possible. In case the situation takes a turn for the worse, most men have decided to stay back and assist the Army and the ITBP," one of the village heads told this newspaper. These villages used to be pit stops for trekkers,

- OF THE FIVE villages in Dharchula of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand, Kuti has a population of about 365 people living in 115 houses.
- NABHI HAS 78 people and 32 houses, Raung Kong about 120 living in 35 houses, Napalachchu 74 in 25 houses and Gunji about 335 in 194 houses.
- LOCATED AT an elevation of about 10,000 feet, locals stay there for six months every year and then migrate to the plains
- ALL THE villages are few kilometres away from the tri-junction between India, China and Nepal
- CHINA HAS deployed surface-to-air missile near Mount Kailash — not very far away from the villages
- ABOUT 975 people including 395 females reside across the five border villages, leading tough lives.

tourists and those travelling to Adi Kailash; they would be offered homes-

tays by the locals. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the people have been hit hard. Most of them sell various products including herbs which they painstakingly collect from mountains at the annual trade between India and China but even that did not take place this year. "Our main earnings are through the trade every year. When we return from China, we buy some products which we sell when we go down to the town. This time around, we do not know how to survive," said a local. The villagers are worried that if tensions continue to rise between India and China, they will permanently lose their source of income and in the worst scenario, even their houses. About 975 people including 395 females reside across the five border villages, leading tough lives. "During the 1962 war, our ancestors assisted the Indian Army and stood by them in the most difficult times. We even gave our rations to them and transported their equipment, arms and ammunition on our backs. We will do the same even now if there is a repeat of 1962," Virendra Singh Nabiyal, a local of Nabi village, said.

Harsimrat quits as mantri as LS passes farm Bills

DC CORRESPONDENTS NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17



Harsimrat Kaur Badal

In a major embarrassment to the NDA government at the Centre, Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the Cabinet over two contentious farm Bills passed in Lok Sabha on Thursday. "I have resigned from Union Cabinet in protest against anti-farmer ordinances and legislation. Proud to stand with farmers as their daughter and sister," Badal, who held the food processing industries portfolio, tweeted. The resignation was, however, first announced by her husband and MP Sukhbir Singh Badal in Lok Sabha during discussion before the passage of the two Bills that seek to liberalise the agriculture sector. While announcing the SAD's decision to withdraw their minister from Narendra Modi's Cabinet, Badal said the SAD would continue to support the government and Bharatiya Janata Party, but will oppose its anti-farmer policies. Badal is the only SAD representative in the Modi government. The party is the oldest BJP ally. The SAD was under tremendous political pressure after the Congress government in Punjab passed a resolution in the Vidhan Sabha against the ordinances, prompting the NDA ally to fiercely oppose the Bills after initially sup-

porting it. The Badals — party patriarch Parkash Singh Badal, former deputy CM Sukhbir Badal and Badal — had not opposed the government's move in June when it had brought ordinances for the same. The SAD, sources said, had told the BJP that they will not be able to support the Bills as there is massive unrest among farmers in Punjab. The Bills in question are the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, which were passed on

- THE SAD president said the Bills, including the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, which has been passed by Lok Sabha, are going to affect 20 lakh farmers and 15-20 lakh farm labourers in Punjab alone.
- THE STATE with 2.5 per cent of the country's landmass produces nearly 50 per cent of food grains for the country, he added.

Thursday. The two Bills were passed by a voice vote. Minister of agriculture and farmers welfare Narendra Singh Tomar while replying to the debate said that as claimed by Opposition the Bills were farmer friendly and would be revolutionary for the agriculture sector. Opposing the legislation, Congress Party said the BJP government is hell bent on destroying the "Anndata" farmer to benefit a handful of crony capitalists. "62 crores farmers and farm labourers are agitating across India. Over 250 farmers organisations are sitting in dharna, on hunger strikes and demonstrating across the length and breadth of India. Drunk with power and determined to serve crony capitalists friends, Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to be blind to the agony of the farmers and suppress every voice of protest. Modi government is dictatorially subverting the voice of farmers' representatives inside the Parliament and has unleashed a draconian 'Lathi-Danda Regime' on protesting farming community," the party said in a statement.

India: No progress in Jadhav's case

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17

India on Thursday said that the Pakistan government has not been able to fulfill its obligations to implement International Court of Justice (ICJ) orders in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case and is yet to address the core issues which include allowing India to hire a counsel of choice to defend Jadhav in Pakistani courts. "The government of Pakistan has not been able to fulfill its obligations on implementation of the ICJ judgment in letter and spirit. It has

not yet addressed the core issues, which includes provision of all documents related to the case, providing unconditional and unimpeded consular access to Jadhav and appointment of an Indian lawyer or a Queen's counsel to ensure free and fair trial," spokesperson for ministry of external affairs Anurag Srivastava said. India has proposed to hire Harish Salve, who is also the Queen's counsel lawyer, to defend for Jadhav during the review of his death sentence in Pakistan. Pakistan is yet to respond to India's proposal.

Chart your own course: What one can learn from Modi's life

SYED ZAFAR ISLAM



their lives. The common thing that I see is the stark confusion people have about what they wish to do going forward. There is always this dilemma that today's youth has in their minds. Should they follow what they feel like doing or should they follow popular trends? To those young citizens of our country, I always say that one should study the life of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and derive an important lesson — must follow the path that

you truly believe in, and do not get distracted by the fashionable trends of the day. At a time and age in his life when most people around him would have been thinking of securing prized government jobs or even looking to become lawyers, doctors or teachers, Narendra Modi decided to be his own man and work for society. While the methods may vary in today's day and age, what Narendra Modi did is today fashionably called a sabbatical. He paused to think of what he wanted to do in his life and the path that he wanted to traverse. One must therefore learn the important lesson to take away from this incident - clean the cobwebs of your mind so that you can think rationally and clearly. Pause, even take a break

if necessary, to figure out exactly what you want to do with your lives. Choose after detailed deliberation the path that you can put your heart into, I repeatedly tell the youth of today. Mr. Modi's life teaches us a lot about this important aspect of life. One sees the sharpness of mind and the intellect of the man and wonders — what if the man had charted a different, perhaps more conventional trajectory in his life? Would we have witnessed him as India's Prime Minister today? It is clear by now that Mr. Modi is among the sharpest minds around, and that he could have been a successful person in any other field. And yet, he chose something that was very different from prevalent trends. He dared

to be different because he pursued something with passion and vigour, and today's youth can draw inspiration from this just as much. The path should be one that gives your heart joy and utmost satisfaction, just as Narendra Modi chose to serve the people of India for it satiates his soul to no end. Life, like in politics, often sees people dragging you down. You will see people mocking your initiatives when it starts, only to realize their own follies later. However, that should not deter you from sticking to the path. Had Mr. Modi hesitated to pursue his goal of making India open defecation free or to roll out the world's largest financial inclusion program of the Jan Dhan Yojana, the successes we see today on the

two fronts would not have manifested themselves. Do not be swayed by the gimmickry of these naysayers in life; instead, view their gimmickry for what it is - a gimmick. Because they do not truly believe in anything that they say necessarily; they are instead seeking perceived momentary benefits without seeing the larger picture. Their myopic vision should not be allowed to overpower your ambition and desires ever. Let your work speak for itself, even as you may face opposition similar to what Mr. Modi has seen coming at him for believing and holding onto his way of doing things. Just like Mr. Modi, you may be called names, may be misrepresented deliberately and attacked as well. However, do not fear

attacks and face them bravely, and see how the malevolent force crumbles by itself just as the opposition has scattered into the wind when faced resolutely by Mr. Modi. Doing your own thing can make you stand out of the crowd in life just as in politics, and people will try to imitate you. These days, some people have rediscovered their roots even in politics, and think they can benefit by being imitators. Some of them suddenly started visiting temples like Mr. Modi, while some others suddenly start chanting shlokas to show that they are perhaps bigger Hindus than Mr. Modi. Never forget though that imitation is the best form of flattery. Take this copycat behaviour in your own stride as a compliment and brush

off the emotional baggage that such imitators bring along with them. Notice how Mr. Modi does not imitate anyone, and is his self - always - be your true self just like that. We can go on and on about Mr. Modi's life as an example for the youth of New India. Being his own man comes naturally to Mr. Modi much like it is a feature of New India and its youth, a key reason why the two gravitate towards each other so naturally. To sum up though, Mr. Modi has only done what Frank Sinatra meant when he sang - I did it my way. (The writer is a BJP's Rajya Sabha MP, its national spokesperson and former Managing Director, Deutsche Bank, India)



SHORT TAKES

WORLD LEADERS
GREET PM MODI
ON HIS 70TH B'DAY

Moscow/London, Sept. 17: Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and German Chancellor Angela Merkel were among the world leaders who extended greetings to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 70th birthday on Thursday and lauded his personal contribution to the strengthening of ties with their countries.

Prime Minister Modi, born on September 17 in 1950, turned 70 on Thursday. In a letter to Modi, Putin praised him and said his activity as India's head of the government has earned him the well-deserved respect of compatriots and high international prestige.

WORLD'S SMALLEST
ULTRASOUND
SENSOR DEVELOPED

Berlin, Sept. 17: Scientists have developed the world's smallest ultrasound detector, which is 100 times tinier than an average human hair, and can visualise features that are much smaller than previously possible, an advance that may lead to better ways of studying ultra-fine details in tissues and materials

According to the researchers from the German Research Center for Environmental Health, the core detection technology for these very low frequency sound waves has for decades focused on using piezoelectric detectors which convert the pressure from sound waves into electric voltage. They said the imaging resolution achieved using this process depends on the size of the piezoelectric detector employed, with reduction in size leading to higher resolution and an improved ability to discriminate features in the imaged tissues.

U.S. TO DECLARE
UN SANCTIONS ON
IRAN ARE BACK

Washington, Sept. 17: In defiance of overwhelming opposition, the United States is preparing to declare that all international sanctions against Iran have been restored. Few countries believe the move is legal, and such action could provoke a credibility crisis at the United Nations.

Virtually alone in the world, the Trump administration will announce on Saturday that UN sanctions on Iran eased under the 2015 nuclear deal are back in force.

But the other members of the UN Security Council, including US allies, disagree and have vowed to ignore the step. That sets the stage for ugly confrontations as the world body prepares to celebrate its 75th anniversary at a coronavirus-restricted General Assembly session next week.

The question is how the Trump administration will respond to being ignored. It already has slapped extensive sanctions on Iran, but could impose penalties on countries that don't enforce the UN sanctions it claims to have reimposed.

UK DEFENDS BREXIT
DEAL AS BIDEN
SLAMS MOVE

London, Sept. 17: The British government struggled on Thursday to overcome American opposition to its plans to breach the Brexit withdrawal agreement with the European Union, after Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden became the latest US politician to express alarm.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's move to break parts of the EU divorce deal relating to Northern Ireland has triggered fears it could undermine the 1998 Good Friday peace accord that ended decades of violence between Irish nationalists and British unionists. "We can't allow the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland to become a casualty of Brexit," Biden tweeted.

"Any trade deal between the US and UK must be contingent upon respect for the Agreement and preventing the return of a hard border. Period," he wrote. Britain and the EU jointly promised in the Brexit agreement to ensure there are no customs posts or other obstacles on the Northern Ireland-Ireland border.

The open border is key to the stability that underpins the peace settlement. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is in Washington this week.

Second wave in Czech Republic



People wearing face masks ride an escalator in subway in Prague, Czech Republic, on Thursday. The Czech Republic has been facing the second wave of infections. The number of new confirmed Coronavirus infections has been setting new records almost on a daily basis, currently surpassing 2,000 cases in one day for the first time. — AP

Defying China, top US
official visits Taiwan

Taiwan Prez to host dinner for American delegation today

Taipei, Sept. 17: A top US diplomat landed in Taiwan on Thursday, the highest-ranking State Department official to visit in 40 years, in a further sign of Washington's willingness to defy China and its campaign to isolate the self-ruled island.

Keith Krach, undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, is visiting to attend a memorial service for late president Lee Teng-hui on Saturday, the US State Department said. 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 demo-

cratic island.

Beijing considers Taiwan part of its territory, to be absorbed into the mainland — by force if necessary.

"China strongly opposes this," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters on Thursday, saying the trip "encourages the arrogant attitude of Taiwan independence separatist forces".

Relations between the United States and China are at their lowest point in decades, with the two sides clashing over a range of trade, military and security issues, as well as the Coronavirus pandemic.

Washington's increased outreach to Taiwan under US President Donald Trump has become yet another flashpoint between the

two powers.

"The United States honours President Lee's legacy by continuing our strong bonds with Taiwan and its vibrant democracy through shared political and economic values," spokeswoman Morgan Ortigas said in a statement announcing Krach's trip.

Taiwan's foreign ministry said Krach, accompanied by assistant secretary Robert Destro, would also discuss "how to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation" during his three-day visit.

It described him as the highest-ranking State Department official to visit Taiwan since 1979, when Washington switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing

from Taipei.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen will host a dinner for the US delegation on Friday.

"We look forward to more exchanges and discussions between Taiwan and the US to solidify the foundation for further collaborations, including economic cooperation, through undersecretary Krach's visit," her office said in a statement.

Beijing discourages any official exchanges with Taiwan but in recent months Washington has dramatically increased its outreach.

Last month, US cabinet member and health chief Alex Azar visited to highlight Taiwan's widely praised efforts to stop Covid-19. — AFP

Fierce storm hits Finland,
80,000 homes powerless

Talinn, Estonia, Sept. 17: A fierce fall storm has battered Finland, leaving over 80,000 households without electricity, disrupting ferry traffic on the northern part of the Baltic Sea and prompting authorities to issue a warning for citizens to stay inside.

The storm, dubbed 'Aila', first hit the Nordic nation's west coast late Wednesday and swept on Thursday through the central and southwestern parts of the country

of 5.5 million, causing trees to fall and other material damage complete with heavy rain and winds of up to 125 kph (77 mph).

The storm is expected to move further south later Thursday, reach the Finnish capital, Helsinki, in the afternoon and move further across the Baltic Sea to neighboring Estonia where strong winds of up to 115 kph (71 mph) have already been recorded in coastal areas.

Estonian authorities said more than 3,500 households had power cut off as of midday. The Baltic country's weather service also issued a warning of extremely strong winds for Thursday.

Ferry companies operating between Finland and Sweden in the Gulf of Bothnia, the northernmost arm of the Baltic Sea, and Finland and Estonia had canceled most departures on Thursday. — AP

Chinese hackers breached Indian government servers

From page 1

"In about 2019, the conspirators compromised Government of India websites, as well as virtual private networks and database servers supporting the Government of India. The conspirators used VPS Provider servers to connect to an open VPN network owned by the Government of India," the indictment said.

In the attacks, the conspirators installed 'Cobalt Strike' malware on Indian government-protected computers, it added. According to the charges, the computer intrusions affected over 100 companies in the United States and abroad. The victims ranged from software development, computer hardware, telecommunication, social media and video game companies. Non-profit organisations, universities, think-tanks, foreign governments, pro-democracy politicians and activists in Hong Kong

were also targeted. Security researchers have tracked the intrusions using labels like APT41, Barium, Winnti, Wicked Panda, and Wicked Spider. These intrusions facilitated the theft of source code, software code signing certificates, customer account data, and valuable business information, the researchers said.

These intrusions also facilitated the defendants' other criminal schemes, including ransomware and crypto-jacking schemes, the latter refers to the group's unauthorised use of victim computers to mine cryptocurrency.

The Chinese hackers targeted government computers and networks of Vietnam and the United Kingdom. The hackers were not successful in compromising the government computer networks in the United Kingdom.

The racketeering conspiracy pertained to the three defendants' conducting the affairs of Chengdu 404 Network Technology

company, through a pattern of racketeering activity involving computer intrusion offenses affecting over 100 companies, organisations, and individuals in the United States and around the world, including in Australia, Brazil, Chile, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, the justice department said. — PTI

Rich nations buy half of
promised vaccine stocks

Washington, Sept. 17: Rich nations representing a fraction of the global population have already bought up over half the promised Covid-19 vaccine stocks, a study showed, as US President Donald Trump pledged to begin inoculating Americans within weeks.

Big pharma is racing to produce an effective jab to counter a virus that has now killed more than 9,35,000 people around the world and infected almost 30 million.

European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday warned against "vaccine nationalism" that she said could put lives at risk by depriving the most vulnerable in poorer nations of immunity.

But a study released by Oxfam showed a group of wealthy countries representing just 13 percent of the world population has already secured the lion's share of doses.

"Access to a life-saving vaccine shouldn't depend on where you live or how much money you have," said Robert Silverman of Oxfam America.

"Covid-19 anywhere is Covid-19 everywhere." The five leading vaccine candidates currently in late-stage trials will be able to supply 5.9 billion doses, enough to inoculate

Alarm across Europe
over virus surge: WHO

Copenhagen, Sept. 17: The World Health Organization on Thursday warned of "alarming rates of transmission" of Covid-19 across Europe and cautioned against shortening quarantine periods as countries in the region scrambled to find ways to reduce infections without resorting to new lockdowns.

The WHO's regional director for Europe Hans Kluge said a September surge — Europe set a new record last week, with some 54,000 cases recorded in 24 hours — "should serve as a wake-up call for all of us." "Although these numbers reflect more comprehensive testing, it also shows alarming rates of transmission across the region," he told an online news conference from Copenhagen.

In Britain, new restrictions will take effect Friday, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson warning that pubs may have to close earlier to help avoid a "second hump" of Coronavirus cases.

Residents of northeast England, including the cities of Newcastle and Sunderland, will no longer be allowed to meet people outside their own homes or immediate social circles.

The government already imposed rules across England on Monday limiting socialising to groups of six or fewer, as daily cases reached levels not seen since early May.

Britain has been Europe's worst-hit country, with the government registering nearly 42,000 deaths. — AFP

about three billion people, the Oxfam report said.

Some 51 percent of those jabs have been snapped up by the wealthy world, including the United States, Britain, the European Union, Australia, Hong Kong and

Japan, Switzerland and Israel.

The remaining 2.6 billion have been bought by or promised to developing countries including India, Bangladesh, China, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico. — AFP

Gilgit-Baltistan
to be full-fledged
province in Pak

Islamabad, Sept. 17: Pakistan has decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan's status to that of a full-fledged province, a Pakistani media report on Thursday quoted a senior minister as saying. India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.

According to a report in the Express Tribune, Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs, Ali Amin Gandapur, on Wednesday said that Prime Minister Imran Khan would soon visit the region and make the formal announcement to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to the status of a full-fledged province with all constitutional rights.

Gandapur also said that work on the Moqondass Special Economic Zone would begin under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of Beijing's ambitious multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). — PTI

India government has decided in principle to give constitutional rights to Gilgit-Baltistan," the minister told reporters. India has said the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.

India completely rejects such actions and continued attempts to bring material changes in Pakistan occupied areas of the Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Instead, Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation, the Ministry of External Affairs said in May while protesting Islamabad's efforts to bring material change in Pakistan occupied territories.

Gandapur also said that work on the Moqondass Special Economic Zone would begin under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of Beijing's ambitious multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). — PTI



Barack Obama

OBAMA'S MEMOIR
'PROMISED LAND'
TO BE RELEASED IN
NOVEMBER

Washington, Sept. 17 : Former US president Barack Obama on Thursday announced the publication in November of the first half of his memoirs, "A Promised Land" — two weeks after the election pitting Donald Trump against Joe Biden.

Publisher Penguin Random House said the book will be released in 25 languages simultaneously on November 17.

"There's no feeling like finishing a book, and I'm proud of this one," Obama tweeted.

"In A Promised Land, I try to provide an honest accounting of my presidency, the forces we grapple with as a nation, and how we can heal our divisions and make democracy work for everybody." Obama, America's first black president, served two terms in the White House from January 2009 through January 2017, when he was succeeded by Trump.

The book will reveal Obama's thoughts during the global financial crisis and his take on Russian President Vladimir Putin, the statement from Penguin Random House says.

It will also revisit the 59-year-old Democratic leader's approval of a May 2011 raid in which Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan.

A release date for the second volume has not yet been set, Penguin Random House said.

SPACE | ODYSSEY A year on Jupiter-sized planet quickly whipping around is only 1.4 days

Giant planet found orbiting dead star

Washington, Sept. 17: Scientists have, for the first time, discovered a Jupiter-sized planet orbiting a white dwarf or a dead star located about 80 light years away.

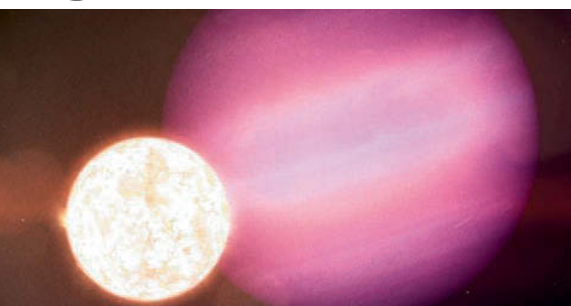
The finding, published in the journal *Nature*, shows the likely presence of the planet, named WD 1856 b, orbiting the smaller star remnant every 34 hours. "This planet is roughly the size of Jupiter, but it also has a very short orbital peri-

od — a year on this planet is only 1.4 days, so it's quickly whipping around its white dwarf star," said Ian Crossfield, assistant professor at the University of Kansas in the US.

A white dwarf is the vestige of a star that has ballooned into a red giant then collapsed back into a dense, dim core that is often about the size of Earth, so this planet is much larger than what is left of its star, the

researchers said. The process usually devours orbiting planets — but not in the case of WD 1856 b, which appears somehow to have avoided destruction, they said. "This tells us white dwarfs can have planets, which is something we didn't know before," Crossfield said. "There are people who now are looking for transiting planets around white dwarfs that could be potentially habitable.

It'd be a pretty weird system, and you'd have to think about how the planets actually survived all that time," he said. The researchers noted that this finding proves that some kinds of planets can survive and be found around white dwarfs. At first, WD 1856 b captured astronomers' interest when they noticed a possible transiting object with NASA's TESS Space Telescope survey. — PTI



Picture of the first time, discovered a Jupiter-sized planet orbiting a white dwarf. — NASA

DECCAN
Chronicle

18 SEPTEMBER 2020

Covid shot: Cautious hope, but policy key

For a month now, India has been consistently recording the highest daily infection rate in the world for the Coronavirus pandemic. Thursday's tally of 97,894 topped all such records and by an unfortunately thin margin, adding to the prevailing atmosphere of fear and anxiety. The death toll is 83,198. The virus has reached the heartlands and ICMR's recently released sero-survey results suggest that for every infection spotted India missed 81 cases.

Independent trackers are reporting a slightly higher death tally than the health ministry. According to Worldometer, India has 5,118,253 confirmed cases and 83,230 people have died due to Covid-19. This is in addition to an independent estimate of 906 people who lost their lives amid a poorly enforced lockdown. The government has denied data on this last count, even as families of these individuals in greatest distress pinned their hopes on relief arriving in the form of a financial compensation.

There will be no financial compensation. The economy has shrunk massively and the government is struggling to pay states GST compensation. West Bengal finance minister Amit Mitra alarmingly opined that the shrinkage is 32-33 per cent rather than 23.9 per cent as stated.

The only hope for citizens lies in the quick discovery and distribution of a Coronavirus vaccine. On this account, Hyderabad-based drug maker Dr Reddy's Laboratories is ready for clinical trials of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine while AstraZeneca has resumed trials for the "Oxford vaccine" in India and the UK. In the US, it is Pfizer that has assumed the lead in the vaccine race, which is now nearing its finish line, even as numbers at home stack up overwhelmingly. Though experts believe a vaccine will at best have 40-50 per cent efficacy, it will lead to the building up of herd immunity, which has now emerged as the best bet for our hapless populations. India needs a comprehensive Coronavirus vaccine strategy that will mobilise its fairly successful pharmaceutical industry to mass produce shots so that their price — initially astronomical — comes down and they can be administered to the last man quickly and efficiently, after first covering the elderly and most vulnerable. With a crashing economy and a collapsing healthcare, this strategy will be tricky not only to formulate but also to implement. Advance planning can perhaps save the day, advises the Opposition, and the government must pay heed. It cannot afford to while away its time and needs must take its bitter lessons from its failure to build capacity during its very costly lockdown.

Science and politics are being conflated in a sickeningly familiar manner in India as also elsewhere. It is hype and wordplay against fact and smart decision-making. A day after Union health minister Harsh Vardhan said a vaccine against the Coronavirus disease would be ready by early next year, Adar Poonawalla of the Serum Institute which is participating in the AstraZeneca vaccine trials rightly warned that there won't be enough doses till 2024. Over in the US, an election-bound Donald Trump contradicted his own expert by declaring that a vaccine will reach his country's population by about the same time. But even if a vaccine for Covid-19 were released now, it would take six to nine months for enough people to receive it to create immunity, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director, Robert Redfield, has held. Amid the gloom and doom, a tiny glimmer, that governments need to rally.

As Neros fiddle

So in another 21 months India will have a new Parliament? Well, not a new set of members but a modern building that will replace the over 90-year-old monumental circular edifice. Coming up at the cost of a whopping ₹861.9 crore, quite close to the existing 144-column structure, the new Parliament is indeed a grandiose plan of the present-day government. When the country is going through a dark patch, economically and otherwise, if a government is keen on moving parliamentarians to a new House with modern amenities, it only reveals a mix up in priorities.

The ostentatious project, which will be given concrete shape by Tata Projects Ltd, also brings to memory stories of ancient monarchs who revelled in building fanciful structures even when their subjects suffered in penury and hunger. In recent times, too, democratically elected leaders had displayed such grandiosity, costing only the exchequer needlessly. The swanky state capital, envisaged at Amaravati, for Andhra Pradesh is one example of one chief minister's grand plan not getting the grants from the next, thus leaving the capital idea remaining an unrealized dream for six years. It had been worse in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, where a resplendent highrise, designed with care by a chief minister to house the Secretariat and Assembly, was turned into a multi-specialty hospital, where Coronavirus patients are now being treated with care. That, however, was not the first new secretariat project in the state that went bust since successive chief ministers had been unsuccessfully trying to shift out of the historic Fort St George for long.

Hope such a fate doesn't befall the new Parliament that the Tata's would build in 21 months, perhaps before another government takes charge. We also hope that Parliamentary Democracy regains its lost vigour and verve in the new premises, ushering in better times for the country with parliamentarians protecting people's rights.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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M. Mohibul
Haque



The curious case of Urdu in NEP 2020

The Union Cabinet approved the new National Education Policy 2020 (hereafter NEP 2020) on 29 July, which proposes drastic changes in the Indian education system. While there are several changes, reforms and policies that are being widely appreciated there are many ambiguities, gaps and contradictions that are creating apprehensions in the minds of many in general and linguistic and religious minorities in particular.

NEP 2020 has given birth to apprehensions in the minds of Urdu lovers due to its unique status. It should be borne in mind that Urdu is a pan-Indian language but it lacks the patronage of any state as official language. Strangely, Urdu has not been mentioned anywhere in the 66 pages NEP 2020 released by the Union government. This conspicuous absence of Urdu drew widespread criticism across the country.

The government tried to alley the apprehensions of Urdu lovers and Secretary of Higher Education is reported to have said: "Para 4.12, 22.6

and 22.18 of NEP 2020 talk of all languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which includes Urdu. Incidentally, what is being deliberately and mischievously suppressed is that the paras do not talk of Hindi also, rather all languages of the Eighth Schedule are mentioned". Despite clarifications by the government the controversy is not dying. It calls for analysis of the NEP 2020 from the perspective of the status of Urdu.

NEP 2020 declares that "wherever possible, the medium of instructions until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language" (para 4.11, p.13) This emphasis on the mother tongue arouses hopes that many languages of India facing the challenge of survival due to deliberate design of the colonial masters and later on the apathy of the successive governments may be saved from extinction.

Under the sub-heading, Multilingualism and the Power of Language, the government recognises the fact

that "young children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their home language/mother tongue". While emphasis on primary education in mother tongue is praiseworthy the determination of home-/local language will be problematic because the NEP 2020 does not mention what will be the unit of determination of local or home language. For example, what is the home language of the people living in cities like Lucknow, Delhi, Moradabad, Meerut or states like UP, Bihar, Telangana, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and so on is indeed very difficult to determine. Under these circumstances, the role of the central and state governments will become crucial in implementation of the three-language formula and Urdu in the absence of patronage and lacking job opportunities will certainly be marginalised.

Another important dimension of the language policy under NEP 2020 is the promise that "there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any state. The three

languages learned by children will be the choices of states, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India." (para 4.13, p.14) However, determination of a 'region' for the purpose of the implementation of the three-language formula needs clarification. Besides, three entities — states, regions and students — are created for exercising the freedom of choice in selection of three languages to be taught. The question is what will happen if there is a clash in choice between states and students. For instance, a group of Urdu speaking students want to study Urdu while state emphasizes on Hindi, Sanskrit, Bangla, Odia, etc.

The apprehensions of Urdu-lovers are not unfounded because NEP 2020 besides especially promoting Sanskrit makes reference to other classical languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian and Prakrit but Urdu is not mentioned as a classical language as it seems that only ancient and not the medieval language/languages

are recognised as classical under NEP 2020.

While the allegation of deliberate exclusion of Urdu is doing the rounds the government decided to introduce the Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill 2020 in Parliament under which Urdu is set to lose its status of the sole official language of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The anxiety can also be understood from the fact that according to Census of India 2011 Urdu is showing a steady decline as mother tongue since 1981(5.25), 1991(5.18), 2001 (5.01), and 2011(4.19). Unlike other languages of the Schedule 8 of Indian Constitution whose speakers enjoy strong regional or state backing, people who speak Urdu are spread all over the country and therefore, it needs special consideration by the government for its survival and promotion.

The writer is a professor of political science at Aligarh Muslim University

Subhani



Kashmiris respond to Centre with 'Gupkar II'

Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near



On August 5, 2019, the Narendra Modi government embarked on a dangerous and destabilising course by tearing up the delicate arrangement Free India entered into with Maharaja Hari Singh on the morrow of Independence. The compact, in the shape of Article 370 of the Constitution, gave Kashmir considerable autonomy (as is now being negotiated with the Nagas). On August 22 this year, just 12 months after constitutional havoc was wreaked, accompanied by unremitting repression, Kashmir announced its riposte.

The riposte was resoundingly peaceful. It was contained in a document that its authors called "Gupkar Declaration II". The manifesto, which holds the promise of a fightback by ordinary people in Kashmir, relying only on constitutional means, if the parties that are signatory to it can hold their nerve in the face of both repression and allure, the twin instruments that go with the orchestration of tyranny.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the basis of the promise of Gupkar II is, as of now, no more than a piece of sophisticated political imagination. Its defining feature can be summed by a phrase in it: "nothing about us without us", which seems to constitute a direct challenge to the militaristic, semi-fascistic, style of governance in Kashmir. On the practical side, Gupkar II underscores that all political activities to be undertaken by the six signatory parties will be "subservient" to the restoration of Kashmir's autonomy as captured in Article 370. At this stage, there is nothing specific about public participation in taking the Gupkar II message forward.

The fundamental rea-

son for this is the disdain for mainstream parties that has developed among ordinary people since the August 5, 2019 crackdown. These parties are now held guilty of having sided all these years with New Delhi which trifled with Kashmir's dignity — indeed, even putting mainline politicians themselves in jail in the same manner as the separatists and the extremists, as if to the BJP rulers they were all the same.

It is the irony of the situation that is sought to be underlined, and it is an irony which, subtly conveyed by interested actors, transmutes into disgust for New Delhi, which gets easily transferred to those who are seen as having represented it in the Valley.

For all that, however, a very negative mood against the BJP sweeps the Valley, and it is this that is likely to sway people's behavior when Assembly elections are held — whenever they are held, and especially if the authorities perversely go on delaying it.

The BJP was once a welcome name in Kashmir due to former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's solicitude toward it. The goodwill was transferred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi until his party's true colours were revealed, ending in the stripping of J&K's autonomy and Kashmir's downright derogation and false depiction — for communal motives — as a land of Pakistan-inspired terrorists.

In the past three decades, Kashmir has seen extremist and terrorist violence, principally an aspect of Pakistan's covert and overt war against India, but also lately developing an indigenous component. But now, if Gupkar II can take off, New Delhi could face two very separate battlefields in Kashmir — one constituting the extrem-

ist-terrorist-separatist variety and, in addition, the newly created second front comprising mainstream political parties.

The latter campaigning for the restoration of Article 370, and not only J&K's statehood, are likely to get to be quite a handful unless, in the coming weeks and months, they are forcibly prevented from campaigning. So there could be greater repression, helping the extremist cause psychologically and politically, and, indirectly, Pakistan, in the process infusing greater strategic uncertainty into a region already beset with hostile Chinese military activity.

Should this materialise, few will miss locating its origins in the ideology-laden hubris which has been the hallmark of Modi, Shah & Associates, a partnership that has been so blind as not to see that the mainstream parties of Kashmir have been made victims of terrorist violence because they were seen as accomplices of Indian democracy, which has shown up in Kashmir in badly faded colours.

Gupkar II was preceded by the original Gupkar Declaration of August 4, 2019, enunciated just a day before the constitutional stripping of J&K. Leaders of the mainline Valley parties, who intuitively knew that the omens were all bad, had assembled at the Gupkar Road residence of National Conference chairman Farooq Abdullah, although they were regional rivals of the NC. They resolved, just before being imprisoned, that they would remain "united" to preserve Kashmir's constitutional status.

Gupkar II is a reaffirmation and a resolve for further action. But its distin-

guishing feature is that in addition to the regional parties that had met in 2019, two national parties — Congress and CPI(M) — also joined them at Dr Abdullah's residence on August 22 this year. A few days later, the CPI in Kashmir extended unqualified support. This makes Gupkar II not only a document of Kashmir but a document for the nation. This makes it unique in Kashmir's annals.

It is instructive that its arch opponents are the BJP and the Narendra Modi government, the suave professionals who spread the Jamaat-e-Islami narrative in the Kashmir Valley, and Pakistan's military establishment if the signals are read right. This is an impressive array of foes for a group that espouses peaceful and constitutional means to return to the old normal.

Can history be re-injected? It is hard to say. But it is worth remembering that the official move to break Kashmir's spirit constitutionally was stoutly opposed in Parliament in August 2019 by the Congress leadership, the Left parties, the DMK, RJD, and Trinamul Congress. The BJP's important Bihar ally, the JD(U), also opposed it. Another BJP ally, Akali Dal, spoke against the bill but was obliged to vote with the government.

This is an impressive number of parties standing up with Kashmir in Parliament. In addition, the principal sections of the mainline media too disapproved of the government's action. The Forum for Human Rights in Kashmir, comprising a retired Supreme Court judge, several retired high court judges, a retired home secretary, a retired foreign secretary, and retired military officers published a sharply critical report on the ending of Kashmir's autonomy and the government's subsequent actions in Kashmir. And yet, regrettably, there seems a concerted effort in some quarters in the Valley to spread the disinformation that India slept soundly through the process of Kashmir's belittling by the Modi government.

LETTERS

FREEDOM MISUSED

The SC has rightly put its foot down on Sudarshan TV from airing programmes that incite people's passions leading to clashes on the streets (*A welcome ruling, DC, Sept. 17*). Both audio and visual media are frequently crossing the limits under the guise of freedom of speech and expression.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

WELCOME MOVE

The Supreme Court and the Centre's initiative of trials against sitting and former lawmakers was long overdue (*SC to frame rules for timely prosecution of lawmakers, DC, Sept. 17*). It's a fact that our tardy justice system emboldens leaders to indulge in every possible crime with impunity. Only criminals of the underprivileged class languish in prisons for years as undertrials without bail. The politically privileged class fearlessly rules the roost. This should end.

Udatha Rama Chandra Rao
Yeleswaram, East Godavari

SIT PROBE

Of late, out of helplessness, it has become a "practice" for AP government to approach the apex court for one thing or the other as the AP HC is almost 'negating' every case of the state that came up for hearing before it. But the latest SIT probe into the alleged Amaravati land scam could be termed as the ultimate. More so because the said stay order seemingly ignored prima facie evidence in the case (FIR).

Govardhana Mynedu
Vijayawada

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN
Chronicle

Fierce fighting erupts in Jordan

BEIRUT, Sept. 17.

Fierce fighting erupted in Jordan today between King Hussein's army and Palestine Commandos, with both sides claiming immediate successes in conflicting versions of the struggle.

But Beirut observers believed the numerically stronger and better armed Royalist army had had the better of things in the initial stages of what seemed to be a final showdown for control of the Hashimite Kingdom.

As army tanks swept into Amman, Syria came out on the guerrilla's side, appealed to Royalist troops to mutiny against their officers, and warned that it would not stand idly by while the Fedayeen were crushed.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,979.85	-0.82
Nifty 50	11,516.10	-0.76
S&P 500*	3,341.83	-1.29
Dollar (₹)	73.65	-0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.38	-0.56
Euro (₹)	86.96	0.34
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,463*608	1.15
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.35	1.13
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.033	0.041
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.663	-0.024

* As of 9:30 PM IST

ESIC members can file for jobloss benefit

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) subscribers who lost their job due to the Covid-19 situation can claim unemployment relief of 50 per cent of wages under the Atal Bimit Kalyan Yojana. The claims can be made online along with submission of the physical claim with an affidavit, photocopy of Aadhaar card and bank account details to the designated ESIC branch office by post or in person.

ALL bags large order from fuel distributor



Ashok Leyland said it has bagged orders for 1,400 intermediate commercial vehicles (ICVs) from a logistics start-up company, Procure Box. The ICVs will be utilised by Procure Box for its fuel distribution business across 750 districts in the country. The order encompasses Ashok Leyland's most successful product, the Ecomet, and will be executed in the next five-six months, the company said in a regulatory filing.

Israeli and Dubai diamond bourses sign trade pact

The Israeli and Dubai diamond exchanges said they had struck a deal to boost trade, days after Israel signed breakthrough agreements with UAE and Bahrain. Israel remains a major leader in the polishing of large diamonds. The Israeli Diamond Exchange will open an office in Dubai, while the Dubai Multi Commodities Center, an economic free zone, will set up shop in Ramat Gan, Israel, the base of the Israeli exchange.

Skoda Rapid automatic priced at ₹7.49 lakh

European car maker Skoda launched the automatic transmission version of its TSI-powered Rapid at a starting price of Rs 7.49 lakh (ex-showroom) ahead of the festival season. Skoda India had rolled out Rapid with TSI in manual version only in May this year. A TSI (turbocharged stratified injection) engine is a compact, high-powered and uses less fuel while cutting fuel consumption and CO2 emissions.



■ Irdai panel wants to cover MSMEs first ₹75K-cr pandemic pool suggested

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, SEPT. 17

A working group formed by the insurance regulator to study the feasibility of setting up a 'pandemic risk pool' to cover business losses arising due to pandemics and epidemics has recommended setting up a Rs 75,000 crore pool with public-private partnership to cover the business losses of MSME workers in the first phase.

The reinsurer, GIC Re, which has experience of managing the Indian Terrorism Pool and Indian Nuclear Pool, would be an apt administrator for the proposed pandemic pool, the group has said.

Pointing to the need for a pandemic pool, the group said some estimates suggest that the current business interruption premiums in some markets would need to be collected for over 100 years to cover two months of Covid-19-related business interruption costs.

"The working group believes that for the pandemic pool to have an adequate purpose, it needs to cover at least 4-5 crores MSME workers in the first phase and to accomplish that, the assurance from the government to provide a backstop is necessary... the backstop triggers only at the event of pandemic striking and the total loss payouts are higher than the capacity garnered by the local insurance/reinsurance and international market. Globally all pan-



demographic pool (including USA, France, Germany) proposals are heavily hinged on their national government's support in the form of similar backstop and are at different stages of approval. The working group has proposed a government backstop of appx. Rs 75,000 crores," said the report.

"The quantum of loss due to an epidemic/pandemic risk event is huge and hence is beyond the capacity of public and/or private companies and/or government alone. Hence a risk pooling mechanism with public-private-government participation would be an appropriate resolution to address this similar concern in future," said the report.

The report said the participation shall be mandatory for the sectors which have been covered under the pool. "This can be with as a standalone product providing coverage for the event or as an add-on with the existing products."

The pool shall provide coverage in a phased man-

ner. As MSME and the unorganised sector are the worst affected segments of society during the current Covid-19 pandemic in India, the first phase of the pool shall cover income losses due to non-damage business interruption resulting from a future pandemic event and subsequent lockdown.

Pandemic losses are covered under currently available health insurance products, hence the coverage for losses in the health segment caused due to a pandemic event, beyond a threshold, may be covered under the pool in the second phase. The coverage under the pool may be expanded to the life insurance segment also in the later phases, said the report.

The pool premium collection is proposed to be invested in government securities or specifically designed bonds by the government. The premiums accumulated over the years and the investment surplus would help in gradually reducing the government backstop.

Advance tax mop-up falls 25.5% in Q2

Mumbai, Sept. 17: Advance tax collections fell 25.5 per cent to Rs 1,59,057 crore in the second quarter of the fiscal, an income tax official said on Thursday.

However, there was improvement over the first quarter ended June, when advance tax revenue had plunged 76 per cent to a tepid Rs 11,714 crore as the whole economy was under a stringent lockdown.

During the year-ago period to September 15, 2019, total advance tax collection had stood at Rs 2,12,889 crore, down from Rs 3,70,652 crore a year ago.

"Total advance tax collection in the second quarter fell by 25.5 per cent to Rs 1,59,057 crore from Rs 2,12,889 crore YoY. While corporates paid only Rs 1,29,619.6 crore in advance tax, down by 27.3 per cent in the reporting quarter, personal income tax collection stood at Rs 29,437.5 crore, down 15 per cent from Rs 34,632.9 crore.

"However, TDS (tax deducted at source) fared better at Rs 1,38,605.2 crore, down by 5.6 per cent from Rs 1,46,792.4 crore," the tax official from the Mumbai zone told PTI.

Advance corporate tax mop-up had plummeted by 79 per cent to Rs 8,286 crore in the June quarter, from Rs 39,405 crore in the June 2019 quarter. Advance personal income tax collection in Q1 had declined 64 per cent to Rs 3,428 crore from Rs 9,512 crore. —PTI

Civil aviation revenues dip 85%; over 18,000 jobs lost

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Revenues of the civil aviation sector dropped by 85 per cent since the lockdown even as the sector lost more than 18,000 jobs.

The Covid-19-induced lockdown had reduced the air traffic to a fraction of what it was before. The regulatory restrictions on flight operations had led to severe curtailment in operations and sub-optimal aircraft utilisation.

As per the ministry of civil aviation data, domestic traffic fell close to 80 per cent from 5.85 crore during March-July 2019 to a mere 1.20 crore in March-July 2020. International traffic too reduced by 87 per cent from 93.45 lakh to 11.55 lakh during the period.

This led to a steep decline in revenues in the June quarter. The aggregate revenue of Indian carriers came down by 85 per cent from Rs 25,517 crore in the June quarter of 2019 to just Rs 3,651 crore during April-June 2020. Air India's revenue fell to Rs 1,531 crore from



Rs 7,066 crore in the same quarter last year.

Aggregate revenues of airport operators too shrunk from Rs 5,745 crore in the June quarter of 2019 to Rs 894 crore in the June quarter of 2020, a drop of 84 per cent.

Reduced revenues saw more than 18,000 employees losing jobs across airlines, airports, ground handling agencies and cargo operators. As many as 5,298 employees of airlines lost jobs by the end of July while 3,246 people at airports, 4,866 people with ground handling agencies and 1,017 employees with cargo operators lost their jobs between March-end and July-end.

"The fall in domestic air travel demand has been much sharper than the

capacity cuts imposed for the industry. The pick-up in domestic passenger volume since end-May 2020 has been slow, with traffic increasing by only 6 per cent in July from the previous month. We think volume growth will remain in the single digits over the next few months, as the pandemic continues to spread in India and people forego non-essential travel," says Fitch Ratings.

Covid-19 has also adversely impacted the financials of the Airports Authority of India and it is likely to see losses this fiscal. In order to meet the working capital requirements, the AAI has taken 'fund-based working capital' facility of Rs 1,500 crore. Delhi and Mumbai airports were given a three-months deferral, up to July 15, on monthly fee payment against their annual fee obligation. Bangalore and Hyderabad airports have also been granted deferral of four months from July 1 for payment of concession fee to the central government.

SC refuses to resume Ambani insolvency case

UPMANYU TRIVEDI
SEPT. 17

The Supreme Court rejected a petition by State Bank of India to allow a personal bankruptcy case against tycoon Anil Ambani to resume.

A three-judge panel headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao ruled that the bankruptcy case against

Ambani will remain suspended and directed the Delhi High Court to decide on Ambani's challenge to provisions of insolvency law.

The case is among the first high-profile ones after



Anil Ambani

rules were set for personal bankruptcy last year. Bankers and investors in stressed assets are keenly watching the case as its final outcome may decide the power of lenders in taking action against founders who guaranteed repayments of loans by companies that later went bankrupt.

—Bloomberg

Covid proves a losing business for insurers

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17

Health insurance may be a fastest growing business for the general insurance sector in the pandemic season, but a significant surge in the number of claims and their immediate settlement have led to companies incurring heavy losses on health cover.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, the health insurers have earned revenue of Rs 450 crore through the sale of corona-specific products, but they have settled a large number of claims on Covid-19 during the period, paying out Rs 1,430 crore, almost over three times the premium they have earned. This was revealed by Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India chairman S.C. Khuntia during a CII virtual summit on Thursday.

"There has been a surge in health insurance claims relating to Covid-19 with a total of 2.38 lakh

claims. Of these, 1.48 lakh claims amounting to ₹1,430 crore have already been settled," Khuntia said, adding that the sector has still witnessed a positive growth of 2.4 per cent between April and August end 2020 as compared to a year ago.

The Irdai is working on a risk-based solvency margin system for the insurers in the next three years' time. "As of now, insurers are supposed to maintain solvency margin to the tune of 1.5 times of their total premium. As the risk varies segment-wise, the regulator is working on varying solvency margins for various segments," he said.

Khuntia said the Irdai is working on standard products for insurance of dwelling units and term insurance as well.

He asked all insurers to ensure repeat purchase and renewal of health-related policies. The Irdai is monitoring the persistency levels (volume of business retained) of life insurance companies.

Global stocks dip on lack of Fed action

Beijing, Sept. 17: Global stocks and US futures sank on Thursday after the Federal Reserve indicated its benchmark interest rate will stay close to zero at least through 2023 but announced no additional stimulus plans.

Indexes in London, Frankfurt and other European markets dropped after Shanghai, Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, India all closed lower.

The Fed said Wednesday it won't raise interest rates until inflation reaches 2 per cent, which the US central bank's own projections say won't happen until late 2023. Chairman Jerome Powell promised the Fed will not lose sight of unemployed Americans but gave no indication of new stimulus.

Markets hoped for the Fed to put policy money where the mouth is but "ended up a tad disappointed," Mizuho Bank said in a report. The Fed was long on talk and short on action. Also Thursday, the Japanese and British central banks left their interest rates unchanged.

—AP

Industrial jobs in India declined 26%

From Page 1

Another group to have suffered big job losses among the salaried class is industrial workers. Around 50 lakh industrial workers lost their jobs post lockdown, translating to a 26 per cent fall in employment in the group over a year. The decline in employment of industrial workers is likely to be largely in the smaller industrial units. This job loss also reflects the dis-

stress in the micro, small and medium industrial units in recent times.

The government has been evasive to the queries by members of Parliament about the post-Covid job losses. The latest data available with the government with regard to unemployment across different sectors is from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the National Sample Survey Office in 2017-18.

When asked by MPs on

whether the government has done any assessment of the job loss among migrant workers due to the Covid-19 crisis, minister of state for labour and employment Santosh Kumar Gangwar on September 14 had said that "no such data is maintained".

Responding to another query on Thursday, the external affairs ministry said that over 3 lakh Indian nationals working abroad have returned due to the pandemic.

DELISTING: VEDANTA SEEKS NOD FOR REVERSE BOOK BUILDING

New Delhi, Sept. 17: After mobilising \$3.15 billion to fund the delisting of its Indian subsidiary, Vedanta Resources Ltd has approached the Securities and Exchange Board of India for approvals to start the reverse book building process, sources said.

The company had in May announced plans to delist Vedanta Ltd from the Indian stock exchanges by buying out non-promoter shareholding.

Sources said the firm is expecting to receive Sebi approvals by early next



week, after which it will launch reverse book building and invite bids from public shareholders.

The reverse book building process is likely to be open for five days and will allow public shareholders to effectively discover the

price for the delisting.

"The final exit offer price" will take the shareholding of Vedanta Resources to at least 90 per cent in Vedanta Ltd. The public shareholding in Vedanta Ltd is currently at 49.49 per cent. "Vedanta Resources is looking to complete the entire exercise in the next two-three weeks," the source said.

When contacted, a Vedanta spokesperson said that the company is working to take all "necessary approvals" for the reverse book building.

—PTI

Babus say taxes are fair, but royalty payments are high

New Delhi, Sept. 17: Auto companies should cut costs by reducing royalty payments to their parent companies abroad instead of asking the government to reduce GST, finance ministry sources said on Thursday, responding to criticism on high taxes in India.

Most globally established companies in the sector have flourished in the current taxation and regulatory regime, which is evident from the huge royalty payouts made by Indian partners to their foreign parent firms, they added.

Toyota Motor Corp is not looking at further expansion in India due to the country's high taxes, the firm's vice chairman of India unit Shekar Viswanathan had said in an interview this week.

Finance ministry



sources said India's tax policy on the automobile sector has been quite consistent for the last three decades, in the form of allowing foreign investment and incentivising domestic manufacturing.

GST rates on automobiles are less than what VAT and excise duty rates used to be in the pre-GST times. All of a sudden, dissent in some quarters on tax rates on automobiles is surprising, they added.

"These companies shou-

ld cut down their costs of manufacturing by cutting down the royalty payments to their parent companies abroad instead of asking the government to reduce GST," a source said.

Taxes on automobiles are in the highest bracket across the globe without much exception, the sources said.

Japan currently has three types of taxes on automobiles—once on the purchase, then an annual automobile tax based on engine size, and finally a weight tax at inspections required once every two years. Over and above this, there is GST at the highest end of the applicable rates, they said.

Also, in the EU, the base rate for VAT/GST on automobiles ranges from 20 per cent to 25 per cent.

The UK charges vehicle

excise duties which vary with car emission norms and has 14 rate slabs.

Besides, there are road usage charges. High parking charges are common across the globe, they said.

Sources said vehicles, based on their high pre-GST incidence, were placed in the 28 per cent GST slab.

Passenger vehicles also attract compensation cess ranging from 1 to 22 per cent. But even with this, the tax rate has not gone beyond pre-GST levels, except in few cases which were enjoying certain duty concessions, they added.

"Most of the countries provide certain concessions to electric vehicles. Given this, it would be unfair to claim that the GST rates are a demand dampener," one source said.

—PTI

Toyota Kirloskar takes a U-turn

New Delhi, Sept. 17: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) on Thursday said it remains deeply committed to the Indian market and its national objectives, refuting once again the claims by a senior company official earlier that it would stop further expansion in India due to high taxes.

The automaker said it has firm belief in the core strength of India's economic growth potential and is fully committed to continually work towards contributing to economic development.

Keeping in sync with the vision of 'Grow India Grow with India, during the past two decades, the

company has worked tirelessly to invest in creation of a world-class talent pool and for building a strong competitive local supplier ecosystem in line with the "Skill India" and the "Make in India" initiatives, TKM managing director Masakazu Yoshimura said in a statement.

Toyota's operations in India are an integral part of its long-term global strategy. "As part of these efforts, Toyota Group is targeting to invest over Rs 2,000 crore in India in the coming years on technology and electrification, both for the domestic and the export markets," he said.

—PTI

New Delhi, Sept. 17: Dr

Reddy's Laboratories on Thursday said it has settled a litigation with a unit of Bristol Myers Squibb related to patents for Revlimid (lenalidomide) capsules, used to treat various kinds of cancer.

The Hyderabad-based company has settled litigation with Celgene, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bristol Myers Squibb, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a statement.

In settlement of all outstanding claims in the litigation, Celgene has agreed to provide the company with a licence to sell volume-limited amounts of generic lenalidomide capsules in the US beginning on a confidential date after March 2022 subject to regulatory approval, it said.

The agreed-upon percentages are confidential, Dr Reddy's said.

The drug maker is already licensed to sell generic lenalidomide capsules in the US without volume limitation beginning on January 31, 2026, Dr Reddy's said.

"We are pleased with the settlement agreement, and look forward to bringing a generic version of lenalidomide to market soon subject to regulatory approval for the benefit of patients," Dr Reddy's Laboratories North America generics CEO Marc Kikuchi said.

Revlimid, a trademark of Celgene, is used to treat multiple myeloma and myelodysplastic syndromes.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Hari slips, Carlsen roars into lead

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna slipped to fifth spot from a share of lead after a win-less day at the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tournament, where he lost to Ian Nepomniachtchi and world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen. Harikrishna, who shared the lead with Lev Aronian after three rounds, lost the fourth round of the Rapid event to Nepomniachtchi, then drew with Armenian Aronian before losing the sixth to Carlsen. Meanwhile, Carlsen bounced back after a below par opening day to record three wins and jumped to sole lead with nine points. The Norwegian outplayed the India No.2 in 31 moves to wrap up a successful day on which he also defeated Aronian and Leinier Dominguez (USA). Hari held Aronian to a draw in 58 moves after a 45-move defeat at the hands of the Russian. — PTI

NSFs gets SC nod for recognition

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry on Thursday welcomed the Supreme Court's go-ahead to it on grant of recognition to National Sports Federations (NSFs) and said it would intimate the court about the process in a week's time. The Supreme Court said the ministry and the Indian Olympic Association are not required to seek the nod of the Delhi High Court before granting recognition to sports federations in the country. The apex court was hearing the sports ministry's appeal against the High Court order which prohibited it from taking decision on granting recognition to NSFs without its prior approval. A total of 57 NSFs were rendered de-recognised because of the HC order. "As per the Honourable Supreme Court's order today, the sports ministry can now give recognitions to NSFs which will help in the preparations for our Olympic-bound athletes," a source said. — PTI

Fed Cup named after Billie Jean

London: The Fed Cup is changing its name to honour tennis great Billie Jean King, the woman whose lifelong battle for equality and social justice laid the foundation for generations that followed. The Billie Jean King Cup will become the first major global team competition to be named after a woman, the International Tennis Federation said Thursday. "I'm still in shock, the 76-year-old King said of the tribute. It's really a privilege, and it's also a responsibility. It's wild, it's great, it's wonderful." The rebranding follows earlier changes to bring prize money in line with the men's Davis Cup and coincides with the 50th anniversary of King's pioneering effort to launch a women's pro tennis circuit. "We feel it's long overdue," ITF president David Haggerty said. — AP

Djoker, Nadal off to winning starts

Rome: Defending champion Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic made winning returns at the Italian Open on Wednesday with the top two men's seeds easing into the third round of the clay-court tournament in Rome. Nine-time winner Nadal swept aside fellow Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta 6-1, 6-1 in his first match in over six months, played behind closed doors at the Foro Italico. The world number two has not played since winning in Acapulco at the end of February, opting to skip the US hard court tour amid coronavirus concerns. Earlier, Djokovic eased past Italian wild card entry Salvatore Caruso 6-3, 6-2 after his unbeaten record this season was ended with a US Open last 16 default for accidentally striking a line judge with a ball hit in frustration. — AP

Live on TV

TENNIS

Rome ATP Masters: Matches from 2.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Spanish League: Getafe vs Osasuna from 12.30 am (Saturday) on LaLiga page on Facebook

WWE SMACKDOWN

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

BASKETBALL

NBA Western Conference Finals (Game 1 of best-of-7): Los Angeles Lakers vs Denver Nuggets from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Six, HD

WRAP AND ROLL

MI look for more finishers to reduce Hardik's load

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 17: Monitoring comeback man Hardik Pandya's workload is paramount for Mumbai Indians coach Mahela Jayawardene as he intends to groom a "few more finishers" for the upcoming edition of Indian Premier League starting here on Saturday.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians will take on last year's runners-up Chennai Super Kings in the opening encounter on Saturday, which will be Hardik's first game in a year having undergone back surgery for stress fracture last year.

"Hardik is coming back from an injury. So we will have to be mindful of that but he is looking very good in the nets. Both the players (Pandya brothers) have been fantastic for MI over the last three or four years. It brings a lot of energy to the group," Jayawardene said during MI's virtual media conference on Thursday.

The Sri Lankan legend was asked whether Hardik will again be assigned the finisher's job.

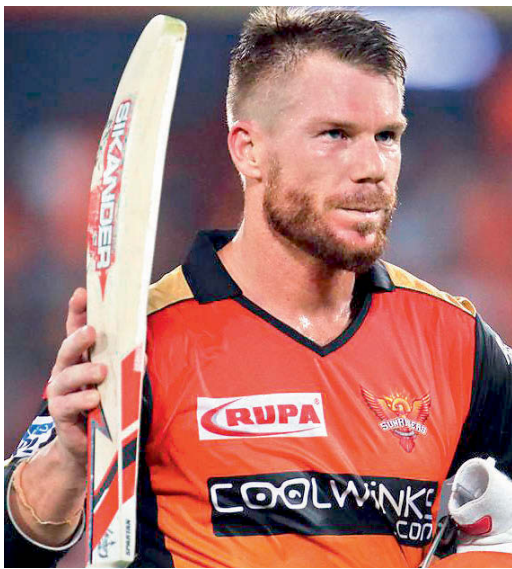
"We have used him (Hardik) in different roles in the past and we will look into that. We will have quite a number of other players who can fix into that role as well, so whenever the opportunity is there we ask anyone to finish the game off," said the former Sri Lanka captain.

"It doesn't just fall on Hardik but it is one of his responsibilities, so we want to try and challenge players in different ways in this camp, so we will continue to do that," he said.

Australian dasher Chris Lynn is an opening option but Jayawardene made it clear that Rohit Sharma-Quinton de Kock opening pair wouldn't be tinkered with.

"Having options is always great. Chris Lynn is a great addition to the squad but the combination of Rohit and Quinton has been there for us, last season they complement each other well," he said.

The MI coach is also aware that Jasprit Bumrah's workload management, just like Hardik's, need to be precise, considering that India will be playing a gruelling four-match Test series against Australia Down Under later in the year. — PTI



David Warner

Maxwell, Carey hit tons as Oz clinch series

Manchester, Sept. 17: Glenn Maxwell and Alex Carey both hit brilliant hundreds as Australia sealed a dramatic series win over world champions England in the third one-day international at Old Trafford on Wednesday. Australia, chasing a target of 303, were all but out of the game at 73-5 when Maxwell came to the crease.

But an Australia record sixth-wicket stand of 212 between Carey (106) and Maxwell (108) helped give the tourists a 2-1 success as England suffered their first home ODI series defeat in five years.

Earlier, Jonny Bairstow had revived England from the depths of 0-2 with a superb hundred that saw them to 302-7 after the opener watched from the

other end as left-arm quick Mitchell Starc removed Jason Roy and Test captain Joe Root with the first two balls of the game.

Sam Billings (57) and Chris Woakes (53 not out) also hit valuable fifties.

Maxwell's hundred was just his second century in 113 matches at this level, with Carey's innings the wicketkeeper's maiden century in his 39th ODI.

But when Maxwell holed out off leg-spinner Adil Rashid, Australia still needed 18 off 15 balls. That became 10 off six when Carey, whose century came off 106 balls, was superbly caught by a diving Mark Wood at third man off Jofra Archer.

New batsman Starc, however, hit his first ball, from Rashid, for six and



Mumbai Indians' Hardik Pandya at a net session in Abu Dhabi.

Malinga will be missed, rues Rohit

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 17: Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma on Thursday conceded that "incomparable" Sri Lankan pace legend Lasith Malinga, who has opted out of this year's IPL, will be severely missed by his defending champion team given his "unbelievable" past performances.

The 37-year-old Malinga, who is IPL's highest wicket-taker with 170 scalps to his credit, has pulled out

citing personal reasons in a major blow to the four-time champions. MI will take on the Chennai Super Kings in this season's lung-opener on September 19 here.

"I don't think it is easy to come and fill his boots. He has been a match-winner for Mumbai. I have said it many times, whenever we sort of find ourselves in trouble, Malinga was the one to bail us out from that," Rohit said in an online press conference.

"His experience will be missed, what he did with MI is unbelievable and it is unfortunate that he is not a part of the team this year."

"We have got likes (James) Pattinson, Dhawal Kulkarni, Mohsin (Khan) and these are the names that we are looking to replace Malinga with. But obviously what Malinga did for Mumbai, it is not just comparable," he added. Talking about his own

role, Rohit said he will continue to open.

"I opened the entire tournament last year and I will continue to do that. Again I keep all the options open, whatever the team wants, happy to do that."

"Even when I play for India, message from my side to the management has always been the same 'do not close any doors' keep all the options open and I will do the same here as well." — PTI

Just 36-hr quarantine for Eng, Oz players arriving from UK

New Delhi, Sept. 17: The Indian Premier League franchises will be heaving a sigh of relief as all the 21 Australian and English players arriving to the UAE from the United Kingdom will have to undergo just 36 hours of quarantine instead of the earlier prescribed six days.

All the franchises which have English and Australian players arriving after the white ball series in the UK had appealed for reducing the quarantine period and the BCCI under Sourav Ganguly's leader-

ship has been able to successfully sort the issue out with local authorities in the UAE.

"Yes, I can confirm that all the English and Australian players have to now undergo 36-hour quarantine instead of six days. The matter has been sorted and most of the teams will now have their big stars available from the first game itself," a senior IPL functionary privy to development said on conditions of anonymity.

The likes of Steve Smith, David Warner, Jofra

Archer, Jos Buttler will arrive in the UAE late on Thursday night (UAE time) from the UK and on arrival will undergo RT-PCR test for Covid-19.

"They have undergone one rapid test before boarding (the flight) and will undergo another on arrival. Otherwise, the robust testing protocols will be followed as usual. The rationale behind the move is that all the players are entering from one bio-bubble to another," the veteran BCCI official said. — PTI



Australia's Glenn Maxwell (left) celebrates with Alex Carey after scoring a century during their third ODI against England in Manchester on Wednesday. — AP

sealed victory with two balls to spare with a four. "It probably wasn't the

ideal situation when I came in but being the last batter, I suppose I had a

FRENCH | LEAGUE

Draxler gifts PSG season's first win

Paris, Sept. 17: Julian Draxler scored in added time on Wednesday night to give depleted Paris Saint-Germain their first league win of the season, 1-0 at home against Metz.

PSG, shorn of many stars before kick off, were playing with nine men when Draxler pounced on a rebound to nod home PSG's first goal of the league season.

"I'm very proud, it's incredible, honestly. I still have to think about it because I still can't believe it," PSG coach Thomas Tuchel said after the game.

PSG, who started the game seriously depleted, were reduced to 10 men after 65 minutes when central defender Abdou Diallou collected a second yellow card and his club's fourth of the season.

In the dying seconds, defender Juan Bernat, a 63rd minute replacement, limped off with a knee injury, leaving PSG, who had used all their replacements with nine men.

"All the fans can be proud, we still deserved to win, at 9 against 11," said Tuchel.

While the game was in progress, the French league announced bans of two games for Neymar and

● **PSG, shorn of many stars before kick off, were playing with nine men when Draxler pounced on a rebound to nod home PSG's first goal of the league season.**

Leandro Paredes and six games for Layvin Kurzawa after their red cards during a home loss to Marseille on Sunday that ended in a brawl.

Another star attacker, Kylian Mbappe, remains in coronavirus quarantine while Thilo Kehrer and Marco Verratti are injured.

But striker Mauro Icardi, centreback Marquinhos and goalie Keylor Navas returned after spells in quarantine.

"We made a lot of effort, we had a lot of changes, we used a lot of players who have not trained for a while...With players who haven't played for a long time," said Tuchel. "But the effort is still there."

PSG had opened the season with two defeats for the first time since 1984/85, losing by one goal to Lens and then Marseille. — AFP

Messi brace takes Barca past Girona

Barcelona, Sept. 17: Lionel Messi scored twice on Wednesday as Barcelona beat second-division Girona 3-1 in a preseason friendly.

Messi helped set up Philippe Coutinho, back from his loan at Bayern Munich, for the first goal after 21 minutes.

The Argentine scored his first after 45 minutes, spinning on the edge of the penalty area and drilling a shot in off the base of the far post. He scored his second, with a deflected shot, after 50 minutes.

He went off after an hour. Messi only returned to training at the start of last week after saying he wanted to leave the club.

Messi started Barcelona's first friendly on Saturday, playing 45 minutes without scoring in a 3-1 victory over third-tier Gimnastica Tarragona.

Earlier on Wednesday, La

Liga president Javier Tebas said he was pleased Messi had stayed at Barcelona.

"Messi is important for our competition," said Tebas, at an event to promote the Liga sticker collection. "He is a player who was born in our competition... And hopefully he will finish his career in our league."

Barcelona used 20 players in Wednesday's game at the club's training centre but neither Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez nor Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal appeared.

Manager Ronald Koeman said after the game he had talked to Suarez and acknowledged Barcelona might not be able to sell him.

"If finally he does not find a team and ends up staying, he will be one more player for the squad," said Koeman. — AFP

BELGIUM TOP FIRST FIFA CHART SINCE SHUTDOWN

Zurich, Sept. 17: The first FIFA men's world rankings for five months were still led by Belgium on Thursday after the shutdown of European teams during the coronavirus pandemic ended in September.

Belgium lead an unchanged top four nations from 2018 World Cup winners France, Brazil — who have yet to play in 2020 — and England.

Portugal, the reigning European and Uefa Nations League champions, rose two places to No. 5.

Rankings after the November international break will decide seedings when FIFA draws the European qualifying groups for the 2022 World Cup in early December. The 10 highest-ranked European teams will be top-seeded in groups where only the winners will advance directly to the finals tournament in Qatar. Three more teams will qualify through playoffs scheduled in March 2022. — AP

Leeds, Saints crash out of League Cup

London, Sept. 17: Leeds and Southampton were the Premier League casualties in the second round of the League Cup on Wednesday as League One Hull won a Yorkshire derby 9-8 on penalties at Elland Road, while Saints lost 2-0 at home to Brentford.

On their first appearance in the top-flight for 16 years, Leeds were unlucky not to hold Liverpool to a thrilling draw at Anfield on Saturday, but Marcelo Bielsa's decision to make 11 changes backfired as his side were far less clinical against a team two divi-

sions below them. Mallik Wilks's early deflected effort gave the Tigers something to hold on to and, despite handing club Spanish international forward Rodrigo his first start, Leeds failed to muster a response until deep into stoppage time when Ezgjan Alioski fired home.

A marathon shootout followed with both sides missing just one of their first eight penalties before Jamie Shackleton's spot-kick was saved and Alfie Jones sent Hull into round three. — AFP

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