

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 16 | SEPTEMBER 2020

## WEATHER



Max: 32°C  
Min: 23°C  
Rainfall: 3 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Aavani 31  
Tithi: Chaturtashi  
**Star:** Magam/ Puram  
**Rahukalam:**  
12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:**  
7.30 am to 9 am  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.47 am  
**Zohar:** 12.10 pm  
**Asar:** 3.21 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.11 pm  
**Isha:** 7.22 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.09 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 4.40 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 5.33 PM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+90,970)	(+1,280)
50,17,884	82,088

covid19india.org

## STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,697)  
TN: 5,14,208 8,502

## WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,96.28.994

## DEATHS

9,36,144

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES 213

worldometers.info

## 13 die in separate incidents of lightning strike in UP

**Lucknow:** At least 13 people were killed in separate incidents of lightning strike during rain and thunderstorm in the state, an official statement said on Tuesday. "In the incidents of lightning on Tuesday, four people were killed in Ghazipur, three in Kaushambi, two each in Kushinagar and Chitrakoot, one each in Jaunpur and Chandauli," Relief commissioner Sanjay Goel said.

## UK restores 3 idols stolen from TN back to India

**London:** A set of three idols of Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu decades ago, were restored to the Indian government on Tuesday after a collector voluntarily offered to hand it back on discovering their true history. The theft dates back to 1978 and led to an investigation by the Idol Wing of the TN Police working along with colleagues in the Metropolitan Police in London.

## COUNTER POINT



**We tested positive? It's a conspiracy by the Opposition!**

## ACTIVISTS' PROTEST



Mahila Morcha and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) activists stage a protest demanding the resignation of Kerala minister KT Jaleel over his alleged involvement in the gold smuggling case, in Kochi, Tuesday. — PTI

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Minister inspects road project



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Don to preside over historic Arab-Israel recognition deals

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Messi in sporting billionaires club



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## TN PASSES BILL IN ASSEMBLY

# 7.5% medical seats quota for Govt school students

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT 15

A Bill to provide 7.5 reservations for students studying in government schools in admissions to undergraduate courses in medicine, dentistry, Indian medicine, and homeopathy was passed in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Tuesday.

Moved by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the Bill provides for preference for students of government schools who have qualified in Neet.

To a query raised by DMK MLA R. Masilamani if social justice will be followed in admission for the 7.5 per cent seats, Palaniswami said the 69 per cent reservation that was given to the State by the late J Jayalalithaa would continue and be applicable in this also.

He said that law was to enable poor and rural students to get admission in the various medical courses.

As of now students from government schools who get admission in medical courses account for just one per cent and hence the 7.5 per cent quota will ensure that 300 students benefit out of it. Palaniswami said.

The bill was framed after a commission headed by former High Court judge P. Kalaiyarasan gave its recommendation, he said.

With the opening of the 11 new government medical colleges in the State, the number of students who would benefit from this quota would further go up, he added.



**"Who is responsible for Neet in 2010 and who went to the court after the apex court quashed the introduction of the exam. It is DMK, which is also responsible for the death of 13 aspirants in the state," Palaniswami charged before moving the Bill providing 7.5% reservation for government school students in medical and dental colleges in the Assembly on Tuesday.**

# Debate on Neet dominates House

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

A heated discussion on how to get exemption for Tamil Nadu students from Neet in the Assembly on Tuesday saw the DMK and the AIADMK members trying to blame each other for the 'problem' that had taken a heavy toll of lives.

Raising a call attention motion, Stalin called for the cancellation of Neet, saying the Centre had not respected the sentiments of the House, which had passed resolutions and also two Bills that were not given consent by the President.

Besides referring to the three cases of suicide the day before the examination, Stalin also said that students who appeared for the test were subjected to

unfair stringent restrictions at the centres and said that a resolution should be passed against Neet.

Only the marks taken by students in the plus-two examination should be taken into account for admission to medical colleges, Stalin said and added that Union minister Piyush Goyal had said that the AIADMK government had not demanded the cancellation of Neet.

Interjecting, AIADMK member I.S. Inbadurai said that Neet was brought in by the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre, in which the DMK was a part, in 2010. The DMK that had kept quiet then was making a noise over it, he said.

■ P3



## Sasikala may be released Jan. 27 next year: RTI

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs BENGALURU, SEPT. 15

Late Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa's aide V. K. Sasikala, serving a four year-term in a corruption case here, may be released from jail next January 27 provided she paid the fine amount of ₹10 crore, Karnataka prison department has said in response to an RTI query.

Sasikala, lodged at the Parappana Agrahara Prison here, was convicted and sentenced in February 2017 in the ₹66 crore disproportionate assets case. ■ P3

# Raksha Mantri delivers stern warning to China

## Congress walks out as discussion denied in House

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

In what is being seen as a veiled warning to China amid repeated border violations by its troops, defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said that India was prepared to deal with all contingencies though it remained committed to peaceful resolution of the situation.

Making a statement in Lok Sabha, Mr Singh said the border issue with China remains unresolved as China, historically, "does not recognise the current boundary". He said that difference in perception has led to the face-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"We do remain committed to the peaceful resolution of the current situation. At the same time, the House can be assured that we remain prepared to deal with all contingencies," the defence minister said.

Asserting that the Indian Army has inflicted heavy losses on the Chinese side during the clash with the PLA at the Galwan Valley on June 15, Mr Singh said since April there has been a considerable build-up of troops and armament by the



Chinese side in the border areas adjacent to eastern Ladakh.

In early May, the Chinese side had taken action to hinder the normal, traditional patrolling pattern of Indian troops in the Galwan Valley area, which resulted in a face-off, he said adding that in mid-May, they made several attempts to transgress the LAC in other parts of western Ladakh.

"This included Kongka La, Gogra and North Bank of Pangong Lake. These attempts were detected early and consequently responded to appropriately by our armed forces."

"We made it clear to the Chinese side, both through diplomatic and military channels, that China was, by such actions, attempting

● "I want to inform this august House and through it the entire nation, that we are prepared for all outcomes to ensure that India's sovereignty is maintained"

— RAJNATH SINGH, Defence minister

to unilaterally alter the status quo. It was categorically conveyed that this was unacceptable." Mr Singh said. Opposition Congress walked out of the House after the defence minister's statement as it was not satisfied with it and wanted to ask certain questions which was disallowed by Speaker Om Birla.

The party has been repeatedly demanding that the government explain the "real situation" in Ladakh. Congress MPs on Tuesday carried placards in the House that read: "We want a discussion on China and the PM must answer".

The MPs staged a walkout when the Speaker refused to allow the party's leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to speak.



An IAF transport aircraft C17 brings in essentials supplies at a base in Ladakh, Tuesday, as the security forces gear up for winter amid tensions at the LAC. — PTI

# India's Covid-19 caseload races past 50 lakh mark

**New Delhi, Sept 15:** India's Covid-19 caseload raced past the 50-lakh mark on Tuesday night, just 11 days after it crossed 40 lakh, while the total number of recoveries too surged to 39,26,096, according to data from states and union territories.

The Union health ministry data updated on Tuesday 8 am showed single-day spike of 83,809 infections, taking the country's Covid-19 tally to 49,30,236, while the death toll climbed to 80,776 with 1,054 people succumbing to the disease in a day. However, by night, a PTI tally showed India's

● India is in the pole position, followed by Brazil and the US, according to the Johns Hopkins University which has been compiling Covid-19 data from all over the world. India is the second worst-hit nation in terms of COVID-19 cases after the US, while it is in the third spot in fatalities after the US and Brazil, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

The Union health ministry on Friday said 38,59,399 people have recuperated from coronavirus infection, taking the national recovery rate to 78.28 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate was at 1.64 per cent.

— PTI

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— PTI



## Modi launches seven urban projects worth ₹541 crore in Bihar

**New Delhi, Sept. 15:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday slammed previous governments in Bihar for indulging in "vote bank politics" and catering to their "selfish interests" over governance, and lauded Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's rule, as he launched seven urban infrastructure projects worth ₹541 crore in the poll-bound state.

Modi inaugurated four projects under 'Namami Gange' Yojana and 'Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation' (AMRUT) in the state, and laid foundation stones for water supply and riverfront projects at a virtual ceremony attended by Kumar, his deputy Sushil Modi and a number of Union ministers. The state had "politically, socially and economically strong cities" along the Ganga river once upon a time, but they were degraded during a long era of "slavery", the prime minister said. While the state had tall and visionary leaders for some decades after Independence but an era came when focus shifted from governance, he said. — PTI

# India beats China to UN women's panel seat

**United Nations, Sept. 15:** In a significant victory, India got elected as Member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global body focussed on gender equality and women empowerment, beating China in a hotly-contested election.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The 54-member ECOSOC, holding the first plenary meeting of its 2021 session in the General Assembly Hall on Monday, held elec-

● India, Afghanistan and China had contested the elections to the Commission on Status of Women. Even as India and Afghanistan won the ballot among the 54 members, China could not cross the half-way mark

tions for two seats in the Asia-Pacific States category with Afghanistan.

India and China in the fray. Afghanistan, which is led by Ambassador Adela Raz at the UN, garnered 39 votes and India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast.

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, got only 27 votes

and could not even cross the half-way mark and also failed to get the required majority of 28 votes.

"India wins seat in prestigious #ECOSOC body! India elected Member of Commission on Status of Women #CSW. It's a ringing endorsement of our commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in

all our endeavours. We thank member states for their support," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti tweeted.

India beat China in the hotly-contested election to the prestigious UN body in the year when the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, that was held in Beijing in 1995, is being commemorated around the world.

The election result is being seen as sending a strong signal about China's own record of women's equality and empowerment. — PTI



## OTHER STORIES

## Karnataka native hangs himself

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

A 30-year-old native of Karnataka ended his life by hanging self in Madipakkam on Monday. The deceased has been identified as Sunil, a resident of Ram Nagar in Madipakkam. He had been doing automobile-related business in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, for the last six years.

Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, he acquired a loss in the business and was struggling to pay interests for the loan he had taken. Police said that on Monday, Sunil allegedly hanged himself inside his house, and the matter came to light after his neighbours alerted the police as he did not come out of his house till Monday evening. The police broke open the door and found him hanging. An inquiry was conducted. The Madipakkam police have recorded proceedings under Section 174 of the CrPc and sent the body to the Chromepet government hospital for post-mortem.

Further investigation is under way.

## Applications open for UK's Chevening Scholarships and Fellowships

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

The application for the UK Government's Chevening Scholarship and Fellowship programmes for 2021-22 are now open. The aspiring scholars can apply for a one-year master's under the Scholarship programme by 3 November 3, 2020, and for the short-term thematic Fellowship programmes by October 19, 2020.

The Chevening Scholarships offers full financial support for one year to candidates applying for a master's degree at any UK university – covering nearly 12,000 courses from more than 150 universities. The Fellowships offer professional development and networking opportunities for mid-career professionals to pursue an 8-12 week course in journalism, science and innovation, or cyber security, according to a press release.

Oliver Ballhatchett, British Deputy High Commissioner in Chennai, said, "The UK is home to some of the world's best universities, brightest students, and most revered academics. Its higher education sector promotes the exchange of information and ideas, as well as the building of knowledge and networks. The Chevening programme offers a unique and exciting opportunity for the best minds in India to study in the UK, paid for by the British Government. This programme is designed both to develop future leaders and to strengthen the UK-India Living Bridge, helping us to share the best of what our two countries have to offer."

**The aspiring scholars can apply for a one-year master's under the Scholarship programme by 3 November 3, 2020, and for the short-term thematic Fellowship programmes by October 19, 2020**

## During lockdown

## Manual scavenging snuffs out 11 lives

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Despite prohibition of manual scavenging in the country, at least 11 people lost their lives across Tamil Nadu due to asphyxiation while clearing the drains during the lockdown.

The data was compiled by Safai Karamchari Andolan, an NGO that works for rehabilitation of manual scavengers, based on the first information report registered under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Rehabilitation Act 201 in the respective police stations.

According to the data, four people aged between 20 and 30 died in Thattaparai police station limits in Thoothukudi district on July 2 while they were cleaning a septic tank and two manual scavengers aged 28 and 27 lost

The data was compiled by Safai Karamchari Andolan, an NGO that works for rehabilitation of manual scavengers, based on the first information report registered under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Rehabilitation Act 201 in the respective police stations

their lives in an incident under Rasipuram police station in Namakkal district on August 12. Two people aged 34 and 36 were asphyxiated at Muthiyal Pettai police station in Kanchipuram district on August 20 and in Chennai district three people aged between 30 and 38 killed in two separate incidents (under Pattinapakkam police and Kundrathur police) on August 21 and on last Sunday last respectively.

According to the data compiled by Safai Karamchari Andolan, a

total of 16 people have asphyxiated in this year so far.

D. Samuel Velanganni, state convener of Safai Karamchari Andolan, said these incidents point to the stark reality that manual scavenging continues in Tamil Nadu. Ninety percent of people who lost life are from the SC and ST communities. Though the government has announced Rs 10 lakh as compensation for the victim's families, only three families have got the amount, that too half.

"The pandemic and subsequent lockdown have resulted in the high demand for manual scavengers in the state and local agents have been encouraging people to do the prohibited job. We had sent detailed letters to all authorities including the district collectors, chief minister and the State Human Rights Commission to take action

against those who encourage people to do manual scavenging by offering inducements. But the situation remains to be the same," he said.

This comes at a time when the Central government is contemplating to make the law banning manual scavenging more stringent by introducing a bill in the ongoing session of Parliament.

According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Bill, 2020, also proposes to completely mechanise sewer cleaning and provide better protection at work and compensation in case of accidents.

The plan also aims to modernise the existing sewage system by setting up sanitation response units with helplines.

## Corpnr worker killed in road accident

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

A conservancy worker of the Greater Chennai Corporation died in a road accident after he was knocked down by a speeding water trailer at Thirunermalai Salai on Tuesday morning.

The deceased, Vijayakumar, 58, working for Chennai corporation Alandur zone, resided in Nagalkeni near Chromepet. The accident happened when he was walking to the Thirunermalai Salai bus stop to go to Alandur.

A speeding water trailer running for a private company hit Vijayakumar. He was reportedly pulled for a few meters by the heavy vehicle. People who witnessed the accident alerted a 108 ambulance. He was rushed to the Chromepet government hospital, but he was declared dead on arrival.

Chromepet traffic investigation police registered a case and launched a search for the driver who caused the accident and fled the spot.

## Traditional umbrellas getting ready

N. SAMPATH | DC  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Tamil Nadu unlocked during the auspicious Tamil month of Purattasi has brought cheer to those making traditional umbrellas, popularly called Tirupati kodais, and elachi garlands for Perumal temples. The families which make the umbrel-

las and elachi garlands in Chindadripet are busy these days expediting their work as Purattasi sets in on September 17. These families have been making temple umbrellas and elachi garlands for decades together.

Devotees are glad that the government has allowed temples to be opened following strict guidelines

Speaking to *DC*, C.K. Shah, who makes these umbrellas, said they had been left with no work for the last six months due to Covid induced lockdown. But after the relaxation of curbs they have got orders from several temples to make the special umbrellas for the Lord. The price of a traditional special umbrella ranges from ₹4,500.

## Public Health Act amended

**Chennai:** An amendment was made to the Tamil Public Health Act 1939 with a view to stopping the violence faced by authorities enforcing the lockdown rules and Covid-19 control measures during the time of the pandemic.

The Bill to bring in the amendment was moved by Health Minister C Vijayabaskar, who said violators and those who abet in the violation of the Coronavirus prevention protocols would face a punishment of three months to two years jail sentence and a fine of ₹10,000 to ₹50,000. — *DC*

## Four workers injured as molten iron falls on them

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Four contract labourers were seriously injured when molten iron accidentally fell on them at a mini integrated steel plant in Melpakkam, near Uthiramerur, in Kanchipuram district.

The incident occurred on Monday night, when the labourers were working at the iron melting shop. Police said the accident happened due to spilling of molten iron

out of the furnace in the melting place. Four workers, all migrants from North India, suffered burns.

Nikkan, Sagar of Uttar Pradesh, Gundan Kumar and Nandhan from Bihar were rushed to the Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital.

The Perunagar police registered a case and began investigation.

An inquiry committee was constituted to ascertain the cause of the accident.

## Intense cold spoils Ooty tourism

DC CORRESPONDENT  
OOTY, SEPT. 15

Unusual rains, an overcast sky and cold weather in September; the autumn tourist season popularly known as the second tourist season here, is playing spoilsport for tourists and the tourism industry here.

The dawn of September here would generally trigger tourism activities, as the salubrious shiny weather would be back in the hills following three months of intense rains during the SW monsoon

that sets in June. But contrarily, the hills witnessed heavy rains in early August this year, which continued almost till August end.

Usually, the month of September here is generally known for its occasional autumn showers with sunshine dominating the rains, but this season it is just the reverse. As the hill residents easily catch cold in this weather condition, for health officials here it has become an extra burden to deal with the backdrop of the pandemic.

## Air customs seizes banned drugs at airport

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

The Air Customs at the Chennai airport seized banned medicines headed to the US and also arrested a wholesale pharma dealer.

According to a release from the department, based on intelligence, the Chennai Air Customs intercepted some postal parcels

On opening the parcels, 234 strips of Addwize 10mg (Methylphenidate), 50 strips of Lonazepam 1 mg (Clonazepam) and 40 strips of Zolfresh 10 mg (Zolpidem) were recovered. 2340 tablets of Methylphenidate, 600 tablets of Zolpidem and 500 tablets of Clonazepam were recovered from these parcels.

Methylphenidate is a central nervous system stimulant used to treat Attention Deficit Hyper-

activity Disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy. Zolpidem is a sedative, also called a hypnotic and is used to treat insomnia. Clonazepam, an anti-epileptic drug, is used to treat certain seizure disorders.

The drugs are psychotropic substances falling under Schedule 'X' & 'H' of Drug and Cosmetic Rule 1945 and are also covered under the NDPS Act, 1985.

Total 3,440 tablets of psychotropic drugs were seized under the NDPS Act, 1985.

The parcels were destined to Florida in the USA, and were booked by a person doing pharmaceutical wholesale business in Chennai. Follow up searches were carried out and he was arrested. Further investigation is in progress.

## HC slams black sheep stalling projects

J. STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Expressing its deep anguish at the sorry state of affairs prevailing in some state undertakings, the Madras high court has said, "even if the state government wants to implement projects taking into consideration the public interest, there are black sheep, both at the level of the government as well as the state undertakings, who will put spokes for their self-aggrandisement".

Stating that this is a classic case which falls under the above category, Justice N. Anand Venkatesh allowed a petition filed by one K. Saraswathi and her son K. Balan, which sought to declare the entire land acquisition proceedings for a housing scheme, which was initiated 21 years ago, in respect of the lands belonging to

them in Vellakinaru village, Coimbatore, become lapsed.

The judge held that the petitioners satisfied the twin requirements of Section 24 (2) of the Act, viz., that the physical possession of the lands was not taken and the compensation has not been paid/tendered/deposited in accordance with law. "This court further holds that the petitioners are not reopening any concluded proceedings and they are not reviving any stale claims and they have approached the court at the right time. These findings are rendered in line with the judgment of the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court. The petitioners are entitled for the relief claimed by them in this petition and the acquisition proceedings so far as the petitioners are concerned stands lapsed under section 24 (2)



of the Act", the judge added.

Following the submission of Advocate General that the entire original records have gone missing, the judge directed the state government to immediately initiate an inquiry into the missing records and take all attempts to trace the original records and also initiate departmental action against persons behind the records going missing.

Senior counsel Ar. L. Sunaresan, appearing for the petitioners, submit-

ted that the state government initiated the land acquisition proceedings in 1999 for Tamil Nadu Housing Board's housing project. Since the petitioners were neither served notice nor informed about the award, they were under the impression that the project was abandoned. They were utilizing their lands for agricultural purposes. While so, the officials of TNHB came to their property and informed them that the property has already been acquired by the government and the possession has been handed over to it.

The judge said as per the counter affidavit and status report filed by the TNHB, it was seen that the proposal to carry on with the housing scheme came up for discussion before the Assembly only in March 2020. Thereafter the TNHB started calling for tender in order to under-

take the scheme work and the tender was opened on June 26, 2020. "Since the original records have gone missing, this court is not able to get any particulars from the State with regard to the taking of possession or payment of compensation and this court does not have the advantage of looking into the records due to the fact that it is not available. It is not known as to whether the records are intentionally concealed in order to prevent this court from taking cognizance of some very material facts. This court is forced to make such an observation since it is nothing but recklessness on the part of the officials to come and state before a high court that the records are missing, more particularly, when it is claimed that the project is being undertaken in a phased manner from the year 1995 onwards", the judge added.



## NORMS THROWN TO WIND

No social distancing followed at flower bazaar on Badrian street in Parry's on Tuesday. — *DC*



## SHORT TAKES

## Minister inspects road project

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARUR, SEPT. 15

Over 60 per cent of works for laying a by-pass road (Amma road) within the town has been completed, to ease traffic congestion, said Transport Minister M R Vijayabaskar.

In a release here on Tuesday, Vijayabaskar said the government had sanctioned a sum of ₹21.12 crore for the by-pass project covering a distance of 2,600 metres by connecting 20 main roads from the railway station to National Highway No: 7, and the proposed by-pass road passes through the adjacent Karur-Erode broad gauge railway track. The road laying cost is worked out at ₹18 crore and ₹3.12 crore has been spent on land acquisition, he added.

## House burgled

**TIRUCHY:** Miscreants gained entry into a locked house by breaking open the front door and made away with half-a-kilo of silver ornaments, a few sovereigns of gold and other valuables at east Devathanam area in the city on Monday.

The inmates were away at Lalgudi since September 6 and they returned home only on Monday, and found their house ransacked.

Based on their complaint, Fort crime police registered a case and are investigating.

## Child abuse: Youth gets 7 years in jail

DC CORRESPONDENT  
PUDUKKOTTAI, SEPT. 15

The district fast track Mahila court convicted and sentenced a 23-year-old youth for attempting to sexually assault an eight-year-old girl and 10-year-old boy here, on Tuesday.

Public prosecutor, Angavi, said the accused, R Raghupathy, of Illuppur in the district, working in a private cable network company, went to attend a fault at a house near Thilagar Thidal on March 16 last year, and attempted to sexually assault the girl and the boy, who were playing there.

Hearing them scream, passers-by caught the accused and handed him over to the all women police station personnel. He was arrested under the POCSO Act and produced before the Mahila court. Judge Dr Sathya convicted and sentenced the accused to seven years imprisonment and also slapped a fine of ₹3,000. The accused has to undergo five years imprisonment for attempting to sexually assault the girl and slapped a fine of Rs 2,000. The judge said the jail term would run concurrently if the accused failed to remit the fine, and would also undergo five more month imprisonment.

## Five shops sealed in Kumbakonam

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, SEPT. 15

Officials locked and sealed five shops in Kumbakonam on Tuesday for not following the norms of social distancing. In a press release issued here, Collector M Govinda Rao, said nine flying squads had been formed to monitor shops, eateries and hotels in the district, if they comply to health norms.

When one of this squad visited a shopping complex in Kumbakonam, they found five shops overcrowded. Hence, they asked people to get out, locked the shops and sealed them. Fines are also levied on people for violating corona preventive measures like wearing masks. Till September 11, a sum of ₹50.60 lakh was collected as fines from 46,599 persons, at the rate of ₹100 for violations, and from September 12, ₹39,400 has been collected as fine so far at the rate of ₹500 per violation. The collector advised people to strictly follow measures like wearing face masks, using sanitisers and following social distancing.

## Public grievances

## CM comes up with new plan for quick redressal

**Chennai, Sept. 15:** A state-level help centre-cum-integrated public grievance redressal management system would be implemented for expeditious registration and initiation of remedial measures, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami announced in the Assembly on Tuesday. Under the initiative, a person could upload his grievances, related to several government departments, in a single portal and all petitions shall be promptly processed and remedied, he said. Noting that several petitions received by the authorities sought employment opportunities, Palaniswami said steps would be taken to provide such individuals skill development as per need and jobs. The project would be implemented through the information



technology department at an estimated cost of Rs 12.78 crore in the first phase, he said adding, the

help centre proposed under the plan would be extended on need basis. On the need for the new

proposal, Palaniswami said various government departments and district authorities had separate

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Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami pays floral tribute to former CM Annadurai in Chennai on Tuesday. Several ministers attended.

— DC

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arrangements and web-sites for grievance redressal besides a state level Chief Minister's Special Cell. In view of such a scenario, an individual had to submit his petitions at various levels and a same petition at the district and state level. Hence an organisational set up to integrate all grievance redressal bodies under the government departments for quick disposal of petitions was imperative, he said.

— PTI

## Won't allow Mekedatu dam construction, CM assures Assembly

**Chennai, Sept. 15:** Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Tuesday assured the Tamil Nadu Assembly that the state government would not allow construction of a reservoir across river Cauvery at Mekedatu in Karnataka. When DMK deputy leader Duraimurugan raised reported efforts by Karnataka to persuade the Centre for early approval to build a balancing reservoir at Mekedatu, Palaniswami said the Supreme Court's judgment on the Cauvery issue is clear. As per the verdict, the "water due for Tamil Nadu should be fully released. Not only that, the water shall not be blocked or diverted," the Chief Minister said. Karnataka's repeated bid to bring up the Mekedatu proposal for discussion in the Cauvery Water Management Authority was halted in view of staunch opposition from Tamil Nadu, he said. "A case related to this is in the Supreme Court. I would like to convey categorically to the deputy leader that the Tamil Nadu government would

never allow them (Karnataka) to construct Mekedatu dam," he asserted. Also, Palaniswami said the Supreme Court's judgment would help establish Tamil Nadu's rights in the issue. According to the draft Terms of Reference of the proposal (2019), the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir and Drinking Water Project involves construction of a balancing reservoir across River Cauvery near Mekedatu in Karnataka. While the project cost is estimated at Rs 9,000 crore, the proposal is aimed at providing drinking water facilities to Bengaluru Metropolitan region and its surrounding areas (4.75 tmc feet) and generate 400 MW of power as an additional benefit. Tamil Nadu had all along strongly opposed the project and approached the Supreme Court as well saying any dam proposal by upper riparian states in the Cauvery basin would deprive the state's delta farmers of their rightful share of water as per the apex court verdict. — PTI

## Who is responsible for Neet? Parties trade charges

FROM P1

Inbadurai also pointed out that it was Nalini Chidambaram, wife of Congress leader P Chidambaram, who argued in the Supreme Court in favour of having Neet, prompting Congress members in the House to raise in protest.

Speaker P Dhanapal refused to allow the Congress members to speak and when they persisted he asked them to leave the House. Even as they were trooping out, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami asked, 'did she appear or not.'

Continuing the debate, Stalin said that it was the DMK that stopped Neet from coming into Tamil Nadu initially by filing a case. After the BJP came to power only Neet came to Tamil Nadu in 2016 with the AIADMK government remaining a silent spectator, Stalin said. 'After that you could not do anything about it,' he added.

IUML member K A M Muhammed Abubacker said that not only 13 students had committed suicide because of Neet, it had also led to situation in which the poor could not study MBBS.

'This was wrong history,' said Health Minister C

Vijayabaskar and asked, 'when did Neet come in?', spurring the DMK members to rise, when the Chief Minister said, 'he is telling the truth.' It was the AIADMK that fought against Neet and it was the coalition in which the DMK was a part that introduced it, Palaniswami said.

Mentioning the date, December 27, 2010, as the day when Neet was introduced, Vijayabaskar called it a 'black day'. Law Minister C V Shanmugham said DMK's representative in the Union Cabinet, S Gandhiselvan was the Minister of State for Health when the notification was issued.

Even the Union Cabinet with DMK representatives had given approval for that and it was the late J Jayalalithaa who sought exemption for Tamil Nadu, he said.

Jayalalithaa was the one who launched the legal battle against Neet, Vijayabaskar said and wondered why the DMK members did not have the same feeling when the Manmohan Singh government went for a revision petition in the Supreme Court. 'You started it all but for one year Tamil Nadu got exemption

because of Jayalalithaa,' he said.

He said the government had now brought in 11 more medical colleges and had already increased the number of seats to 3,050 from the earlier 1,100 and of the 3,050, 85 per cent seats would come to students for Tamil Nadu.

Stating that the AIADMK was firm in its opposition to Neet, Vijayabaskar asked Stalin how he would cancel it if he came to power. He said Stalin should not take students and parents for a ride as it was not possible and asked him to spell out how he would do it and help the government do it now.

Stalin said the House could pass a new law as it did in the case of the Jallikattu issue, on which too the Supreme Court had given its order. 'Besides, we could put pressure on the Centre to exempt Tamil Nadu,' he said.

Vijayabaskar explained that the method adopted in getting clearance for Jallikattu would not work out in the case of Neet because all the other states had already adopted it whereas jallikattu was something exclusive to Tamil Nadu. The DMK had committed a historic blunder, he added.

## Suicides force DMDK to revise stance on Neet

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUNELVELI SEPT. 15

The Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) which earlier supported Neet, now seems to backtrack from its earlier stance following the anti-Neet wave caused by the suicides of three Neet aspirants.

"It is true that we supported Neet, but we differ from the Centre in its implementation," said L K Sudhish, party dy. general

secretary, here on Tuesday. "We want a national-level common entrance exam for medical colleges to be implemented only after bringing a uniform education in the country," said Sudhish, justifying his party's stance.

"Until the successful implementation of a uniform education system in the country, the DMDK suggests to defer Neet," said Sudhish, adding that his party fully backed the

National Education Policy - 2020, that has seen strong opposition from both the ruling and the Opposition parties in the state.

"We stand by the new education policy (NEP), as it paves the way for creating a uniform system of education in the country," said Sudhish. Unlike almost all Dravidian parties in the state, the DMDK also declares its support for the three-language formula proposed

in NEP-2020.

A party functionary in the southern district, however pleading anonymity, said that this kind of confused stance of the party on issues like Neet, NEP and the three-language formula, would further erode the support base for the party. The functionary also regretted that his party high command had taken such a confused stance, merely to appease the BJP.

## 'If fine not paid, she will be released on Feb. 27'

From P1

"As per prison records, convict prisoner number 9234 Sasikala's probable date of release is January 27, 2021, provided in-default fine amount is paid as awarded by the honourable court," Superintendent of Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara R. Latha said in his response to an RTI query by activist T Narasimha Murthy on September 11.

Latha added Sasikala's "probable date of release" would be February 27, 2022 if the fine is not paid. The officer explained the probable date of release may vary if Sasikala utilises a parole facility. She will have to pay Rs 10 crore to walk out of prison on January 27, 2021, else spend another 13 months behind bars. After the Supreme Court restored the trial court judgement in toto against Sasikala and two of her close relatives in the disproportionate assets case, (V N Sudhakaran and J Elavarasi), she surrendered before the court in Karnataka on February 15, 2017, and has been lodged in Parappana Agrahara Central Jail.

Her two relatives are also undergoing 4-year simple imprisonment and all three of them were slapped a fine of ₹10 crore each.

## Remission of good conduct

## 'Sasikala is likely to be released this month-end'

**Bengaluru, Sept. 15:** Sasikala's counsel has expressed hope of her early release, possibly by the end of this month, citing remission for good conduct.

As per norms, three days of remission for good conduct is available for every month in jail and so far, she has completed 43 months, making her eligible for a reduction of 129

days in prison, "The Karnataka Prison Manual does not have any provision barring remission to those convicted for offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act. "As per the manual, I strongly believe that she will be released by the month end," her advocate N. Raja Senthoo Pandian had said.

When the remission of

129 days is applied, the release will be during the month end and not the previously expected date of January 2021, he had said. Sasikala has already spent a total of 35 days in jail in 1997 and 2014 and availed a 17-day parole in 2017, which is deducted from the period she already served, he had said.

## Fatalities cross 8,500

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Deaths due to Covid-19 went up to 8502 following 68 fatalities on Tuesday when fresh infections were 5,697 all over the state with Chennai accounting for 989 new cases and 12 deaths. Districts with high number of infections were Chengalpattu 324, Coimbatore 485, Cuddalore, 268, Salem 292, Thiruvallur 283 and Tiruppur 262.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam told the Assembly that the government had spent totally Rs 7167 crore on coronavirus prevention, treatment and providing relief to those affected by the pandemic and the lockdown.

He was replying to a call attention motion by Leader of the Opposition M K Stalin on Tuesday raising several questions on the management of the Covid-19 crisis and seek-

ing details of expenses. Panneerselvam said that Rs 830.60 crore was spent on procuring medicines and equipment, Rs 147.10 crore on building medical infrastructure, Rs 243.50 crore on the additional manpower in the health sector, Rs 638.85 crore on prevention and treatment, Rs 262.25 on hospital isolation, Rs 143.62 on guest workers and Rs 4897 crore on providing relief to those affected by the lockdown.

## Anna medal for 131 officers, personnel

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

The government has chosen 131 officers and personnel from the police and other uniformed forces for the Chief Minister's Anna Medal in recognition of their outstanding devotion to duty.

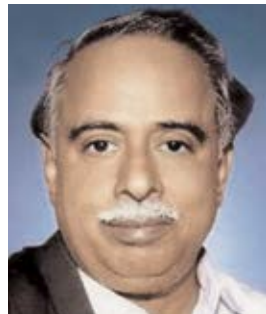
An official press release said 100 police officers and personnel from the rank of Superintendent of Police to Grade-I police constables, 10 Fire and Rescue Service personnel from the rank of Deputy Director to Fireman, 10 Prison Service personnel from the rank of Assistant Jailor to Grade I Warder, 5 Home Guards personnel in the rank of Area Commander to Home Guard Jawan, 2 officers from Finger Print Science unit in the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police and 2 officers from Forensic Science

Department in the rank of Assistant Director/Scientific Officer have been chosen for the award.

The recipients of the award are eligible for a bronze medal and a lump sum grant.

Besides that, S Veeraraj, Station Officer and S Selvam, Upgraded Leading Fireman, of the Fire and Rescue Services Station in Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli district, have been awarded the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Fire Service Medal for Gallantry for rescuing S Ganesan (45) from committing suicide by jumping off from the 70 feet over head corporation water tank in Xavier colony, Tirunelveli on August 15. They will get a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh each.

The Medals will be presented by the Chief Minister at a ceremonial parade.



## POLITICOS PAY HOMAGE TO EX-CM

**Tiruchy:** Leaders of various political parties garlanded the statue of late Chief Minister C N Annadurai, located in different parts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukottai, Tiruvallur and Nagapattinam districts on Tuesday, to commemorate the late leader's 112nd birth anniversary.

Police made elaborate arrangements in and around the statue area to regulate the crowd as the visited the place to garland it.

## Road not taken



A rain-battered road in Vellore.

— K. Senthil Nathan

## Another woman killed in jumbo attack

ANANTH MATHIVANAN |  
DC  
COIMBATORE, SEPT. 15

A senior citizen died in an elephant attack near Pappanaickenpalayam in Coimbatore forest range in the early hours of Tuesday, even as forest department officials had requested residents staying close to the reserve forest not to venture alone late at night and early morning hours.

Sources said a 73-year-old woman identified as Leela, resident of Pannimadai - Pappanaickenpalayam in

Coimbatore forest range, died in an elephant attack on Tuesday around 4 am, as she was heading to a nearby temple.

Residents staged a road roko demanding necessary action to stop the wild elephant from entering human-habitats. The body was sent to the government hospital for post-mortem. An immediate relief Rs 50,000 will be handed over to the family members, said the DFO.

After witnessing a series of wild elephant deaths in the Coimbatore forest divi-

sion in the past eight months, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) had formed a committee comprising experts like Ajay Desai to conduct a scientific study on the issue, while officials of the Coimbatore forest department took various steps to prevent elephants from coming out of the woods late in the night and in the early mornings, for feeding on crops.

More than 10 special teams have been deployed in various ranges including Coimbatore, Boluvampatti, Madhukkarai, Periyaniac-

kenpalayam, Sirumugai, Mettupalayam and Karamadai to monitor the movement of wild elephant herds or singles.

Special teams are monitoring the animals round-the-clock to drive them back into the woods whenever they attempt to step out of the forest boundary. A herd of seven elephants including a male, two females and two calves, were driven back into the woods of Chinnamalai beat in the early hours of Tuesday, as they attempted to enter the human habitat near

Bharathiar University.

Another herd of three comprising a male, female and a calf, was driven back around 1:30 am on Tuesday near Veerapandi in Thadagam central beat, another herd of five was driven from a private farm land near Kembanoor - Anaimadavu, around 2:30 am on Tuesday.

Two other male tuskers in Mettupalayam range that made individual attempts to enter human habitats in two different beats, were also driven back into the woods, on Tuesday.



## SHORT TAKES

## US SPL ENVOY ON AFGHANISTAN MEETS EAM

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

The United States Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, was in New Delhi on Tuesday for a brief visit during which he met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla were also present during the meeting.

This was the fifth visit of Khalilzad to India since January 2019. He had last visited India on May 7, 2020.

According to sources, the conversation focused largely on the Intra-Afghanistan peace talks and how India can play a major role in the region once United States security forces start withdrawing from war-torn Afghanistan.

Having watched the Afghanistan-Taliban talks from the sidelines so far, India has for the first time taken active participation in the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN) held in Doha on September 12 where Jaishankar addressed through video conferencing.

## RAILWAYS TO RUN CLONE SPL TRAINS FROM SEPT. 21

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

Considering the huge demand for travel on specific routes, Ministry of Railways has decided to run 20 pairs of 'Clone Special' trains from September 21, 2020.

These 'Clone' trains will run on notified timings and will be fully reserved trains with limited halts.

These Clone Special trains will be in addition to special trains which are already in operation.

Railway officials said these 19 pairs of 'Clone Special' trains will run by utilising Humsafar rakes while one pair Lucknow-Delhi Clone special will run as Jan Shatabdi Express.

Fare of Humsafar rake will be charged as Humsafar trains and for Janshatabdi rake, fare will be charged as Janshatabdi Express.

The ARP (Advanced Reservation Period) will be 10 days for these trains. These trains will be primarily three AC and will have speed higher than the existing special trains.

"Clone trains have not been operated by the Indian Railways in the past. These trains will be operationalised on the routes having high patronage and demand. The clone trains being proposed, are based on the patronisation of already operating Special trains with limited stoppages and faster transit time," officials said.

## SSR CASE: NCB ARRESTS 2 MORE IN DRUG PROBE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Tuesday arrested two more person, including school friend of Showik Chakraborty, in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide and have seized a high-end vehicle of one of the accused that was also used for peddling drugs. The officials said that they also brought Chris Costa to Mumbai from Goa. He was arrested in connection with the drug syndicate and their peddling from Goa to Mumbai.

The arrested accused was identified as Suryadeep Malhotra, who is Showik's friend. Malhotra was picked up from Mumbai taking the total number of arrests to 18. The NCB have secured the custody of the duo and they will be grilled in connection with their links with Chakraborty and the suicide probe.

"The specific roles of the duo are being probed and if needed all the arrested accused would be jointly questioned. Malhotra has been remanded to custody till September 18," said an officer.

The NCB officials earlier confirmed that names of actresses Sara Ali Khan, Rakul Preet Singh and designer Simone Khambatta surfaced while questioning Rhea. The NCB has not ruled out summoning them for questioning.

The agency said that they are also zeroing in on other names that would be indirectly related with the ongoing probe.

## RS passes Aircraft Amendment Bill 2020

Civil aviation minister says the issue of privatisation of airports should be seen in a historical context

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

Parliament on Tuesday passed the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which seeks to improve India's aviation safety ratings and provide statutory status to regulatory institutions, including the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). The Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha in March, was passed by a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha.

Introducing the Bill, which also seeks to

increase the fine for violations from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore, Civil Aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said amendments were necessary as tremendous growth in civil aviation has thrown many challenges such as saturated airport capacity, lack of trained manpower, limited manpower capabilities, while adding that these are "happy challenges". The proposed amendments follow the 2012 and the 2015 audit by the International Civil Aviation Organisation that had indicated the need to give statutory recognition to these agencies.

However, some members,

also including Congress's K.C. Venugopal, accused the government of privatising airports in the name of development and also centralising powers in its hands.

In his reply to the debate, Puri said the issue of privatisation should be seen in a historical context and noted that country's largest airports Delhi and Mumbai were successfully privatised in 2006 under a previous political dispensation, and proceeds from the process have resulted in getting resources to develop airport infrastructure in the country.

On the Congress' charge of allotting six airports to one group, Puri said the

Delhi and Mumbai airports account for 33 per cent of air traffic and earnings while the six airports that were awarded in 2018 together account for only nine per cent of traffic and earnings.

"In terms of six airports being given to one entity, let me just place it in perspective. When these two airports in Delhi and Mumbai were privatised all subsequent efforts at privatisation contained a stipulation to the effect that prior experience was necessary.... So, we fell into a trap of our own making and not by this government and I don't want to make it a political point," Puri said.

## Oppn members criticise privatisation of airports

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Some Opposition members in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday accused the government of privatising airports in the name of development and also centralising powers in its hands. Participating in the discussion on "The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020" that seeks to improve India's aviation safety ratings and provide statutory status to regula-

tory institutions, including the DGCA, members of the Congress and Left, besides some other parties alleged monopolisation of airports in the hands of one entity. However, the BJP claimed the government's objective is to expand the aviation sector and create the infrastructure to make air travel safer and accessible for all.

Congress member K.C. Venugopal demanded a

probe into the privatisation of six airports alleging violation of rules and corruption, a charge denied by BJP member G.V.L. Narasimha Rao who said there is complete transparency under the Modi dispensation. Initiating the debate, Venugopal alleged that the government was promoting crony capitalism by privatising airports in the name of developing them. —PTI

## Centre blames fake news for the exodus of guest workers

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

The Union government on Tuesday blamed 'panic created by fake news' for the exodus of a large number of guest workers from the cities to their villages during lockdown.

"The migration of a large number of migrant workers was triggered by panic created by fake news regarding the duration of lockdown," minister of state for home G Kishan Reddy told Mala Roy of TMC. "And people, especially migrant labourers, were worried about an adequate supply of basic necessities like food, drinking water, health services and shelter. However, the central government was fully conscious of this, and took all necessary measures to ensure that during the period of the inevitable lockdown, no citizen should be deprived of basic amenities of food, drinking water, medical facilities etc."

The government had on Monday told the member that the Centre had no data on the number of people who died during the said migration as the data is not maintained centrally.

The minister listed out the steps the government took to contain the spread

of Covid-19.

"From March 21, 2020 onwards, control room operations in the Ministry of Home Affairs were expanded by making their functioning 24x7 under the supervision of senior officers of the level of joint secretaries along with the representatives of key central ministries. These control rooms, inter alia, attended to the grievances of stranded persons, including migrant workers and promptly resolved these grievances relating to food, transport, shelter, etc. States and Union territories were also advised to set up control rooms with helplines and to appoint nodal officers," the ministry said.

India successfully blunted the aggressive spread of Covid-19 by imposing country-wide lockdown, the ministry claimed. "Lockdown helped create additional health infrastructure. During this time, dedicated isolation beds went up by 22 times and dedicated ICU beds, above 14 times from what existed in March 2020. Testing capacity for Covid-19 increased 10 times; limited indigenous manufacturing capacity for masks, PPEs, ventilators, etc at the time of lockdown, was also enhanced to attain self-reliance," it said.

## Antobody memory will last long: expert

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 15

Antibody memory in the cells of those infected with Covid-19 will be long-lasting and natural immunity in the population is going to protect them from the disease according to an immunity study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The path of immunity has been discussed in detail as it was found that there is an early decline of antibodies in the population. But this neutralising effect is not a concern as the memory in the cells ensures protection from the disease, say researchers.

Dr Narahari B., senior government doctor, explained, "After every

acute phase of infection, there is a reduction in the antibody levels. But the memory is maintained in the plasma cells and the antibody is secreted. The antibody response to an infection is from this pool of long-lasting memory in the cells."

With cases of re-infection being noted across the world, the natural immunity built up after the first infection will help to fight the virus is the conclusion of scientists and treating doctors.

With more people recovering, resistance has been created and that will help to recover. Experts predict that within a few years SARS Cov 2 will become endemic like previous coronaviruses and become another common cold virus.



Labourers sort onions at a market in Karad on Tuesday.

— PTI

## Sharad Pawar urges Centre to rethink ban on export of onions

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday urged the central government to rethink over its decision to ban the export of onions. He said such a decision will help Pakistan and other countries. The Maharashtra Congress unit will stage a protest on Wednesday across the state over this decision. Meanwhile, All Bharatiya Kisan Maha Sabha said that the central government has betrayed the farmers of the country by this move.

The NCP chief met Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal with a demand to reconsider its sudden decision. Pawar informed that Goyal has assured him that the government will rethink the decision if there is consensus among the ministries of commerce, finance, and consumer affairs on the issue.

In a series of tweets, Pawar said that the central government has abruptly announced a ban on export of onions. This has led to strong reactions from the onion growing belt in Maharashtra. Therefore, the representatives of various political parties contacted and requested him to convey their demands to the central government.

"To address this issue, I met Union Minister of Commerce and Industry

Piyush Goyal (@PiyushGoyal) today and apprised him of the plight of onion growers. I pointed out to him that these onion growers are mainly small land holders and Jirait farmers (sic)," Pawar tweeted.

In another tweet, he said, "I also brought to his notice that onions are in good demand internationally & we have been exporting onions consistently. But a sudden decision to this effect by the central government is a major blow to India's image as a reliable exporter of onions in the international market (sic)."

In the wake of the decision, there is a possibility that India may emerge as an "unreliable supplier" of the commodity internationally, Pawar said, adding that the move will benefit nations like Pakistan and others. In another tweet, Pawar said Goyal told him that the proposal to ban the export was moved by the Union consumer affairs ministry based on the rising prices of the commodity.

Agitations took place in Munge, Pimpalgaon, Nampur and Umrane markets and protesting farmers stalled auctions under way for some 10,000 quintals that had arrived, and also tried to stop traffic in the vicinity, including on the Mumbai-Agra Highway that skirts past Umrane.

The auctions started on

## Kangana seeks ₹2cr from BMC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

Days after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) razed unauthorised alterations at Kangana Ranaut's office, the Bollywood actress has demanded compensation worth ₹2 crore from the civic body citing the demolition 'illegal'. She has filed an amended petition before the Bombay high court seeking the damages.

In her amended petition, Kangana has stated that the BMC has demolished 40 per cent of the office, which included valuable property such as chandeliers and rare artworks. She has sought interim relief to take steps to make the property "capable of use" after the demolition.

"The large-scale illegal demolition has caused

● KANGANA HAS stated that the BMC has demolished 40 per cent of the office, which included valuable property.

damage estimated to be around ₹2 crore," the plea said.

The BMC had issued a 24-hour stop-work notice to Kangana on September 8 citing illegal alterations in the renovation and finishing work at her office at Pali Hill, Bandra. To this, Kangana had filed a plea in the HC seeking interim relief of stay on the demolition work. While the BMC went ahead with the demolition of unauthorised structures on September 9, the HC stayed further demolition and directed the civic body to file an affidavit. The court will hear the petition and BMC's response on September 22.

Tuesday morning at a price of ₹2,200 per quintal at Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC).

Speaking with The Asian Age, all India Kisan Sabha Maharashtra's general secretary Dr Ajit Navale alleged that owing

to the upcoming Bihar election, the farmers are being sidelined. The farmers of Maharashtra and the country have been betrayed by the Central government. The high onion prices are undesirable for any government seeking re-election.

## GOLD | SCAM Oppn workers, police engaged in pitched battles demanding minister's resignation

## No need for Jaleel to resign, says Pinarayi

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 15

Workers of the Opposition Congress-led UDF and the BJP were engaged in pitched battles with the police in Capital city and many parts of the state on Monday, demanding the resignation of higher education minister K.T. Jaleel.

Opposition parties have been up in arms against Jaleel after the minister was questioned by ED in connection with the allegations regarding aid sought from the UAE consulate during Ramzan in

violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (accepting foreign aid without Centre's permission), diplomatic baggage used to bring copies of Quran and gold smuggling accused Swapna Suresh's role in arranging the flood relief kits.

The epicentre of the Opposition agitation was the state secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram where agitators had gathered since morning holding demonstrations, protests and marches.

A march led by Youth Congress workers to the Secretariat turned violent

when agitators tried to remove the barricades put in front of the main gate.

Police used water cannons to disperse the protesters and resorted to a mild lathicharge in which many Congress workers including K.S. Sabarinathan MLA were injured. The police also used stun grenades to disperse agitators.

The agitation led by Youth Congress state president Shafi Parambil MLA continued for a couple of hours turning the city centre into a battle zone.

The Youth Congress protest march was followed by a march of the

BJP and the Yuva Morcha. The police used force to force against agitators.

Similar agitations took place in Kozhikode, Kannur, Kasargod, Pathanamthitta, Ernakulam, Thiruvananthapuram and Wayanad.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has defended Jaleel saying he has committed no wrong.

He said the Opposition was resorting to violent agitation on a baseless issue, to create law and order problems in the state.

He said that there was no precedent of a person

resigning on the basis of questioning by an agency. In this case the agency has received some complaints and they wanted certain clarifications from the minister.

"There is no allegation against Jaleel. The Opposition is trying to cook up a story. As far as the gold smuggling case is concerned, some of the accused have been caught and the investigations are on to get others who are involved."

The Chief Minister said the Opposition was trying to link the Quran issue with the gold smuggling case.

"On what basis are they raising such allegations and demanding the minister's resignation?" he asked.

There is no need for him to resign on such baseless allegations.

The Chief Minister said there should not have been a controversy over getting copies of Quran from the UAE consulate.

Jaleel is minister of Wakf and distribution of Quran is normal during Ramzan period when zakat is given.

The Chief Minister said people of the state will reject the Opposition stand on the issue.

Kerala has 3,215 new cases 12 deaths

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Tuesday recorded 3,215 new cases of Covid - 19 even as 2,532 persons recovered from the disease. Of the new cases, 3,013 contracted the infection through contact. The state recorded 12 deaths on Tuesday. The state has so far reported 114,033 cases of Covid - 19 of which 82,345 persons have recovered. At present 31,156 persons are undergoing treatment.

—PTI

Deaths in Telangana getting closer to 1K

Hyderabad: Telangana state recorded 2,058 new Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, taking the total Coronavirus infections to 1,60,571 even as the number of deaths from the disease reached 984 with the health department reporting 10 more fatalities.

The department, in its Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday, said the state had 30,400 active cases as on Monday 8 pm. It said 2,180 persons had recovered between Monday and Tuesday evenings taking the number of people discharged or considered recovered so far in the state to 1,29,187.

7,576 new cases, 97 deaths in K'taka

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Tuesday reported 7,576 new cases of Covid-19 and 97 related fatalities, taking the total number of infections to 4,75,265 and the death toll to 7,481. The day also saw 7,406 patients getting discharged after recovery. Of the fresh cases reported today, 3,084 cases were from Bengaluru urban alone.

The state has cumulatively 4,75,265 Covid-19 positive cases, which includes 7,481 deaths and 3,69,229 discharges. It said of 98,536 active cases, 97,742 patients are in isolation at designated hospitals and stable, while 794 are in ICU.

According to the bulletin, 41 out of total 97 deaths reported today are from Bengaluru urban, followed by Mysuru (12), Dakshina Kannada and Tumakuru (5). Most of the dead are either with a history of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection or Influenza-like illness.



## IN BRIEF

## China launches nine satellites

**Beijing:** China successfully launched on Tuesday a solid-propellant carrier rocket from a ship in the Yellow Sea, sending nine satellites into orbit in the second such sea-based launch mission, the official media reported. The Long March 11-HY2, the 10th member of the Long March 11 family blasted off at 9:22 am from the Debo 3, a self-propelled deck barge that was modified for the mission, *China Daily* reported. The nine satellites belong to the Jilin-1 Gaofen 03-1 group. About 13 minutes later, after travelling 535 km, it has deployed nine Jilin 1 high-resolution Earth-observation satellites, three to take videos and six to take photographs in sun-synchronous orbits, the report said.

## NBW issued for Nawaz

SHAFQAT ALI | DC  
ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 15

Pakistan's Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants against Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) supreme Nawaz Sharif, who is currently in London due to medical treatment, for September 22 in Al-Azizia reference. The court rejected his plea seeking exemption from the hearing and directed to initiate proceedings to declare him as proclaimed offender. The court also turned down the PML-N supreme's petition to continue the case hearings through legal representative. Nawaz had requested the IHC to nullify its ruling and allow him to become a part of the court proceedings through his representative. He made the request on medical grounds. The IHC had ordered Nawaz to surrender and appear on September 10 at any cost in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption reference.

## UK returns 3 idols to India

**London:** A set of three idols of Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu decades ago, were restored to the Indian government on Tuesday after a collector voluntarily offered to hand it back on discovering their true history. The theft dates back to 1978 and led to an investigation by the Idol Wing of the Tamil Nadu Police working along with colleagues in the Metropolitan Police in London. The unnamed collector, who had acquired the statues in good faith, was informed about their dubious provenance by the Met Police. After matching them up with archival photographs from the 1950s held at the French School in Pondicherry, it was proved that the idols in his possession were those belonging to the Vijayanagara period and stolen from Sri Rajagopalaswami Temple at Ananthamangalam in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu. In a ceremony streamed from India House in London, priests from Sri Murugan Temple in London conducted a short religious ceremony.

## AVNI DOSHI ON BOOKER PRIZE SHORTLIST

**London, Sept. 15:** Dubai-based Indian-origin author Avni Doshi is among the six authors shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize for her debut novel 'Burnt Sugar'. The shortlist was unveiled virtually in London on Tuesday after judges re-evaluated the 13 longlisted novels published in the UK or Ireland between October 2019 and September 2020 to whittle down the shortlist for the GBP 50,000 literary prize in November. "This utterly compelling read examines a complex and unusual mother-daughter relationship with honesty, unflinching realism — sometimes emotionally wrenching but also cathartic, written with poignancy and memorability," the judges said of Doshi's entry. Doshi, born in the US and now living in Dubai, has previously spoken about the long journey to her first novel, which was released in India last year as 'Girl in White Cotton' and for its UK release in July. Others in the shortlist include Diane Cook for 'The New Wilderness', Tsitsi Dangaremba for the third novel in her trilogy — 'This Mournable Body', Maaza Mengiste for 'The Shadow King', Douglas Stuart for 'Shuggie Bain' and Brandon Taylor for 'Real Life'. Literary heavyweight and former double Booker winner Hilary Mantel, failed to make the shortlist cut.

## Brexit bill clears 1st hurdle in Parl

**London, Sept. 15:** UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's controversial bill that aims to override parts of the Brexit divorce agreement struck with the European Union (EU) cleared its first parliamentary hurdle by winning the first House of Commons vote by 340 to 263 votes. The Internal Market Bill, which has faced strong criticism from the Opposition parties and senior members of Johnson's own Conservative Party, is set for rebellions as it progresses through further stages in its parliamentary process despite Johnson's 80-seat majority in the Commons.

The government says the bill contains vital safeguards to protect Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK if negotiations on a future trade deal with the EU break down. But critics warn that it risks damaging the UK by breaching international law.

Two ruling Tory party members of the parliament — Sir Roger Gale and Andrew Percy — voted against the bill on Monday night, while a further 30 abstained, which includes general absences from the House. During a five-hour debate ahead of the vote on Monday evening, Johnson claimed the EU's current approach could lead to excessive checks and even tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. He said the bill would ensure the UK's "economic and political integrity",

accusing the EU of making unfair demands to "exert leverage" in the trade talks — including a threat to block food exports. "Now that we have left the EU, and the transition period is about to elapse, we need the armature of our law once again to preserve the arrangements on which so many jobs and livelihoods depend. That is the fundamental purpose of this bill," he told the MPs.

"I regret to have to tell the House that in recent months the EU has suggested that it is ready to go to extreme and unreasonable lengths using the Northern Ireland Protocol in a way that goes well beyond common sense, simply to exert leverage against the UK in our negotiations for a free trade agreement," he claimed.

"I understand how some people will feel uneasy over the use of these powers. And I share that sentiment myself and I have absolutely no desire to use these measures. They are an insurance policy," he added. The prime minister also held a call with his Tory party members of the House of Lords on Monday night in anticipation of the bill eventually moving to the Lords.

The Opposition Labour Party accused the government of renegeing on a deal Johnson signed earlier this year, and on which Conservative members of the parliament campaigned in the December 2019 General Election. — *PTI*

## Bigger response if Iran attacks: Don

**Washington, Sept. 15:** President Donald Trump has warned Iran that any attack against the US would be retaliated with "1,000 times greater in magnitude" after media reports that Tehran is planning to avenge the killing of top general Qasem Soleimani in January. The death of Gen Soleimani, head of Iran's elite Quds Force, in a US airstrike near Baghdad's airport marks a major escalation in the standoff between Washington and Tehran, since US President Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions. Iran had vowed to seek revenge for Gen Soleimani's killing.

"Any attack by Iran, in any form, against the United States will be met with an attack on Iran that will be 1,000 times greater in magnitude!" Trump said in a tweet after news reports emerged that Iran is planning some kind of attack against the US. "Iran may be planning an assassination or other attack, against the US in retaliation for the killing of terrorist leader Soleimani, which was carried out for his planning a future attack, murdering US Troops,



Donald Trump

and the death & suffering caused over so many years," Trump wrote.

In a news report based on unnamed intelligence sources, the *Politico* said "the Iranian government is weighing an assassination attempt against the American ambassador to South Africa Lana Marks. "If carried out, it could dramatically ratchet up already serious tensions between the US and Iran and create enormous pressure on Trump to strike back — possibly in the middle of a tense election season," the American news outlet said. An intelligence source told *Fox News* that the intel community is taking the threat against the ambassador seriously. — *PTI*

## Firefighters put out new blaze in Lebanon capital

**Beirut, Sept. 15:** Firefighters in Lebanon's capital said Tuesday they put out a fire at a building under construction, in what was the third blaze to hit the city since a massive explosion at the port.

The building, located about 1.5 kilometres (0.9 miles) away from the city's port in central Beirut, was designed by the renowned late British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid.

Footage shared on social media showed black clouds of smoke billowing off of bright red flames that climbed up the side of the curvaceous building with latticed covering.

AFP reporters at the scene saw firefighters use a crane to aim water hoses at its smouldering facade.

"What was on fire was the insulation that separates the outside from the inside" of the building, a civil defence officer said.

"We were able in the fastest time possible to control" the blaze, he said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire.

The August 4 explosion at the port, one of the



People gather next to firefighters extinguishing fire in an under-construction building in downtown Beirut near the city's port where an explosion last month killed nearly 200, wounded thousands and left the city's residents traumatised. — *AP*

world's largest non-nuclear blasts ever; killed 190 people, wounded thousands and ravaged building windows and doors in large parts of the city.

It was followed by a small fire on Tuesday last week at the port and another huge fire on Thursday at a port warehouse where food aid was stored.

Both the explosion and port fires have revived popular outrage against a political class accused of being inept, corrupt and unable to ensure public safety.

Preliminary government findings said sparks from a power saw could have caused Thursday's blaze, echoing a theory that welding was also behind the August 4 explo-

## Don to preside over historic Arab-Israel recognition deals

Power dynamics to shift as Prez to get a boost ahead of the Nov. US election

**Washington, Sept. 15:** President Donald Trump is set to preside over the signing of historic diplomatic deals between Israel and two Gulf Arab nations that could herald a dramatic shift in Middle East power dynamics and give him a boost ahead of the November US election.

In a White House ceremony aimed at showcasing presidential statesmanship, Trump will host more than 700 guests Tuesday on the South Lawn to witness the sealing of the agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Trump and his allies hope the occasion will burnish Trump's credentials as a peacemaker at the height of his re-election campaign. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Emirati and Bahraini foreign ministers are to ink the deals before the crowd, which will include representatives of supporting nations from the Washington-based diplomatic corps but few other dignitaries from overseas. Some Congressional Democrats who have offered muted praise have been invited to attend.

In addition to the individual bilateral agreements signed by Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, all three will sign a trilateral document, officials said. The agreements are dubbed the "Abraham Accords" after the patriarch of the world's three major monotheistic religions. Trump is expected to sign as a witness. — *AP*



Demonstrators, mask-clad due to the Covid-19 pandemic, hold Palestinian flags during a protest against the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain's decisions to normalise relations with Israel, in the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday. Palestinians had in August accused Abu Dhabi of a "stab in the back", as the UAE became only the third Arab nation after Egypt and Jordan to announce it would have formal relations with Israel. — *AFP*

## 'NO PROBLEM' SELLING UAE ADVANCED F-35: TRUMP

**Washington, Sept. 15:** US President Donald Trump said Tuesday he would have "no problem" selling advanced F-35 warplanes to the United Arab Emirates, despite objections from close ally Israel.

"I personally would have no problem with it," he said on Fox News. "I would

have no problem in selling them the F-35." He said the sale would mean "tremendous jobs at home". The UAE is eyeing the stealth fighter jet as a component in its ambitious plans to make the small, wealthy country into a regional military power. Israel — currently the only country

in the region to possess the US warplanes — has pushed back, insisting on retaining its overwhelming technical advantage against its Arab neighbours. Analysts say that the UAE has used its demand for F-35s as a bargaining chip in agreeing to sign the Trump-brokered deal. — *AFP*

## Police shoot, kill knife-wielding man in Lancaster, set off protests

**Lancaster (US), Sept. 15:**

A police officer fatally shot a man with a knife after his sister said she called police to get him involuntarily committed, leading to street protests and vandalism in what the mayor of the small Pennsylvania city of Lancaster called a "heartbreaking day". Police posted the officer's body camera video on social media, showing the man chasing the officer down a sidewalk with a knife before he was fatally shot.

Police eventually used tear gas early Monday to disperse hundreds of protesters who took to the streets of the diverse city of 59,000 people in the heart of Pennsylvania Amish country following the shooting death of Ricardo Munoz on Sunday afternoon. Munoz, 27, was mentally ill — diagnosed with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia — and hadn't been taking his medications, his sister said.

Rulennis Munoz, 33, said she had called a crisis intervention organisation and a police non-emergency number to get her brother involuntarily committed. "He had an episode. He was just incoherent and acting out," she said. "I called to find out what the procedure was to get him some help."

Authorities did not

## Police chief fired over Prude death

**Rochester (US), Sept. 15:** Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren fired the police chief and suspended her top lawyer and communications director Monday in the continuing upheaval over the suffocation death of Daniel Prude.

Chief Le'Ron Singletary announced his retirement last week as part of a major shakeup of the city's police leadership but said he would stay on through the end of the month. Instead, Warren said at a news conference that she had permanently relieved him while suspending Corporation Counsel Tim Curtin and Communications Director Justin Roj without pay for 30 days following a cursory man-

agement review of the city's role in Prude's death. "This initial look has shown what so many have suspected, that we have a pervasive problem in the Rochester Police Department," Warren said. "One that views everything through the eyes of the badge and not the citizens we serve. It shows that Prude's death was not taken as seriously as it should have been by those who reviewed the case at every level."

Officers found Prude running naked down the street in March, handcuffed him, put a hood over his head, then held him down until he stopped breathing. He died a week later. — *AP*

## FEDS PROBING IN-CUSTODY DEATH OF POC

**Batan Rogue (US), Sept. 15:** Federal authorities are investigating the death of a PoC during what Louisiana State Police described as a struggle to take him into custody following a rural police chase last year. The death of Ronald Greene, 49, remains shrouded in secrecy because State Police have declined to release body-camera footage related to the May 2019 chase north of Monroe, Louisiana. Troopers say it began when Greene failed to stop for an unspecified traffic violation.

Greene's death drew new attention after his family filed a wrongful death lawsuit this year alleging state troopers "brutalised" Greene and "left him beaten, bloodied and in cardiac arrest" before covering up his actual cause of death. Greene's family said authorities initially claimed Greene died after crashing into a tree but omitted what police now acknowledge was the "struggle" preceding his death. — *AP*

## Leave waters, Indonesia to China

**Jakarta, Sept 15:** An

Indonesian patrol ship confronted a Chinese coast guard vessel that spent almost three days in waters where Indonesia claims economic rights and are near the southernmost part of China's disputed South China Sea claims.

The Indonesian Maritime Security Agency said it detected Chinese ship 5204 entering Indonesia's exclusive economic zone in what Indonesia calls the North Natuna waters on Friday night. The agency sent a patrol ship that closed within a kilometre (0.6 mile) of the Chinese coast guard vessel and they communicated to affirm their position and their nation's claims to the area, said Aan Kurnia, chief of the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency. "We asked them to

## US BANS IMPORT OF 5 CHINESE GOODS PRODUCED USING 'FORCED LABOUR'

**Washington, Sept. 15:** The US has banned the import of five goods from China, including computer parts, cotton and hair products, alleging that they are produced in forced labour camps in the restive Muslim-majority Xinjiang province.

In a statement, the Department of Homeland

Security (DHS) said the products subject to the import ban are cotton, apparel, computer parts, and hair products.

The fifth ban is on all products made with labour from the Lop County Number 4 Vocational Skills Education and Training Centre in Xinjiang. — *PTI*

move out as it was Indonesia's EEZ. But they insisted that it is China's nine-dash-line territory. Our officers at the vessel argued with them until they moved out," Kurnia said. He said he reported the incident to Indonesian government ministers.

"The Chinese coast guard vessel finally left the North Natuna Sea on Monday at 11:20 am," he said. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin indicated that China saw nothing wrong with the ship's actions and said the two countries are in

contact over "relevant maritime issues". "China's rights and interests in the relevant waters of the South China Sea are clear," Wang said at a daily briefing on Tuesday. "As far as I know, Chinese coast guard vessels have been performing normal patrols in the waters under China's jurisdiction." China's "nine-dash line" delineates its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea. A 2016 international arbitration ruling involving the Philippines invalidated most of China's sweeping claims in the sea, but China has ignored the ruling and called it a sham. Indonesia does not have a territorial claim to the South China Sea, but a section of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone lies within China's "nine-dash line". — *AP*



# DECCAN Chronicle

16 SEPTEMBER 2020

## A gross misuse of anti-terrorism laws

It's a paradox that citizens in nations that proclaim themselves to be democratic do not get their democratic rights expanded as time goes by but those sitting in positions of power get theirs. People who have been worst victims of governmental excesses never bother to scarp such systems once they come to power; they would instead use them effectively to strangle their opponents. India is now witnessing such a paradox.

The Delhi police last Sunday arrested Umar Khalid, a former student leader of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for 'inciting violence' during the Delhi riots, and got him remanded to its custody for 10 days. It is understood that he has been booked under, apart from various sections in IPC including murder and attempt to murder, the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which would ensure that he remained incarcerated for a long time without bail.

The police action comes close on the heels of it filing a chargesheet in connection with the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, in which it included the names of CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav, economist and academic Jayati Ghosh, Delhi University professor Apoorvanand and documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy. They are purported to have "encouraged" anti-CAA protests.

Given the way the Union government uses the legal process to engage people who are ideologically opposed to, as is seen in the case of Bhima Koregaon case, it is not long before all those whose names are mentioned in the chargesheet will find themselves behind bars. What makes it interesting is that it happens on the watch of people, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who cut their teeth in politics fighting the excesses of Emergency.

The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh is going a step further and introducing a parallel system to ensure law and order. Personnel of the newly formed Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force can "without the prior permission of any magistrate and without any warrant, arrest any person". This is a dream project of chief minister Yogi Adityanath! The government clarifies that the provisions are similar to the ones that govern the functions of the Central Industrial Security Force.

None has a doubt that governments need powerful legal tools to tackle terrorism. But in India, tools such as UAPA are used more to rein in political opponents, apart from persecuting the most vulnerable sections of society such as Dalits, tribals, minorities and other marginalised sections of society, than taking on terrorists. The Allahabad high court had to recently intervene to ensure liberty to doctor Kafeel Khan after it found that there was little reason to slap sections of the National Security Act, 1980, on him. The Public Safety Act, 1978, of Jammu and Kashmir is being used to smother popular politicians of the Union territory.

"The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened," former US president John F. Kennedy once reminded his countrymen. Time Indians woke up and kept the wolf from the door.


## Govt's utter callousness

The opening day of Parliament's Monsoon Session, held under extraordinary circumstances as the country nears five million Covid-19 cases, made it quite evident why the Narendra Modi government was so keen to avoid answering members' questions on the floor of the House. In reply to a written question by a BJD member, labour minister Santosh Gangwar said the government had "no data" on how many guest workers had died or were injured on the long trek back home in the lockdown months. While the minister acknowledged over one crore such workers had walked or otherwise travelled to their home states after the nationwide lockdown was imposed with just four hours' notice, he also said in response to another question that the Centre had no information on how many had lost their jobs, as "no such survey has been conducted by the Centre". This of course begs the inevitable question: Why not? It is utterly shameful that India's government could display such a callous, unfeeling attitude towards its own people — the minister could get away with it only because the response was laid on the table of the House, and he didn't have to face supplementaries afterwards, as would have been inevitable if he was speaking on the floor. Did the government think if it didn't keep count, the deaths — perhaps in thousands — hadn't happened?

The mass movement by India's guest workers, with searing images of people battling the police, sometimes being sprayed with insecticide, often being huddled together in quarantine shelters, was one of the defining global images of Covid-19's impact. It was possibly the largest migration in India's history since the 1947 Partition. The entire world saw how people were collapsing on their way home, fighting exhaustion and sheer hunger, with many losing their lives. But the government, in an extraordinary lack of empathy, apparently didn't feel the need to record these deaths. Was it because it didn't want to be held responsible, as of course it was, for people losing their lives due to official callousness. Was it because it didn't want to be liable for compensation? The answers are overdue.

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Bela Bhatia



## Lockdown for some, lockup for the others

It is obvious that the threat of the coronavirus, a communicable disease, is worst in places of high population density. The prison is one such place. About half a million persons are incarcerated in more than 1,300 jails scattered all over India. More than two thirds are undertrials.

While most prisoners are charged under some section of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), many are also incarcerated under "special laws". Some, like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967 (UAPA), are all-India laws, but many states also have their own special laws, such as the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2005 (CSPSA). Large numbers of undertrials have been incarcerated under these laws as part of the so-called war on terror, without due process.

Most of them are ultimately acquitted. For example, in the Jagdalpur central jail of Bastar subdivision in Chhattisgarh, the conviction rate is less than three per cent. Meanwhile, however, these undertrials often remain in prison for as long as seven-eight years or even more, because court trials are notoriously slow. Those who are convicted are unable to appeal with ease because the high court is too far and the lawyers are too expensive.

In any case they would be joining a long waiting list since the high court is currently attending to its backlog of pending cases (the last time I enquired, it was hearing cases filed in 2012).

As a human rights lawyer in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Sessions courts in Bastar, I have witnessed the anguish and frustrations of undertrials and their families whose cases do not move for years. These "Naxali cases" may be under various sections of the IPC as well as under the UAPA or CSPSA. Many undertrials are prima facie innocent villagers who were picked up after a Maoist action in or around their villages (e.g. an IED blast or attack on a contingent of security forces). Sometimes, a single incident involves many accused. Most of them are not named in the FIR because habitually the FIRs of such incidents are made out against known Maoist leaders or cadres of the area, plus "unknown persons". So these are the unknown persons who, after being picked up when they were sleeping, in the market or forest, or attending to other needs like a visit to the hospital, get labelled as "Naxali" for many years, until their trial is over.

There are many such cases involving a group of villagers. A particularly star-

ting example is that of 120 villagers who were arrested from various villages in Sukma district after the Burkapal incident in which 25 CRPF were killed by the Maoists in 2017. That incident is being tried in the NIA court in Jagdalpur and it is still at the initial stage of framing charges.

The UAPA and other special laws like CSPSA are called black laws because the crimes they seek to cover could be dealt with under IPC and because these laws give special, unaccountable power to the police. It is only high-profile cases like those of Binayak Sen, Varavara Rao and others incarcerated in the Bhima Koregaon case that attract national or even international attention. While this attention is justified, most people do not realise that thousands of powerless, impoverished people face similar or worse injustice. These people remain invisible, while their families, fleeced by local lawyers, are forced to sell their land, trees or part with their savings to get them out of jail. No campaigns are organised for these people because they are largely invisible to the public eye. It does not require much intelligence to see that this is the way in which the state troubles ordinary people to get back at the Maoists. For every actual Maoist,

dozens of ordinary villagers get caught in this vicious web of harassment, lies, revenge and ruin.

In "Naxali" cases, bail is routinely denied in the sessions and NIA courts. As per procedure, it is only after a bail is refused there that the accused can approach the high court for bail. In reality, as explained earlier, that option can be exercised by only a few. Bail is even more elusive during the lockdown, when its importance for the life and safety of the prisoner is greater than ever. They remain stuck in prison with mounting fear that the virus will get them as Covid-19 cases spread in Chhattisgarh prisons. Ever since the lockdown started, family members and lawyers of the prisoners have also been denied "mulakat" (visits). There was a time, in the past few months, when the jails were not even accepting parcels from the families for the inmates.

In March 2020, the Supreme Court ordered state governments to consider releasing selected categories of prisoners during lockdown under parole or bail. In Chhattisgarh, however, only a small minority of prisoners (barely 20 per cent) have been released. Chhattisgarh jails are among the most crowded in the country.

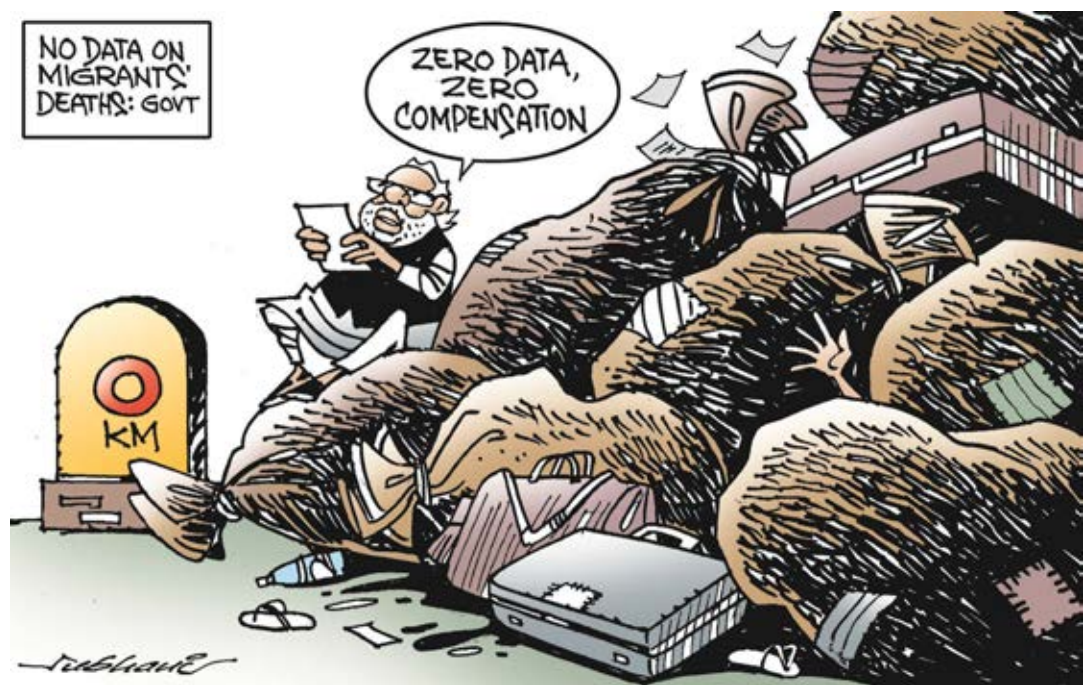
More humane provisions are needed

for prisoners, including political prisoners and those charged under special laws. For example, the 120 people charged in the Burkapal case could easily be in their villages (and report to the local thana if required) during this period. They are likely to be safer in the villages, where the density of population is far less. Likewise, it is not clear what the state gains by continuing to incarcerate the disabled professor G.N. Saibaba, 81-year old Varavara Rao, now ill, or others in the Bhima Koregaon case. All these individuals have been working in full public view for decades and could be allowed to stay at home.

Ultimately, we need to do away with these authoritarian special laws. They have no place in a democracy. Greater attention should be paid to the rights and wellbeing of prisoners during the pandemic, the end to which is nowhere in sight. As far as bail is concerned, it is time to return to the principle underlined by Justice Krishna Iyer in a Supreme Court judgement in 1977: "The basic rule may perhaps be tersely put as bail not jail."

*Bela Bhatia is an independent researcher and human rights lawyer based in Bastar, south Chhattisgarh*

Subhani



## Export agro-produce to sow seeds of prosperity



V. Vijayasai Reddy

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce recently came out with its report on the promotion of India's agricultural and marine exports. A closer reading of the report quantifies extent of fall of Indian agro and marine exports. It highlights problems faced by Indian exporters. Most export items have plateaued, others have been experiencing a negative growth. Some are falling due to availability of cheaper and better alternatives in international markets, others are negatively affected due to low or lack of quality production in India.

The report, beyond outlining problems, also suggests how to address these issues through direct intervention or sometimes through innovative solutions, such as "export only" tobacco farms and promotion of international marketing.

India is exporting a very small percentage of total agricultural products produced in quantitative terms. In 2018-2019 we exported just 0.2 per cent of our wheat, 1.3 per cent of our fruits and vegetables and 1.25 per cent of our pulses. Export of agricultural commodities, with an exception to rice, is less than two per cent of the total production with no significant increase for the last three years, despite India being one of the largest producers of these commodities.

It is not a case that productivity of our soil needs to increased manifold so even after feeding our population we have a large surplus to export. India is already producing enough surplus, therefore, factors like

inefficiency in supply chain, infrastructure development and a higher value addition for promoting agricultural exports is needed.

India needs to leverage newly created goodwill in central Asian countries into trade benefits to augment agri-exports of wheat and rice. We must also work towards market exploration of new emerging trade destinations of Egypt, Mexico, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines for Indian rice.

On marine exports, the report says there was a 5.8 per cent decline in value of marine exports during the April-December period and a 12 per cent quantity decline. Marine produce should be a profitable venture because of the sheer number of people dependent on it, especially in coastal states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The parliamentary committee opined that special focus should be given to production, marketing and export of shrimp, which fetches a comparatively high price in the international market, especially the United States.

There is huge potential in export of tuna, which, if caught in a certain manner with proper "know-how", can fetch a 15 per cent higher revenue. A scheme has to be devised by the Central

**India needs to leverage newly created goodwill in central Asian countries in order to create trade benefits to augment the agri-exports of wheat and rice**

**India is the third largest exporter of tobacco. With thousands dependent on its farming for their livelihoods, steps should be taken for exportable surplus production**

Institute of Fisheries Technology for promoting tuna production and export.

Marine export is an infrastructure-heavy sector, right from maintaining a cold chain of export items to ensuring proper storage and packaging.

We lost over a quarter of our total marine production was lost due to factors related to poor or non-existent infrastructure. The potential of marine export is being hampered by inadequate post-harvest infrastructure and dilapidated fishing harbours. Government must prioritise upgradation of infrastructure facilities and modernization of fishing harbours to augment marine production and export. Centre must ensure upgradation of two fishing harbours at Kochi and Nizampattanam at the earliest.

Spices, for centuries, have been closely associated with Indian cultural traditions, preservation, medicine, cooking habits and embalming. Spices have been our historical basis of trade with the world, from Egypt to Persians or Europeans.

It is not surprising that India is the largest producer, exporter and consumer of spices in the world. India accounts for 47 per cent in quantity and 43 per cent in value of global spice trade. Total production of spices, cultivated in all states, was 9.2 million tonnes in 2018-19. Of this, India exported over one million tonnes (12 per cent of total production), while rest is domestically consumed.

We must ensure that spices with lesser exportable value are not

given undue importance at the cost of other more significant spices like cardamom and chilli.

A controversial but important agricultural produce dealt was tobacco. India produces about 800 million kilos of various types of tobacco every year, mostly in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. India is the third largest producer and exporter of tobacco in the world, which earned India over ₹6,000 crores in foreign exchange. The land under tobacco cultivation in India has come down considerably. With thousands of tobacco farmers dependent on its farming for their livelihoods, steps should be taken for exportable surplus production to enable farmers to earn income without affecting health of our country.

A step could be to have 'export only' tobacco farms for promoting cultivation of tobacco, specifically for export and look at China, world's largest consumer of tobacco for trade.

The Agricultural Export Policy in 2018 envisaged ways to double agricultural exports by 2022 from present \$30 billion to \$60 billion. We can achieve it because India has an advantage of huge landmass and varied climatic conditions and is a global leader in producing cereals, fruits and vegetables, spices and milk, but our share in international trade is very low (2.2 per cent). We must have several ministries like commerce, agriculture, shipping, food processing, finance and external affairs work closely on "mission mode" to achieve the target. Exports shall be key to doubling income of the farmers and in making India a \$5 trillion economy.

*The writer is parliamentary party leader of the YSR Congress Party, and chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce*

### LETTERS

#### RAHUL'S GROUSE

Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was recently seen (in a video) feeding peacocks at his residence, Congress president Rahul Gandhi has said that the PM is "busy with peacocks" and, as such, has no time to address the Covid-19 problem. The Wayanad MP has accompanied his mother Sonia Gandhi for a routine medical check-up in the US, and would not be attending the current Parliament session. If the Gandhi scion is so concerned about the so-called ills of the country, why did he choose to be away exactly during the Parliament session? Could he not have advanced or postponed the trip? After all, it's only a 'routine' health check-up, not a medical emergency. When will RaGa give up pettifogging, and learn the art of healthy criticism instead?

**P.G. Menon, Chennai**

#### GUARDIAN OF RURAL INDIA

THANKS TO *DC* for the editorial tribute (Mathematician who found formula to help rural poor, Sept. 15) on former Union minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh who passed away a few days ago. Mr Prasad was the guardian of rural India, and was widely known as the architect of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the UPA's flagship programme. Whenever any tricky situation arises during Parliament proceedings, the veteran socialist leader would always quote points from the book of Practice and Procedure of Parliament to win his argument. No amount of interruption by fellow Parliamentarians would deter him from completing his argument. Notwithstanding his political status, Mr. Prasad would love to have chats with his constituents, reclining on a charpoy and sipping tea, and pronouncing tikkets as "tikas".

**R. Sivakumar, Chennai**

#### TWISTS GALORE

KUDOS TO Austrian Dominic Thiem for claiming his maiden Grand Slam title at the U S Open, in a stunning comeback, to beat Alexander Zverev in 5 sets. Like the women's finals this year, where Osaka came back from one set down, to win her second U S title, Thiem too came back from 2 sets to love and Zverev serving for the title at 5-3. Probably Zverev was overconfident, which killed his chance to lift his maiden Grand Slam title. Throughout this tournament there have been many twists and turns. Both finals were interesting and Osaka and Thiem richly deserved to win the titles.

**N.V. Krishnan, Chennai**



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,044.35	0.74
Nifty 50	11,521.80	0.71
S&P 500*	3,415.34	0.94
Dollar (₹)	73.64	-0.21
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.97	-0.56
Euro (₹)	87.52	-0.39
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,019.422	0.70
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	40.16	0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.029	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.679	0.010

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

## IndiGo, GoAir told to fly with altered PW engines



Aviation regulator DGCA has asked IndiGo and GoAir to fly only aircraft that have modified Pratt and Whitney engines on them, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. The PW engine-powered A320 neo planes in IndiGo and GoAir fleets have been facing glitches since 2016. Puri said IndiGo has 134 A320neo and A321neo and have modified PW engines on them. He said GoAir has 46 A320neo and 30 are modified.

## ‘We won’t exit India, but we won’t scale up’ Toyota says won’t expand in India, blames high taxes

ANURAG KOTOKY  
SEPT. 15

Toyota Motor Corp. won't expand further in India due to the country's high tax regime, a blow for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who's trying to lure global companies to offset the deep economic malaise brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

India is planning to offer incentives worth \$23 billion to attract firms to set up manufacturing, people familiar with the matter said last week, including production-linked breaks for automakers. The country is the fourth-biggest car market in the world but international players have struggled to find a niche in a sector that's dominated by cheap, fossil fuel-vehicles.

The government keeps taxes on cars and motorbikes so high that companies find it hard to build scale, said Shekar Viswanathan, vice-chairman of Toyota's local unit, Toyota Kirloskar Motor. The high levies also put owning a car out of reach for many consumers, meaning factories are idled and jobs aren't created, he said.

"The message we are getting, after we have come here and invested money, is that we don't want you," Viswanathan said in an interview. In the absence of any reforms, "we won't exit India, but we won't scale up."

Toyota, one of the world's biggest carmakers, began operating in India in 1997. Its local unit is owned 89

**Market India always has to precede Factory India, and this is something the politicians and bureaucrats don't understand"**



**Shekar Viswanathan,**  
vice-chairman, Toyota Kirloskar Motor

**The message we are getting, after we have come here and invested money, is that we don't want you...You'd think the auto sector is making drugs or liquor"**

per cent by the Japanese company and has a small market share - just 2.6 per cent in August versus almost 5 per cent a year earlier, Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations data show.

In India, motor vehicles, including cars, two-wheelers and sports utility vehicles, attract taxes as high as 28 per cent. On top of that there can be additional levies, ranging from 1 per cent to as much as 22 per cent, based on a car's type, length or engine size. The tax on a four-metre long SUV with an engine capacity of more than 1500 cc works out to be as high as 50 per cent.

The additional levies are typically imposed on what are considered to be "luxury" goods.

General Motors Co quit the market in 2017 while Ford Motor Co agreed last year to move most of its assets in India into a joint venture with Mahindra &

Mahindra after struggling for more than two decades to win over buyers. That effectively ended independent operations in a country Ford had once said it wanted to be one of its top three markets by 2020.

Such punitive taxes discourage foreign investment, erode automakers' margins and make the cost of launching new products "prohibitive," Viswanathan said. "You'd think the auto sector is making drugs or liquor," he said.

Toyota, which also has an alliance with Suzuki Motor Corp to sell some of Suzuki's compact cars under its own brand, is utilising just about 20 per cent of its capacity in a second plant in India.

Taxes on electric vehicles, currently 5 per cent, will probably also go up once sales increase, Viswanathan said, referring to what he says has become a pattern with suc-

cessive governments.

While discussions are ongoing between ministries for a reduction in taxes, there may not any immediate agreement on an actual cut, heavy industries minister Prakash Javadekar said this month.

Automobile sales in India were weathering a slump before the pandemic, with at least half a million jobs lost. A lobby group has predicted it may take four years for sales to return to pre-slowdown levels.

The biggest players are the local units of Suzuki and Hyundai Motor Co., which have cornered the market for compact, affordable cars. Maruti and Hyundai have a combined share of almost 70 per cent.

Toyota in India has largely pivoted toward hybrid vehicles, which attract taxes of as much as 43 per cent because they aren't purely electric.

But in a nation where few can even afford a car, EVs or their hybrid cousins have yet to gain much acceptance. Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla, has said import duties would make his vehicles unaffordable in India.

"Market India always has to precede Factory India, and this is something the politicians and bureaucrats don't understand," he said. India needs to have demand for a product before asking firms to set up shop, yet "at the slightest sign of a product doing well, they slap it with a higher and higher tax rate," he said.—Bloomberg

## E-com, logistic firms kick off festive season hiring

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Having waited a little longer to assess the festive season demand, e-commerce and logistics firms have started framing their season's hiring plans. After Ecom Express, Flipkart has on Tuesday made a big announcement of helping generate over 70,000 direct and lakhs of indirect seasonal jobs.

Flipkart will be creating direct job opportunities, including delivery executives, pickers, packers and sorters, across its supply chain. Further, there will also be additional indirect jobs created at Flipkart's seller partner locations and kiranas.

The on-boarding of more than 50,000 kiranas by Flipkart for last-mile delivery will also create thousands of seasonal jobs to deliver millions of packages this season.

"By generating employment and enabling our sellers to scale their businesses during this time, we're doing our part to drive growth in the industry and the economy," said Amitesh Jha, senior vice-president, ekart and marketplace, Flipkart.

Flipkart is undertaking training programmes for its direct hires in various aspects of the supply chain through a mix of classroom and digital training. For lakhs of seller partners, MSMEs and artisans, Flipkart provides separate training in warehouse management and packaging.

On Monday, logistics firm Ecom Express had



said that it will be hiring over 30,000 people as part of its seasonal recruitment exercise for its hubs and delivery centres, among others, to meet the festive season demand. These seasonal positions have been created across the country with 75 per cent of the total hiring for beyond metros as well as cities including, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vijayawada, Chandigarh, Indore, Patna, Lucknow, Kanpur, Bhopal and Jaipur.

During the lockdown in May, Amazon had announced plans to open 70,000 seasonal jobs. "We will continue to create thousands of additional opportunities across the network to support customer demand across the country this upcoming festive season," Amazon said. The e-com giant had created 90,000 jobs in the 2019 festive season.

Snapdeal would rely on third-party logistics partners to meet the seasonal delivery needs. "We are working in close coordination with our third-party logistics partners to prepare for the surge in festive orders. Our partners are in the process of augmenting their deliv-

ery capability through additional hiring and expansion of their delivery fleet to ensure time-bound pick-up and delivery of our shipments," said a Snapdeal spokesperson.

According to the Indian Staffing Federation (ISF), logistics and e-commerce are the sectors still hiring in the Covid-19-hit festive season. "There has been a shift in consumerism to the digital platform from physical stores due to the pandemic. This shift will help e-commerce sales this festive season despite an overall subdued demand. However, the e-commerce firms have been waiting to see how Unlock India has been helping the demand situation. Usually, festive season hiring plans are finalised a quarter before the season itself. This time, it got delayed," said Suchita Dutta, executive director, Indian Staffing Federation.

As per ISF data, in the second half of 2018, different sectors had hired around two lakh people for temp jobs. In 2019, despite the gloom in the economy, hiring had seen a 10 to 15 per cent growth.

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** You may get romantic. Expect increased and financial difficulties, although you'll get new offers and unexpected financial gains in the future. Stay calm.



**Taurus:** Save up for expansions. Today's good for business development. You could make good money now. Avoid idolising anyone so you aren't disillusioned later.



**Gemini:** Pending court cases are successful; expect pleasant news. Your financial position is unsatisfactory; don't expect money from business partners.



**Cancer:** Respond to new ideas to avoid hampering your progress. You could impose restrictions at home. Love gets into a rough patch.



**Leo:** Recharge your body; reschedule your regular routine. Work keeps you engaged in meetings and brainstorming sessions with seniors and subordinates.



**Virgo:** Some of you want to spend on luxury and comfort articles. You may go out with your spouse this evening. Businesspersons may do well, though a few employees might cause trouble.

### You share your b'day with

Nick Jonas, American singer, songwriter and actor. He is best known for his works *It's About Time*, *A Little Bit Longer*, *Who I Am*, *Jealous* and *Last Year Was Complicated*.



**Libra:** There's peace at home and you may want to spend for your family. Employees have fun at work. You may receive an upskilling opportunity. Students may do well.



**Scorpio:** Strike a balance between good and negative events in life. Employees do well, completing their work with their subordinates. Situation at home requires tact.



**Sagittarius:** You find an old problem's solution. Monetarily you're satisfied. You might need to deliver a speech. Business flourishes. Some may expect new projects assigned.



**Capricorn:** Expenses are high. Family life is satisfying, and your spouse is quite supportive. You'd be quite busy today. Professionals need to finish their pending jobs.

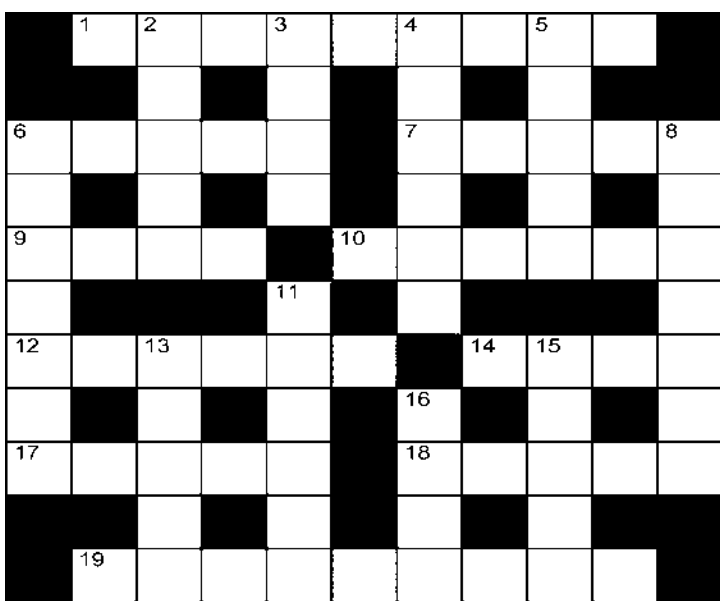


**Aquarius:** An old friend may invite you for a long-due dinner. Today's favourable for enjoying favours from seniors or those in authority.



**Pisces:** Some of you need to travel. Today's good for enjoying domestic bliss. On the career front, expect a job or place change, which bestows you with good professional opportunities. Spend time with your partner.

### QUICK CROSSWORD



#### Across

- Standard for comparison (9)
- Banish (5)
- Go aimlessly (5)
- Dusty list (4)
- Customer (6)
- Contaminate (6)
- Avoid (4)
- Fine mesh (5)
- Municipal (5)
- Speedway (9)

#### Down

- Decree (5)
- Masticate (4)
- Interfere (6)
- Elevate (5)
- Jewellery item (7)
- Huge (7)
- Plan (6)
- Animal life (5)
- Mayhem (5)
- Skin mark (4)

#### YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Belonged, 7. Admit, 8. Alone, 9. Unisex, 10. Cede, 12. Aide, 14. Insult, 17. Limit, 18. Outdo, 19. Premiere.

Down: 1. Bambi, 2. Letter, 3. Neat, 4. Erode, 5. Naturally, 6. Selection, 11. Income, 13. Demur, 15. Untie, 16. Atom.

### Word Mine

**B  
A A E  
I G L C R**

TODAY'S RATINGS: 28 AVERAGE: 30  
GOOD: 33 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

Answers: 1. Bacteria, 2. Bacteria, 3. Bacteria, 4. Bacteria, 5. Bacteria, 6. Bacteria, 7. Bacteria, 8. Bacteria, 9. Bacteria, 10. Bacteria, 11. Bacteria, 12. Bacteria, 13. Bacteria, 14. Bacteria, 15. Bacteria, 16. Bacteria, 17. Bacteria, 18. Bacteria, 19. Bacteria.

### jumble

SPEIO  
VLEBE  
DYOLEM  
ALIPSR  
THE

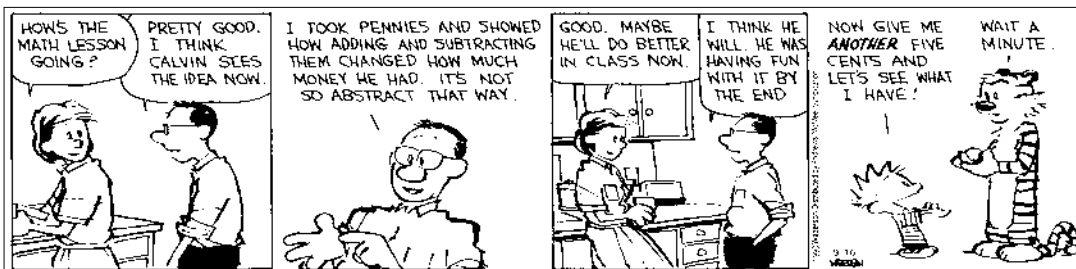


Yesterday's Jumbles Answer: If you get tagged while playing tag, just accept the fact and think — SO BE IT

played the club ace (just in case West had a singleton queen), crossed to the diamond ace and ran the club jack. The finesse lost, but the contract was assured. Declarer even got an over-trick when West, in desperation, cashed the spade ace, hoping that South had started with queen-doubleton.

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



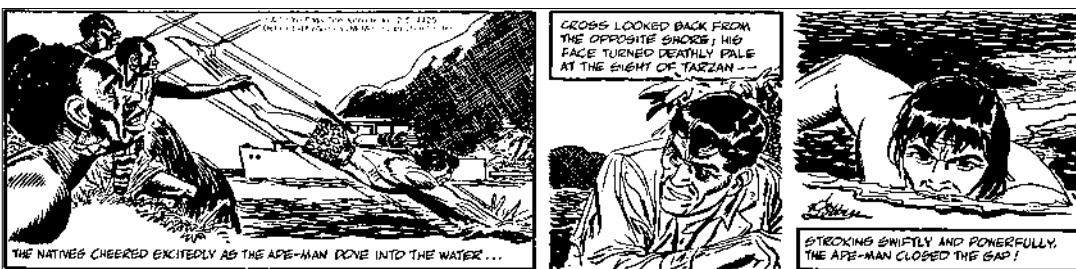
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



**bridge**  
**PHILLIP ALDER**

**TWO HANDS THE SAME, TWO DIFFERENT**

Abraham Lincoln said, "If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?" The North-South hands in today's deal are sort of two-faced, the second mask appearing tomorrow.

How should South plan the play in three no-trump after West leads a fourth-highest spade six?

It was a straightforward auction. South's two-no-trump opening bid showed

20 to a poor 22 points -- if there is such an animal as a poor 22! North expected the contract to be a cakewalk, but South had to be careful. Declarer started with eight top tricks: one spade (given the lead), three hearts, two diamonds and two clubs. The ninth trick could definitely come from clubs, but the lead might have to be lost if the finesse in that suit was losing. Alternatively, hearts might split 3-3.

North		South	
♠ K 3	♠ 4 5 6	♠ A 2	♠ 7 8
♥ A 2	♥ 3 4 5 6	♥ K Q	♥ J
♦ A 2 3 4	♦ 5 6 7 8	♦ K Q	♦ J
♣ A 2 3 4	♣ 5 6 7 8	♣ K Q	♣ J
Dealer: South		Vulnerable: Both	
South	West	North	East
2NT	3NT	4NT	All Pass
Opening lead: ♠ 6			

First, though, South had to decide what to play from the board at trick one: the king or the four. Because there were only two cards, declarer called for the king -- high-low with a doubleton, as it were. Here, the king took the trick. Now South had to make sure that he kept East off the lead; otherwise, East would push a spade through declarer's queen.

South cashed his three top hearts -- no luck there. So he

played the club ace (just in case West had a singleton queen), crossed to the diamond ace and ran the club jack. The finesse lost, but the contract was assured. Declarer even got an over-trick when West, in desperation, cashed the spade ace, hoping that South had started with queen-doubleton.



## SHORT TAKES

## Messi in sporting billionaires club

**Paris:** Lionel Messi may have had to stay put at Barcelona but the Argentine legend did succeed in joining one new club this year — the one reserved for sporting billionaires, according to *Forbes* magazine. The Argentine striker's career earnings of over one billion dollars (840 million euros) places the six-time *Ballon d'Or* winner in a group of mega-wealthy sports figures containing just Tiger Woods, Floyd Mayweather and his great rival on the pitch, Cristiano Ronaldo. *Forbes* said that in 2020 Messi was the best paid footballer in the world with an income of \$126 million from his Barca salary (\$92 million for the 2020/2021 season) and \$34 million from sponsors and other sources. The 33-year-old knocked Juventus forward Ronaldo (\$117 million) off the top of the football salary chart with Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar (\$96 million) in third place. — *AFP*

## French Open wild card for Murray

**Paris:** Andy Murray received a wild card into the French Open. The former No.1 was the only non-Frenchman of eight players to be given a free pass into the main draw of the clay Grand Slam which starts in 13 days. Murray was also awarded a wild card into the US Open, after his struggles with pelvic and shin injuries dropped his ranking to 129th. He went two rounds in New York, and improved to 110th, but still too low for the French Open when it published its main draw entry list. Murray's best French Open result was the final in 2016. Tsvetana Pironkova of Bulgaria and Eugenie Bouchard of Canada were the only non-Frenchwomen to receive wild cards. Pironkova, who made the US Open her first comeback tournament since 2017 after having a son, achieved an impressive first-time run to the quarterfinals, where she was stopped by Serena Williams. — *AP*

## 156 Tour riders pass virus test

**La Tour-Du-Pin, France:** The remaining 156 Tour de France riders were authorised to keep racing on Tuesday after the latest coronavirus tests. All 785 tests on Sunday and Monday of riders and staff members of the 22 teams returned negative, Tour organizers and cycling governing body the UCI announced before Stage 16 in the Alps. No rider has tested positive since the race started on Aug. 29 in Nice. The latest screening around the race's second rest day was the fourth since the beginning of the Tour, and the last one before the peloton reaches the Champs Elysees on Sunday. At risk of being cancelled because of the pandemic, the Tour was delayed from its traditional July date to the end of the summer and is being run amid strict health protocols. Anyone who tests positive has to leave the race which affected race director Christian Prudhomme last week and any team with two or more positive tests within seven days also has to abandon. — *AP*

## Covid-19 made Manpreet stronger

**Bengaluru:** India hockey skipper Manpreet Singh says going through a stressful isolation period while recovery from coronavirus has made him a mentally strong player who is now equipped to tackle any situation on the field. "Hockey India officials would check on us almost every day if the food being provided is good, if our tele-treatment was done regularly, if we are monitoring our oxygen levels regularly and so on," he said. — *PTI*

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

England vs Australia 3rd ODI from 5.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

## WWE NXT

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

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## FORECAST SUNNY

## SRH among top-4 likely contenders for play-off spot

**New Delhi, Sept. 15:** Armed with a lethal top-order and a solid spin attack, Sunrisers Hyderabad as usual are an epitome of a balanced T20 side which will again be among the top four likely contenders for a play-off spot in this year's Indian Premier League.

Not exactly as high-profile as Mumbai Indians or a Chennai Super Kings, the low-key presence armed with a solid core coaching group comprising Trevor Bayliss (KKR's IPL winning former coach), V.V.S. Laxman and Muthiah Muralitharan, which has done remarkably well to identify their core strengths.

Best part is all three have been in dug-outs of successful IPL outfits and have that been there and done that aura about them.

In David Warner, who is back as captain for this season, the franchise has an inspirational leader and a superb batsman, who would like to lead from the front.

The southpaw led Sunrisers to a title triumph in 2016 and has made the tournament his own, winning the 'Orange Cap' thrice.

Last season, alongside Jonny Bairstow, Warner shattered multiple records including the highest opening partnership in IPL history. The duo single-handedly led Sunrisers to the knock-out stage.

The Australian was the leading run-getter, amassing 692 runs in 12 matches, with eight half-centuries and a ton. While Bairstow scored 445 runs in 10 games, notching up two fifties and a century.

This year again, the pair will be expected to do the heavy lifting with the bat, while senior India pacer Bhuvaneshwar Kumar and the Afghanistan T20 captain Rashid Khan will be manning the bowling resources. Siddarth Kaul and Shahbaz Nadeem are potent Indian bowling options while Billy Stanlake can crank it up considerably.

Sunrisers' blind spot in the lack of depth in their batting order. The team will rely on Manish Pandey and Kane Williamson to provide direction provided Warner and Bairstow fail to click as a pair. — *PTI*

**Brighton, Sept. 15:** Frank Lampard believes Chelsea are already showing the benefits of his £200 million (\$257 million) spending spree as they kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 3-1 win at Brighton on Monday.

Blues boss Lampard has splashed out on a host of new signings and the early returns on his lavish investment were promising. Germany striker Timo Werner, a £53 million recruit from Leipzig, won the penalty that Jorginho converted to put Chelsea ahead.

Kai Havertz, who made a £70 million switch from Bayer Leverkusen, wasn't quite so impactful, but Lampard will be confident there are better days to come from the young Germany forward.

"Timo's speed to win the penalty showed he is sharp and he was a threat all night. He is very mobile and I liked his performance," Lampard said, adding, "With Kai we saw a lot as well. To get these minutes will only be good and both of them will be huge players for this club."

Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga was guilty of another mistake when Leandro Trossard equalised for Brighton.

But Reece James' superb strike put Chelsea back in front before Kurt Zouma's deflected effort sealed the points.

It was an encouraging result for Lampard, who has accepted he is under pressure to deliver a title



Sunrisers Hyderabad pacer Bhuvaneshwar Kumar (left) interacts with teammate T. Natarajan during a practice session in this file photo.

## Players want quarantine reduced

**New Delhi, Sept. 15:** Australia and England's IPL-bound stars, who are supposed to undergo a six-day quarantine after arriving in the UAE, have requested the BCCI to reduce the duration to three days to ensure their availability from the start of the tournament.

Around 21 players, currently part of an England-Australia white-ball series, will be boarding a chartered flight from Manchester to Dubai, touching base on September 17. They can only be available from September 23, while tournament gets underway

Desperate to not miss a single game, a big-hitting star has requested BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, on behalf of the players from both countries, to lessen the quarantine period to three days.

Ganguly, who is in the UAE along with other office-bearers to oversee the tournament's preparations, wasn't available for a comment but a senior IPL source admitted that a plea has been made. "Yes, the BCCI president has received a request. It may have been written by one of the players but it is something that all the English and Australian players, who are coming from the UK, feel," a senior IPL source said on conditions of anonymity.



Brighton's Aaron Connolly (left) and Chelsea's Andreas Christensen vie for the ball during their English Premier League match at Falmer Stadium in Brighton, England, on Monday. The Blues won 3-1.

challenge after spending more than any other club so far in the summer transfer window.

"I think to expect everything to click on day one is very difficult. But what they did do was show a bit of determination," Lampard said.

@I really liked the work ethic and the discipline of the team. We've been

together as a team for four days after the international break. We had a lot of quarantines before that and new signings. "We might have dropped points in this game last season. I'm not getting excited by that on day one, but it had a little bit of determination and resilience about it I thought." — *AFP*

## THE RESULTS

<b>Brighton</b> (Trossard 54)	1
<b>Chelsea</b> (Jorginho 23-pen, James 56, Zouma 66)	3
<b>Sheffield United</b> <b>Wolverhampton</b> (Jimenez 3, Saiss 6)	0 2

## Thomas-Uber Cup postponed

**New Delhi, Sept. 15:** The Thomas and Uber Cup in Denmark was on Tuesday postponed to next year by the Badminton World Federation following a wave of withdrawals by top teams due to the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

India had announced both the men's and women's squads for the prestigious event which was scheduled to be held in Aarhus, Denmark from October 3 to 11.

However, after Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, the sport's governing body held a virtual emergency council meeting on Sunday.

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF), in full consultation and agreement with local host Badminton Denmark, has made the tough decision to postpone the TOTAL BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2020 in Aarhus, Denmark," BWF said in a statement.

"The decision comes following the withdrawal of a number of participating teams from the TOTAL BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals and the European leg of the adjusted HSBC BWF World Tour."

"BWF is looking into possible alternative dates to reschedule the World Men's and Women's Team Championships, but on dates not before into 2021," it added.

BWF had tried to rope in Singapore and Hong Kong as replacements but they declined the invitation. There were also reports that Japan was contemplating withdrawing from the event, while China too was awaiting government's approval.

September 18 was the last date for confirmation. Among top players, India's Saina Nehwal had raised concerns about the timing of the event, asking whether it would be safe to go ahead with it in the middle of the pandemic.

Saina, alongwith Olympic silver medallist P. V. Sindhu, were supposed to lead the 10-member women's team in Uber Cup, while former world no.1 Kidambi Srikanth would have spearheaded the Indian men's campaign in Thomas Cup.

— *PTI*



Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar.

## Vimal blames it on teams from Asia

**New Delhi, Sept. 15:** Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar on Tuesday blamed the withdrawals by Asian nations for the postponement of the Thomas and Uber Cup Final, calling it a "big setback" for the sport.

"What Asian nations have done, it is really disappointing. There are no major issues in these countries, they are having local events there, so to pull out in this way, is a big setback for the sport."

— **VIMAL KUMAR**  
badminton coach

Vimal said: "It was an ideal way to revive the circuit. The platform was there."

"We are not as big as China but India stood positive, we wanted to participate but if big countries don't play, what can BWF do? How will they conduct events? I'll blame the Asian nations for this mess."

The international body, though, decided to proceed with the Denmark Open in Odense, a HSBC BWF World Tour Event, as originally planned from October 13-18, while cancelling the Denmark Masters that was slated for October 20 to 25.

— *PTI*

India had announced both the men's and women's squads for the event. However, after Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, the BWF decided to push the event to next year.

## SAI UPGRADES COVID-19 SOP TO TACKLE THREAT

**New Delhi, Sept. 15:** Athletes who get the nod to train at the restarted national camps will have to undergo 15-day self-isolation before joining in, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) announced on Tuesday, "upgrading" the Standard Operating Procedure to tackle the Covid-19 threat at its facilities.

A six-member committee, headed by SAI secretary Rohit Bharadwaj, had in May formulated the original SOP for resumption of sporting activities across the country. National camps have resumed for boxing, athletics, and badminton among others after over five months of a shutdown.

"The (upgraded) SOP is in continuation of the SOP released by SAI earlier, and includes procedural changes with regard to new trainees joining the training camps," a SAI statement read.

The upgraded SOP will apply to the ones who will join now or for the camps which will begin later.

— *PTI*