





## OTHER STORIES

YSRC LEADERS  
FACING CRIMINAL  
CASES, SAYS TDDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

Telugu Desam state president K. Kala Venkatrao on Sunday stated that the ruling YSR Congress leaders were afraid of the Supreme Court's directive to states to submit information on the criminal antecedents of MLAs and MPs.

He said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and his party MP V. Vijaya Sai Reddy, in particular, were being shaken after the apex court asked the High Court of Andhra Pradesh to providing details of elected representatives having criminal cases pending against them.

Mr Venkatrao alleged that over 50 MLAs of the YSRC and about nine ministers were involved in criminal cases. Similarly, cases of atrocities were pending against seven YSRC MPs, he claimed and remarked that these people's representatives were shivering at the thought of the next orders of the Supreme Court.

AMARAVATI  
FARMERS DENY  
INSIDER TRADINGMD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

Pro-Amaravati farmers, objecting to the allegations of insider trading by Telugu Desam leaders in land acquisition for the capital city project, claimed they had sold their lands for their own needs. Accusing the YSRC government of spreading lies with an ulterior motive, the farmers vowed to repulse the 'false' propaganda.

The cabinet sub-committee submitted a report to the government, pointing to TD leaders' role in insider trading and other irregularities in land acquisition for capital in Amaravati. Based on the report, the government appointed SIT to further probe into alleged insider trading. The SIT during investigation found the involvement of several officials in the scam and arrested Thullur tahsildar Anne Sudhir Babu among others.

SIT investigation came handy for YSRC leaders to accuse TD leaders of purchasing lands cheap from farmers and selling them to APCRDA at higher prices under the land pooling scheme.

The pro-Amaravati farmers who have been agitating for the past 271 days against the government's decision to shift executive capital to Visakhapatnam, have now sprung to the support of TD leaders.

SATYA NADELLA'S  
FAMILY LAUNCHES  
PROJECTHOSKOTE NAGABHUSHANAM  
ANANTAPUR, SEPT. 13

The family of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella launched a programme to 'Promote alternate/additional livelihood for women and farm workers' in Anantapur district on Sunday. Satya Nadella's wife Anupama Nadella donated ₹2 crore for the project on the occasion of the first death anniversary of former IAS officer B.N. Yugandhar, a native of Bukkapauram village in the district.

After retired IAS officer Venugopal, who is the brain behind the project and father of Anupama, addressed through webinar, collector Gandham Chandrudu formally launched the NGO, to be headed by Dr Malla Reddy.

Recalling Nadella Yugandhar as a brilliant IAS officer, who had served in the Prime Minister's Office and as the member of Planning Commission, collector Chandrudu said the project would be taken up with ₹10 crore. It would prove a boon for a large number of farmers and farm labourers, who returned to their native villages after the outbreak of Covid-19.

The stark miseries of migrants that came to the fore in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic reflects a tragic situation. Mr Venugopal observed and hoped that the project would help farmers in many ways.

The project aims to benefit 3,000 women/families in one and a half years' time. Launching the project, Mr Gandham Chandrudu distributed cheques among 12 women farmers.

Mr Malla Reddy said they were planning to name the project after Yugandhar.

## Testing times



A Neet aspirant hugs her mother before entering the examination centre at RVR and JC College of Engineering in Chodavaram village of Guntur district on Sunday.  
— C. NARAYANA RAO

DGP tells his men to beef up  
security at religious places

The state police chief stressed the need for keeping tabs on social media

MD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

Director general of police (DGP) Gautam Sawang has directed police officials across the state to initiate measures for the protection of all religious places.

Addressing a video-conference with police officials in the 13 districts, the DGP said fire safety equipment also should be made available in temples and other places of worship and the police should strengthen patrolling to foil the designs of anti social elements. The state police chief stressed the need for keeping tabs on social media rumours pertaining to religious matters and quick steps by police to put an end to them in the interests of peace and social harmony.

Mr Sawang also suggested setting up of committees to promote peace and communal harmony. He warned of serious action against police officials found guilty of neglecting



Gautam Sawang

their duties.

Mr Sawang directed the officials to identify the persons with criminal background and keep a watch on them and install CCTV cameras in the vicinity of temples.

Describing the Antardvedi incident as unfortunate, the DGP said the police department would not tolerate such incidents under any circumstances.

Foolproof security at  
TTD temples, says EOAVINASH P.  
SUBRAMANYAM | DC  
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 13

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams executive officer Anil Kumar Singhal reiterated that they were fully prepared with hi-tech gadgets to protect properties of the temples run by the TTD.

He gave the assurance when a caller from Visakhapatnam expressed concern during the monthly 'Dial your EO' programme on Sunday, over security for temples keeping in view the recent burning of the chariot at Antardvedi temple.

Mr Singhal explained, "The TTD has the best security system to protect its properties like chariots. Our Chief Vigilance

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC  
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 13

The National Research Development Corporation (NRDC) of the Union ministry of science and technology has launched a low-cost Covid-19 treatment equipment, giving a boost to the country's fight against the deadly virus.

The NRDC Visakhapatnam unit head, Dr B.K. Sahu, said the equipment has the approval of government agencies before it was sent for commercial production.

The breathable low-cost PPE, christened NavRakshak, has been developed by Dr Arnab Ghosh, a naval doctor, posted at the recently created innovation cell at the Institute of Naval Medicine, Mumbai.

The PPE fabric will not have polymer or plastic lamination unlike others in the market and will assist in the removal of

heat and moisture from the skin of the user.

The commercial availability of this user-friendly PPE will be within a month at a low cost of ₹450 to ₹500 per piece with superior technology and fabric quality, said Dr Bhavya Manjeera P., assistant development engineer, NRDC, Vizag.

The other projects at the pilot stage include a Coronavirus oven, a quick, reliable, safe, and effective sanitisation system, especially designed for combating the virus. It uses UV-C light in combination with significant design parameters in order to effectively sanitise the surfaces of various products of regular use in healthcare and household settings.

The patent for NavRakshak was filed by the defence ministry in association with the NRDC.

The corporation also filed for trademark regis-

tration of the PPE and also made it available for commercialisation to start-ups, MSMEs and industry, Dr Sahu said.

The equipment was also approved by the ICMR and also tested and certified at the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), DRDO, following the prevailing ISO standards and guidelines of the Union ministry of health and family welfare and the ministry of textiles.

The technology IP is protected by patent for NavRakshak, which was filed by NRDC in association with the intellectual property facilitation cell of the Directorate General of Quality Assurance (Naval), ministry of defence.

To prevent surface-to-human transmission of the virus, the Coronavirus oven has been designed by the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee (IIT-R).

BJP constitutes  
40-member  
state committeeDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

The BJP, which is leaving no stone unturned to strengthen its base in the state, constituted a 40-member committee on Sunday. Two former Telugu Desam ministers, Ravela Kishore Babu and Adinarayana Reddy, who joined the BJP, were among 10 leaders chosen by the party for posts of vice-presidents.

The other leaders appointed as vice presidents are: Vishnu Kumar Raju of Visakhapatnam, Relangi Sridevi of Rajahmundry, Kaku Vijayalakshmi of Nellore, Malathi Rani of Eluru, Nimmala Jayaraju of Paravathipuram, Pydi Venugopal of Srikakulam, P. Surender Reddy and Chandramouli of Kurnool.

P.V.N. Madhav, Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Suryanarayana Raju, N. Madhukar and L. Gandhi were appointed party state general secretaries.

S. Uma Maheswari, Kandrika Uma, Mattam Santhi Kumari, A. Kamala and K. Chiranjeevi Reddy were appointed state secretaries.

G. Bhanu Prakash Reddy, Pudi Thirupathi Rao, Suhasini Anand, Chandu Sambashiva Rao, K. Anjaneya Reddy and S. Srinivas are party spokespersons, while the party appointed V. Satyamurthy as treasurer and P. Srinivas as office secretary.

The BJP which is eyeing to emerge as a major political force in AP is making its presence felt whenever an opportunity presented itself. For instance, it quickly seized upon the Antardvedi temple chariot burning incident.

Mr Vishnuvardhan Reddy said that the BJP gave representation to all sections of the society in the state committee. "We

SAJJALA SLAMS  
LOKESH, SAYS  
VAT HIKE ON  
NATURAL GASDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

State government adviser (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy alleged that the opposition Telugu Desam was carrying on a false propaganda against the Jagan Mohan Reddy government. While the government hiked VAT on natural gas, the TD was spreading lies that the tax increase would affect domestic gas consumers, he said and slammed TD MLC Nara Lokesh for creating panic among the public.

"Lokesh is ignorant and doesn't know that LPG falls under the jurisdiction of the Central government," the YSRC leader said.

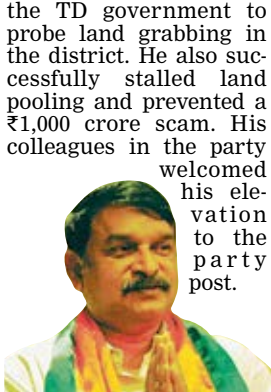
Mr Ramakrishna Reddy said that the opposition leaders were using their friendly media to create confusion among the people.

FORMER VIZAG  
MLA IS STATE BJP  
VICE-PRESIDENTDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 13

Former Visakhapatnam North MLA and floor leader of the BJP in the previous Assembly P. Vishnu Kumar Raju was appointed as the vice president of the state unit of BJP on Sunday.

Mr Raju, a multi-faceted personality, graduated in civil engineering from Andhra University and became an entrepreneur in construction. He also launched his software company Nunet Technologies in ITSEZ. He was the former president of the District Cricket Association and played a significant role in the construction of the YSR Cricket Stadium at Madhuravada.

He joined politics in 2014 and became an MLA and floor leader of the party. An active member of the Assembly, he was responsible for the constitution of the SIT by the TD government to probe land grabbing in the district. He also successfully stalled land pooling and prevented a ₹1,000 crore scam. His colleagues in the party welcomed his elevation to the party post.



will strive hard to bring the BJP to power in AP under the leadership of party chief Somu Veeraj. We will fight for public cause and play the role of a responsible political party," he said.

## Low pressure over Bay, heavy rains at AP coast

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC  
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 13

The low pressure area over the west central Bay of Bengal off the north Andhra Pradesh coast is likely to get more marked, causing increased intensity and distribution of rains in coastal AP.

The system, third in quick succession, will be consolidating over the coastal region for the next 24 hours. The Met department has issued a warning for the next five days in the coastal region. Thunderstorms, along with lightning and isolated extremely heavy rainfall, are likely to occur in East and West Godavari districts and Yanam.

The department also

● AP has received 20 per cent excess rainfall this monsoon season having received 556 mm rainfall against the normal of 464 mm.

issued a yellow watch over the state on Friday and Saturday, with the advisory urging residents to 'be aware' of the local weather situation.

AP has received 20 per cent excess rainfall this monsoon season having received 556 mm rainfall against the normal of 464 mm. Rayalaseema has recorded excess rains. Deficient rainfall has so far been recorded at Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts.

The monsoon trough (line of low pressure) lies south of its normal position. The eastern end of the monsoon trough is likely to shift further southwards due to formation of a low-pressure area over west central Bay of Bengal off Andhra Pradesh coast by Monday.

Associated cyclonic circulation extends up to mid-tropospheric levels tilting south westwards.

Meanwhile Sagileru Canal flooded due to heavy rains on Saturday night. Brahmgarimatham revenue and police officials have asked people of Godlavedu, P.C. Palli, Mallegudipadu, Tummalapalli, Dirasavancha and Peddirajupalle villages to remain vigilant.

## RESERVOIRS GET HEAVY INFLOWS

FROM PAGE 1

Cooking utensils could be seen getting washed away from several houses in Mrityunjaya Kunta. Motorists were hit hard by knee-deep water on the roads. Two houses collapsed, one in old Kadapa SC Colony and the other in Chakrayapeta.

Various reservoirs in Kadapa district have been receiving heavy inflows. About 12,000 cusecs of water reached Gandikota Reservoir, which released water in the downstream Mylavaram Reservoir. In

addition, pumps were activated and water lifted from Gandikota to Chitravati and Paidipalem projects. As Mylavaram Reservoir too is full, its six gates have been lifted and 9,000 cusecs of water is being released downstream.

District Collector Chevuri Harikiran has warned people of Penna river basin to be vigilant. People of low-lying areas have been advised to move to safer places.

Gates of Vankamarri Dam have also been raised to release excess waters.

WATER | WORLD

15,000 acres of paddy crop may get damaged

## Farmers downstream distressed

FROM PAGE 1

Water from various rivulets filled up the Yeleru reservoir. The water level at Yeleru touched 86.34 meters against its full capacity of 86.56 metres.

With the quantum of water in Yeluru reaching 23.62 TMC of total 24.11 TMC capacity on Sunday evening, irrigation officials lifted gates of the reservoir and released 13,000 cusecs of water. This has caused distress among farmers downstream, who are afraid that almost 15,000 acres of their paddy crop would get inundated and damaged if discharges from the reservoir continue for another

three or four days. Farmers are also worried over the precarious condition of bunds at Mukkollu and Ramakrishna Rao Peta.

PBC District Water Distribution-1 former chairman Rao Chinna Rao expressed anger that till 10 days ago, reservoir authorities did not release any water, which would have helped farmers cultivate their paddy. After the rains, farmers sowed their paddy and even completed the transplantation process. Officials have now discharged 13,000 cusecs of water. As a result, entire paddy fields under RRB Tank near A. V. Nagar and Pithapuram-Gollaprolu

areas may get damaged.

Chinna Rao explained that the original capacity of Yeleru Reservoir was only 21 TMC.

But officials increased it to 24 TMCs. He said had the officials released water after the reservoir capacity reached 21 TMC, farmers could have completed their transplantation and the present problem would not have arisen. He accused irrigation officials of taking decisions without taking farmers into confidence about water management methods.

Chinna Rao maintained that the reservoir capacity could be maintained to its full capacity of 24 TMC in November for the second

crop.

Yeleru Reservoir assistant engineer Rayudu Nageswara Rao of Kirlampudi division conceded that discharge of surplus waters from Yeleru had inundated paddy fields. But there was no danger to the crops. He, however, said the situation is being closely monitored with special attention being paid to Mukkollu, Rajupalem and other areas.

It is said bunds at Mukkollu and Rajupalem in Kirlampudi mandal have weakened. Farmers are afraid that they may breach any time due to continuing release of surplus waters from Yeleru Reservoir.





## IN BRIEF

**Cops posted at Antarvedi test +ve**

**Kakinada:** Superintendent of Police of East Godavri Adnan Nayem Asmi, additional SP K. Kumar, Razole CI Durga Sekhara Reddy and an SI of Krishna district, apart from two drivers in the police department tested positive for Covid-19. These officials camped at the famous Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Antarvedi where the chariot was gutted. They were on investigation duty. All of them are undergoing treatment. Two accused in connection with the incident also contracted Covid and they were sent to remand. Meanwhile, it is said that Razole CI D. Sekhara Reddy was admitted to KIMS Hospital at Amalapuram. Meanwhile, Kakinada LS member Vanga Geetha also tested positive for Covid and she is in home isolation. Tuni MLA Dadisetty Raja has also got the positive.

**Srisaillam receives floodwater**

**Kurnool:** With heavy rains in the upper reaches of Krishna and Tungabhadra river, the Srisaillam reservoir is getting good inflow. The Central Water Commission of Krishna and Godavari basins forecasted a steady trend of flood to Srisaillam while the trend for Priyadarshini Jurala is rising. The Jurala project discharged 37,420 cusecs through the spillway and 36,096 through the powerhouse. Sunkesula barrage on Tungabhadra opened 13 gates on Sunday to let out 38,799 cusecs of water into Srisaillam. Even Hundr also discharged 250 cusecs. The net realised inflows at Srisaillam stood at 1,35,374 cusecs. The Andhra Pradesh Power House utilised 30,937 cusecs while Srisaillam lifted 3 gates to a height of 10 feet to let out 83,949 cusecs. Total outflows stood at 1,35,374 cusecs.

**2 youths die in road mishap**

**Visakhapatnam:** Two youngsters met a gory death when their motorcycle hit head on a moving car near Visakhapatnam railway station in the early hours of Sunday. The IV Town police identified the victims as Muppidi Koti, 20, a resident of SC Colony in Malkapuram and Nepal Sarat of nearby Gandhiji Colony. Koti was a professional dancer and event organiser but had no work since last five months due to Covid. Sarat also lost his private job due to the lockdown. Both went to RK Beach on their motorcycle to take part in their friend's birthday party which went midnight past. While returning, the duo were driving at high speed and hit a moving car at DLO junction near Visakhapatnam railway station. Koti died on the spot while Sarat died in the early hours while undergoing treatment at KGH. The front portion of the motorcycle was completely smashed, the police said.

**Lockdown total in Srikakulam**

**Srikakulam:** The lockdown imposed in Srikakulam district for the third consecutive Sunday was total. The district administration allowed individual vehicles only for medical needs. Milk vendors were also allowed to move. Except these, no other person was visible on the roads. The RTC Complex, Seven Road junction, KIMS Hospital junction, Palakonda Road, Day and Night Junction were a deserted look. There were no vegetable shops, chicken or meat and fish markets anywhere in the town. However, the scenario was different in the rural areas where the shops were open due to lack of monitoring and cooperation from the public, said a senior health official.

**TD men stage stir at temples**

**Kakinada:** TD leaders staged stir at various temples in different constituencies on Sunday in protest against the attacks on temple property and priests during the YSRC rule. Former Deputy Chief Minister Nimmakayala China Rajapa staged a dharna at Lord Sri Suryanarayana Swamy temple at Panasapadu in Samalkot mandal. Before launching the agitation, he performed pooja at the temple. He alleged that after the YSRC assumed power, more temples have been attacked by miscreants and criticised the government for failing to curb the attacks. He said that 23 idols of the gods and goddesses have been destroyed at six temples in Pithapuram. The chariot of Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in Konadabitrugunta and Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Antarvedi were gutted. He alleged that a conspiracy was hatched for grabbing lands of Lord Sri Narasimha Swamy temple at Simhachalam.

**Ready for rain**

Thick clouds hover over the sky as people witnessed drizzle in various parts of Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

**AP reports 66 new Covid deaths, toll at 4,912**

Tests were conducted on 72,233 of whom, 9,536 tested +ve

**MD ILYAS DC**  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

As many as 9,536 new corona positive cases and 66 deaths were registered in Andhra Pradesh over the last 24 hours on Sunday taking the total positive cases to 5,67,123. Of them, 95,072 are active cases, 4,67,139 have recovered and 4,912 succumbed to the virus.

East Godavari district continued to be among the worst hit. Seven deaths each were reported in Anantapur, Nellore and Prakasam districts, followed by six each in Kadapa and Visakhapatnam districts, five each in Chittoor, East Godavari, Krishna and Kurnool districts, four each in Guntur and Vizianagaram districts,

three in West Godavari district and two in Srikakulam district. Tests were conducted on 72,233 persons of whom 9,536 tested positive. The State has tested a total of 45,99,826 samples till date, which is the highest in the country.

As many as 10,131 patients recovered and were discharged from various hospitals in the last 24 hours. The single day highest of 1,414 positive cases was in East Godavari district, increadasing its tally to 76,808. Of them, 12,098 are active cases. West Godavari registered 1,076 positive and took the district's overall figure to 50,474 with 7,759 being active cases. Chittoor district registered 957 new positive cases increasing its total to 49,398 in which

■ The least number of 397 new Corona positive cases registered in the past 24 hours was in Krishna district. Its overall tally stands at 21,274

8,477 remain active cases.

With 844 new positive cases, Nellore district's total is at 43,374 with 5,077 being active cases. As many as 792 new cases were registered in Guntur district increasing its overall total to 45,338, of which 7750 remain active cases. As many as 788 new cases were reported in Prakasam district to take its tally to 36442 in which 14,379 remain active cases. Srikakulam district had 733 new positive cases increasing the total to 32,230 with 6,287 being active cases. A total of 585

new positive cases were registered in Kadapa district and its overall figure is 36,165 in which 6,195 are active cases. With 573 new positive cases Vizianagaram district's tally stands at 27,946. Of them, 9,694 remain active. Around 521 new cases were registered in Anantapur district increasing its total positive cases to 49,306 with 4,288 remaining active cases.

In Kurnool district, 441 new cases were registered in the past 24 hours taking the total positive cases to 51,625 in which 4048 are active cases.

The least number of 397 new Corona positive cases registered in the past 24 hours was in Krishna district. Its overall tally stands at 21,274 with 3,074 being active cases.

**Private hospital license to treat Covid cancelled**

**MD ILYAS | DC**  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

Krishna district collector A. Md. Imtiaz, on Sunday cancelled the license of Liberty hospital in Vijayawada disallowing it from treating Covid-19 patients after a three-member committee had submitted its report that the hospital management was collecting excess charges from the patients.

Many private hospitals that had obtained permission to treat Covid-19

patients are charging lakhs of rupees and messing with the lives of patients in the name of coronavirus treatment. No matter how many measures the government has been taking, the private hospitals still are squeezing money from the patients' kin. Ramindeed Sarala from Rajahmundry had lodged a complaint against Liberty hospital management alleging that her husband lost his life even after paying Rs 15 lakh to the hospital for treatment. In this regard, the collector appointed a

three-member committee to look into the complaint.

The committee report stated that Liberty hospital is reportedly charging higher fees than what was prescribed by the government. Based on the committee's report, the collector issued orders cancelling the license to Liberty Hospital for Covid-19 treatment. The officials further ordered that Covid-19 patients being treated at the hospital should be relocated to other Covid-19 care centres.

**BJP deceived people on SCS: Cong**

**NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC**  
KADAPA, SEPT. 13

Dr N. Tulasi Reddy, working president, APCC, alleged that the BJP has deceived the people of Andhra Pradesh.

He reminded that the BJP leaders, themselves proposed in the Parliament that the special status should not be for just 5 years but that it has to be extended for another five years.

All the promises were forgotten after the elections, he said.

He was addressing media persons at Vempalli in Kadapa district on Sunday morning. He said that under Section 46 (3) of the Partition Act, the central government should give a special development package to Rayalaseema and Uttarandhra on the lines of Bundelkhand package.

Out of ₹24,350 crore promised, it has given only ₹1,050

crore, he said.

He said the central government had to give a total of ₹5 lakh crore towards compensation of revenue deficit, for Polavaram, capital construction, steel plant, new port and setting up of 13 central educational institutions, but it had given only ₹18,000 crore.

He said the state was completely devastated by BJP's fraud, TD's incompetence, YSR Congress opportunism.

**2 labourers struck by lightning, youth washed away in reservoir**

**VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC**  
KAKINADA, SEPT. 13

Rains and lightning claimed three lives in East Godavari District on Sunday. According to sources, two agricultural labourers - Vadrevu Babu Rao (55) and Kola Venkatrao alias Gummaiah (48) of Kandrakota village in Peddapuram mandal died after being struck by lightning.

While these two labour-

ers were working in the field of Kurra Rambabu, rain, along with lightning and thunder, lashed the landscape and struck them. They died on the spot. A farmer, Rambabu, fell unconscious and he was admitted to an area hospital at Peddapuram. Later, he recovered. Peddapuram mandal tahsildar B. Sridevi and Peddapuram police rushed to the spot. The Peddapuram police registered a case.

In Prathipadumandal, Suddagadda reservoir

received heavy rain. While a youth, Mande Raju, (21), was trying to swim to the other side, he washed away. Prathipadu police are searching for him.

Irrigation officials discharged 1.69 lakhs cusecs of water from the Sir Arthur Cotton barrage in Dowleswaram and released 10,600 cusecs of water into canals. The water levels recorded at Cofferdam and in the Polavaram project were 21.550 metres and 7.870 meters respectively.

Meanwhile, several areas in East Godavari district experienced downpours on Sunday with lightning and thunder. The district recorded 4101.2 mm rainfall with an average of 64.1 mm. PGannavaram registered the highest rainfall with 174.2mm whereas Chinturumandal received the lowest rainfall of 94 mm.

In other mandals, Ambajipet received 162.4 mm, Ravulapalem, 154.6 mm, Kotananduru, 144.8 mm, Kapileswarapuram, 137.8 mm.,

**Vizag railshed modifies 2 engines**

**K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC**  
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 13

The Visakhapatnam electric railshed as part of an innovative measure, paired two electrical WAP-4 model locos by performing key modifications and made them ready for goods train operations.

Electric railshed, Visakhapatnam, has successfully modified the two locos, which are being operated for passenger trains, to work in multiple unit operation for hauling goods train operations. As these coaching train locos utilisation reduced due to Covid-19 pandemic, the team took initiative to use these locos for effective utilisation by performing key modifications.

These classes of locos are originally designed to

work in a single unit operation for hauling coaching rakes.

The main objective of this project is to increase the productivity with available resources for operation of goods trains and increasing the reliability of WAP-4 electric locos in freight transportation.

The electric loco shed staff successfully completed necessary modifications to the locos like cabling and fabrication works by attaching couplers to both leading and trailing engines through series of multi-unit cables in order to synchronise these engines electrically and mechanically.

The project was led by P. Siva Naresh, senior divisional electrical engineer and other technical personnel at the shed.

**NTR, Paritala statues removed amid TD stir**

**MD ILYAS | DC**  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 13

Former Telugu Desam legislator GV Aanjaneyulu and several members of the party began a protest deeksha against the removal of statues of NTR and Paritala Ravindra at Vinukonda on Sunday. The two statues were removed on court orders at Vishnukundi Nagar but the protestors demanded immediate reinstallation of the statues.

With tension mounting in Vinukonda, police placed Aanjaneyulu under house arrest where he launched his deeksha.

The two statues were erected on the Perumalla branch canal of Vishnukundi Nagar

without taking prior permission following which a local filed a petition in the High Court which ordered officials to remove the statues.

Vinukonda Urban Circle Inspector D Chinna Mallaiah said that one D Yedukondala filed a petition against the illegal statues. Although the HC issued orders more than two years ago that they be removed within 14 days, the municipal and revenue departments did not remove them. Consequently, he filed a contempt petition in the High Court, which directed officials to implement its orders immediately.

Vinukonda Tahsildar Venkateswaralu and municipal commissioner

Srinivasulu submitted a report on the issue to district collector I Samuel Anand Kumar and he directed the officials to remove two statues, which they did with the support of police despite the TDP protest. Narasaraopet DSP M Veera Reddy said that the statues were shifted to the Tahsildar office premises to avoid tension in the town.

Aanjaneyulu alleged that YSRC leaders pressurized the officials to remove the statues for political gains. He demanded removal of all statues, including that of YS Rajasekhara Reddy, which is obstructing traffic in Vinukonda. He warned of stir if authorities do not oblige.

**TIRUPATI RLY STATION GETS ISO 14001**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 13

Tirupati railway station, one of the busiest stations in the South-Central Railway division, has secured the prestigious ISO 14001:2015 certification for its compliance with environmental management system (EMS).

The certificate is offered to Tirupati station for provision of services like accommodation, enquiry, tickets, and timely disposal of garbage, maintenance of cleanliness, growing trees, and most importantly for the effective implementation of total ban on plastic. The station also offers provision of connectivity to passengers detraining at Tirupati railway station to various nearest temples including Tirumala and other locations.

A press release from the railway station authorities said, the ISO 14001-certification to a railway station is issued based on the EMS being adopted in managing the aspects that have a significant impact on the environment.

**SlIs passing-out parade tomorrow**

**HOSKOTE NAGA BHUSHANAM | DC**  
ANANTAPUR, SEPT.13

Anantapur Police Training Centre is gearing up to hold passing-out parade of 273 sub inspectors of 2019-20 batch on Tuesday. This is the third passing-out parade for sub-inspectors at the centre, after bifurcation of the state. Prior to the state division, AP Police Academy (APPA), Hyderabad, was the training centre for SlIs, sub-divisional officers as well as IPS officers.

Following the bifurcation, AP had set up the temporary training centre here six years ago.

The proposal for a permanent training centre is pending at various levels. The government conducted a survey to identify land for AP Police Training Academy in Anantapur district and Mangalagiri.

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The stipendiary cadet trainee sub inspectors of Civil, Armed Reserve and AP Special Police wings have received training in the institute. Anantapur range DIG and in-charge principal of the centre, Kraenthi Rana Tata reviewed the arrangements.

Home minister Mekathoti Sucharitha will be the chief guest while DGP Gowtham Sawang and other top officials will take part in the event, sources said.

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## SHORT TAKES

## WB: BJP WORKER FOUND HANGING FROM TREE

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, SEPT. 13

A BJP worker was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Hooghly of West Bengal on Sunday morning. Ganesh Roy, the deceased, was a booth level worker of the party. The body, with legs bent and apparently touching the ground almost, was found hanging from a tree, one and half km away from his home. A noose was tied around the neck of Roy.

The police later recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. Roy's family members said that he went out of home at Khanati village in Goghat on Saturday afternoon but he did not return. According to them, he was murdered by the Trinamul Congress which they claimed was threatening him with dire consequences before the Lok Sabha Elections last year.

Echoing them state BJP president Dilip Ghosh also accused the ruling Trinamul Congress of killing Roy in cold blood and then hanging the body to pass it as a case of suicide.

## ARTISAN OFFERS TO MAKE DURGA IDOL AT ₹101

PRANMOY  
BRAHMACHARI | DC  
BERHAMPORE, SEPT. 13

At a time when many Durga Puja organisers in West Bengal are facing difficulty to collect donations to organise the biggest festival of the state, due to financial crunch amid Covid-19 pandemic, a Berhampore-based artisan has dropped his remuneration to ₹101, perhaps the lowest amount, for idol making. Kanchan Karmakar, the reputed idolmaker, said he would take the amount as his fee from the Berhampore Indraprastha Women Durga Puja Committee.

Asked about his decision, he said, "I have been working as a sculpture for the last 45 years. My creations were sent to the US, Europe and the Middle East earlier. But this time I am making an idol of Goddess Durga of clay for our local organisers all of whom are women. Since they have no funds due to this pandemic, they can not afford to pay for a Durga idol. So they decided to not organise the Durga Puja this year. I then reduced my fee as a token price to help them continue with their puja and bring happiness in our locality."

Chhanda Dutta, one of the puja committee organisers, said, "We are indebted to Kanchanda for his good effort. Now we can organise our Durga Puja despite many odds. Due to the pandemic situation we failed to collect big amount but he generously supported us. The price of his idol can be anything around ₹50,000! But, he dropped the price for us."

## YECHURY NAMED IN DELHI RIOTS CHARGESHEET

**New Delhi, Sept. 13:** The CPI(M) on Sunday criticised the government over the reference to its leader Sitaram Yechury and some civil society members in a supplementary chargesheet filed by the Delhi Police which cites statements from some accused to say that they mobilised anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protestors.

"The CPI(M) condemns this obnoxious action by the Delhi Police to further the narrative of its political masters and urges the government to desist from such acts of criminalising peaceful political protests," the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Politburo said in a statement.

The reaction came a day after it was reported that the names of CPI(M) general secretary Yechury, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav, economist Jayati Ghosh and Delhi University professor Apoorvanand figure in the supplementary chargesheet in the February riots cases, allegedly for "provoking and mobilising" anti-CAA protesters.

The Sunday statement by the Politburo said it was "shocked by the brazenness with which the Delhi Police, acting under Home Minister Amit Shah, has tried to implicate prominent political leadership, academics, cultural personalities and activists in connection with the horrific communal violence in North East Delhi in February".

## Nepal trying to stake claim on 3 villages in U'khand

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC  
HYDERABAD SEPT. 13

With India locked in a stand-off with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Nepal has started to play its games with renewed vigour. The K.P. Sharma Oli government is increasingly sending feelers to people living in three villages adjoining the Kalapani region in the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand to shift their loyalties to Nepal so as to stake claim over the villages which are administered by India.

Coming at a time when the Nepal Army is believed to be assisting China expand its military bases close to Mount Kailash, China seems to be behind the latest move by Nepal, which is seen as a quid pro quo arrangement between the two neighbours.

In return, the Nepal government is promising

tonnes of money, land and houses along with Nepalese citizenship — most of which is believed to be funded by China.

Sources in the know of the Nepalese "operation" told *Deccan Chronicle* that for the past few days, "agents" working for the Nepal government have got in touch with people residing in Kuti, Nabhi and Gunji villages — located a few kilometres from Kalapani territory in Pithoragarh district — asking them to consider shifting loyalties to Nepal.

The locals of these three Indian villages, located at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, who share a 'roti-beti' relationship with the people of Darchula in Nepal, are getting multiple calls from people on the other side asking them to consider the "irresistible offer".

Information reaching Indian agencies is that the agents have been either



Temple at Kalapani.

— DC

been making calls directly to the villagers, claiming to be their "well-wishers", or taking the other easy way of making the locals of Darchula speak with their friends and relatives in the three villages.

Since decades, people on both sides have remained in constant touch with each other, hopping in and out of Indian territory

everyday as they either have business links or relatives on the other side.

Many Indian girls have married into Nepali families in Darchula and elsewhere in Nepal.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, India-Nepal border has been sealed for the last few months. People on both sides communicate with each other using



One of the bridges between India and Nepal in Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.

— DC

Nepal Telecom SIM cards.

With the frequency of such calls increasing by the day — which has now become a point of discussion in the three villages — the villagers are contemplating writing to the Centre that there is no question of shifting loyalties and that they firmly remain with India.

Many of them even held

a meeting among themselves on Friday. In all the three villages put together, there are more than 850 residents. Prior to the pandemic, people on both sides used to meet everyday. Many on the Nepal side are dependent on the Indian side for their livelihood.

Sources said that though there were some indica-

tions earlier that Nepal might resort to such moves, especially after it claimed Kalapani to be its territory, the attempts at wooing with the villagers with land, money and Nepalese citizenship has increased manifold even as tensions between India and China along the LAC is at an all-time high.

For quite some time now, Nepal has left the people in its border villages along the tri-junction between India, China and Nepal at the mercy of the People's Liberation Army of China which supplies food and essentials to the villagers to win them over, even as the Chinese Army has been steadily taking control of certain areas inside Nepalese territory.

In May, Nepal triggered a diplomatic row with India after it claimed Kalapani and Lipulekh in its political maps. Later, it showed Limpiyadhura within its boundaries.

## Sena targets Akshay Kumar for silence on Kangana row

Is Mumbai only to make money for them, Sena MP questions Bollywood

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 13

The Shiv Sena has now trained guns on actor Akshay Kumar asking why other Bollywood stars are silent about the conspiracy to defame Mumbai.

"Not all, but at least half of them should have expressed their views about Mumbai's defamation and said Kangana Ranaut's stand was not that of the entire Hindi film industry. Is Mumbai only for making money to them?" asked Sena MP Sanjay Raut.

Mumbai has given them everything. The bigger artists like Akshay Kumar should have come forward for Mumbai.

But they feel pain when it comes to expressing gratitude for Mumbai, he said in his weekly column Rokhthok (forthright) in the Sena mouthpiece Saamana on Sunday.

Referring to Kangana's statements, Raut said, "An actress calls Mumbai as Pakistan. She uses derogatory language against the Chief Minister of Maharashtra by sitting in Mumbai, but the people of the state should not react on it. What kind of one-sided freedom is this?"

The Shiv Sena MP alleged that there are systematic efforts to undermine the importance of Mumbai. Its continuous defamation is a part of this conspiracy. Some people think that Maharashtra will automatically collapse by damaging the glory of Mumbai, he added.

Raut also slammed the Maharashtra BJP for supporting Kangana in this matter. "It is really unfortunate that the BJP, which is the main opposition party in the state, has stood behind the actress, who has called Mumbai as Pakistan and BMC as Babar."

They want to win elections in Bihar by backing Kangana. For this, it is okay for them to insult Maharashtra. Not a single Marathi Union minister in Delhi has felt bad about Maharashtra's insult, he said.



Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut during a meeting with Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari at Raj Bhavan in Mumbai on Sunday.

— PTI

## Will face all political storms, fight Covid, says Thackeray

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 13

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday assured that he would fight with Coronavirus infection as well as all political storms in the state. While addressing the people through social media, Thackeray announced to start a campaign 'My Family, My Responsibility' from September 15.

Meanwhile, calling Chief Minister's address a big disappointment, the BJP said people were expecting him to explain the government's roadmap to tackle rising number of cases and deaths due to Covid-19. Despite the worsening situation in the state, the Chief Minister was seen only praising himself, the opposition party said.

Thackeray has been facing flak from detractors on both political and Coronavirus fronts. He said a conspiracy is afoot to malign Maharashtra. "Whatever political storms come, I will face... I will fight Coronavirus too," said the Chief Minister.

A day after Covid-19 infection cases in Maharashtra crossed the 10-lakh mark, Thackeray said his government has done effective work to tackle the pandemic.

Speaking in the backdrop of political criticism over demolition of actress Kangana Ranaut's bungalow in Mumbai and the way his government handled the Sushant Singh Rajput death case, Thackeray assured people that he would fight the political crisis too.

"I will have to remove

the mask of Chief Minister to respond to politics. I don't speak, it does not mean I don't have answers," Thackeray said.

Speaking on the state government's "Mission Begin Again" campaign during the pandemic, Thackeray said his administration effectively tackled the Covid-19 situation, cyclones and floods and will also deal with the political storm with people's support.

The Chief Minister said his government was doing its best to deal with all challenges. "We should share our responsibilities to make the 'my family, my responsibility' campaign (against Covid) which begins on September 15 a success. This war can be won only with people's wholehearted support," he said.

## NCB ESTABLISHES CHAIN OF NARCO SUPPLY TO SSR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 13

Following NCB raids in Mumbai and Goa and arrests of drug peddlers while probing the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide, the breakthrough has helped identify chain of narcotics that reached Rajput. The NCB has arrested one Dwayne Fernandes, who is the associate of Showik Chakraborty and is stated to have supplied drugs to the latter, meant for Rajput. Officials said that Fernandes is a Mumbai-based drug dealer and deals in curated marijuana and hash.

Other arrested peddlers have revealed the chain of supply of substances to the film stars and other celebrities. The investigation is now headed to identify these known personalities who were buying from these peddlers.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 13

The CBI, probing the alleged sexual exploitation of minor girls at a shelter home in Deoria district in Uttar Pradesh, is all set to file chargesheet against four senior public servants of the state government and several private persons. Besides, the agency will recommend departmental action against lower level officials of the state government.

According to sources, investigation by the agency has revealed that these public servants allegedly released funds worth several crores to the accused NGO without any physical audit. "Despite serious complaints pertaining to the alleged finan-

cial irregularities against the Deoria-based NGO — Maa Vinধ্যavasini Mahila Evam Balika Sanrakshan Griha, senior public servants of the revenue department of the state kept on releasing funds to the shelter home. The accused NGO was running the shelter home", sources said.

The central probe agency will mention names of at least four senior public servants and others in its chargesheet, that will be filed very soon, they added.

The CBI had registered two FIRs against Girija Tripathi and Superintendent Kanchan Lata Tripathi of the Maa Vinধ্যavasini Mahila Evam Balika Sanrakshan Griha, Deoria in connection with the case.

## Odisha minister admitted to hosp.

AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 13

Odisha textiles, handlooms and handicrafts minister, Padmini Dian, and her husband, Sadashib Dian, and Nabarangpur Lok Sabha member, Ramesh Chandra Majhi, who tested positive for Coronavirus earlier last week, were on Sunday shifted to a Covid-19 hospital in the state capital after they complained of difficulty in breathing.

Dain, her husband, son and nephew tested positive for the virus on September 3, following which they were under home isolation.

When the minister and her husband faced difficulty in breathing late on Saturday evening, they were shifted to a Covid-19 hospital at Jeypore in Koraput district and later sent to SUM Covid-19 hospital in Bhubaneswar.

The Nabarangpur MP who was also under home isolation from September 4, was shifted to another Covid-19 hospital here

after developing breathing difficulties.

Another minister, Ranendra Pratap Swain, has been admitted to SUM Covid-19 hospital after his swab reports returned positive.

Till date, 18 MLAs, including Bhubaneswar (North) legislator, Susant Rout, Bhubaneswar (Central) MLA, Ananta Narayan Jena, Berhampur MLA, Bikram Panda, Chandbali MLA, Byomakesh Ray and Khandapada MLA, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik have tested positive for the virus.

Six ministers, including Sushanta Singh, Tukuni Sahu and Arun Sahoo have contracted the virus.

On Sunday, Odisha reported 3,913 new Covid-19 cases to go past the 150,000-mark for the total number of Coronavirus cases detected in the state since the outbreak of the disease this year.

Of the total 3,913 cases reported in the last 24 hours, 2,348 cases were detected from various quarantine centres while 1,565 are local contact cases.

## TIGER FOUND DEAD IN MAHA SANCTUARY

**Nagpur, Sept. 13:** A sub-adult male tiger was found dead in Umred Pauni Karhandla wildlife sanctuary in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, a forest official said on Sunday. The carcass of the two-year-old big cat was spotted by forest staff during patrolling in Kuhl wildlife range, Field Director, Pench Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra), Ravikiran Govekar said in a release. "The dead tiger was one of three sub-adult cubs of female tiger T17," it said. — PTI

## ASSEMBLY | POLLS

## PM inaugurates 3 petroleum sector projects, gives big thumbs up to Nitish

## Modi hails Bihar as 'powerhouse of talent'

**Patna, Sept. 13:** In the run up to the Assembly polls in Bihar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated three petroleum sector projects, gave a big thumbs up to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and reached out to voters, calling the state a "powerhouse of talent".

Modi's praise of alliance partner Kumar came weeks ahead of the elections that are likely to be held in October-November, as he dedicated three petroleum projects worth nearly ₹900 crore to peo-

ple. These included a gas pipeline that extended from Durgapur in West Bengal to Banka in Bihar.

Banka was also the beneficiary of an LPG bottling plant while another such unit is located at Harsiddhi in East Champaran district.

"I had the opportunity of flagging off the work on extension of the gas pipeline a year-and-half ago. I am delighted to see its completion. The country and Bihar have come out of an era when a project was announced and a generation had to wait for

its completion. *Nitish ji* has played an important role in ushering in this change in the state," Modi said.

In his trademark style, the Prime Minister began his speech with a few sentences in Angika, the dialect spoken in Banka and adjoining districts.

He marvelled at the gas pipeline project which was no mean feat as it involved working across a stretch of nearly 200 km of difficult terrain dotted with many rivers, dense forests and hills.

"I would like to use the

terms gas-based industry and petro-connectivity, which may sound very technical but actually impact the lives of the common people," he said, addressing the function virtually from the national capital.

Just imagine what would have been the situation if people were to keep venturing out in search of wood and other fuel for cooking their meals.

The need is no longer there thanks to schemes like the Ujjwala Yojana which has ensured that LPG reaches households

of the poorest of the poor, he said while talking about the Coronavirus outbreak.

The Prime Minister recalled how people would queue up in front of the residences of MPs for a cooking gas connection from their quota. "There was a time when having an LPG connection was a luxury not many could afford," he said.

Launching a veiled attack on RJD chief Lalu Prasad, who he did not mention by name, Modi said Bihar has come out of an era when rail, road and

internet connectivity were made light of and people used to say of what use roads are for those who walk on their feet.

He said Bihar, like the rest of eastern India, never lacked *samarthya* (potential) and *sansadhaan* (natural resources) but suffered for want of political will and faulty priorities.

Being a land-locked state, Bihar was obviously at a disadvantage when it came to availing petroleum projects. All that is going to change, the Prime Minister said. — PTI



## IN BRIEF

## Swiss cops break up party

**Geneva:** Police in the Swiss capital Bern said they used water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse a crowd of mostly young people holding an illegal “street carnival”. Several hundred people gathered late Saturday in the northeast of the city around cars blaring music and floats. A huge banner in French read “Street Carnival”, according to a photo on aurka.com, the website of a Swiss photographer who specialises in demonstrations and street art. Police said they intervened when those taking part began heading toward the city centre and throwing bottles and stones at officers. It was not immediately clear why the gathering was deemed illegal. Demonstrators “set up barricades and set off fireworks”, a police statement said.

## Vatican: Return to in-person Mass

**Vatican City:** The Vatican has said it was “necessary and urgent” to return to in-person Masses as soon as anti-Coronavirus measures permit. The head of the Vatican’s liturgy office, Cardinal Robert Sarah, on Saturday said in a letter to bishops conferences that virtual liturgies, while useful, were no replacement for the real thing. He said physical presence by the faithful in churches was “vital, indispensable, irreplaceable”. While some Catholic priests claimed Coronavirus lockdowns that shuttered churches infringed on religious liberties, Pope Francis has adhered to Italy’s strict lockdown. He halted all public Masses at the Vatican, livestreamed his morning liturgies during the peak of Italy’s outbreak, and at one point even admonished priests who balked at the measures for their “adolescent resistance”. The Vatican said on Saturday that Francis had approved Sarah’s letter to bishops conferences.

## Protest outside Netanyahu house

**Jerusalem:** Thousands of Israelis demonstrated outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s official residence in central Jerusalem late Saturday, demanding he resign over his trial on corruption charges and what is widely seen as his mishandling of the Coronavirus pandemic. With Israel reporting record levels of new Coronavirus cases each day, the country appears to be headed toward a nationwide lockdown this week ahead of the Jewish New Year. Saturday’s demonstration came a day after Israel announced an agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Bahrain, the second Arab country to normalise ties with Israel in under a month and just the fourth overall. But the surprise announcement had little effect on the thousands of demonstrators gathering outside Netanyahu’s residence every Saturday throughout the summer to protest his corruption trial, handling of the health crisis and the resulting economic pain.

## PHILIPPINES DEPORTS U.S. MARINE

**Manila, Sept. 13:** A US Marine convicted of killing a Filipino transgender woman was deported Sunday after a presidential pardon cut short his detention in a case that renewed outrage over a pact governing American military presence in the Philippines. Lance Cpl. Joseph Scott Pemberton left a message to President Rodrigo Duterte and to the family of Jennifer Laude, who he was convicted of killing in 2014 after finding out that she was a transgender in a motel northwest of Manila. The message’s content will be released after his departure, his lawyer, Rowena Garcia-Flores, said. Philippine immigration officers and American security personnel escorted the 25-year-old Marine from his cell in the main military camp in metropolitan Manila to the airport, where he boarded a military aircraft. Ahead of the flight, he was subjected to a Coronavirus test, which turned negative, immigration spokeswoman Dana Sandoval said. “He’s been successfully deported,” Sandoval said. On Monday, Duterte granted an “absolute and unconditional pardon” to Pemberton in a move that caught many by surprise. The Philippine leader has long been a vocal critic of US security policies while reaching out to China and Russia.

## Marching on in Minsk



Opposition supporters parade through the streets during a rally to protest against the presidential election results in Minsk on Saturday. Belarusians have been demonstrating against the disputed re-election of President Alexander Lukashenko for a month, with more than 100,000 people flooding the streets of Minsk for the four straight weekends.

— AFP

## Afghan peace talks: The hard work begins

## Search on for lasting ceasefire after decades of fighting

**Doha, Sept. 13:** Peace talks between the Taliban and Afghan government negotiators get down to business Sunday, with the search for a lasting ceasefire one of many key issues up for discussion.

A slick opening ceremony in the Qatari capital Doha on Saturday saw the Afghan government, and allies including the United States, call for a ceasefire.

But the Taliban, who have fought a guerrilla campaign against both since they were forced from power in 2001, did not mention a truce as they came to the negotiating table.

The head of the peace process for the Afghan government suggested to AFP that the Taliban could offer a ceasefire in

exchange for the release of more of their jailed fighters.

“This could be one of their ideas or one of their demands,” said Abdullah Abdullah, the chairman of Afghanistan’s High Council for National Reconciliation.

Negotiations will be arduous and messy, delegates warned during the opening ceremony, and are starting even as deadly violence continues to grip Afghanistan.

“We will undoubtedly encounter many challenges in the talks over the coming days, weeks and months,” US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said as he called for the warring sides to “seize this opportunity” to secure peace.

— AFP

## AFGHAN RESOLUTION IS THE KEY TO REGIONAL PEACE, SAYS IMRAN

**SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 13**

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday said successful culmination of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process was indispensable for Afghanistan and regional peace.

In a Facebook post, the Prime Minister reiterated the determination that Pakistan will continue to remain in full support and solidarity with the Afghan people as they march forward in this consequential journey for peace and development.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Pervez Khattak

said Pakistan was committed to bring peace in Afghanistan. He termed resumption of intra-Afghan dialogue a good omen for the region.

He said peace in Afghanistan is vital for the prosperity of Pakistan. Speaking about the national issues, the Defence Minister said the country had come out of the financial crisis and now the government had focused provision of relief to the people.

Pervez Khattak said the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan will honour all pledges made with the people.

## 2 L.A. DEPUTIES SHOT, HUNT ON FOR ATTACKER

**Compton (US), Sept. 13:** The shooting of two Los Angeles County sheriff’s deputies in an apparent ambush prompted a manhunt for the shooter, reaction from the President and protests outside the hospital where the wounded deputies were being treated Saturday night in California.

The 31-year-old female deputy and 24-year-old male deputy both underwent surgery Saturday evening, Sheriff Alex Villanueva said in a late-night news conference. Both graduated from the academy 14 months ago, he said. The deputies were shot while sitting in their patrol car at a Metro rail station and were able to radio for help, the sheriff said.

Villanueva expressed frustration as he urged people to pray for the officers.

It sparked thousands of reactions, including from President Donald Trump, who responded, “Animals that must be hit hard!”

— AP

## Lens on foreign journos if giving ‘slanted view’ of Oz

**Melbourne, Sept. 13:** Foreign journalists working in Australia will come under the scrutiny of federal agencies if they provide a “slanted view” of the country, interfere with its democracy or steal the intellectual property, a senior minister warned on Sunday, amidst a diplomatic standoff with China. Australian Home Affairs Ministers Peter Dutton said there had been a concerted effort with Australian

federal police working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies to make sure that the government can address foreign interference wherever it may occur in the country.

“If people are here as journalists and they’re reporting fairly on the news, then that’s fine. And if people are masquerading as journalists or business leaders or whoever they might be, and there’s

evidence that they are acting in a contrary to Australian law, then ASIO and AFP and other agencies will act,” Dutton said.

“If there’s an attempt with interfering or conducting espionage-type activities, then we have a problem with that. But for a journalist coming into our country, applying scrutiny as anybody on your panel would today — we don’t have an issue,” he said.

— PTI

## Lanka Constitution Amendment faces internal resistance

**Colombo, Sept. 13:** The Sri Lankan government’s proposed 20th Constitutional Amendment has faced internal resistance from within a faction of the ruling SLPP parliamentary group itself, ahead of its inclusion in Parliament’s order paper, the party members said on Sunday.

The government on Sept. 2 gazetted the 20th Constitutional Amendment draft, the new proposed legisla-

tion that would replace the 19th Amendment introduced in 2015 that curtailed the powers of the President and strengthened the role of Parliament. The 19A was seen as the most progressive pro-democracy reformist move since Sri Lanka came to be governed under the all-powerful executive presidency in 1978. It depoliticised the government administration by ensuring the indepe-

ndence of key pillars such as the judiciary, public service and elections.

The 20th Amendment proposes to restore full legal immunity to the President, removing the provisions made in the 19A to take legal action against the President. The office of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in a statement on Saturday night said that a nine-member ministerial committee has been appoi-

nted to review the 20A in its present form and, if needed, a fresh gazette will be issued. Ever since the government gazetted the 20A, some of the ruling SLPP’s own parliamentarians and the party’s allies have been publicly expressing unhappiness over its certain provisions, the party members said. If the 20A is implemented in its present form, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa

will be the hardest-hit as his current powers as the premier would be diminished with his younger brother and the President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, assuming full executive power, they said.

Moreover, Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is also a two-time president, will not be able to contest for the presidential election again as the two term bar has been retained in the 20A draft,

the party members said. The draft legislation was to be placed in Parliament’s order book this week for debate and adaptation. However, it faced internal resistance from within a faction of the SLPP parliamentary group. And now, with Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is also the leader of the Sri Lanka People’s Party (SLPP), appointing a committee, this process could be delayed.

— PTI

## China calls HK people held at sea ‘separatists’

## US threat to world peace: China min

**Beijing, Sept. 13:** The 12 Hong Kong people arrested at sea by mainland authorities last month were separatists, a spokeswoman for China’s foreign ministry said on Sunday, in response to her US counterpart’s characterisation of the arrest as a deterioration of human rights.

The comment came a day after relatives of the detainees held a news conference in Hong Kong demanding the urgent return of the 12 who were intercepted by the Guangdong coast guard on Aug. 23 on a boat bound for Taiwan.

Donning masks and hats to shield their identities, they made their first public appeal for help and information on their relatives’ plight, pleading for them to be allowed to consult lawyers appointed by their families and not the Chinese government and to be allowed to call relatives in Hong Kong.

US State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus tweeted on Saturday that their arrest was “another example of the deterioration of human rights in Hong Kong”, and called on mainland authorities to “ensure due process”.

The arrests came about two months after the mainland government imposed a security law on the special administrative region following months of pro-democracy demonstrations.

China’s Hua Chunying responded in another tweet. “Seriously?! Fact check: The 12 people were arrested for illegally cross-

**Beijing, Sept. 13:** China’s Defence Ministry on Sunday blasted a critical US report on the country’s military ambitions, saying it is the US instead that poses the biggest threat to the international order and world peace. The statement follows the September 2 release of the annual Defence Department report to Congress on Chinese military developments and goals that it said would have “serious implications for US national interests and the security of the international rules-based order”.

Defence Ministry spokesman Colonel Wu Qian called the report a “wanton distortion” of China’s aims and the relationship between the People’s Liberation Army and China’s 1.4 billion people.

“Many years of evidence shows that it is the US that is the fomentor of regional unrest, the viola-

tor of the international order and the destroyer of world peace,” he said. US actions in Iraq, Syria, Libya and other countries over the past two decades have resulted in the deaths of more than 800,000 people and displacement of millions, Qian said.

“Rather than reflecting on itself, the US issued a so-called report that made false comments about China’s normal defence and military construction,” he said in the statement. “We call on the US to view China’s national defence and military construction objectively and rationally, cease making false statements and related reports, and take concrete actions to safeguard the healthy development of bilateral military relations.”

The report examined the PLA’s technical capabilities, doctrines and the ultimate aims of China’s military buildup.

— AP

ing the border in waters. They are not democratic activists, but elements attempting to separate #HongKong from China,” she wrote. The Shenzhen city police, in its first notice since the arrest, on Sunday said the 12 Hong Kong citizens were under criminal detention on suspicion of illegally crossing the

border. The investigation is ongoing, it said.

“Police will protect the legitimate rights and interests of criminal suspects in accordance with law,” the police said.

The relatives on Saturday said they had been given no information on the allegations.

— Reuters

## Blair, Major call for boycott of Johnson’s Brexit bill plan

**IF THE** government has concerns about specific parts of the withdrawal treaty, there are ready mechanisms within it to resolve them amicably; in the first instance by negotiation between the UK and the EU and, if that fails, through independent arbitration. It has chosen to ignore these options.

**TONY BLAIR AND JOHN MAJOR, Britain’s former PMs**

“If the government has concerns about specific parts of the withdrawal treaty, there are ready mechanisms within it to resolve them amicably; in the first instance by negotiation between the UK and the EU and, if that fails, through independent arbitration. It has chosen to ignore these options. Instead, it has thrown the withdrawal treaty into uncertainty and given the EU genuine reason to

question whether Britain can be relied upon in any future trade agreements with the EU,” they wrote.

Major was a Conservative prime minister from 1990 to 1997. His Labour successor Blair served as Britain’s prime minister from 1997 to 2007. Amid growing discord over the issue within his own party, Johnson has sought the backing of his MPs for the new Bill saying the EU is threatening to impose a customs border in the Irish Sea, separating Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK.

The Bill focuses on the Northern Ireland Protocol — the part of the Brexit divorce designed to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland. If it became law, it would give UK ministers powers to modify or “disapply” rules relating to the movement of goods between Britain and Northern Ireland that will come into force from January 2021, unless the UK and EU are able to strike a trade deal ahead of that.

— PTI

## FILM | FEST

Hungarian Kornel Mundruczo’s 1st English foray *Pieces of A Woman* is set in Massachusetts

## And the Oscar goes to... ‘Princess’ Venessa Kirby

**SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 13**

It doesn’t happen often, but when it does, it creates what we call “the magic of cinema”. Bringing to life characters and a world that simply didn’t exist before a writer conjured them up requires a unique mix of individual pursuit of brilliance, but also a *jugalbandi* of skill, daring and commitment with others. A director who can imagine and create it, an actor who can make us believe in it, a cinematographer who captures it and an editor who eventually decides

what we see, how, when, and for how long.

No matter how well one of them does, creating that magic depends on what everyone does. Hungarian director Kornel Mundruczo’s first English language film, *Pieces of A Woman*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on Saturday, strives for that kind of brilliance and achieves it in a bravura sequence that comes barely six minutes into the film and goes on for almost 24 minutes.

Based on a screenplay by Kata Webber, *Pieces of A Woman* is set in Massachu-

setts, US, where Martha (Venessa Kirby), a slim, chic executive, and her construction worker husband Shaun (Shia LaBeouf) have planned a home birth for their first child. They have bought a baby-friendly car, a room with a crib is ready, and the midwife has been booked. September 17. There is slight chill in the air. Winter is coming. And so is the baby.

Cinematographer Benjamin Loeb’s long, intimate sequence, shot by a hand-held camera, stays with Martha for the entirety of the birth of her baby. It starts with mild contrac-

tions, her water breaking, the contractions increasing and a replacement midwife turning up.

In this sequence, where there are few, carefully-concealed cuts, the camera stays close to Martha as a helpless Shaun tries his best to be of some use. It zooms in when Martha needs a hand to squeeze and

steps back as she gets delirious with pain and says she smells something rotten. We feel as if we too are attached to her, bobbing around Martha gently in amniotic fluid along with her baby. Your hair will stand on its end when Martha screams in pain, her veins popping out as she tries to push the baby out.

This visceral look at what child birth entails for a woman, eager and desperate to eject a piece of herself, is just the beginning of change — of Martha’s body and emotions.

Venessa Kirby, most well-known for playing Princess

Margaret in Netflix’s *Crown*, is stripped of all veneer of glamour and even dialogue in *Pieces of A Woman* as she has to first let a child rip through her, and then cradle a tragedy that keeps taking her apart, bit by bit.

Kirby carries this destruction, this loss in her body, in her silence, in her inability to tolerate even the most loving and benign of touches. They all feel as if they are taking a bite of her broken pieces. While Martha is pretending to live, a media and court room drama is playing out. But Martha is keeping everything and everybody at an arm’s

length. Her mother, Elizabeth (played with flinty self-assurance and infuriating interference by Ellen Burstyn), won’t have it. In the film’s second most powerful scene, Elizabeth tells her own story and the film again takes Martha apart so that she can piece herself back together.

Though it’s too early to tell, but for now my prediction is that the next Oscar for best performance female will go to Venessa Kirby. And I won’t be surprised if Ellen Burstyn stands smiling next to her, holding her own golden knight.





## DECCAN Chronicle

14 SEPTEMBER 2020

### It's status quo once again for Congress

The latest recast of the Congress leadership by its president Sonia Gandhi seems to be in line with the saying “the more you change, the more you remain the same”. The party has chosen to return to ad hocism, a strategy which has helped it float at many critical times but weakened it every time. Ms Gandhi, who returned to her post after being ‘interim president’ for a year, has picked the same people who have been at the helm of the party all these years, to assist her. The Congress Working Committee (CWC), once the most powerful political forum in the country, sees no change that reflects the changed political reality of the country.

The exercise comes in the background of 23 senior party leaders writing a letter to Ms Gandhi demanding that the party have a full-time president who can inspire the party cadre, more freedom to state units and election to the state units. It is to the credit of Ms Gandhi that she has included some of the letter writers, including veteran face Ghulam Nabi Azad and Jitendra Prasada, members of the CWC. She, however, dropped them from the new arrangement which will advise her on “organisational and operational” matters. That articulate faces of the party such as Dr Shashi Tharoor, who has been an effective voice of the party within Parliament where it is a famished lot, and outside has not been accommodated in any of the new committees, is a signal that the rebels will find it tough to go further up in the party hierarchy if they raise their voice for more democratisation. The party seems to have no plans to brook dissidence if it is aimed at its first family.

It is disappointing that the grand old party of Indian politics has chosen to ignore the signals that emanate from the ground asking it to reinvent itself and be the bulwark of resistance to the right wing politics that is bent on undoing every single block with which the republic is built. Instead of looking for fresh faces that can inject new enthusiasm into the minds of the party workers whom one would be able to find in every village, the choice of leadership has remained a game of musical chairs.

A series of challenges of unprecedented magnitude and reach, each one with a firepower that can seriously damage its future, faces India and the government and the party that leads it have conveniently chosen to ignore each one of it. It is estimated that India will have the most number of Covid infections by mid-October. The economy has been in tatters and the pandemic has pushed it further down. The border issue is far from over, though the determined efforts of the Armed Forces have been able to checkmate the enemy at the border. The country deserves an Opposition which can hold the government accountable to Parliament and the people, and the Congress has the leading roles in ensuring it. A vibrant and elected leadership alone can ensure it.

### Vilification campaign

It turned out to be a false alarm. First, a tweet by the Swaraj Abhiyan leader and then a clarification issued by Delhi Police have confirmed that Yogendra Yadav, Sitaram Yechury, Jayati Ghosh and Apoorvanand have not been arraigned as accused in a supplementary chargesheet filed in connection with the death of a 17-year-old in the February riots in Delhi. It does raise a few uncomfortable queries, though, pertaining to both the source and the process resulting in the misleading news flash by the agency.

The leaders and activists, however, have been named in unauthenticated disclosure statements obtained by police from the accused and which form part of the chargesheet. It is not admissible in court but can form the basis of legal action against these individuals should there be found, or concocted, corroborative evidence. Prima facie, the allegation against them is about “provoking and mobilising” the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests in Jaffrabad on February 22. But since they were perfectly within their rights to criticise and rally public opinion against CAA, it is no more than the government’s political position on the matter. “Maliciously the image of the government”, to quote from the second chargesheet, is no offence under the law.

The Delhi Police investigation into the riots has been loudly condemned by this newspaper for being shoddy in the extreme and ideologically charged. The original chargesheet was against Pinjra Tod members Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal, and Jamia Millia Islamia’s Gulfissha Fathima. Incredible though it may appear to be, they are now being accused of instigating an unknown person to shoot Amaan, the 17-year-old riot victim. Curiously or not, Kalita and Narwal have written, “I refuse to sign”, in some pages of the statements in the new chargesheet.

Recently, hearing a bail plea by her, the Delhi High Court held that there is no evidence against Kalita of participating in any conspiracy. Clearly, these new “revelations” strategically hyped by the police is part of its partisan agenda to discredit the anti-CAA movement, discourage new participants and intimidate, harass and harm the protesters.

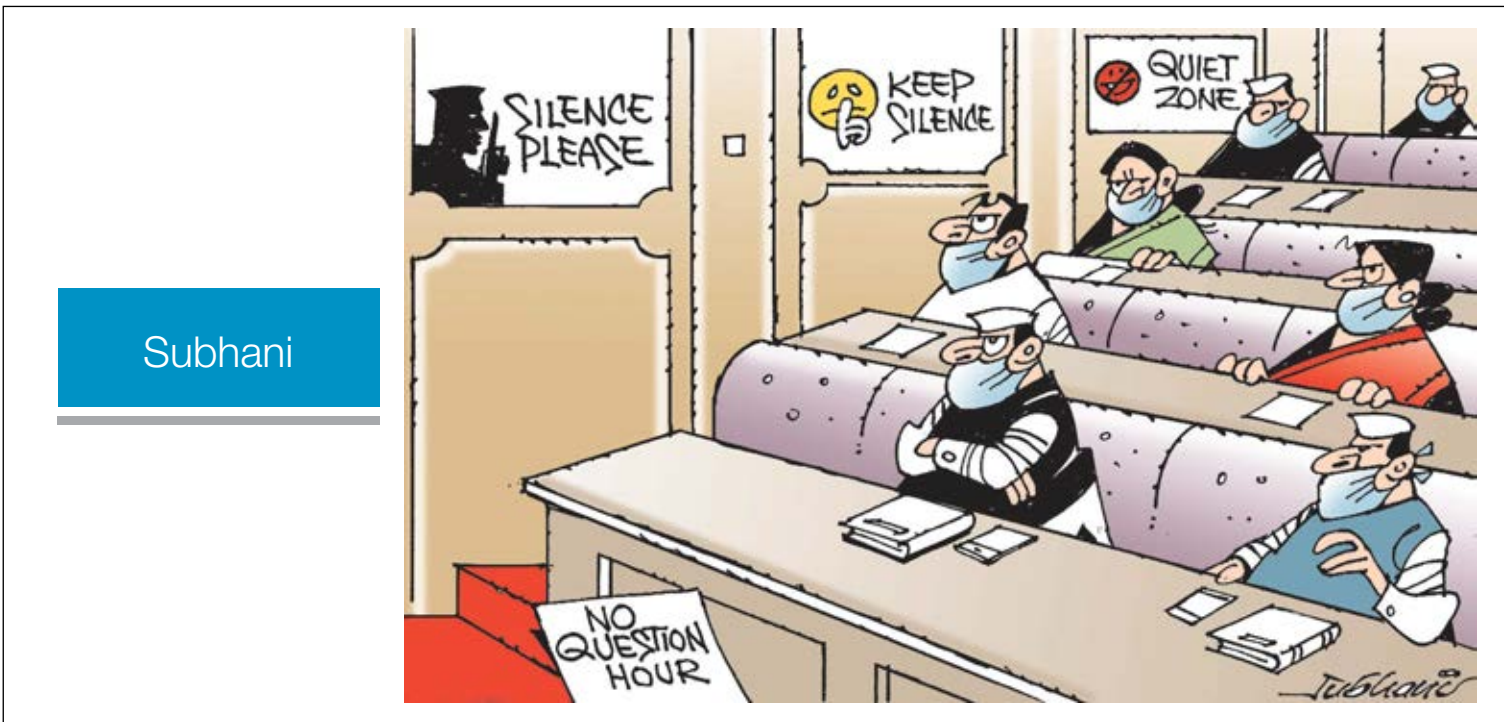
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Subhani

## Staring at Dragon's eyes: India must stay on guard



Ruchi Ghanashyam

The fire that was lit by the Chinese in the Galwan Valley on June 15 continues to smoulder in eastern Ladakh. The worst incident of violence on the India-China border since 1967 claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers. Several weeks later, many efforts to resolve the situation are yet to yield the desired results. India has demanded China restore the status quo, while China blames India, claiming sovereignty over the area.

This is the second India-China standoff in recent memory. The tussle between the two militaries in Doklam in 2017 is still fresh in our memory. The Chinese attitude towards India has been evident for years, if not decades. Covert Chinese backing for anti-India groups in the Northeast has been known for long. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, its tight embrace of Pakistan, including support at the UN for Pakistan-based terrorist Masood Azhar, are mirrored in its anti-India activities elsewhere in our neighbourhood. Each of India's neighbours is vulnerable to Chinese stratagems: Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives or Bhutan.

China's aggressiveness isn't restricted to India's neighbourhood. Its activities in the South China Sea have alienated much of Southeast Asia, and raised alarm bells in several Western capitals. Its bellicose approach to Taiwan hasn't gone unnoticed in Washington or elsewhere. Even worse is its approach towards Hong Kong, where it is systematically undermining the “One country, two systems” principle, which was the basis for the governance of Hong Kong and Macau since they became China's

Special Administrative Regions in the late-1990s. Britain has taken the lead to speak out against the draconian security law that China imposed on Hong Kong in July.

Human rights violations across China are another issue that bothers the West. The heavy-handed tackling of unarmed protesters in Hong Kong was brought into the world's living rooms by international TV channels. The treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang province has alarmed not only the West but also Central Asia.

China has demonstrated a voracious economic appetite. Of late, it has increasingly given direct loans and trade credits to developing nations, much beyond their capacity to pay back. One report claims it has given \$1.5 trillion in such loans and credits to over 150 countries, and more than 50 developing nations owe more than 15 per cent of their GDP to China. It eyes the assets of nations unable to service their debts, though the Chinese media denies this.

China's approach to trade is no less aggressive. The United States and China are engaged in what is described as a trade war, while European and other countries are concerned over China's single-minded approach. Chinese companies like Huawei and many Chinese apps are increasingly attracting greater scrutiny. India, too, has taken action to ban several of these apps.

While disliking China's political and economic approach, most countries have looked the other way due to their growing dependence on Chinese finance and investments. The tipping point may have been reached as the world struggles to cope with the human and economic impact of the coronavirus that has brought most developed countries

virtually to their knees.

India faces a challenge from China on its borders. It also has an opportunity to engage with a world that is increasingly uncomfortable with China's actions. The engagement among the “Quadrilateral” (India, Australia, Japan and the US) has been revitalised. It is time that the “Quad” is expanded to include Britain, that has a direct interest in Hong Kong and is a long-time maritime power. In addition, Britain has a good understanding of this region. France can similarly bring greater depth to this initiative. Closer coordination between the Quad and Southeast Asia must also be on our agenda. Our engagements shouldn't be limited to the Indo-Pacific; strengthening ties with Central Asian nations should also be an important objective.

These efforts shouldn't be seen or projected as “anti-China”, and such coordination is vital to maintain secure and peaceful maritime movement in the Indo-Pacific. It could benefit development of the “blue economy”, studying the impact of climate change and disaster relief and management. Our engagements with the Quad also shouldn't be seen as a panacea for our border problems with China. We must resolve the current situation with China through dialogue, but our engagement with China must firmly convey our resolve to defend our sovereignty. India's preference for peace should not be mistaken for military inability or unwillingness. This “red line” must be understood by the Chinese. Within the bounds of this position, the creativity of our diplomats and policymakers can try and find a solution that is acceptable to both sides and which the Chinese leadership can take back to their people

**The Chinese seem to have opened too many fronts. Despite its strength and power, China today seems to have few friends in the world.**

without appearing to have surrendered or backtracked.

In war and diplomacy, it is always advisable not to open too many fronts simultaneously. The Chinese seem to have opened too many fronts. Despite its strength and power, China today seems to have few friends in the world. It's efforts to encircle India may have had dubious success, but its own overambition, bordering on arrogance, has led to the near encirclement of China itself.

Is it an arrogant misjudgement on China's part, which made it supremely confident of handling such widespread unhappiness of its actions across the globe? Somehow, it's difficult to accept that Chinese policymakers could have been so naive. Some blame internal struggle and dissonance within the Chinese leadership for the current overstretch. Others point to the centenary of the Communist Party of China next year and the desire of the leadership in Beijing to deliver the Chinese vision of itself as a great superpower at this important landmark. Covid-19's appearance as China is preparing to deliver this vision; its actions in Ladakh and other places while the rest of the world is preoccupied with the Wuhan virus could be a coincidence, unless the macho Chinese behaviour in Ladakh and south of its borders is aimed at diverting the attention of its own people.

China is busy spreading its wings. From Hambantota to Gwadar, from Djibouti to Greece's Piraeus Port, and now its efforts to establish its footprint in the islands of southern Italy, combined with its increasing assertiveness in Hong Kong, the South China Sea and Ladakh, paint a picture of a China that has decided its time has come. India must remain on guard, both militarily and diplomatically. When it comes to the crunch, our battles are our own!

*The writer is a retired IFS officer who recently served as India's high commissioner to Britain*

#### LETTERS

##### TD IDEOLOGY

A desperate TD is trying return to power by hook or by crook after being decimated in the 2019 Assembly elections. Even this route is not that easy to tread for the leaders of TD, as the people of AP are not that enamoured by Hindutva ideology.

**Govardhana Myneedu**  
Vijayawada

##### ACTORS IN POLITICS

The charisma of an actor cannot make him an administrator and administration is not entertainment. The little charisma that one has will be lost if they become a damp squib. It would be better if they remain in the domain in which they reign supreme. It is rare for actors to carve out a niche in politics.

**D.S.P. Rao**  
Kakinada

##### DUPLICITY IN MUMBAI

BMC bulldozers razed the office of Kangana with much fanfare even though demolitions were kept in abeyance due to Covid-19. Now, Mumbai police has released 6 Shiv Sena goons who bludgeoned a retired navy officer in broad daylight citing Covid-19. Absolute power emboldens Shiv Sena cadres to run riot. After some time, the cases against hoodlums will be dropped and persecution of Kangana will be given importance.

**Parthasarathy Mandadi**  
Tirupati

#### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

### PM: Strong Centre alone can meet challenges

KASARGOD, SEPT. 13

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said today that the many difficult problems facing the country could be solved only if the Centre is able and strong and there is peace.”

Addressing her first election meeting soon after arrival here this morning of a three-day tour of Kerala, Mrs. Gandhi said the people of Kerala were educated and intelligent.

They should take into account all prevailing factors before taking a decision in the coming elections.

“We are today engaged in the great task of reconstruction of India. In that I hope you and I have to play our part,” Mrs Gandhi said. Mrs. Gandhi said that some parties were talking in terms of fighting against the Centre.

ending at Monday lunchtime.

But what about theatre? How many of us are prepared walk into a theatre to watch a play about Covid-19? At least it will be a live performance with properly socially distanced seating. Well, some people have done exactly that because Ralph Fiennes is enacting the role of a Covid patient at a time the government dithers over the next step, at the Bridge theatre. The playwright of *Beat the Devil* is David Hare — who apparently did get the infection — and then was inspired to write the play. Perhaps it is a great idea to stage this monologue — but honestly, even though the combination of Fiennes and Hare are dynamite, right now a monologue on Covid is the last thing I need.

*Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author. Her latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life and Times of Devika Rani, will be out by November.*

## Apocalypse just around corner, Rule of Six can't ward it off

Kishwar Desai

London Diary



A big shock this week was the pause of the human trials for the “Oxford vaccine” as it is now known, when one volunteer fell ill. The vaccine is our eagerly awaited “Christmas present” ever since Prime Minister Boris Johnson had said there would be a vaccine by the end of the year, and we were dreaming of an unmasked Christmas. And now more sobering information comes to us that even vaccines which reach the human trial stage have only a 20 per cent chance of success and no one knows out of the five vaccine candidates that Britain has lined up — which one will eventually triumph. In any case no country plans to vaccinate the whole population — so new rules will have to be drawn up. Rule Britannia, as they say! But in these disrupted times, when everyone is stuck at home (and I have always maintained that I don't mind at all as I am now doing the final edit of my new book in which I will be slobberingly grateful to “self isolation”) — the

two sections of society who will always appreciate WFH are women and authors. For once I am in the winning team — being a woman and an author!

But meanwhile, we are now seeing The Return of Carona in the UK. This is a horrifying sequel to the first act. Covid cases are doubling every week and the dreaded R number is 1.7. As it happens, schools are starting again and within a fortnight universities will reopen. The government already looks indecisive as it did last April. Now it keeps on changing its mind as frequently as the weather changes. Can we blame them? There is no ready-made solution — and even those subjects which may have a solution such as Brexit are being tossed around. I always think of Boris as a “jolly” leader who somehow thinks that if you remain optimistic the problem will disappear. But Brexit plus Carona equals Chaos. Right now, the country looks unprepared for

the apocalypse round the corner.

But when in doubt invent a new rule! Rule Britannia! A new rule says that only six persons can gather together indoors or outdoors. So all those restaurants and pubs which did a roaring trade in the summer will be back under wraps. Offices were about to reopen and London transport would have carried more passengers on the underground. But now this has been put under a cloud. Of course before it comes into effect on Monday the weekend will be full of crowded beaches, pubs and restaurant. The stiff upper lip of the quietly obedient Briton is nowhere to be found, and instead we see lips firmly wrapped around beer glasses.

Indeed one argument is that it was the haste with which the government relaxed the lockdown to help the economy that may have caused the resurgence of the infection. For the first time since he became Chancellor, Rishi Sunak is

being questioned about the wisdom of his Eat Out to Help Out Policy which gave customers price cuts in restaurants for each meal they had on selected days of the week. And the opening of the pubs would have added to the return of Covid. But as has often happened since the epidemic started, scientists, civil servants, politicians have not agreed on anything. “The Rule of Six” sounds suspiciously like a Sherlock Holmes mystery — and possibly will remain one.

Of course football resumed this weekend but without spectators just as it was during the last season. People will still watch it online and at least there will something to talk about on Monday morning when they meet their mates or crowd out the phone lines of radio talk shows. The English male talks more about football than any other topic over the weekend — before the match on Saturday and then after final whistle and over the entire weekend



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,854.55	0.04
Nifty 50	11,464.45	0.13
\$S&P 500*	3,340.97	0.05
Dollar (₹)	73.53	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.32	1.30
Euro (₹)	87.06	0.17
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,452.191	0.36
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	39.83	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	0.669	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.674	-0.010

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

Banks sanction ₹1.63 lakh cr to 42 lakh MSMEs

The finance ministry said banks have sanctioned loans worth over Rs 1.63 lakh crore to more than 42 lakh business units under the Rs 3-lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for the MSME sector. Of this, over Rs 1.18 lakh crore has been disbursed to 25 lakh enterprises, till Sept. 10. The scheme is the biggest fiscal component of the Rs 20-lakh crore Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package.

ICAI seeks more time to file FY19 GST returns



The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has written to the GST Council seeking deferment of the 2018-19 GST annual return filing deadline by three months till December 31. The last date for filing the annual return for 2018-19 for GST-registered taxpayer is Sept. 30. In its representation to the GST Council, the ICAI said majority of the offices are working only partially due to the pandemic.

FPIs pull out ₹3,510 crore from equities in Sept.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) turned net sellers in Indian markets by pulling out Rs 2,038 crore so far in September as they turned cautious in view of rising Indo-China tensions and weak global cues. According to the depositories data, a net Rs 3,510 crore was withdrawn from equities while Rs 1,472 crore was pumped into debts by them between September 1 and 11.

Covid cases account for 11% of health claims

Treatment for Covid-19 accounted for as much as 11 per cent of the total health insurance claims paid by insurance companies during the first five months of the current financial year, says a Policybazaar.com research. It said 89 per cent of health insurance claims during April 1 and August 31 were for other major illnesses, including cancer, heart problems, kidney and treatment.



Govt wants to expand domestic market Foreign listing to be tied to local listing

ADITYA KALRA, ADITI SHAH & ABHIRUP ROY NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, SEPT. 13

Indian companies that list overseas will have to later launch on a domestic bourse under policy changes being considered by government officials, sources told Reuters, a move that global investors fear will harm valuations. India said in March it would allow local firms to directly list abroad to better access foreign capital for growth, but the rules have yet to be decided. Currently only certain types of securities such as depository receipts are able to be listed in foreign markets, and only after the companies go public in India.

The new policy, aimed at helping local firms achieve better valuations, could be a shot in the arm for Indian unicorn start-ups valued at over \$1 billion and Reliance's digital unit which is eyeing a US listing after raising over \$20 billion from global names like KKR & Co. But in recent weeks Indian officials told global investors and companies in meetings they were considering mandating a secondary listing for local companies on Indian bourses after they list abroad, five sources said. The time period under consideration for such a requirement ranges from six months to three years, sources said. A separate senior regulatory source in India said "dual listing was being



considered by the (finance) ministry for sure," but a final position on the matter has not been reached. Japan's SoftBank and an Indian payment firm it backs, Paytm, as well as Reliance, and US-based Sequoia Capital have conveyed to the government the secondary listing provision risks splitting trading volumes, hurting long-term valuations and raising compliance needs and costs, the sources added. "To require companies to subsequently list in India will make these rules meaningless," said a senior executive from a global venture-capital firm. SoftBank and Sequoia have invested in various Indian firms like ride-hailing company Ola and hospitality firm Oyo. Foreign listings could provide exits for such investors at higher valuations but also allow Indian firms, especially from the tech sector, to access specialised investors abroad who can better value their companies. The rules are being drafted by the finance and corporate affairs ministries, in discussion with the capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India, and will be finalised in coming weeks. Currently, Indian companies can list locally and then access foreign equity capital through instruments like American depository receipts (ADRs), a route used by Infosys and ICICI Bank. India is concerned that the upcoming policy change will mean that companies hunting for higher valuations through access to a wider group of investors, would choose to only list abroad, the sources said. That risks hitting the growth ambitions of Indian capital markets and depriving local investors of the wealth-creation opportunity. "The government needs to balance Indian aspirations so that (domestic) investors can invest in these companies," said Siddharth Pai, founding partner at investment firm 3one4 Capital. "This is a trailblazing endeavour, if India plays its cards right."

— Reuters

Dilip Buildcon in talks to sell 7 highway projects

New Delhi, Sept 13: Highways builder Dilip Buildcon Ltd (DBL) is in talks with large global financial investors to sell seven of its road projects.

The company that claims to be India's largest road construction company currently building 16 per cent of all Nat-ional Highways, has already sold five of its projects to Cube Highways. "After the successful transaction of selling HAM portfolio with Shrem group, we have sold yet another portfolio of 5 HAM projects to Cube Highways, focusing on the efficient use of equity," DBL said in its annual report. It had won 12 HAM (hybrid annuity mode) projects in 2018-19. The company is in talks with few "large global financial investors," in this regard, it said. "We will continue to emphasise on improving the Return on Equity by exploring possibilities for monetising the remaining 7 HAM projects out of the 12 we had won in FY19, for which we are in talks with a few large financial investors," it said. To fuel highway projects, the government had earlier approved HAM under which it provides 40 per cent of the project cost to the developer to start work while the remaining investment is made by the developer.

—PTI

Non-tariff steps affect all Indian products: UN

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 13



Non-tariff measures like technical barriers to trade (TBT) and export-related measures affect all the products exported out and imported into India, finds a study by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad).

A total of 4,618 non-tariff measures (NTMs) have been issued by 17 Indian ministries and institutions. China has issued 7,332 NTMs, Australia 1,897 and Japan 1,278, finds a study by Unctad on NTMs in countries initially engaged in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations. The study includes countries like Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. Non-tariff measures are policy steps other than ordinary customs tariffs that can potentially have an economic effect on international trade in goods. TBT, which is any regulation, standard or procedure that can make exporting goods to a country difficult as well as other export-related measures, affects all the 11,483 products or HS codes traded by the country.

While TBT accounts for 36.24 per cent of the NTMs, sanitary and phytosanitary measures account for 50 per cent of the NTMs. Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures are quarantine and biosecurity measures which applied to protect human, animal or plant life or health from risks arising from the introduction, establishment and spread of pests and diseases and from risks arising from additives, toxins and contaminants in food and feed. Such measures have been largely issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Both these ministries account for 63.6 per cent of total NTMs in India. Animal and animal products, food, vegetables and chemicals mostly have SPS measures. Of all the product groups, food-stuff is the product group,

which has 100 per cent NTMs, followed by vegetable products (99.72 per cent) and animals and animal products (99.56 per cent). As many as 7,557 products have four different NTMs and more. The product groups that mostly have four or more NTMs are textiles (88.9 per cent), machinery/electricals (80.4 per cent) and chemicals and allied industries (57.5 per cent). Although the current database for NTMs with respect to India is relatively comprehensive, it requires regular updates to capture the impact on international trade, value chains, and business models, finds Unctad. Indian laws are often amended and continuously reviewed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Finance to ensure that India's trade practices and policy are fair, inclusive, profitable and feasible.

NVIDIA NEARS \$40 BILLION DEAL TO BUY CHIPMAKER ARM

DINESH NAIR, LIANA BAKER & IAN KING SEPT. 13

Nvidia Corp is nearing a deal to acquire SoftBank Group Corp's chipmaker Arm Ltd, according to people familiar with the mat-

ter, an acquisition that would extend its reach into mobile devices. A transaction could be announced as soon as this week, said the people. The companies have been discussing a deal that would value Arm at about \$40 bil-

lion in cash and stock, two of the people said. The Wall Street Journal reported Saturday that a deal worth more than \$40 billion could be sealed early this week. Nvidia and Softbank represeedined to comment. — Bloomberg

Over 13 lakh join stock rush in last one month

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 13

More than 13.21 lakh new retail investors were added in the BSE's registered investors' list in the last one-month period, indicating growing retail investors' interest in the equity market. Maharashtra (2,77,588), Rajasthan (1,03,145), Gujarat (1,01,190), Uttar Pradesh (1,01,076), Andhra Pradesh (87,633) and Telangana (82,441) were states where the highest new unique client codes were added in the last one month. Among the large states, Telangana registered the highest percentage increase in new client additions to the capital market at 6.70 per cent while Andhra Pradesh clocked 3.17 per cent rise. Smaller states of North East are seeing the highest percentage increase due to smaller base—for example, Manipur (8.84 per cent/2,579 new investors). Delhi showed relatively lower increase in new additions, with a 1.64 per cent rise, or 50,265 new investors.

"Over 35.97 lakh new retail investors were added since last quarter, taking total registered investors' number to over 5.42 crore," as per latest BSE data as on September 13. Another evidence of large number retail investors investing in stocks has emerged from national depository Central Depository Services (CDSL) adding 50 lakh investors since January 2020. "The net number of active demat accounts opened with CDSL has crossed a new milestone of 2.5 crore (25 million)," CDSL said at the beginning of September. CDSL crossed the 2-crore mark in January 2020 and crossed the 2.5 crore mark as on August 31, 2020. Speaking on the milestone achieved, CDSL MD & CEO Nehal Vora said, "The growth of investors, especially in the current unprecedented times, is a representation that the Investor is now moving to a self-sufficient environment with opening and operating demat accounts from the comfort of their homes."

Sebi clarifies on multi-cap MF asset allocation framework

New Delhi, Sept. 13: Regulator Sebi on Sunday said that mutual funds have many options to meet with the requirements of its circular pertaining to asset allocation framework for multi cap schemes based on the preference of their unit holders.

In a press release, the markets watchdog clarified that apart from rebalancing their portfolio in the Multi Cap schemes, mutual funds (MF) could inter-alia facilitate switch to other schemes by unit holders, merge their Multi Cap scheme with Large Cap scheme or convert their Multi Cap scheme to another scheme category, for instance, Large cum Mid Cap scheme. The clarification came after the regulator tweaked asset allocation framework for multi cap mutual funds through a circular issued on Friday, requiring them to invest a minimum of 25 per cent each in Large, Mid and Small Cap stocks, and giving flexibility to the fund manager with the balance 75 per cent. In its latest press release,



Sebi noted that some sections of media have reported various views on the circular and various conclusions are being drawn. "Sebi is conscious of market stability and therefore has given time to the Mutual Funds till January 31, 2021 to achieve compliance with the circular through its preferred route of which rebalancing of the portfolio is only one such route," the regulator said. It is reiterated that to achieve the desired objective of True to Label and A p p r o p r i a t e Benchmarking, Sebi will examine proposals of the industry received in this regard, it added. Multi Cap schemes had

flexibility in terms of allocation to Large, Mid and Small Cap stocks but it was observed that some Multi Cap Schemes have skewed portfolios, with over 80 per cent of investment in large cap stocks akin to Large Cap schemes, and some Multi Cap schemes have near zero or insignificant asset allocation to small cap companies. Therefore, in order to achieve the objectives of True to Label and Appropriate Benchmark, a need was felt to review the scheme characteristics of Multi Cap schemes and take necessary steps to clearly distinguish Multi Cap schemes from other category of schemes, Sebi noted. "In order to diversify the underlying investments of multicap funds across the large, mid and smallcap companies and be true to label, it has been decided to partially modify the scheme characteristics of multicap fund," the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had said in its circular on Friday.

— PTI

Tyre-maker ATG to invest ₹ 1,240 cr at Vizag plant

Mumbai, Sept. 13: Off-highway tyre-maker Alliance Tire Group (ATG), owned by the Japanese major Yokohama Group, is setting up its third plant in the country in Visakhapatnam with an investment of \$165 million (around Rs 1,240 crore).

The proposed plant will add over 20,000 tonnes per annum (55 tonne per day rubber weight) capacity to the 2.3-lakh-tonne annual production from two India plants and will be commissioned by the first quarter of 2023. The plant will generate around over 600 new jobs, adding to its 5,500-strong headcount, Nitin Mantri, chairman of Yokohama India and director of ATG, told PTI on Sunday. ATG has one plant at Dahej in Gujarat with an annual capacity of 1.3 lakh tonne (360 tonne per day) and another at Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu with an annual capacity of 1 lakh tonne. The group has a 45,000-tonne plant in Israel as well where it has its main



R&D centre. The TN facility has an R&D centre. These two plants produce all the three key off-highway tyre brands, of ATG Alliance for agricultural machinery, Galaxy for construction & industrial machinery, and Primex for forestry machinery. Over 90 per cent of the production is exported to over 120 countries. Mantri said they were looking for a suitable location for the third plant for almost three years now and had identified Vizag before the pandemic broke out. From a demand side we see one of the best farming seasons ahead here and forestry is also doing well globally. Only construction is down. — PTI

How flying business class feels more like economy now

ANGUS WHITLEY & ANURAG KOTOKY SEPT. 13

Forget the flute of chilled Moët & Chandon before takeoff, mid-flight gin and tonics and a roaming dessert trolley after dinner: Flying business class isn't what it used to be. Efforts to minimise human interaction and reduce the risk of infection are taking the shine off the most expensive seats onboard commercial aircraft. Gone are the multi-course banquets and warm personal service, once the hallmarks of carriers like Singapore Airlines Ltd and Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. These days, what's left of premium-grade travel is functional, hygienic and closer

to cattle class – only with more legroom. The limitations are one more headache for an industry grappling with a near-total collapse in demand and follow years of luxury onepmanship among carriers in a contest for the most profitable passengers. Suddenly, it's harder to tell airlines apart when you're up the pointy end. That's making it tougher to win top-paying customers, and risks pushing some to the back of the plane. "There's nobody to help you with your bag, you're not escorted to your seat, and there's definitely no pre-flight champagne," said Sandra Lim, who flew business class to Singapore from Los

Angeles with Singapore Air late last month. "It feels like it's reverted back to economy class." Crew wore face masks and eye shields, and avoided contact and shared touch points where possible, Lim said. While passengers could ask for a drink, they weren't freely offered, and there were no menus. Meals came with everything on one tray, just like in economy, rather than in separate courses. "When you strip away the food and service, it's just a mode of transport to get from point A to B," said Lim, a 38-year-old food and beverage consultant. Some overseas routes have resumed, but traffic worldwide has barely started to creep back. International passenger



demand was down 92 per cent in July. The planes that were flying were typically about half full, according to the International Air Transport Association. It's also not clear to what extent the premium mar-

ket, which IATA says generated 30 per cent of airlines' international revenues in 2019, can recover. Many grounded business travellers have become accustomed to video conferencing rather than making visits in person, and a global recession threatens corporate budgets. IAG SA, owner of British Airways and Iberia, said in July that leisure demand will recover before corporate travel, and this "structural change" in the market will lead to new cabin layouts. On a conference call, IAG chief financial officer Stephen Gunning said British Airways retired its Boeing Co 747s early partly because they had so many premium seats. Virgin Australia

Holdings Ltd chief executive officer Paul Scurrah said at a conference this month that business travel would rebound slower than the overall market as some companies maintain work-from-home policies. Qantas Airways Ltd CEO Alan Joyce was optimistic that demand would fully recover, but not until 2023 or 2024. Low-cost airlines such as Ryanair Holdings Plc and EasyJet Plc, largely catering to short-haul leisure travellers, are likely to bounce back faster than airlines with a bigger international focus, UBS Group AG analysts led by Jarrod Castle said in a report last month. According to Volodymyr Bilotkach, a lecturer in air-transport management

at the Singapore Institute of Technology, a single business class seat that lies flat needs to generate at least four times the profit of an economy seat to justify all the space it takes up in the plane. Some airlines will use the pandemic to permanently downgrade their offerings in premium cabins to save money, said Jeremy Clark, who runs Malaysia-based JC Consulting, which advises carriers on catering and service. "There will still be airlines that recognise the value good food and service bring to their brand in return for the relatively small cost of providing it," said Clark. "We're human beings. We like to be spoiled." — Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES

Sree's spot-fixing ban comes to end

**New Delhi:** India pacer S. Sreesanth's ban for alleged spot-fixing came to an end on Sunday, concluding a seven-year punishment that was originally meant to be for life and was aggressively contested by the flamboyant bowler. The 37-year-old has already made it clear that he intends to resume at least his domestic career at the end of the ban and his home state Kerala has promised to consider him if he manages to prove his fitness. "I'm completely free of any charges nd anything nd now gonna represent the sport I love the most.will give my very best to every ball I ball even (if) it's just practice," he tweeted on Friday, a couple of days before the end of his suspension. "Just have another 5 to 7 years max to give it all I've got nd I will give the very best to any team I play," he added. However, with the Indian domestic season postponed at present due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it remains to be seen when exactly Sreesanth is able to make a comeback if Kerala decides to give him a chance. — PTI

Ruturaj to undergo 2 more Covid tests

**Dubai:** Young Chennai Super Kings batsman Ruturaj Gaekwad, who tested positive for Covid-19 last month, will undergo two fresh tests starting Sunday and could miss the first few games of the IPL. Thirteen members of the CSK contingent tested positive for the virus and two of them were players — Gaekwad and Deepak Chahar. Chahar, along with 11 others, has recovered and resumed training after clearing his mandatory two tests. "Ruturaj will undergo two tests, today and tomorrow. If he tests negative, he will be back in team hotel bubble. The other staff members have tested negative and are now back to normal," CSK CEO K.S. Viswanthan said on Sunday. For Gaekwad, CSK will follow the established protocol and he will also have to undergo cardiovascular and lung function tests to ascertain his fitness if he clears the virus tests. — PTI

Messi plays 45 mins in friendly

**Madrid:** Lionel Messi started and played 45 minutes in Barcelona's first pre-season friendly on Saturday as Ronald Koeman showed no hesitation in reintegrating the Argentinian. Barca beat third tier side Gimnastic Tarragona 3-1, with Ousmane Dembele opening the scoring on his first appearance since November. Antoine Griezmann and Philippe Coutinho then each scored penalties, either side of Javier Bonilla pulling one back for the visitors. But Messi's return at the Johan Cruyff Stadium was perhaps the biggest plus for Koeman, who was taking charge of his first game since being appointed coach last month. — AFP

Honda riders slip in Misano

**Misano Adriatico, Italy:** Despite flashes of promise throughout the weekend, the Repsol Honda Team left the first of two races in Misano unrewarded despite efforts of Alex Marquez and Stefan Bradl. Putting a difficult Saturday behind him, Alex Marquez showed his maturity as he approached Sunday with an open mind. A strong performance in morning Warm Up, ending ninth and only 0.321 off the fastest time set by Takaaki Nakagami, proved there was promise in his race pace. A steady start as the lights went out saw Alex make up a handful of places early, the MotoGP rookie spending much of the race working on getting past Petrucci. Matching the speed of the leaders during the closing stages, Alex was forced to settle for 17th. Takaaki Nakagami took top Honda honours in ninth, his sixth top 10 finish in this season.

Live on TV

**FOOTBALL**  
English Premier League: Brighton vs Chelsea from 12.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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NAOMI AGAIN!

Osaka beats Victoria to win second US Open crown

**New York, Sept. 13:** Japan's Naomi Osaka came from a set down to beat Victoria Azarenka of Belarus to win the US Open on Saturday and clinch her third Grand Slam title.

Osaka, the fourth seed, overcame her unseeded opponent 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 inside a near-empty Arthur Ashe Stadium at Flushing Meadows.

It brought 22-year-old Osaka's haul of tennis major trophies to three after her victories at the 2018 US Open and 2019 Australian Open.

"I didn't really enjoy that. It was a really tough match for me," Osaka said following her 1hr 53min victory.

Azarenka, 31, sprinted to the first set in just 26 minutes, dominating Osaka with an 88 percent success rate on her first serve.

The Japanese was uncharacteristically sloppy, hitting a whopping 13 unforced errors.

Azarenka then went 2-0 ahead in the second set before Osaka fought back to break her opponent's serve twice and take a 4-3 lead.

The momentum had quickly swung in Osaka's favor and she broke a third time to take the match to a deciding set.

"I just thought it would be very embarrassing to lose this in under an hour so I just have to try as hard as I can and stop having a really bad attitude," said Osaka, explaining the turnaround.

Osaka enjoyed the first breakthrough of set three in game four when she broke Azarenka's serve to take a 3-1 lead. Azarenka then blew a golden opportunity to get back into the match, wasting three break points as Osaka recovered from 0-40 to hold for a 4-1 lead.

Azarenka saved four break points to make it 4-2 as she battled to keep the contest alive.

When she broke Osaka in game seven, the set was back on serve. But Osaka immediately



Naomi Osaka of Japan returns the ball during the US Open women's singles final against Victoria Azarenka of Belarus at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York on Saturday. Osaka won 1-6, 6-3, 6-3. — AFP

broke back after Azarenka pushed a forehand wide to leave herself the opportunity of serving for the match and title. On Osaka's second championship point, Azarenka found the net.

'THIS WAS FUN'

Azarenka, a two-time

Grand Slam champion, was playing in her first tennis major final since losing the 2013 US Open to Serena Williams.

The last few years of the former world number one's career have been disrupted, firstly by injury then by a custody battle over her son, born

in December 2016.

But she enjoyed a fairy-tale run in New York, clinching the Western & Southern title before reaching Saturday's US Open final, where she lost for the third time.

"It's been a long road of getting here, but this was fun," she added. — AFP

Mayhem at Mugello as Hami clinches 90th race

**Mugello (Italy), Sept. 13:** Lewis Hamilton won a chaotic, crash-littered Tuscan Grand Prix on Sunday, extending his lead at the top of the Formula One drivers' championship.

Reigning champion Hamilton finished ahead of his Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas to claim his 90th F1 victory in a race which only 12 drivers finished, moving the Briton to within one win of equalling Michael Schumacher's all-time record.

"It's was all a bit of a daze," said Hamilton to Sky Sports.

"It was incredibly tough today... All those restarts, the con-

centration that's needed during that time, it was really, really hard."

Hamilton, 35, is now on 190 points, some 55 ahead of Bottas and is also on course this season to equal Schumacher's record of seven world titles after claiming his sixth win in nine races this year.

Alex Albon finished third, claiming his first podium finish for Red Bull, after a thrilling drive to compensate his team for the early exit of Max Verstappen in the first of two multi-car collisions in a race of three Safety Car interventions. The race took two hours and 25 minutes to complete, with the spells behind the Safety Car adding up to 76 minutes.

Two spectacular multi-car collisions brought Sunday's Tuscan Grand Prix to a chaotic standstill and reduced the field to just 13 of the original starters, but despite all the carnage no driver was injured. — AFP



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning the Tuscany Grand Prix at the Mugello circuit in Scarperia, Italy, on Sunday. — AP

Has SASCOC decision put SA cricket in jeopardy?



Hemant Kenkre  
Silly Point

There are a few days to go before the grand entertainment of cricket hits Indian television screens. As teams are preparing for the Indian Premier League (IPL) that kicks off on September 19, an important bit of news did not find much space among the reams being written about the blue riband tournament run by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

A few days ago, South Africa's Olympics body South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SAS-

COC) asked key members of Cricket South Africa (CSA) to step down from their posts and took over the administration of cricket in the country. To CSA, which has been in the deep end with allegations of corruption, racism and many other evils, SASCOC's directive has dug the hole deeper, casting a pall of gloom for cricketers and fans in the country.

Even as the 10-odd South African (SA) cricketers are busy shaking the rust, caused by a long absence of competitive cricket, in the Arabian desert for the IPL,

the question on the minds of their colleagues who are not as lucky is a terrible one directly concerning their future. South African cricket in the recent past has undergone turmoil, losing much talent, thanks to the Kolpak ruling which hit their country the hardest.

SASCOC's decision now puts a cloud over the future of SA cricket on the whole depending on which way the International Cricket Council (ICC) will interpret it. According to an article in the ICC constitution, cricketing matters of each member country must be handled autonomously only by the board without interference from the government or other public or quasi-public body. The debate whether SASCOC's ruling constitutes government

interference or not is something which ICC's legal team must be pondering over at this point in time.

SASCOC has strongly denied that their directive constitutes meddling by the government and stresses that it has not acted under any kind of directive from the country's rulers and is a completely independent act. While the legal eagles will be busy trying to decide SASCOC's stand, it will be pertinent to note that there is a precedent of familiar cases that have happened in the past.

SA's neighbours, Zimbabwe, were suspended by the ICC in July last year for alleged intrusion by their government in Zimbabwe Cricket's (ZC) affairs. Thus the country became first full member

of the ICC to be banned from playing any form of cricket. A similar fate was suffered by Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN), an associate member and a rising force in the Subcontinent. Both countries were brought back into the ICC fold in October 2019.

According to their website, SASCOC is the Sports Confederation for all Sports Federations in the Republic of South Africa, and of course, is recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Paralympic Committee (IPC), amongst others. The latest media release by them confirms that CA is its member and is required to comply fully with their constitution. SASCOC claims that it has acted in good faith, and in the best

interests of the sport.

What then constitutes 'government interference' in the constitution of the ICC? If an association has members of that country's ruling party on their board, will their opinion or acts be defined as those suggested by the government? In the case of Pakistan Cricket Board, their country's head of state automatically becomes their patron-in-chief. When Imran Khan, the current head takes a call on cricketing matters will it be termed as one taken by an eminent cricketer (their most successful cricket captain) or the head of their government?

Closer to home, though the committee formed under Retd. Chief Justice R. M. Lodha did not stop politicians from holding posts in the BCCI, the

Supreme Court (SC) suggested a ban on government servants and ministers donning the role of cricket administrators. Laws are meant to be laid and enforced for the betterment of the populace, in this case for the game to prosper.

From an ICC perspective, for now, SASCOC's action will cause furrows among their legal team and the country will be under close scrutiny.

It will be prudent for ICC to take a relook at their constitution and come out with clear guidelines which leave little room for doubt for their members, going forward. They could well consider the statement of Chief Justice T. S. Thakur who had said: "Politicians as a category cannot be barred. There is a politician in everyone."

DDCA removes Justice Verma as its Ombudsman

**New Delhi, Sept. 13:** The Delhi & Districts Cricket Association on Sunday removed Justice (Retd) Deepak Verma from the post of Ombudsman during its Apex Council meeting, held virtually, and reinstated Justice (Retd) Badar Durrez Ahmed.

Justice Verma is also the Ombudsman of the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) and Apex Council felt that the one person can't hold the same post in two different state units.

All 11 members of the Council, including three government nominees, attended the meeting where it was "unanimously decided" to reinstate Justice Ahmed as Ombudsman.

"The decision (to replace Ombudsman) was unanimous. All his decisions were arbitrary without any consultation with the Apex Council. There were legal fees running into crores and support staff weren't being paid," a member of the Apex Council said on the condition of anonymity.

"We have appointed Justice Badar Durrez Ahmed. He has given his

consent. The decision will be ratified at the next AGM," he added.

It was also learnt that Saurabh Chaddha was appointed legal counsel of the DDCA.

However, all these appointments can not last not more than a month as DDCA needs to hold election by October 30 and a change in regime will mean new policy decisions.

Support Staff Issue

Most of the member of the support staff associated with various Delhi teams (age group, women, men) have finally been paid 50 per cent of their contract amounts, including Ranji team's former coach K. P. Bhaskar.

"Bhaskar's original contract was for ₹30 lakh provided the team qualified for the knockouts. Since Delhi didn't qualify for the knock-outs under his coaching, he was supposed to be paid ₹24 lakh (as per agreement). Out of ₹24 lakh, ₹12 lakh has already been paid. In the next few weeks, we hope to clear the entire amount," a senior official, who is dealing with players' payment informed. — PTI



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scores his side's fourth goal against Leeds United in their Premier League match at the Anfield Stadium in Liverpool on Saturday. — AP

Super Salah seals it for Liverpool

**London, Sept. 13:** Mohamed Salah hit a hat-trick as Liverpool kicked off their Premier League title defence with a thrilling 4-3 win against Leeds on Saturday.

Just 48 days after last season's delayed conclusion, the Premier League returned with a bang as Liverpool and Leeds served up a feast of goals to open the 2020-21 campaign.

Liverpool didn't have it all their own way as Leeds came from behind three times before Egypt forward Salah finished them off with two minutes left.

Leeds are back in the top-flight for the first time in 16 years and Marcelo Bielsa's team deserve credit for putting Liverpool under enough pressure.

Salah won a fourth-minute penalty when his shot hit Leeds debutant Robin Koch on his outstretched arm and he dis-

THE RESULTS

<b>Liverpool</b> (Salah 4-pen, 33, 88-pen, Van Dijk 20)	<b>4</b>
<b>Leeds</b> (Harrison 12, Bamford 30, Klich 66)	<b>3</b>
<b>Crystal Palace</b> (Zaha 13)	<b>1</b>
<b>Southampton</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>West Ham</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Newcastle</b> (Wilson 56, Hendrick 87)	<b>2</b>

patched the spot-kick himself.

Leeds fashioned a stunning equaliser in the 12th minute when on-loan Manchester City midfielder Jack Harrison cut past Trent Alexander-Arnold and Joe Gomez before drilling a superb low finish into the bottom corner. — AFP