





## IN BRIEF

## Online admission for city schools reopens

**New Delhi:** The Delhi government on Friday issued a circular for the second phase of the online admission process of classes VI to IX and XI under non-plan admissions 2020-21. The second phase has been launched to address the concerns of the parents who could not get their wards registered earlier for online admission. The registration has been reopened today and will last till October 3. According to Delhi government, the school allotment and verification of the documents at the allotted schools is currently on for the applicants of the first phase. "In the first phase, the total number of online applications received by the Directorate of Education for classes VI to XII is 64,995. Out of these applicants, 64,450 students have been allotted school till date. The admission process of the first phase will be over by September 30," it said. The admission on the basis of application received in the second phase for which the last date is October 3 will be completed by October 15 for classes IX & XI and October 26 for classes VI to VIII. Applicants who have applied earlier in the first phase and allotted schools or who are already studying or passed the previous class from government or aided schools of the Directorate are not eligible to apply.

## 275kg marijuana seized, 2 arrested

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Police's Crime Branch on Friday seized 275 kg of marijuana worth over ₹15 lakh and arrested two members of a gang involved in supplying the contraband in the national capital, officials said. The accused have been identified as Shaik Suban (39) and Sheikh Sadak Hussain (31), both residents of Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. They both worked as truck drivers, they said. The consignment was also carried by them in the hidden chamber of a truck, especially constructed for the purpose, police said. Deputy commissioner of police (Crime) Rakesh Paweriya said, "We received information on Friday morning that some people are coming to Delhi in a truck carrying marijuana, which was to be delivered to a person in Jhilmil Industrial area, New Delhi. "Accordingly, the accused duo were apprehended from the spot and our team recovered 275 kgs of marijuana from cavity of the truck." The seized consignment is worth over ₹15 lakhs, he said. — PTI

## CISF nabs man with ₹35L at Metro station

**New Delhi:** The CISF has apprehended a man for allegedly carrying ₹35 lakh "suspicious" cash at a Delhi Metro station, officials said on Friday. They said the passenger, Ajmalbhai (44), was intercepted on Thursday at the Tagore Garden station. "During the screening, CISF constable Lalan Kumar noticed an image of a currency note inside the bag. He immediately stopped the passenger and informed the matter to his shift-in-charge. The passenger, who is a resident of Patan district in Gujarat, could not explain as to why he was carrying such huge amount of money. As the cash looked suspicious, the Central Industrial Security Force personnel handed over the man to the income tax department for further probe," a senior officer of the force said.

## Delhi prisons DG tests Covid-19 +ve

**New Delhi:** The director general of Delhi Prisons, Sandeep Goel has been tested positive for Covid-19. This came less than a month after the Delhi prisons department declared there was no active Covid-19 case among the inmates in its three jail complexes. According to a data shared by the prison authorities on September 13, the number of active Covid-19 cases in Delhi Prisons stood at 25, including 20 jail staff. Earlier, on August 21, the Delhi prisons department had stated that none of the inmates in the three jail complexes of Tihar, Rohini and Mandoli are coronavirus positive and that the pandemic situation in jails here has improved.

# 'Home isolation salient feature of Delhi model of Covid management' 50% recover under home isolation

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

More than 50 per cent of the total 2,24,375 Covid-19 recoveries in the national capital so far have been achieved under home isolation, according to Delhi government data. Delhi recorded 3,827 new Covid-19 cases on Friday. Of the total 2,64,450 patients, 30,867 are active and 2,28,436 patients were recovered. With 36 deaths in the last 24 hours, total death counts rose to 5,123.

According to Delhi government data, since first week of May till September 23, a total of 1,34,113 persons having mild Covid-19 symptoms underwent home isolation out of which 1,13,374 were released as per protocol from the quarantine. "Delhi government lays much emphasis on home isolation as a salient feature of Delhi model of Covid-19 management devised by it. With a surge in the number of positive cases, home isolation has emerged as a very useful tool under test, track and isolate strategy, to handle growing patient load," said a senior government official.

As per government data, the highest number of home isolated active Covid-19 patients 3077 were in

West district, followed by 2261 in North West, 1844 in South West, 1808 in South, and 1710 in East districts. The lowest numbers of home isolated Covid-19 patients were in North East, 759 and New Delhi, 989, while in remaining districts the number was between 1000-2000.

Figures also showed that till September 23, 41 deaths due to Covid-19 occurred in home isolation. Over 2700 patients who developed moderate or severe symptoms were shifted to hospitals.

Under home isolation strategy, a person who tests positive for Covid-19 is approached by a medical officer from the district administration and prescribes home isolation after ascertaining suitable quarantine conditions like availability of adequate residential space. The patients in home isolation are regularly monitored through phone calls and home visits by health officials for follow up and to provide help in case he or she develops symptoms or faces problems like low oxygen level.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday inaugurated a flu screening centre and liquid medical oxygen plant at the state-run Baba Sahab Ambedkar Hospital here.

## Sisodia administered plasma therapy, condition better now

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is battling a double infection of Covid-19 and dengue, has been administered convalescent plasma therapy and his condition is better now, an official from his office said on Friday.

Mr Sisodia is undergoing treatment at Max Hospital, Saket, where he was moved on Thursday evening from the Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital due to his "falling" blood platelet count and low oxygen level. He is admitted to the ICU of the private hospital in south Delhi. "He was administered plasma therapy and his condition is better now," the official

According to officials, this plant will further enhance the oxygen supply in the city amid the coronavirus pandemic.

At the event, Mr Jain reiterated that wearing a mask will guard against the Covid-19 infection and that it was the most important



Manish Sisodia

said. Mr Sisodia had tested positive for Covid-19 on September 14 and was under home isolation. He was admitted to LNJP Hospital on Wednesday for treatment, and tested positive for dengue a day later.

He is perhaps the first prominent personality in the city to have been diagnosed with both infections. Medical superintendent of LNJP Hospital Suresh Kumar said though there is no scientific evidence to prove that plasma therapy benefits a patient, it has been administered for various ailments for several years.

lesson learnt in the last six months amid the pandemic. Last week, an order was issued by the city government to turn the BSA Hospital into a partial Covid-19 facility wherein a portion of the hospital will admit suspected or confirmed cases.

# Covid-19 tally in India breaches 58-lakh mark

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

On the day when India registered the highest number of tests in a single day with nearly 15 lakh tests conducted in the last 24 hours, the trend of high recoveries continues unabated. More than 47.5 lakh (47,56,164) patients have recovered so far while 81,177 patients recovered in the last 24 hours.

Daily new Covid-19 infections in India remained below the 90,000 mark for the fifth consecutive day even as the country's coronavirus caseload zoomed past 58 lakh, according to the Union health ministry data on Friday. The total coronavirus cases mounted to 58,18,570 with 86,052 infections being reported in a day. The death toll climbed to 92,290 with 1,141 people succumbing to the disease in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 6,89,28,440 samples have been tested up to September 24 with 14,92,409 samples being tested on Thursday.

## COVID WATCH

**58.18 LAKH**  
CASES ACROSS NATION

**47.5 LAKH**  
PEOPLE CURED SO FAR

The 1,141 new fatalities include 459 from Maharashtra, 76 from Punjab, 67 from Uttar Pradesh, 66 from Tamil Nadu, 65 from Karnataka, 62 from West Bengal, 52 from Andhra Pradesh, 45 from Madhya Pradesh and 36 from Delhi.

A total of 92,290 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 34,345 from Maharashtra followed by 9,076 from Tamil Nadu, 8,331 from Karnataka, 5,558 from Andhra Pradesh, 5,366 from Uttar Pradesh, 5,123 from Delhi, 4,606 from West Bengal, 3,381 from Gujarat, 3,066 from Punjab and 2,122 from Madhya Pradesh. The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

## Minor boy, 2 others mowed down by cluster bus in Delhi

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

In a tragic incident, three persons, including a minor boy, were mowed down allegedly by a speeding cluster bus on Thursday night in northeast Delhi's Nand Nagri area.

Police said that the victims were shifted to SDN Hospital, where Ravinder (22), a resident of Loni in Ghaziabad, Karan (12), a resident of Mandoli and one unidentified person (40) were declared brought dead while Kanchan (35), a resident of Mandoli, Satish (45) and Sujet (16), a resident of Loni received injuries and are undergoing treatment.

According to Ved Prakash Surya, the deputy commissioner of police (DCP), Northeast district, police received a call around 9.30 pm regarding the incident and rushed to area opposite Nand Nagri bus depot on the road leading towards Bhaura Road.

"After reaching the spot, it was found that the driver of the cluster bus, while going down the Mandoli flyover towards Bhaura Road, lost control over the vehicle," said the DCP.

"The bus crossed the footpath towards the left side and hit a truck and later hit an eggs cart. The bus, which had been seized, was coming towards the flyover near ITI, Nand Nagri," said the DCP.

Locals gathered at the spot and allegedly vandalised the bus. They created chaos at the spot. However, police said that the situation has been brought under control.



A relative along with a health worker helps to place the body of a person who died from Covid-19 before cremation in a furnace at Nigambodh Ghat cremation ground in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

# 92 top cops shuffled in MP, Cong lodges plaint with EC

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, SEPT. 25

The Madhya Pradesh government, on Friday, effected a major reshuffle of police officers ahead of the upcoming by-elections in 28 Assembly constituencies in the state, the schedule of which may be declared on September 29.

As many as 92 Indian Police Service (IPS) officers were transferred in the reshuffle exercise. The reshuffle in the police department comes hours after the Election Commission (EC) announced that a decision on holding by-elections to the vacant Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies in different states would be taken on September 29.

The EC dropped hints on holding LS and Assembly by-elections in different states while announcing

▶ **THE STATE** government violated the model code of conduct by effecting a massive reshuffle in the police department, Congress spokesman J.P. Dhanopia said. The BJP denied any violation of election rules.

the schedule for the Bihar Assembly polls. Congress has taken strong exception to the decision by the Shivraj government to go for large scale transfer of police officers immediately after the EC indicated to announce the schedule of by-elections in 28 Assembly constituencies in MP after 4 days.

"The EC indicated that the schedule of by-elections in 28 Assembly elections in MP would be announced on September 29. This means the model code of conduct for polls

has come into force informally in the state.

"The state government violated the model code of conduct by effecting a massive reshuffle in the police department. We have lodged a complaint with the EC seeking revocation of the transfer orders," Congress spokesman J.P. Dhanopia said.

BJP, however, denied any violation of election rules by the state government in shuffling the police officers.

"First of all, EC has not announced the schedule of Assembly by-polls in the state so far and hence, model code of conduct is not in force in MP now. Besides, the model code of conduct is only enforced in districts where Assembly by-elections are held. Congress is trying to mislead the people on the matter," BJP spokesman Rajneesh Agrawal said.

▶ **UNION HEALTH** minister Harsh Vardhan said the country's continuously rising Covid-19 recovery rate and progressively falling case fatality rate have proven the success of the containment strategy

containment strategy followed by all states/UTs, the health ministry said in a statement.

"We have successfully ramped up our testing capacity which has touched nearly 15 lakh milestone today with more than 1,800 testing labs spread across the country. I have confidence in the scientific developments taking place in the field of treatment and vaccines for COVID-19 and

soon India will achieve more success in our fight against coronavirus infection," the statement quoted Mr Vardhan as saying.

He also hailed the institution's huge contribution during the Covid-19 pandemic. "More than 5 million patients have been infected with coronavirus but the healthcare system of India has shown great efficiency in not only providing diagnostic and management facilities but also keeping the mortality at minimum and recovery at maximum," the statement said.

Speaking at the event, minister of state for health Ashwini Kumar Choubey praised the medical community for their endless and selfless efforts during Covid times.

## MP: Pvt docs to treat Covid patients in home quarantine

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
BHOPAL, SEPT. 25

In a first of its kind initiative in the country, aimed at easing pressure on Covid-19 hospitals in Bhopal, the local administration on Friday allowed the patients infected by the virus to hire private doctors to treat them in home quarantine.

Bhopal district collector Avinash Labania has unveiled the plan by making public names and contact numbers of 10 doctors, recommended by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), who have given their consent to visit the Covid-19 patients, quarantined in their homes, to treat them.

The move was aimed at easing pressure on Covid-19 hospitals which are now flooded with virus infected patients and may run out of beds owing to rapidly growing cases of

coronavirus positive in the city as well as Madhya Pradesh.

The state government estimates that by end of October, the tally of confirmed cases in MP may touch 2.51 lakhs.

"Covid-19 patients can now avail facility of hiring the particular doctors for their treatment in home quarantine. The visiting doctor will charge a fee of ₹750 to the patient. This will purely be a private arrangement," Mr Labania said.

The initiative comes in the wake of surging Covid-19 cases in the state. Health experts however criticised the move saying that the state was trying to shed its responsibility.

"As per Epidemic Disease Act, 1987, it is the responsibility of the state to provide healthcare to the people", health care expert Amulya Nidhi said.

# National Medical Commission replaces MCI

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

The Centre on Friday abolished the controversy and corruption ridden Medical Council of India (MCI), replacing it with National Medical Commission (NMC).

In addition to NMC, four more autonomous boards — Under-Graduate Medical Education Board, Post-Graduate Medical Education Board, Medical Assessment and Rating Board and Ethics and Medical Registration Board — have been created to oversee UG/ PG education, accreditation and assessment and the matters related to ethics and

professional conduct of doctors. These boards will help the NMC in its day-to-day functioning.

"This historic reform will steer medical education towards a transparent, qualitative and accountable system. The basic change that has happened is that the Regulator is now 'selected' on merits, as opposed to an 'elected' Regulator. Men and women with impeccable integrity, professionalism, experience and stature have been now placed at the helm to steer the medical education reforms further," said union health ministry officials.

Dr S C Sharma (rtd. Prof. ENT, AIIMS, Delhi) has

▶ **HEALTH MINISTRY** officials said the NMC will carry forward the reforms initiated by the board of governors under Dr V.K. Paul. Already, the number of MBBS seats has increased over the last six years by 48 per cent.

been selected as the chairperson for a period of three years of NMC. Besides the chairperson, NMC will have 10 ex-officio members that include Presidents of the four autonomous boards — Dr Jagat Ram, Director PGIMER, Chandigarh, Dr Rajendra Badwe, Tata Memorial

Hospital, Mumbai and Dr Surekha Kishore, Executive Director, AIIMS, Gorakhpur. In addition, NMC will have 10 nominees from Vice Chancellors of health universities from States/UTs, 9 nominees from State Medical Councils, and three expert members from diverse professions. Dr Smita Kolhe, a renowned social worker working in tribal Melaghat area of Maharashtra and Santosh Kumar Kraleli, CEO, Foot Soldiers for Health Pvt Ltd have been nominated as these expert members. Dr R K Vats will head the Secretariat as Secretary of the NMC.

Health ministry officials said the NMC will carry

forward the reforms initiated by the board of governors under Dr V.K. Paul. Already, the number of MBBS seats has increased over the last six years by 48 per cent from around 54,000 in 2014 to 80,000 in 2020. The PG seats have increased by 79 per cent from 24,000 to 54,000 in the same duration.

"The key functions of the NMC will be further streamlining regulations, rating of institutions, HR assessment, focus on research. Besides they will work on modalities of the common final year exam after MBBS (NEXT-National Exit Test) to serve for both registration and PG entrance," officials said.

## Naveen demands 'classical' status for Odissi music

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO  
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 25

Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday wrote a letter to Union culture minister Prahlad Singh Patel urging him to accord "classical" status to Odissi music.

"I would like to draw your attention to the ongoing efforts put by the art and music lovers of Odisha to confer classical status to Odissi Music (Vocal and Instrumental). It is a matter of concern that Odissi music, the tradition of which dates back almost to second century B.C.E. is yet to be recognised as a classical



Naveen Patnaik

Naveen cabinet in its Patnaik meeting held on September 2 had decided to draw the attention of the Union government to the need of granting "classical" status to the Odissi music.

The CM also urged the Union minister to consider conferring classical status to Odissi music to fulfill the long cherished dream of the music lovers of Odisha.





## SHORT TAKES

## BTAD renamed, says Assam mantri

**Guwahati:** Assam finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Friday announced that the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) has been renamed as Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The new name has already been approved by governor Prof. Jagadish Mukhi. Informing that the new name was the part of the Bodo Peace Accord, Mr Sarma told reporters that his government was willing to implement the commitments of the Bodo Peace Accord which brought an end to all the armed rebel groups. Referring to the long pending demand of settling the border of the autonomous council, Mr Sarma said, "A commission will look after the inclusion and exclusion of villages in the BTR. The commission will be headed by former Assam chief secretary P.P. Verma," said Mr Sarma while adding that other than Mr Verma, there will be three other members in the namely BTC administrator Rajesh Prasad, ABSU representative Jayanta Basumatary and Dalim Bayan as representative of other communities.

## ED attaches Rana Kapoor's London flat

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached a residential apartment in London belonging to Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor in connection with a money laundering case, officials said on Friday. The economic offences watchdog attached the property worth Rs 127 crores in London, United Kingdom, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in the Yes Bank scam case. According to ED officials, the property was purchased by Kapoor in 2017 for 9.9 million pounds (Rs 93 crores) in the name of DOIT Creations Jersey Limited, wherein accused Kapoor is the beneficial owner. Kapoor was arrested by the investigative agency on March 7 in the matter. The Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate have already filed charge sheets against Kapoor and other accused persons in connection with the Yes Bank-DHFL scam and money laundering case being probed by the two probe agencies respectively. — ANI

## NIA seeks custody of Chhatradhar Mahato

**Kolkata:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday prayed for the custody of Chhatradhar Mahato, a former leader of the Maoist-backed People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA), before a special court. The agency prayed for custodial interrogation of Mahato and four others in connection with the killing of a CPI(M) leader in 2009 in Lalgarh, which was a hotbed of Maoist activities in the Jangalmahal region of West Bengal. The NIA has accused Mahato, now a TMC leader, under various sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, apart from waging war against the country. NIA special court judge Prasenjit Biswas directed that the hearing in the plea will be taken up on Monday. Mahato failed to appear before the NIA court, which had summoned him along with others, complaining of illness. He was released from prison in 2019 after having served a 10-year sentence in connection with an abortive bid on the life of the then chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee in 2008 and several other cases of bombing and landmine blasts. — PTI

## C'garh: 2 killed by wild elephants

**Jashpur:** Two persons were killed in separate incidents of elephant attack in Chhattisgarh's Jashpur district on Friday, a forest official said. A 60-year-old tribal woman, Igneshiya Tigga, was trampled to death by a herd of wild elephants in Tapkara forest range, while Binath Ram (62) was killed by jump-bom in Kunkuri forest range, said Shrikrishna Jadhav, divisional forest officer (DFO), Jashpur division. Tigga had gone to collect mushrooms in a forest near Daijbahar village when she was attacked by elephants, the official said. The severely injured victim was rushed to a local hospital by locals where she died during treatment, he said. — PTI

■ Lawyer was shot dead by unidentified militants at his residence in Srinagar

## SIT to investigate Qadri's killing

**YUSUF JAMEEL**  
SRINAGAR SEPT. 25

The Jammu and Kashmir police on Friday said that it has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the killing of lawyer and TV debater Syed Babar Qadri by unknown assailants at his Srinagar home the previous evening.

Inspector-general of police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, told reporters here, "We've constituted a SIT headed by superintendent of police Hazratbal that will probe the killing of Qadri". He said that the assassins had approached Qadri's home in the City's Hawal area as "clients with files in their hands".

He said that during the preliminary investigation it was learnt that the visitors told the lawyer that they were to discuss with him some accident-related case but when he walked close to them they shot

him. He said, "Qadri sustained four bullet wounds in his head and died on the way to the hospital." He added that while fleeing from the spot, the assailants fired a few shots in the air so that no one could attempt to capture them.

The IGP said that the other members of the SIT would be the concerned sub-district police officer, a deputy SP of cargo (counterinsurgency wing of the J&K police), the local SHO and a legal expert.

"The SIT has been directed to solve the case immediately and identify terrorists and their outfit. If not arrested, we will try to carry out encounter," he said. The police officer when asked if the 35-year-old lawyer was a "protected person, said, "No, he wasn't a protected person but in 2012 when his vehicle was fired upon, the area SHO and DySP personally told him not to reside in the

## Shopian encounter: Slain trio's DNA samples match with kin

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
SRINAGAR SEPT. 25

The results of the DNA or deoxyribonucleic acid samples of the parents of three youth, who went missing a day after their arrival in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Shopian district in July this year to earn living, have matched those three persons killed by the Army in an alleged fake encounter and then passed off as terrorists.

"We've received the DNA sample results of three families of Rajouri and these have matched those of the three killed in

Amshipora, Shopian on July 18. We will now take further course of action and complete the remaining formalities," IGP (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar said on Friday.

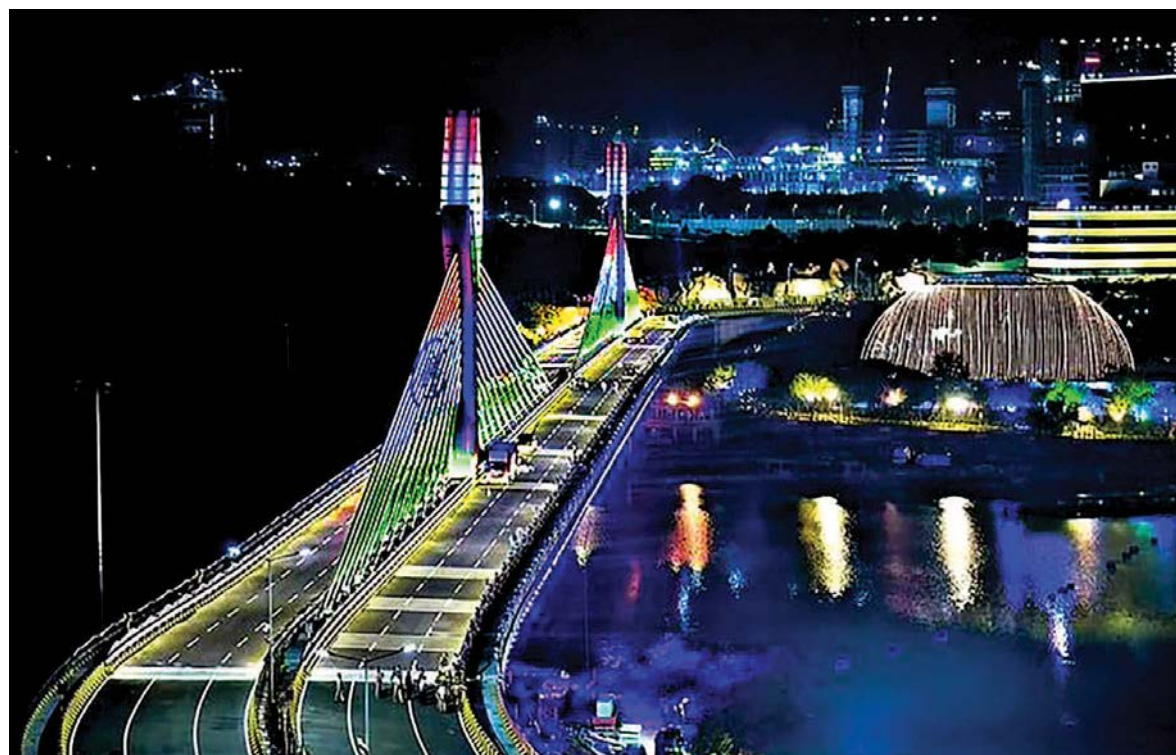
The Army had last week admitted that three youths of Rajouri district, who had reached Shopian district on July 17 to work as labourers in a local apple orchard, were killed by its troops in an "encounter".

Army, however, also said that the slain men's "involvement with terrorism or related activities are under investigation by the J&K police".

Hawal area. Today I talked to the SHO Lal Bazar and SHO Zaidibad and they said they had repeatedly requested him not to reside

in Hawal. In reply Qadri said he won't leave his home".

The IGP said that any person whether protected or



View of cable stay bridge across Durgam Cheruvu Lake after its inauguration at Madhapur in Rangareddy district. A unique aspect of this bridge is that it has the world's longest precast segmental span of 233.85m in concrete for a cable stay bridge.

— PTI

## Modi likely to virtually address UNGA today

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to address the United Nations General Assembly during the General Debate on Saturday. He is presently scheduled as the first speaker. Since the UNGA this year is being held in the backdrop of the Covid pandemic, it is being conducted mostly virtually. Prime Minister's address will therefore be via a pre-recorded video statement broadcast at the UNGA hall in New York.

Some of the priority issues for India during 75th session of UNGA are to promote the strengthening of global action on counter-terrorism and India will push for more transparency in the

process of listing and delisting of entities and individuals in sanction committees. India is seeking inclusive and responsible solutions for international peace & security, effective response to terrorism, New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System, technology for all and streamlining of peacekeeping.

Being one of the largest troop-contributing countries, India wants to engage intensively in finalising of mandates for UN peacekeeping missions. While looking at promoting its role as a net health service provider, India will highlight the contribution to global cooperation against COVID-19 by aiding more than 150 countries and as a pharmacy to the world.

## Covid: SC reserves order on refund of cancelled air tickets

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

The Supreme Court on Friday reserved its order on a batch of petitions seeking refund of airfare for the tickets booked for travel during lockdown period – March 25 to May 25 – as Centre told the court that passengers will get a refund of their air-tickets or transferable credit vouchers.

By the credit voucher, the air traveller can buy a ticket for another day or transfer it to someone else including a travel agent from whom he had bought the ticket or take a refund at a later stage.

The airlines have been given a deadline of March 31, 2021, to refund the tickets.

Appearing for the civil aviation ministry and directorate general of civil aviation solicitor general Tushar Mehta told the court that as far as airlines are concerned they recognize the passenger figuring on their manifest list and no travel agent.

"We do not know them, we don't recognize them", Mehta told the court about travel agents.

Having said that passengers were entitled to refund of their cancelled tickets for the lockdown period, solicitor general told the bench comprising justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah that directing the airlines to give refunds will

adversely impact them and that is not a desirable outcome – an indication that it is unlikely that there would be a refund of the air-tickets in near future.

The solicitor general said the government has not accepted the suggestion by travel agent associations to process the refunds and credit vouchers through the travel agents if the tickets were booked through them.

Senior counsel Arvind Datar appearing for Indigo seeking more time to make refunds, said that their working capital is frozen, input costs including fuel prices have gone up and to top it all the government has imposed a cap on the price of the tickets.



Vehicle torched during a protest demanding recruitment of reserved category candidates on vacant unreserved positions for teachers from the year 2018 in Kakari Dugri village of Durgapur district on Friday.

— PTI

## Trinamul govt trying to bribe Hindus: Adhir

**Kolkata, Sept. 25:** West Bengal Pradesh Congress committee president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury Friday accused the TMC government of trying to "bribe" the Hindus by announcing doles for Durga Puja committees and Hindu Brahmins and claimed that it is desperate to project itself as a "bigger brand of Hindutva" than the BJP.

Chowdhury, who is also the leader of Congress in Lok Sabha, said that instead of getting into "competitive Hinduism" with BJP, the TMC government should "focus on creating job and industries". "Yesterday we saw Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announcing ₹50,000 for Durga Puja committees and other doles after projecting TMC as the messiah of Muslims by propagating that the state government has given allowances to Imams and muezzins."

"The TMC is now busy projecting itself as the mascot of brand Hindutva to counter BJP. And in doing so, it is now giving allowances to Hindu priests and grants to Durga Puja commit-



Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

tees. She (Banerjee) is trying to bribe the Hindus," Chowdhury said.

Banerjee had on Thursday doubled the annual financial assistance to 37,000 Durga Puja committees across the state to ₹50,000.

The development came close to heels of the state governments' announcement of providing free housing and a monthly allowance to 8000 Hindu priests of the state.

"The fact is the state government is not giving allowance to Imams and muezzins. It is the state Wakf board which provides those allowances."

"Now the TMC is not bothered about Muslim votes. It wants Hindu votes to compete with BJP. The TMC is now engaged in competitive Hinduism," he said.

— PTI

## NCB grills Dharma's executive producer

## Deepika to be quizzed today

**SAURABH JOSHI**  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 22

The Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB) on Friday grilled executive producer with Karan Johar's Dharma Productions on Friday in connection with their investigation into the alleged Bollywood-drugs nexus. The executive producer was identified as Kshitij Ravi Prasad and he was summoned by the NCB after marijuana was seized from his Mumbai residence, officials said. The agency also grilled actor Rakul Preet Singh, who claimed that she never did drugs. The NCB will question Deepika Padukone and Sara Ali Khan on Saturday.

The officials said that Prasad was not available at his Versova residence when a team of NCB went there on Thursday. The officials seized marijuana and they will question Prasad on the lines of where he bought it from. A day later, the officials again visited the same place where they found Prasad and he was asked to accompany them for questioning at the NCB office in connection with the ongoing drugs probe. The agency will look into Prasad's links with arrested drug peddlers in this case or if there is anybody else who allegedly supplies narcotics to the film industry celebrities.

The NCB officials meanwhile said that the starting point of the entire probe was WhatsApp chats about drugs that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) unearthed while probing the money laundering angle in the alleged suicide of Rajput.

## Bihar elections starting Oct. 28

■ Continued from Page 1 the state, comprising the JD(U) BJP and LJP, as Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar makes another bid to retain power for the fourth time. Among key challenges faced by the JD(U)-BJP alliance is the coronavirus crisis, unemployment, the law and order scenario and the flood situation.

The ruling alliance and the Mahagathbandhan led by the RJD-Congress are the two major political groups in the fray, where the NDA is trying to reach out to its voters with "Vikas" (development) and "15 years of good governance versus 15 years of jungle raj" narrative against the Opposition parties.

The Bihar election is crucial for the NDA, and particularly the BJP, that suffered massive setbacks in Delhi, Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

"Our party workers are excited after the dates

were announced by the Election Commission. We are confident that the NDA will win more than 220 seats and the Grand Alliance will be completely wiped out after the polls as they neither have a leader nor policies for the development of the state", BJP spokesman Nikhil Anand said in Patna.

The Nitish Kumar-led NDA had come to power in Bihar after defeating the 15-year Lalu Yadav-Rabri Devi government in 2005. In the 2015 Assembly elections, the JD(U) along with the RJD and Congress had formed a grand alliance and defeated the Bharatiya Janata Party by a huge margin. However, in July 2017, after the CBI registered corruption cases against RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav and his son Tejashwi Yadav, Nitish Kumar returned to the NDA and formed a government with the BJP's support.

## Playback legend 'SPB' no more

■ Continued from Page 1 night, sources said. "He was a nice gentleman who spent his lifetime for music and playback singing," said Tamil Nadu governor Banwarilal Purohit, adding: "His demise is an irreparable loss to the people of India and particularly to all music lovers across the globe. All of his will miss his magical golden voice."

Describing him as a "brother", Telangana governor Tamlilaisai Soundararajan wondered

if the man born on Telugu soil and who earned fame in Tamil Nadu had been called by the heavens to sing there. Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said the singer was God's gift to the Indian musical world in the 20th century and said his demise was a loss to music lovers, Tamil film and Tamil Nadu. He recalled the singer endeared himself so much to M.G. Ramachandran (MGR)

that he was very particular that SPB should sing the song Aaiyram Nilave Va (Adimai Penn) that later on became very famous. Calling Balasubrahmanyam a legend, deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam said with his melodious voice he attracted millions of fans of all ages. He would be remembered all through as his songs would be heard all along, he said, adding he had carved a niche for himself in the world of music.

that he was very particular that SPB should sing the song Aaiyram Nilave Va (Adimai Penn) that later on became very famous. Calling Balasubrahmanyam a legend, deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam said with his melodious voice he attracted millions of fans of all ages. He would be remembered all through as his songs would be heard all along, he said, adding he had carved a niche for himself in the world of music.

## Agitating farmers block roads

■ Continued from Page 1 at the Noida-Delhi border where farmers, who travelled on foot, two-wheelers and tractor trolleys, held a demonstration and a "panchayat" that was addressed by regional farmers' leaders and BKU office-bearers.

The gathering disrupted traffic on the key road linking Noida and Delhi. In Punjab, chief minister Amarinder Singh said the state government was

with the farmers in the fight against the bills, and no FIR would be filed for violations of Section 144 CrPc. Buses of the state-owned Pepsu Road Transport Corporation (PRTC) remained off the road on Friday. While the ruling Congress and AAP extended support to the protest, the Shiromani Akali Dal held a "chakka jam" (road blockade) in many parts of Punjab.

Capt. Singh said the passage of the farm bills was "a step in the wrong direction". He tweeted: "Farmers are the backbone of our society & the recent farmer bills passed by the Union government are a step in the wrong direction. It's time we all stand for what's right. Together let's impress upon the Centre to pull back these anti-farmer bills."

that he was very particular that SPB should sing the song Aaiyram Nilave Va (Adimai Penn) that later on became very famous. Calling Balasubrahmanyam a legend, deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam said with his melodious voice he attracted millions of fans of all ages. He would be remembered all through as his songs would be heard all along, he said, adding he had carved a niche for himself in the world of music.



S. P. BALASUBRAMANYAM | 1946 - 2020

# A golden voice falls silent

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 25

**T**he celebrated playback singer, who enthralled movie fans with over 40,000 songs in 16 languages and lent his voice to several matinee idols on screen, strode the world of film music for more than five decades. Remarkably, his voice never lost its timbre with age and he was busy almost up to the day he was admitted to a hospital in Chennai. A winner of six national awards, Shripathi Pandithadrahyula Balasubramanyam, more readily identified by three letters – SPB – by the film fraternity and millions of fans, was born in Nellore in 1946.

His father Sambamurthy was a Harikatha artiste who had also acted in plays. Though SPB developed interest in music at a very young age, he was also very interested in academics. He enrolled in JNTU, Ananthpur, to pursue his engineering and for some reasons he had to drop out of college. He joined the Associate Member of Institution of Engineers, Chennai, and also pursued his passion of music and started performing in several music competitions. He was adjudged the best singer at a competition by ace musicians S.P. Kodandapani and Ghantasala who were on the jury panel. Later on, S.P. Kodandapani became his mentor and the rest is history.

Balasubramanyam made his debut as a playback singer on December 15, 1966 with the song *Sri Sri Marayada Ramanna* composed by his guru Kothandapani in a Telugu movie. After recording a Kannada song, he made his debut singing in Tamil with the number *Athaanodu Ippadi Irundhu Eththanai Naalaachu*, a duet with L.R. Eswari in M. S. Viswanathan's composition for the film *Hotel Ramba*, but unfortunately the film was never released. His song, a duet with P. Susheela, *Iyarkai Ennum Ilaya Kanni* in the 1969 film *Shanti Nilayam*, featuring Gemini Ganes and Kanchana was a big hit.

Industry pundits recall that SPB was personally selected by the iconic star MG Ramachandran (MGR) to sing a song for his production venture *Adimai Penn*, featuring him and late CM Jayalalitha and directed by K. Shankar. The song was *Aayiram Nilave Vaa*, which took SPB to dizzy heights. A time soon came when he was singing for the likes of MGR, Sivaji Ganesan and Gemini Ganesan in MS Viswanathan's composition on par with top playback singers like T.M. Soundarrajan and P.B. Srinivas. He also recorded songs with all top women singers like P. Susheela, S. Janaki, Vani Jayaram and

L.R. Eswari. Thus began the SPB era. Balasubramanyam's association with Ilayaraja began even before the maestro came to the film industry. In their early days, SPB used to sing in towns and villages all over south India and Ilayaraja, then an unknown harmonium and guitar player, accompanied him and played in all his concerts.

Donning several hats as a playback singer, music director, actor, voice artiste and film producer, he worked predominantly in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Hindi and Malayalam. He won six National Film Awards for Best Male Playback Singer for his works in four different languages — Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Hindi — besides 25 Nandi Awards from Andhra Pradesh for his works in Telugu cinema and numerous other state awards from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka governments.

Without a background in classical music, he had to toil in rendering all the famous songs in Sankarabharanam which were in high classical notes after KVM chose him over ace playback and classical singers like K.J. Yesudas and Balamurakrishna.

He had successful collaborations with Ilayaraja and S.Janaki and the trio's songs were a huge hit from late 1970s and throughout 1980s. SPB and Raja won National Awards together for their collaborations in films like *Saagara Sangamam* in 1983, *SwathiMuthyam* in 1986 and *Rudraveena* in 1988.

SPB's prominence rose in Bollywood right from 1989 when he sang for Salman Khan for the film *Maine Pyar Kiya*. Besides winning many awards, Balasubramanyam continued as the "romantic singing voice" on the soundtracks of Khan's films for almost a decade. SPB was identified as Salman Khan's voice in the '90s and he consolidated his position as an 'Indian playback singer'.

In the '90s, he worked with other composers like Vidyasagar, SA. Rajkumar, Deva and MM Keeravani and his collaboration with AR Rahman turned out to be a bigger hit. ARR and SPB joined hands right from the former's debut film *Roja*, July *Maadhama*, *Pudhiya Mugam*, *Kizhakku Cheemayile*, *Duet* and *Minsara Kanavu*, and the last one fetched him the 6th National Award for the song *Thanga Thaamarai Magale*.

SPB has also been the music director of 46 films in four south languages. Some notable works among them are *Padamati Sandhya Ragam* and *Thurpu Velle Railu*. SPB has always been a lucky mascot for Rajinikanth's numerous intro songs and the combo has always clicked. The ace singer's last few renderings include *Petta's Marana Mass* and *Chumma Kizhi* from *Darbar* composed by Anirudh.

**For someone with no formal training in classical music, the heights SPB scaled were not something that even well-trained singers could touch**



SPB with legendary Ghantasala

'Balu', fondly called by many of his friends such as Ilayaraja, was born on June 4, 1946, in Nellore in Andhra Pradesh

He made his debut as a playback singer on December 15, 1966 with the song *Sri Sri Marayada Ramanna* for a Telugu movie composed by his guru Kothandapani

His duet with P. Susheela, 'Iyarkai Ennum Ilaya Kanni' in film *Shanti Nilayam*, featuring Gemini Ganes and Kanchana was a big hit. The song 'Aayiram Nilave Vaa' in *Adimai Penn*, starring MGR took SPB to dizzy heights

He won his first National Award for Telugu movie *Sankarabharanam* for his song 'Omkaara Naadanu'

In the '80s he had successful collaborations with Ilayaraja and S.Janaki and the trio's songs were a huge hit from late 1970s to the 1980s.



SPB AND K.J. YESUDAS

SPB's love for singer K.J. Yesudas is well known and he used to always address him as a guru. SPB lent his voice several Malayalam songs during his five-decade-long career. In the movie, *Kinar*, released in 2018, he sang a duet 'Ayyaa.. Saami....' with Yesudas. Both also acted together in the same song.

**SPB** has also given voice for various stars including Kamal Haasan, Rajinikanth, Salman Khan, Vishnuvardhan, Nagesh, Gemini, Arjun, Raghuvaran and Karthik in various languages. He also dubbed for Ben Kingsley in the Telugu-dubbed version of the film *Gandhi*.



**SPB AS AN ACTOR**  
Did films in three languages. Notable films as an actor include *Keladi Kanmani*, *Sigaram*, *Thiruda Thiruda*, *Kadhalan*, and *Naanayam*. He was also part of a few TV serials and shows.

**SPB HAS ALSO BEEN A MUSIC DIRECTOR**  
Composed for films in four south Indian languages. Some of the notable works among them are *Padamati Sandhya Ragam* and *Thurpu Velle Railu*.

The singer was presented with Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan

He won his sixth National Award for the song 'Thanga Thamarai' in Tamil movie *Minsara Kanavu*

Bagged **National Award** for his Kannada song in movie *Sangeetha Sagara Ganayogi Panchakshara Gavai*

**His collaboration with AR Rahman** turned out to be a huge hit. ARR and SPB joined hands right from the former's debut film *Roja* and then *July Maadhama*, *Pudhiya Mugam*, *Kizhakku Cheemayile*, *Duet* and *Minsara Kanavu*



**IN THE** unfortunate demise of Shri SP Balasubramanyam, our cultural world is a lot poorer. A household name across India, his melodious voice and music enthralled audiences for decades. In this hour of grief, my thoughts are with his family and admirers. Om Shanti: **NARENDRA MODI**, Prime Minister



Prime Minister Modi presenting a memento to SPB on Sankranti to mark the golden jubilee of his singing career in New Delhi on Jan. 16, 2016.



SPB won his **second National Award** for Hindi movie *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*



Bagged **two National Awards** for his songs in Telugu movies *Sagara Sangamam* and *Rudhra Veena*

SPB gets Padma award from Prez Prathiba Patil



## Janaki first spotted Balu

S.P. Balasubramanyam wanted to study engineering and join government service. That was the wish of his father. Balu was not interested in singing for films, and had not learnt music though he used to participate in singing competitions. When he was studying engineering in Anantapur, he participated in a competition in Gudur, where the chief guest was the

famous playback singer S. Janaki. Balu won the first prize, and Janaki asked him to try singing in films as she found something special in his voice. He replied that he did not know music. To this, Janaki said she too did not know music but was singing in films. That's the first time that SPB's talent was spotted by the film industry.

—Suresh Kavirayani

## Sankarabharanam got him global recognition

In Balu's long and illustrious career, *Sankarabharanam* was a milestone. K. Viswanath was the director and he initially wanted veteran classical singer Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna to render the songs which were based on Carnatic music. Music director K.V. Mahadevan, however, kept his faith in Balu. The songs were a huge hit and are considered classics today. The film released

in 1980 and changed Telugu cinema. SPB won a national award for his song in the film.

The songs of the film are considered to be among among Balu's best. The film was screened in international film festivals. He and K. Viswanath continued their collaborations in films like *Sagara Sangamam*, *Siri Vennela*, *Saptapadi* and *Sruthilayalu*.

—Suresh Kavirayani

## SPB tuned a number on Covid, its deadly effects

Ironically, before he tested positive for coronavirus, singer S. P. Balasubramanyam composed music and sang a Tamil song to create awareness about the deadly pathogen with the lyrics brimming with confidence that mankind would eventually win over the pandemic. "I composed this number: Let us listen to this... it is not more musical, it is more lyrical," he had said months ago in his foreword to

the song, penned by renowned lyricist Vairamuthu. Popularly known as 'SPB', he had in the three-minute plus video post urged his fans to pay attention to the depth and import of the words and act accordingly to help prevent the virus spread. The song that begins with "Corona, Corona," goes on to explain that though the virus was pretty small in size, smaller than an atom, it was deadly like

an atom bomb and it infected people stealthily. The rendition by Balasubramanyam also attached importance to avoiding physical contact, following hygiene and other aspects aimed at avoiding the pathogen. The singer switched to a higher pitch while singing verses laced with confidence that human race would annihilate coronavirus and emerge victorious.

—PTI



(From left) Former Tamil Nadu CM J. Jayalalitha presenting Nandi Award to SPB; The singer sharing a smile with Usha Uthup; Susheela and SPB recording one of their memorable duets; Veteran playback singer P. B. Srinivas kisses SPB.



# THE ASIAN AGE

26 SEPTEMBER 2020

## Dig in for the long haul: Chinese not going soon

We may be in for a very long haul in eastern Ladakh and perhaps across the entire Line of Actual Control: the standoff with China that began in May isn't ending anytime soon, and the nation had better get used to it. While the two countries agreed, at the sixth round of the corps commanders' talks Monday, to stop sending more troops to the frontline, there is no real way each side can verify what the other is doing, besides satellite imagery, which is often misleading. India and China also agreed, in a "candid and in-depth exchange of views", to "refrain from unilaterally changing the ground situation" and "avoid taking any action that may complicate the situation". Such pious sentiments, in the joint statement issued a day after the talks, are all very well, but appear completely out of sync with the reality on the ground. It should be noted that even if China and India don't send any additional troops to the LAC, the People's Liberation Army already has 50,000 soldiers there, with heavy artillery, tanks, armoured carriers, and the Indian Army has a matching number of troops and equipment. The important thing is that there wasn't an iota of progress on the disengagement process: with the Chinese side refusing to budge on withdrawal of its forces from the Finger area and elsewhere, and go back to its pre-April 2020 positions — despite the 14-hour-long negotiations, attended for the first time by a MEA joint secretary.

**The Chinese are masters at the long game, in tiring out their opponents, and India needs a lot of patience. It will be costly too, as our economy is weaker than China's, and the additional spending on defence is something we can ill afford.**

After foreign ministers S. Jaishankar and Wang Yi agreed in Moscow on a five-point action plan to reduce tensions, Monday's agreement not to engage in "escalatory behaviour" along the LAC is perhaps the first significant step forward, but one has to wait and see if it holds for a reasonable period. To reiterate, one can only hope for small steps at a time and it will be a mistake to expect too much from two/three rounds of military/diplomatic negotiations. Given that, the two armies have to remain dug in across the harsh terrain in sub-zero temperatures through the coming winter, and perhaps beyond. India's only advantage is that having occupied the Kailash range's strategic heights overlooking the Spanggur Gap's entry points in Chushul on August 29-31, the PLA can't take it by surprise as it did in May-June. The Chinese side is demanding that India withdraw from these heights, which New Delhi has rightly rejected, saying as the first transgressions were by China, in the Finger area, Pangong Tso, Gogra Post-Hot Springs and Depsang Plains, where the PLA is still preventing Indian Army patrolling, it has to make the first move towards disengagement. China is, of course, in denial that it had transgressed first.

There are fears if the Chinese can't be forced to leave soon, the change in the LAC's alignment might become permanent, to India's disadvantage. That is why the Army must be in readiness, prepared to retaliate for any Chinese action, including by firing if required, and remain watchful for mischief elsewhere on the LAC, such as Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese are masters at the long game, in tiring out their opponents, and India needs a lot of patience. It will be costly too, as our economy is weaker than China's, and the additional spending on defence is something we can ill afford, especially now. But it must be done, we have no alternative.

## Deano transformed cricket

Tragic as the death of the Victorian cricketer Dean Jones in India is, his emotional ties to the subcontinent may have been destined to end this way. The Australian batsman helped transform the modern game by showing the way in a more energetic mode of playing as batsman, bowler or fielder in the limited-overs game in which each run seems to matter more towards defining victory or defeat. A positive attitude towards batting in a team's cause and raw courage in standing up to the challenge of pace like that of the West Indies in its heyday enabled him to leave a grand imprint on the game, especially in an epochal World Cup victory in India under Allan Border in 1987 that reshaped the history of Australian cricket.

Not many foreigners of Dean Jones' time took to the subcontinent as a favourite touring or visiting place. A liberal-minded Jones was different and he sought out assignments in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan as a commentator. After a gaffe on air in likening a bearded South African batsman's appearance to that of "a terrorist", Jones reconciled to only being a part of studio cricket shows. In his 'Professor Deano' persona, he used his head for figures to present cricket in quirky and engaging fashion and carved a niche in the field of the "talking heads" of sport.

A brave Jones may have defied death very early in his career as he dominated the opening parts of Tied Test II at Chepauk in Chennai in September 1986 when he compiled a mammoth 210 in 503 minutes of sapping heat and humidity, besides the discomfort of the foul smell emanating from the polluted Cooum River flowing nearby. Jones was so dehydrated with the effort on the opening day that he was thrown into a bathtub filled with ice cubes in his hotel room to cool him down and then dragged to a hot shower to make him feel "human" again and fit to resume batting, but only to be put on saline drips in a hospital that night. Alas, a stroke took him in his Mumbai hotel room at the relatively young age of 59.

### THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY  
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR

THE ASIAN AGE offices are located at:

New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124. Mumbai: Sigma House, # 43, Ground Floor, R. A. Kidwai Marg, Near Wadala Rly Station, Wadala (West), Mumbai - 400 031 Phone (022) 24195301 Fax (022) 24195347. Kolkata: 4th Floor, Chowdhury Building, 8/1A Little Russell Street, Kolkata 700 071. Phone: (033) 2289 0676/77 Fax (033) 2289 0686

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office in the United Kingdom Air surcharge for Kathmandu and J&K ₹1

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301. Mumbai: Dangat Media Pvt Ltd, Plot No 22, Digha MIDC, TTC Industrial Estate Area, Vishnu Nagar, Digha, Navi Mumbai-400708. Kolkata: Satyajit Employees Cooperative Industrial Society Ltd, 13/A, Prafulla Sarkar Street, Kolkata 700 072. London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94 Postal registration numbers: DL(S)/05/4189/15-17

Saeed Naqvi  
Wide Angle



## BJP impunity in House stems from Opp. fear of exposure

With 303 seats in a House of 540 members, and only 37.36 per cent of the popular vote, the BJP can rush through bills with lightning speed, pummelling any effort at debate. How does this happen? After all, 237 members on the Opposition benches is not a negligible number.

The BJP's impatience with the Constitution is obvious but blame also lies with the Gandhi trio on two counts: neither have they been able to pull together a coalition with any punch, nor have they moved out of the way so that others can.

The salience given to the Gandhis by the media keeps them in the public eye as wishful thinkers with a determination to revive the Congress. This comes across as a massive roadblock in the way of any Opposition unity. They know that such a revival is impossible but harping on the belief serves a purpose: it obstructs opposition unity and sustains their relevance to no useful end. The media is content with the simplicity of the Tweedledum versus Tweedledee narrative.

In recent times, a story that has wafted out of the Gandhi enclosure is one of differences between them. Sonia Gandhi, with reliable retainers like Ahmed Patel is averse to rocking any boat. Status quo, uncomfortable

though it be, is about the best she sees for the brood in the given circumstances. Her listless politics is also a function of her indifferent health.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's status quoism derives from her personal anxieties, family problems and an inability to cope with responsibilities. Ask Kishori Lal Sharma, appointed years ago to nurse the "family burroughs" of Rae Bareilly and Amethi, and he will guardedly spill the beans. The poor fellow's Stan Hardy (as in Laurel and Hardy) moustache greyed waiting for Priyanka to address the "Congress volunteers". But Priyanka, like Godot, never showed up.

Rahul Gandhi, meanwhile, is being more assertive about beliefs he has long held and which approximate to the line Rajiv Gandhi enunciated at the 1985 Congress Centenary in Mumbai chastising the "power brokers". Is Rahul Gandhi looking for that kind of a platform?

In 1969, when his grandmother, Indira Gandhi, split the Congress away from the "power brokers", the regional satraps, the capitalists were, in a sense exposed. They eventually joined up with the RSS, Socialists in the Bihar movement of 1974 under the leadership of arch-Gandhian, Jayaprakash Narayan.

The 1969 split had a Left-Right

dimension to it because it was in the context of the Cold War. In the post Cold War world "Inequality" has emerged as the principal affliction of democracies where people's demands are dismissed as "populism". Crony capitalism thrives but no political party is allowed to find its feet if it intends to harness the discontent of the people who have borne the brunt of, say, the extended lockdown in India. There is a huge Left-of-Centre space for the Opposition to occupy. It does not have to be terribly ideological. All it has to do is to make available to the people social benefits such as health, education, housing, et cetera. Surely Rahul is aware of this opening.

Politics these days is at a standstill because of the lockdown, of course, but also because of what I call the "Eulalie" syndrome. This light-hearted diversion comes from Wodehouse. The resourceful Jeeves has come to the assistance of his master, Bertie Wooster, at a particularly challenging moment. Roderick Spode, the Earl of Sidcup, has become a permanent social menace in a country house which is Bertie's favourite haunt. How to cut down Spode's bombast? That is Bertie's challenge. Jeeves provides the panacea. Bertie has to sneak upto Spode and whisper, "I know all about Eulalie." Bertie fol-

lows Jeeves' advice. The result is electric. Spode becomes white as a sheet and collapses in the chair like a deflated balloon. It turns out that before Spode began to float in London's high society, he owned a store called Eulalie which sold lingerie known for its bras with bold designs. Eulalie, then is harmless blackmail. But the blackmail which has become the staple in contemporary politics is brutal.

After the BJP's stunning victory in UP in 2017, the Opposition, armed with data on electoral fraud, sought Sonia Gandhi's permission to hold a press conference. She refused to get involved in "controversies". Likewise, she backed away from "snoogate" which had both Modi and Amit Shah in difficulties.

Take a look at Lucknow. Jockeying has begun for the 10 Rajya Sabha seats from UP. Conventional wisdom concedes eight to the BJP and one to the SP. One would have expected the Opposition to jointly keep the BJP out on the solitary remaining seat. But individual party leaders are in an almighty state of funk just in case the Enforcement Directorate comes knocking at their door.

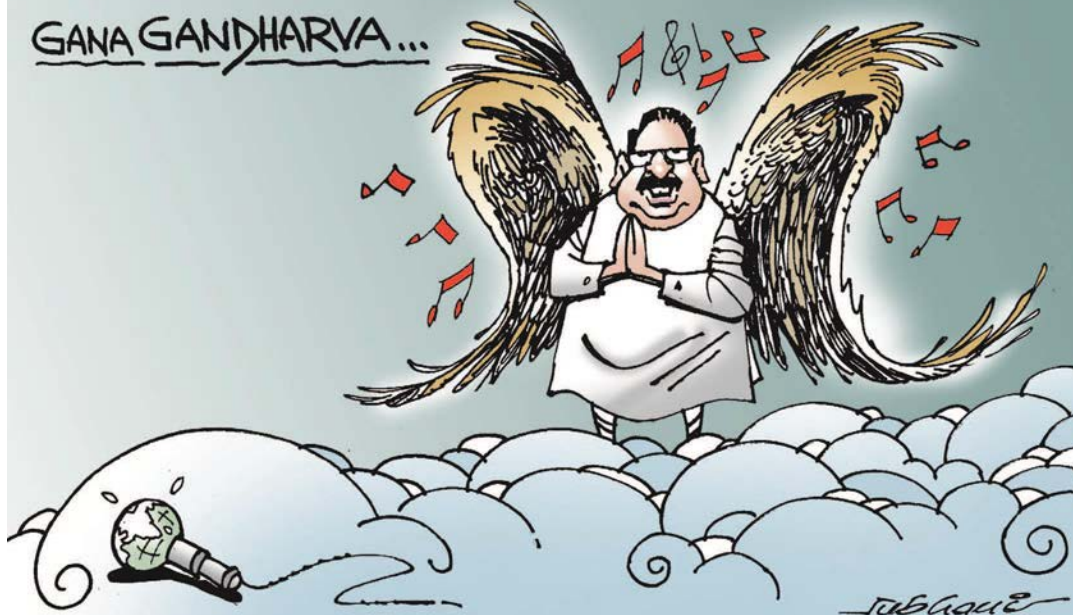
Even though the Opposition has a comfortable majority in the UP Upper House, the BJP rammed through nearly a hundred bills with-

out any vote. A petrified Akhilesh Yadav is hiding behind columns to avoid political leaders who are pressing him to approach the Supreme Court. What if Yogi Adityanath sets the dogs on him? In fact, Lucknow would appear to have been a rehearsal for the real show in Parliament.

In uniformed cities like New Delhi these examples of the ruling party's impunity, away from the media's critical glare, enhance an impression of the BJP's invincibility. Forgotten are dismal economic figures and a simple catalogue: the party is not in power in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Odisha, West Bengal, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Delhi. Just as your eye settles on these facts, *India Today* thrusts before you its poll results: Modi's approval ratings are 78 per cent. Like the Priest in Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, you walk away nodding your head, "What is the truth?" The climax, of course, is the audacity of ramming through bills in Parliament. Slowly what is being brought into focus is a need for a new Constitution.

*The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi*

GANA GANDHARVA...



Subhani

## Can fury over farm bills trigger wider Opp. stir?



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

For the first time in India, a motion of no-confidence was moved against the deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha earlier this week. It's another matter that it was rejected. To save the two agriculture bills — on which Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears to have staked so much — from possibly falling in the Upper House, Harivansh, as the presiding officer, appeared to shabbily disregard the rules, leading to the Opposition parties expressing their mistrust in him.

Mr Harivansh stubbornly refused the Opposition's demand for a formal vote to test whether the government actually had a majority to pass the intended legislation. It's quite clear that to press for a vote is no longer your right even inside the Parliament of India. All these years formal voting has been permitted the minute any member in either House has demanded a "division".

On this occasion, however, the deputy chairman chose to impose voice voting when the House was in a state of turmoil caused by stiff opposition to the rules being imposed by him even by parties that normally vote with the government. The deputy chairman no doubt acted to help the intended legislation sail through on the strength of lung power. It's clear that if the presiding deity is with you, that's practically nine-tenths of the law.

These were truly "historic" bills, to quote the PM, in the sense that they will make history. The laws that these will bring about have the intent of deepening capitalism in

agriculture by slowly strangulating the long-standing MSP regime — evidently a bad old "socialist" construct — through which the government offers an assured minimum price to farmers to prevent them from going to the wall. The path will be cleared for businessmen to do all the food-grain procurement to bring farm produce to cities at prices that the market dictates.

The effect of these laws may take time to come to fruition. For the time being, the government has hastily announced even an increase in the MSP to placate farmers who are on the warpath. But when the desired results begin to kick in with the passage of time, Indian agriculture, which has been described as a "gamble on the monsoon", will also carry the additional feature of being a gamble on the market. The fate of approximately 50 per cent of the population that subsists on agriculture — about 70 million people — will be determined eventually by how the stock market, the money market and the foreign trade market are faring.

Naturally, bedlam ensued of a kind not seen before in the Rajya Sabha. To hide the shame, the live telecast of Rajya Sabha TV was abruptly cut. The microphones of the Opposition members were switched off. It was a blatant effort to ensure that people do not get to see the methods being deployed on the government's behalf in Parliament. It was darkness at noon that was on display.

If China or North Korea had a multi-party system and a real Parliament,

this is what might have been expected. But they don't. So that makes us a special category of "democracy", a foretaste of the New India that is being promised as India ostentatiously lays claim to being the "vishwa guru".

Before Mr Harivansh announced a voice vote, it seemed that the ruling party's opponents might just have the upper hand in terms of numbers as some of the government's regular allies from among the Opposition parties were switching sides on this particular vote since it concerned millions of farmers, and they didn't wish to be seen ranged against the growers of food, whose condition is pitiable at the best of times.

Year after year, we have seen gripping images of farmers casting away the healthiest-looking onions and tomatoes — fruits of their toil — on the roads instead of selling them to traders at ridiculous market-determined prices because the MSP regime does not cover such crops. What if the MSP went and rice and wheat now had to be flung away in the wind by our agriculturists?

A defeat for the government on the agriculture bills in Parliament topping a farmers' agitation gripping Punjab, Haryana and several other parts of North India would have been a signal event, coming on top of the news of 24 per cent negative rate of growth, the worst among all countries of the world, shooting Covid-19 figures (again the worst in the world), and China sitting on our territory in Ladakh, barely 200 km out of Leh. The looming defeat

**Mr Harivansh stubbornly refused the Opposition's demand for a formal vote... It's quite clear that to press for a vote is no longer your right even inside the Parliament of India**

had to be prevented at any cost, and Mr Harivansh offered his services, although he is not from the BJP-RSS stable.

What is important is that the no-confidence move against the deputy chairman was signed by as many as 12 non-NDA parties, including several that have loyally supported the Narendra Modi government for a long time, behaving as a loyal Opposition. These decided to make common cause with the government's (and the BJP's) inveterate opponents — the Congress, the Left parties, the RJD and AIADMK, and lately the Trinamul Congress.

The flash unity and loss of faith has come on the heels of the Akali Dal, the BJP's oldest remaining ally (the Shiv Sena departed last year), withdrawing its Cabinet minister from the Modi government. Although the Akalis have not quit the ruling alliance at the Centre, and it is still unclear if they will do so, for many years the two parties have had a fairly tense relationship as partners.

What is fundamental to the unusual Akali Dal decision to withdraw itself from the Union Cabinet, catching the BJP wholly unawares, and the unprecedented events in Rajya Sabha, is the spontaneity seen in the protest of farmers in various parts of North India.

The government is doing its best to head off a nationwide action by farmers by offering unrealistic promises and announcing a hike in MSP for certain crops. But it is clear as day that the continuance of MSP runs against the logic of the two laws cleared by Parliament. Not for a long time in the country have we seen a coming together in protest by a robust constituency even as legislation was in the making. The test of the Opposition will be if it can translate its actions in the legislature with channelling a wide variety of people's grievances on the ground.

### LETTERS

#### BUCK STOPS HERE

Harsh Vardhan, the Union health minister, has blamed "irresponsible societal behaviour" for spurt in Covid-19 cases. But it is Mr Vardhan's government and he, himself, who have been unable to boost medical infrastructure during the lockdown and manage the crisis in a way that it had least impact on the economy. Now comes the news that testing has been reduced by the government in order for the figure not to cross the one lakh mark and so as to boost recovery rate. Harsh Vardhan should understand that the buck stops with him as far as handling the Covid-19 pandemic.

**S. Kamat**  
Alto St. Cruz, Goa

#### BEGGING RIGHTS

DO BEGGARS have a right to minimum alms? I believe not. This incident took place a few years ago. One day, a man in tattered clothes approached me. Feeling sorry for him, I opened my wallet and gave him a coin of ₹2. He took it, and then threw it back on my face and said, "Aaj kal, do rupaiya mein kya milta hai? Mujhe kum se kum dus rupaiya de do." When I wrote about it, I received a letter at my address from the Beggars' Association of India that said, "₹10 is the minimum amount one must give to a beggar." After this, I give the same money to charitable institutions or put it as a love offering in church.

**Jubel D'Cruz**  
Mumbai

#### RAW DEAL

WHY HAVE FARMERS opposed the two new bills? Three reasons. First, a company reaching out to a farmer will require a specific type of produce. These could be specialty crops. The farmer can no longer keep a portion of harvest aside for his family. Second, there's fear the farmer will have to sell below MSP. Third, they will become contract producers on their own land, give it up even. Thus the farmer is separated from knowledge built over generations and made dependent on the market. This is a bad deal.

**Subhashini Ramasamy**  
Mumbai

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



## IN BRIEF

**Fire breaks out at Huawei office**

**Beijing:** A huge fire broke out in southern China on Friday at an unfinished Huawei research facility, sending massive plumes of smoke over the industrial city of Dongguan. The blaze started at a Huawei building on Alishan Road, where the company is developing a research base, according to the city government. It was extinguished after 140 firefighters were called to the scene, the local fire brigade said in a separate statement. Footage broadcast online by state media channel CCTV showed dark clouds of smoke billowing out of a blue and white building near Songshan Lake. Huawei's spokesperson said the company could not yet provide details on the fire.

**Rat wins award for bomb-sniffing**

**London:** A rat has for the first time won a British charity's top civilian award for animal bravery, receiving the honour for searching out unexploded landmines in Cambodia. Magawa, a giant African pouched rat, was awarded the PDSA's Gold Medal for his "life-saving bravery and devotion" after discovering 39 landmines and 28 items of unexploded ordnance in the past seven years, according to the charity. First known as the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, PDSA started as a free veterinary clinic in 1917 and has heroic animals since 1943. Magawa was trained by a Belgian organization that has taught rats to find landmines for more than 20 years. The group, APOPO, works with programs in Cambodia, Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique to clear millions of mines left behind from wars and conflicts.

**SL arrests 3 for killing leopard**

**Colombo:** Sri Lankan police on Friday arrested three people suspected of trapping and killing an endangered leopard and trying to sell its meat as a cure for asthma. The trio were detained after police raided their home following a tip-off that they had used a snare to catch the creature in the central highlands. "They cut the head off and killed the animal after it got caught in the snare on Thursday," chief inspector Dushantha Kangara said by phone. He said the suspects had thrown the leopard's head in the forest and removed the carcass to sell the animal's skin, meat and other body parts. Several leopards have been trapped by snares in the region, some 175 kilometres (110 miles) east of Colombo. Police seized 17 kilos (37 pounds) of leopard meat from the three suspects.

**THAILAND SUES FACEBOOK TWITTER**

**Bangkok, Sept. 25:** Thailand's government lodged complaints with police on Thursday against Facebook and Twitter, alleging they failed to comply with court orders to block content judged illegal under Thai law. Minister of Digital Economy and Society Buddhapongse Punnakanta said at a news conference that it was the first time his ministry has taken such action against the social media companies under Thailand's Computer Crime Act. It has prosecuted website and account owners and users in the past. The ministry filed the complaints at the police Technology Crime Suppression Division, where Buddhapongse said the companies had failed to meet 15-day deadlines issued by the courts to block hundreds of accounts. He said the targeted sites were banned because they contained illegal content related to online gambling, pornography, drugs or the monarchy, a highly sensitive subject. The ministry also filed complaints against parties using five accounts to disseminate material considered offensive during a large anti-government rally this past weekend.

Buddhipongse said Facebook had blocked access in Thailand to 215 of the 661 accounts his ministry had requested. Twitter had blocked four of 69 accounts, he said. Police Col. Siriwat Deepor, deputy chief of the Technology Crime Suppression Division, said the two companies could face fines of not more than 200,000 baht (\$6,325) and an additional daily fine of 5,000 baht (\$158) for each day the accounts remain unblocked.

# Retired generals, admirals endorse Biden in US polls

**4-star officers who served under Trump also back Dem US Prez candidate**

**Washington, Sept. 25:** More than 200 retired generals and admirals endorsed Joe Biden for president in a letter published on Thursday, saying he had the character and judgment to serve as commander-in-chief instead of President Donald Trump, who has failed "to meet challenges large or small."

Some of the officers who signed the letter supporting Biden had retired only in the past few years, including Air Force Gen. Paul Selva, who served as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Trump before he retired in August 2019; Vice Adm. Gardner Howe, a Navy SEAL leader who also retired last year; and retired Adm. Paul Zukunff, who oversaw the Coast Guard until 2018.

The list of signatories featured 22 retired four-star military officers, among them Navy Adm. Samuel Locklear, who oversaw all US forces in the Pacific from 2012 to 2015, and Adm. Harry Ulrich, who commanded U.S. naval forces in Europe during President George W. Bush's administration.

The retired top brass signed the letter backing

## Despite Trump attacks, both parties vow orderly elections

**Washington, Sept. 26:** President Donald Trump's refusal to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he loses drew swift blowback on Thursday from both parties in Congress, and lawmakers turned to unprecedented steps to ensure he can't ignore the vote of the people.

Amid the uproar, Trump said anew he's not sure the election will be "honest."

Congressional leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, rejected Trump's assertion that he'll "see

what happens" before agreeing to any election outcome. Many other lawmakers — including from Trump's own Republican Party — vowed to make sure voters' wishes are followed ahead of Inauguration Day in January.

And some Democrats were taking action, including formally asking Trump's defense secretary, homeland security adviser and attorney general to declare they'll support the Nov. 3 results, whoever wins. Asked as he departed the White House

for a campaign rally if the election is only legitimate if he is the winner, Trump said, "We'll see." The president said he wants to "make sure the election is honest, and I'm not sure that it can be."

Trump's attacks on the upcoming vote — almost without modern precedent in the US — are hitting amid the tumult of the campaign, as partisan tensions rage and more Americans than ever are planning to vote by mail because of the Coronavirus pandemic. — AP

## TRUMP PROMOTES 'VISION' FOR HEALTH CARE

**Charlotte, Sept. 25:** More than three-and-a-half years into his presidency and 40 days from an election, President Donald Trump on Thursday launched what aides termed a "vision" for health care heavy on unfulfilled aspirations.

"This is affirmed, signed, and done, so we can put that to rest," Trump said. He signed an executive order on a range of issues, including protecting people with preexisting medical conditions from insurance discrimination. But that right is already guaranteed in the Obama-era health law his administration is asking the Supreme Court to overturn. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi dismissively said Trump's "bogus executive order on pre-existing conditions isn't worth the paper it's signed on."

Democrats are betting heavily that they have the edge on health care this election season. — AP

Biden along with nearly 300 other former national security officials and diplomats. William Webster, the former director of the CIA and the FBI, was among the signatories, along with five former defense secretaries: William Perry, William Cohen, Chuck Hagel, Leon

Panetta and Ash Carter. "My own personal view is that I have a duty to be involved in civic matters of the nation that I'm a citizen" of, retired Adm. Steve Abbot said of his decision to sign the letter.

Abbot served as commander of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and commander of Naval

Striking and Support Forces in Southern Europe, and he later became Bush's acting homeland security adviser. He said that he believed he had a duty to speak out as a citizen and that he was troubled initially by Trump's comments about the late Sen. John McCain in 2016. — AFP

# Terror probe opened after 2 stabbed in Paris

**Paris, Sept. 25:** French terrorism authorities are investigating a double-stabbing outside the former Paris offices of a satirical newspaper where a dozen people were killed in 2015, and two suspects have been arrested in Friday's violence, authorities said.

France's counterterrorism prosecutor said authorities suspect a terrorist motive because of the place and timing of the stabbings: in front of the building where *Charlie Hebdo* was based until the Islamic extremist attack on its cartoonists and at a time when suspects in the 2015 attack are on trial across town.

Prosecutor Jean-Francois Ricard said that the chief suspect in Friday's stabbings was arrested, along with another person. Ricard said the assailant did not know the people who were stabbed, two workers in a documentary production company who had stepped outside for a smoke break.

The suspects' identities have not been released, and it is unclear exactly what prompted the attack. An investigation was opened into "attempted murder in relation with a terrorist enterprise," according to an official at the terrorism prosecutor's office. French Prime



French Prime Minister Jean Castex and French interior minister Gerald Darmanin arrive at the scene where several people were injured near the former offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* following an attack by a man wielding a knife in Paris on Friday.

Minister Jean Castex said the lives of the two wounded workers are not in danger. He offered the government's solidarity with their families and colleagues. *Associated Press* reporters at the scene saw police flood the neighborhood in eastern Paris near the Richard Lenoir subway station, which

remained cordoned off hours later. Children were sequestered in nine schools while police scoured the area, but were later released, according to the Paris school district. "All the team at Charlie offers support and solidarity to its former neighbors and colleagues at PLTVfilms and to the peo-

ple hit by this odious attack," Charlie Hebdo tweeted.

The prime minister noted the "symbolic site" of the attack, "at the very moment where the trial into the atrocious acts against Charlie Hebdo is under way." He promised the government's "unfailing attachment to freedom of

the press, and its determination to fight terrorism."

The two people confirmed injured worked for documentary film company *Premieres Lignes*, according to founder Paul Moreira. He told *BFM* television that the attacker fled into the subway, and the company's staff members were evacuated. — AP

## \$150 m budget for H1-B job training

**Washington, Sept. 25:** The US will invest \$150 million in training for middle-to-high-skilled H-1B occupations in key sectors, including in information technology which employs tens of thousands of Indian professionals.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

The technology compa-

nies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. According to the Department of Labor, prominent among these sectors are information technology, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, transportation, wherein the H-1B One Workforce grant programme would be used to upskill the present workforce and train a new generation of workers to grow the future workforce. — PTI

## Turkey wants Kurdish politicians arrested

**Ankara, Sept. 25:** Turkish prosecutors have issued warrants for the detention of 82 people, including a number pro-Kurdish former lawmakers, as part of an investigation into deadly riots six years ago by Kurds angered at what they perceived to be the government's inaction against Islamic State group militants who had besieged the Syrian border town of Kobane, state media reported on Friday.

The three days of clashes in early October 2014 were the worst in Turkey in recent years, resulting in 37 deaths and leaving hundreds of others —

● **AT LEAST 18 of the suspects were detained in simultaneous police raids in seven provinces on Friday, Anadolu Agency reported.**

police and civilians — injured. The protests were called by leaders of Turkey's pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party, or HDP, who were angered by what they considered to be Turkish support for IS militants.

At least 18 of the suspects were detained in simultaneous police raids in seven provinces on Friday, Anadolu Agency

reported. They include Ayhan Bilgen, the current mayor of the eastern city of Kars, six former HDP lawmakers, and other former party executives, the agency said.

It was not immediately clear why the investigation against the 82 people was launched six years after the rioting. HDP's jailed former leaders, Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, have already been charged over the riots, which spread across the country, including Ankara and Istanbul.

The government accuses the HDP of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Wor-

kers' Party, or PKK, which is considered a terror organisation by Turkey, the U.S. and the European Union. Turkish officials say the HDP leaders took instruction from the PKK for a "rebellion" against the state.

The government has frequently cracked down on the political movement, stripping lawmakers of their legislative seats and arresting and removing elected mayors from office. Several HDP lawmakers have been jailed alongside Demirtas and Yuksekdag, on terror-related charges. — AP



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg holds a poster reading 'school strike for the climate' takes part in a Fridays For Future protest in front of the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen) in Stockholm on Friday. — AFP

## YOUTH | STRIKES

**Greenpeace releases photograph of 18-yr-old 'birdgirl' protesting on floating Arctic ice**

# Activist Greta calls for more climate pressure

**Stockholm, Sept. 25:** Teenage campaigner Greta Thunberg demonstrated outside Parliament in her native Sweden on Friday as a new set of worldwide protests to fight climate change kicked off.

More than 3,000 rallies by the Fridays for Future movement were scheduled to take place around the world, from Iceland to Australia and both online and in the streets depend-

ing on Coronavirus restrictions.

"The main hope is, as always, to try to have an impact on the level of awareness and public opinion so that people will start becoming more aware of the climate crisis, so that we build up this pressure on people in power so that something happens," the 17-year-old, surrounded by a dozen other activists, told reporters.

"We need to treat the climate crisis as a crisis, it's just as simple as that," she said, holding her now-famous "School Strike for the Climate" poster and wearing a face mask.

In Sweden, more than 200 events are planned, though Corona restrictions will limit each to fewer than 50 participants.

Thunberg said the Swedish demonstrations would "focus on being few

people in many places and keeping distance." Previous global Fridays for Future school strikes have seen millions of young people pour into the streets to demand action.

Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, however, much of the group's actions moved online.

Greta herself resumed her Friday school strikes on September 4, after returning to high school

following a year spent campaigning for the climate around the world.

Meanwhile, Greenpeace marked the day by releasing a photo taken several days ago in the Arctic of 18-year-old ornithologist Mya-Rose Craig, known as "birdgirl", standing on an ice floe holding a poster "Youth Strike for Climate" — in what it said was the world's most northerly climate strike. — AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,388.66	2.28
Nifty 50	11,050.30	2.27
S&P 500*	3,267.82	0.65
Dollar (₹)	73.61	0.39
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.01	0.03
Euro (₹)	86.01	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,551*0.71	353
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.78	-0.16
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.038	0.046
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.659	-0.005

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

ESIC scheme adds 7.41L new members in July

Around 7.41 lakh new members joined the ESIC-run social security scheme in July this year, against 8.13 lakh in the previous month, official data showed on Friday, giving a perspective on formal sector employment in the country. The latest data is part of a report released by the NSO on Friday. Gross new enrolments with the ESIC were registered at 4.81 lakh in May compared to 2.6 lakh in April 2020.

Positive cheque system from Jan. 1, says RBI



In order to check banking fraud, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to introduce from January 1, 2021, the 'positive pay system' for cheque, under which re-confirmation of key details may be needed for payments beyond ₹50,000. Availing of this facility would be at the discretion of the account holder. However, banks may consider making it mandatory in case of cheques for amounts of ₹5 lakh and above.

DRL launches Precedex injection for sedation in US

Dr Reddy's Labs on Friday said it has launched generic version of Precedex injection, used for sedation purposes in patients, in the US market. The Hyderabad-based company's Dexmedetomidine Hydrochloride in 0.9 per cent Sodium Chloride injection is the generic version of Hospira Inc's Precedex injection. "We are pleased to bring this generic product to market," DRL CEO North America Generics Marc Kikuchi said.

Hetero launches patient pack of Favivir 800/200

Hetero on Friday launched the first-ever 'Patient Compliant Pack' of Favivir 800/200 for the treatment of mild-to-moderate symptomatic Covid-19 patients in India. Favivir 800/200 will be available in a patient-friendly pack containing 16 tablets of Favipiravir 800mg and 2 tablets of Favipiravir 200mg, priced at ₹2,640. Favipiravir 800 mg has been approved by the Drug Controller General of India.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

Centre used states' ₹47,272cr GST funds to lower fiscal gap

CAG says Centre violated GST Act through unauthorised use

New Delhi, Sept. 25: The CAG has found that the Union government in the very first two years of the GST implementation wrongly retained ₹47,272 crore of GST compensation cess that was meant to be used specifically to compensate states for loss of revenue.

In its audit report of government accounts, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) flagged that the amount was to be credited to the non-lapsable GST Compensation Cess collection fund for payment to states for loss of revenue due to implementation of GST since 2017, but the government did not do so, and thus violated the GST law.

"The GST Compensation Cess Act, 2017, provides for levy of cess for the purpose of providing compensation to the states for loss of revenue arising due to

BREACH OF TRUST

- CAG said the Centre used this money for "other purposes" which "led to an overstatement of revenue receipts and understatement of fiscal deficit for the year".
- According to CAG, the Finance Ministry accepted the audit observation and stated in February 2020 that the proceeds of cess collected and not transferred to Public Account would be transferred in the subsequent year.

implementation of GST for a period specified in the Act," CAG said.

As per the Act and the accounting procedure, the entire cess collected during the year is required to be credited to a non-lapsable Fund (the GST Compensation Cess Fund) which shall form part of the Public Account and shall be used for the purpose mentioned i.e., for providing compensation to states for loss of rev-

enue. CAG said out of the ₹62,612 crore GST Compensation Cess collected in 2017-18, ₹56,146 crore was transferred to the non-lapsable fund.

In the following year (2018-19), ₹54,275 crore out of ₹95,081 crore collected was transferred to the fund.

The short transfer in 2017-18 was ₹6,466 crore and in 2018-19 it was ₹40,806 crore, CAG said adding the Centre used

this money for "other purposes" which "led to an overstatement of revenue receipts and understatement of fiscal deficit for the year".

The short-crediting was a violation of the GST Compensation Cess Act, 2017. The issue of compensation cess is driving a wedge between the Centre and states at the GST Council, the highest decision making body of the GST regime that had subsumed 17 different central and state taxes such as excise duty and VAT.

States have not been paid their promised compensation for letting go their powers to levy taxes on goods and services since last fiscal. The Centre says a slowdown in the economy has meant that not enough money is being collected by way of cess that is levied on luxury and sin goods. — PTI

LIC, GIC, NIAC too big to fail

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 25

Insurance regulator finds Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India, General Insurance Corporation (GIC) of India and The New India Assurance Co (NIAC) too big to fail.

As their failure can cause a significant dislocation in the domestic financial system, IRDA will subject them to enhanced regulatory supervision.

IRDA has identified LIC, GIC and New India as

domestic systemically important insurers (D-SIIs) for the year 2020-21.

D-SIIs are insurers of such size, market importance and domestic and global interconnectedness whose distress or failure would cause a significant dislocation in the domestic financial system. Therefore, the continued functioning of D-SIIs is critical for the uninterrupted availability of insurance services to the national economy.

The D-SIIs have been asked to raise the level of

corporate governance and identify all relevant risk and promote a sound risk management culture. D-SIIs will also be subjected to enhanced regulatory supervision.

As D-SIIs are seen as insurers that are 'too big or too important to fail', the perceived expectation of government support may amplify risk taking, reduce market discipline, create competitive distortions, and increase the possibility of distress in future. These considerations require that D-SIIs

Harley close to deal with Hero for bike distribution

New Delhi, Sept. 25: Harley-Davidson Inc is in advanced talks with India's Hero MotoCorp for a distribution deal which will allow the US company's motorcycles to be sold in India after it stops local manufacturing there, three sources told Reuters.

The Milwaukee-based company said on Thursday that it will stop sales and shut its manufacturing plant in India, effectively abandoning the world's biggest motorcycle market after a decade of unsuccessful efforts to gain a foothold.

Harley, however, is in talks with Hero over a distribution arrangement that will allow the Indian company to import and sell Harley bikes as its sole distributor, two sources familiar with the talks said. "Hero will be the master distributor for Harley bikes in India ... This will be a partnership, a strategic alliance," said one of the sources, all of whom declined to be named as the discussions were private.

Discussions are also ongoing to let Hero become a contract manufacturer for at least one Harley motorcycle with 300-600 cc engine capacity, which it will launch later, the first source added.



The financial details of the deal were not immediately clear.

Asked about talks with Hero, a Harley spokeswoman said the company would not comment on speculation. On Thursday, it said it was changing its business model in India evaluating options to continue to serve customers.

Hero MotoCorp, India's largest two-wheeler manufacturer by sales, also declined to comment on market speculation. It produced 6.4 million two-wheeler scooters and motorcycles in the fiscal year ending March 2020, a third of India's total output.

Hero typically sells motorcycles with engine capacity of under 200 cc and a deal with Harley will boost its entry into the mid- and high-engine market favoured by biking enthusiasts and fashion-conscious younger riders,

the second source said. Harley's 33 dealerships will likely come under Hero's management under the new arrangement, said one of the sources.

In a statement on Friday, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) in India criticised Harley for not informing dealers about their India plans. "It goes without saying that dealers who have invested their hard-earned capital in this iconic brand are left like an abandoned baby without any compensation package," FADA said.

The automobile dealer body said the closure of Harley's operations in India would lead to job loss for up to 2,000 workers across the brand's 35 dealerships and also lead to a loss of up to ₹130 crore for the brand's dealer partners. — Reuters

Centre plans \$4.6bn sops to boost battery factories

New Delhi, Sept. 25: India plans to offer \$4.6 billion in incentives to companies setting up advanced battery manufacturing facilities as it seeks to promote the use of electric vehicles and cut down its dependence on oil, according to a government proposal seen by Reuters.

A proposal drafted by NITI Aayog, a federal think tank chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said India could slash its oil import bills by as much as \$40 billion by 2030 if electric vehicles were widely adopted.

The proposal is likely to be reviewed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his cabinet in the coming weeks, said a senior government official, who was not authorised to comment on the matter

● A PROPOSAL drafted by NITI Aayog, a federal think tank chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said India could slash its oil import bills by as much as \$40 billion by 2030 if electric vehicles were widely adopted.

and declined to be identified. NITI Aayog and the Indian government did not respond to requests for comment.

The think tank recommended incentives of \$4.6 billion by 2030 for companies manufacturing advanced batteries, starting with cash and infrastructure incentives of ₹900 crore (\$122 million) in the next financial year which would then be

ratcheted up annually. "Currently, the battery energy storage industry is at a very nascent stage in India with investors being a little apprehensive to invest in a sunrise industry," the proposal said.

India plans to retain its import tax rate of five per cent for certain types of batteries, including batteries for electric vehicles, until 2022, but will increase it to 15 per cent thereafter to promote local manufacturing, the document said.

Though keen to reduce its oil dependence and cut down on pollution, India's efforts to promote electric vehicles have been stymied by a lack of investment in manufacturing and infrastructure like charging stations. — Reuters

CFOs' optimism falls to record low levels

New Delhi, Sept. 25: The optimism level among chief financial officers (CFOs) about India's financial and macro-economic conditions during the third quarter this year has witnessed a decline of 15 per cent and touched record low level, according to a survey.

Dun & Bradstreet Composite CFO Optimism Index showed a decline of 15 per cent on quarter-on-quarter basis to 74.2 during Q3 2020, bringing the index to a record low.

The survey covered nearly 350 chief financial officers (CFOs), who were asked a set of questions regarding the financial performance of their companies and the overall macroeconomic scenario for the corporate sector in the forthcoming period.

"The steady rise in total infected cases and the spillover effects of the lockdown measures have undermined the optimism levels. Moreover, the psychological impact of Covid-19 is having a bearing on the confidence levels of both businesses and consumers alike," said Arun Singh, Global Chief Economist, Dun & Bradstreet.

Further, the lack of space for demand stimulus coupled with subdued

consumer demand have constrained the pace of economic activity, Singh said.

"This is reflected in the low optimism level of CFOs for profitability, liquidity and risk appetite which stood at a record low during Q3 2020. Low optimism level of businesses, in turn, has led to lower growth impulses," he added.

As per the survey, the macroeconomic scenario sub-index value at 87.5 is the lowest in nearly seven years, as the index was at its lowest value of 77.5 during Q4 2013.

The financial performance sub-index is at its lowest value of 67.1 during the third quarter this year. The percentage of CFOs expecting an increase in the operating margin (21 per cent) and liquidity position (20 per cent) of their companies is the lowest ever.

Besides, CFOs indicating a need for raising short-term funds (22 per cent) and long-term funds (15 per cent) is also at the lowest level.

The index encapsulated the optimism surveyed on 12 parameters such as liquidity position, level of financial risk on company's balance sheet, risk appetite, etc. — PTI

Production of pulses to hit record high: Centre

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 25

Higher acreage under Kharif crop and adequate water availability for Rabi crop will see pulses production in 2020-21 break the 2017-18 record, finds ministry of agriculture.

"Pulses sowing for the 2020-21 kharif pulses has reached 138.62 lakh hectares, an increase of 6.20 lakh hectares over last year. The condition of the kharif crop is excellent in most areas barring a very few where there has been some excessive rain and as per our first advance estimate, kharif pulses production for 2020-

21 should reach 9.20 million tonnes vis-a-vis 7.72 million tonnes," said S K Malhotra, Agriculture Commissioner, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India while attending a webinar by India Pulses and Grains Association.

"The prospects for the rabi season also look excellent given that reservoirs in India are at 85 per cent of their capacity. So there will be no shortage of water for farmers during rabi sowing. The ministry of agriculture is extremely confident of the 2020-21 pulses production breaking the 2017-18 record," he said.

In 2017-18, the country had produced a total of 25.23 million tonnes of pulses. Urad, moong and tur are the major pulses grown during the kharif season.

Despite the crop damage witnessed in major producing states, higher acreage will help moong production reach about 1.50 million tons.

Similarly, excessive rains have damaged urad crops as well. But higher sowing is expected to result in output of around 2.09 million tonnes.

With respect to tur dal, crop condition is mostly good so far and in vegetative to branching stage.

RAMPANT | MISUSE

Group accuses Facebook of deliberately delaying ombudsman's appointment

Facebook critics launch rival oversight board

San Francisco, Sept. 25: Critics of Facebook Inc, including the architects of an advertising boycott against the company, on Friday launched a rival oversight board to review the company's content moderation practices.

The new group, which bills itself as the "Real Facebook Oversight Board," counts among its initial members the heads of three US civil rights groups, the former president of Estonia and the former head of election integrity at Facebook.

The announced launch comes a day after Facebook's officially-mandated Oversight Board said it would start work in mid-late October, nearly a year behind schedule.

That delay means the official Facebook-funded board is unlikely to review cases related to the November 3 US election, which has generated some of the most contentious issues faced by the world's biggest social network.

The rival board plans to move at a faster clip. It will hold its first general

meeting next week, it said in a statement, and focus squarely on election topics, including voter suppression, election security and misinformation.

Facebook "responds to criticism with bad faith statements and cosmetic changes," said board member Roger McNamee, an early investor in Facebook who turned critical of its leaders over misuse of the platform in the 2016 election.

Members plan to broadcast their meetings in weekly shows on

Facebook Live, according to the statement.

The group said it was being funded by Luminate, a philanthropy backed by The Omidyar Group, but did not disclose a funding amount.

Facebook has committed \$130 million to its project, which it said would cover operational costs.

Despite an agreement by Facebook, YouTube and Twitter on how to curb harmful content online, advertisers who boycotted social media are not all rushing back.

Unilever, one of the world's biggest advertisers, told Reuters the move this week was "a good step in the right direction," but would not say whether it would resume paid advertising on Facebook in the US next year after stopping over the summer.

Coca-Cola also remains paused on Facebook and Instagram and declined to say if this changed its view. Beam Suntory, maker of Jim Beam bourbon and Courvoisier Cognac, plans to stay away from paid advertising for

the rest of 2020.

Over 1,000 advertisers joined a Facebook boycott over concerns it wasn't doing enough to combat hate speech. US civil rights groups enlisted multinationals to help pressure the social media giant after the June death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis.

"Brands are very concerned about having any affiliation with the disinformation," said Michael Priem, CEO of advertising technology firm Modern Impact. — Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Messi blasts Barca for Suarez sack

**Madrid:** Lionel Messi bid an emotional farewell on Friday to Luis Suarez, the day after the Uruguayan striker had said tearful goodbyes to Barcelona after the club sent him to Atletico Madrid. "Today I went into the dressing room and the awful truth hit me," Messi posted on *Instagram*, before renewing his criticism of club management. "You deserved to be sent off as what you are: one of the most important players in the history of the club," Messi wrote. "And not to be fired in the way they did it. The truth is that at this point nothing surprises me anymore," the post added. Messi has a long-running feud with club president Josep Maria Bartomeu which intensified after Barcelona were humiliated 8-2 by Bayern in a Champions League quarterfinal in August. Messi tried to force his exit from Barcelona but finally accepted that he would have to see out the final year of his contract. — *AFF*

## Gurpreet, Sanju adjudged best

**New Delhi:** Indian men's team goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu and women's squad's mid-fielder Sanju were on Friday declared the winners of the All India Football Federation (AIFF) Footballer of the Year awards for the 2019-20 season. This is the first time Gurpreet has received the award, and in the process he became the second goalkeeper after Subrata Paul in 2009 to be named the AIFF Player of the Year. Gurpreet was elected as the winner on the basis of votes from Indian Super League and I-League club coaches. — *PTI*

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharalal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301. Editor - T. Venkaram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

## Prithvi is big Shaw

## Youngster's half-century sets up win for Capitals

**Dubai, Sept. 25:** Delhi Capitals beat Chennai Super Kings by 44 runs to register their second consecutive win in the Indian Premier League here on Friday.

Sent into bat, DC made 175 for 3 and then restricted CSK to 131 for 7 to maintain their winning run. Young Prithvi Shaw struck a fluent half-century and shared a 94-run opening stand with Shikhar Dhawan to guide Delhi Capitals to a powerful position.

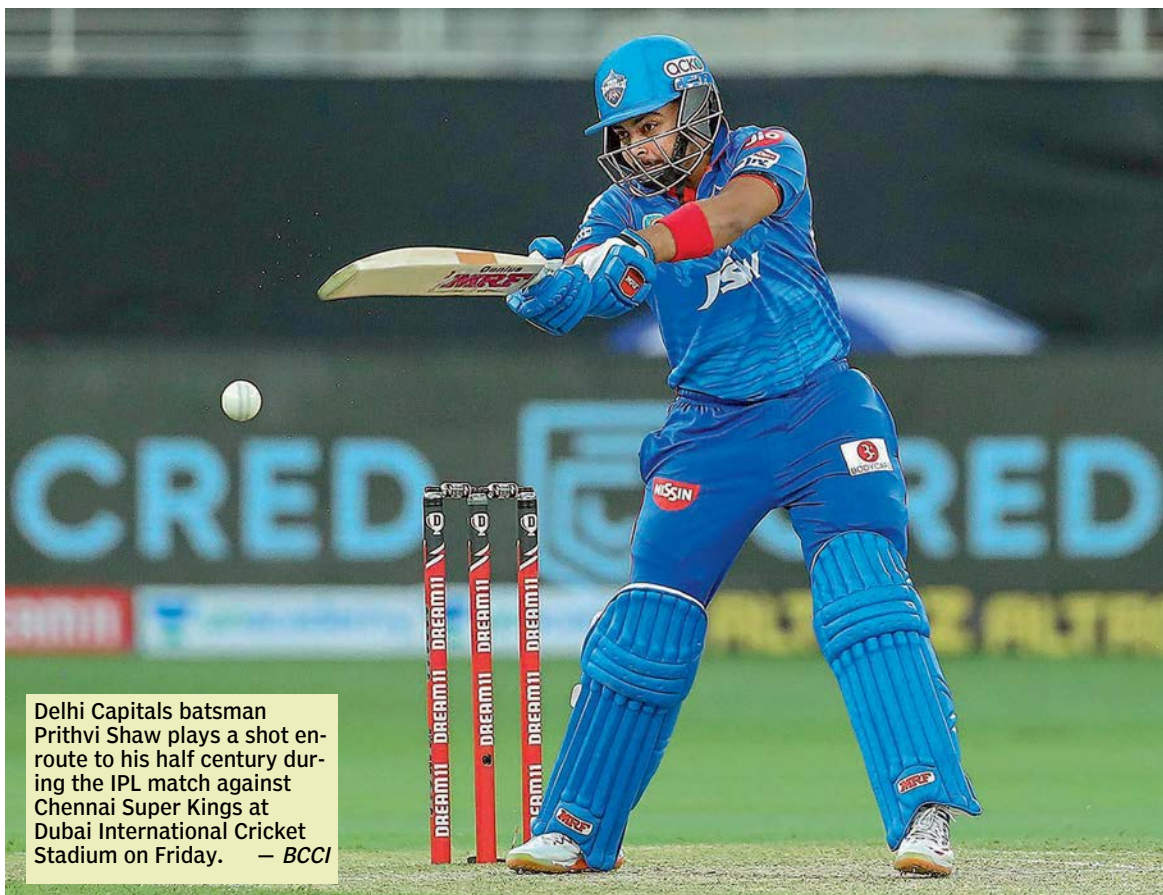
Shaw made 64 off 43 balls in the company of Dhawan (35 off 27 balls, 3 fours, 1 six) to provide a superb start to DC's innings after being put into bat.

The duo started slowly, scoring just 36 runs of the first six overs of power-play before opening up to stitch 94 runs for the opening wicket in 10.4 overs.

Shaw got into his stride, hitting two consecutive boundaries off Deepak Chahar.

The Mumbai youngster didn't appear to rush things and played some attractive shots.

Once CSK skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni introduced the spin duo of Piyush Chawla and Ravindra Jadeja in the seventh over, both Shaw and Dhawan went on the



Delhi Capitals batsman Prithvi Shaw plays a shot en-route to his half century during the IPL match against Chennai Super Kings at Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Friday. — *BCCI*

offensive.

Chawla, who was taken apart by Sanju Samson in their previous game against Rajasthan Royals, came in for some rough

treatment as did Jadeja who went wicketless in his four overs (0/44).

Dhawan after playing second fiddle for a while, joined the party and hit a

couple of attractive boundaries and slogged Jadeja's first ball for a six over mid-wicket.

The DC openers hammered 58 in the next 4.4

overs after the slow start.

Chawla broke the dangerous-looking partnership by removing both Dhawan and Shaw in consecutive overs. — *PTI*

## SCORECARD

**Delhi Capitals:** Prithvi Shaw st M. S. Dhoni b Piyush Chawla 64, Shikhar Dhawan lbw Piyush Chawla 35, Rishabh Pant not out 37, Shreyas Iyer c M. S. Dhoni b Sam Curran 26, Marcus Stoinis not out 5. **Extras:** (LB-5, W-3) 8. **Total:** (for 3 wickets, in 20 overs) 175. **FoW:** 1-94, 2-103, 3-161.

**Bowling:** Deepak Chahar 4-0-38-0, Sam Curran 4-0-27-1, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-28-0, Piyush Chawla 4-0-33-2, Ravinder Jadeja 4-0-44-0.

**Chennai Super Kings:** Murali Vijay c K. Rabada b Nortje 10, Shane Watson c Hetmyer b Patel, Faf du Plessis c Pant b Rabada 43, Ruturaj Gaikwad run out 5, Kedar Jadhav lbw b Nortje 26, M. S. Dhoni not out c Pant b Rabada 15, R. Jadeja c Mishra b Rabada 8, Sam Curran not out 0. **Extras:** (LB-1, W-4) 5. **Total:** (For 7 wickets, in 20 overs) 131. **FoW:** 1-23, 2-34, 3-44, 4-98, 5-113, 6-130, 7-131.

**Bowling:** K. Rabada 4-0-26-3, Axar Patel 4-0-18-1, A. Nortje 4-0-21-2, Avesh Khan 4-0-42-0, Amit Mishra 4-0-23-0.

## IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Delhi Capitals	2	2	0	0	4	+1.100
Kings XI Punjab	2	1	1	0	2	+2.425
Mumbai Indians	2	1	1	0	2	+0.993
Rajasthan Royals	1	1	0	0	2	+0.800
Chennai Super Kings	3	1	2	0	2	-0.840
Royal Challengers Bangalore	2	1	1	0	2	-2.175
Sunrisers Hyderabad	1	0	1	0	0	-0.500
Kolkata Knight Riders	1	0	1	0	0	-2.450

Tabulated as Played, Won, Lost, No Result, Points, Net Run Rate

## KKR &amp; SRH look to open account

**Abu Dhabi, Sept. 25:** Skipper Dinesh Karthik's tactical nous will once again be put to test when Kolkata Knight Riders take on a depleted Sunrisers Hyderabad in their second IPL fixture here on Saturday.

Much was expected from a revamped Kolkata Knight Riders set-up but it seemed Karthik did not learn from his past mistakes and made some inexplicable decisions that led to their complete capitulation against Mumbai Indians.

Once again, the batting position of their biggest hitter Andre Russell became the talking point in their 49-run loss to Mumbai Indians.

The Jamaican, who was their highest run-getter last season with 510 runs from 249 deliveries and the tournament's highest strike rate of 204.81, was

seen at No. 6 but by then the task had become extremely difficult.

Eoin Morgan also could not do much as the asking rate had shot past 13 by the time he came to bat at No.5. In bowling too, there was a tactical blunder by holding back their ace spinner Sunil Narine till the last over of power play.

Needing just 43 runs from last five overs, SRH lost their last seven wickets for 32 runs to lose the game by 10 runs. If that was not enough, injury to their all-rounder Mitchell Marsh has compounded their misery.

Skipper David Warner, after being run out in an unfortunate manner at the non-striker's end, will be keen to get into the act, while it remains to be seen whether Kane Williamson has recovered from his injury to bolster the batting department. — *PTI*

## GAVASKAR IN ROW OVER KOHLI-ANUSHKA COMMENTS

**Dubai, Sept. 25:** Sunil Gavaskar on Friday found himself in the midst of a controversy for a comment on India skipper Virat Kohli and his wife Anushka Sharma but the legendary batsman asserted that his remarks, construed as sexist, were misinterpreted.

Kohli had a bad day in office on Thursday when he led Royal Challengers Bangalore against Kings XI Punjab in an IPL match.

While Kohli was still at crease, Gavaskar said 'India captain is keen to improve and he knows that he can do so only by practicing more and more'. He then added that 'during the lockdown Kohli faced only Anushka's bowling and it is showing that it did not help much'.

Gavaskar was speaking in Hindi when he made the comment.

However, the comment did not go down well with Kohli and Anushka's fans and some even demanded his sacking from Star Sports commentary panel, lashing out at him on social media.

Reacting to it, Anushka also issued a statement on her Instagram page and said that Gavaskar's message was "distasteful". She was livid that her name was unnecessarily mentioned by a respected personality like him.

She wrote, "That, Mr Gavaskar, your message is distasteful is a fact but I would love for you to explain why you thought of making such a sweeping statement on a wife accusing her for her husband's game?." — *PTI*



Govt. of Haryana

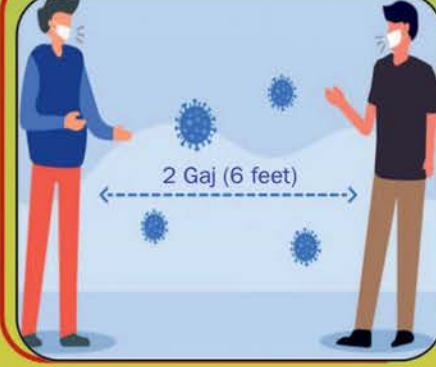
# Stay Alert Stay Safe



Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana



**Wearing Mask is Compulsory**



**Maintain 2 Gaj (6 feet) Distance**



**Wash/ Sanitize Your Hands Frequently**



**Adopt Yoga and Regular Exercises**



**Adopt Ayurveda and Consume Healthy Food**



**Do Not Panic, Consult Doctor if required**



Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana  
www.prharyana.gov.in | @Cmohry | @DiprHaryana

Health Department, Haryana

For Information Related to COVID-19, Contact 24x7 Corona Helpline



**1075**

Except Gurugram & Faridabad



**8558893911**