

## Bitter attack

### Congress leader Konda Vishweshwar Reddy says HC order on RTC strike is a no-brainer and shame on the government



KCR is facing the curse of all sections of society

— Dr Sravan Dasoju  
Congress spokesperson

## New order on wine shop allotments

**Hyderabad:** Twenty-nine liquor shops that had received the fewest applications were not allotted licences on Friday. All the other 2,187 shops were allotted licences by the lottery method. The government had received 48,401 applications. Regarding the shops that got a poor response, the excise department suspects that liquor contractors had formed a syndicate to get the permits. The officials said a fresh notification will be issued on Saturday for these 29 shops calling for applications. They said those who had applied for these shops need not apply again.

## NOTICE TO EC, ZAHEERABAD MP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, OCT. 18

The Telangana High Court on Friday issued notices to the Election Commission of India and Zaheerabad MP B.B. Patil to file affidavits within their contentions in a plea challenging the election of Mr Patil. Justice Challa Kodandaram was dealing with an election petition filed by Congress candidate K. Madan Mohan Rao who lost to Mr Patil in the 2019 elections. The petitioner challenged the election on the grounds that Mr Patil had not disclosed the criminal cases he faces in the election affidavit along with the nomination. Advocate and ex-law minister Salman Khurshid, representing the petitioner, said that as per the law, if any information relating to the cases was not disclosed, then the candidate automatically becomes ineligible to continue in the post. The high court bench directed Mr Patil and the Election Commission of India to file their counter within six weeks.



TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, working president, A. Revanth Reddy, former minister, Mohammed Ali Shabbir, storm the streets of Huzurnagar with roadshows on Friday.

## Cong in top gear ahead of Huzurnagar bypoll

TRS failed to fulfill a single major promise: Reddy

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC  
HYDERABAD, OCT. 18

With just a day left for the end of the campaign for the Huzurnagar byelection, senior Congress leaders, including TPCC president, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, working president, A. Revanth Reddy, and former minister, Mohammed Ali Shabbir, stormed the streets of Huzurnagar with road shows. They launched the road show from Jana Pahad, after offering special prayers at the dargah there. Addressing road corner meetings, Mr Uttam Kumar Reddy said that he was seeking votes for the Congress candidate and his wife Ms Padmavathi on the basis of his performance and achievements as MLA in Huzurnagar. He said that every bit of development in Huzurnagar had been due to his efforts as MLA since 2009. The TRS was trying to lure voters with

■ The TRS was trying to lure voters with money, liquor and other incentives, TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said.

money, liquor and other incentives, he said, and asked people to be cautious for the next three days to foil the attempts by the ruling party to tamper with and manipulate the election process. He said he has full faith in the people of Huzurnagar and they would ensure the victory of Uttam Padmavathi with a huge majority. TRS leaders were shamelessly seeking votes despite not fulfilling a single major promise they made to the people in the previous two elections, he claimed. TPCC working president, A. Revanth Reddy, too launched a scathing attack on the TRS government, especially Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

He ridiculed the claims of TRS leaders that development would come if the ruling party wins Huzurnagar. He asked why there was no development in constituencies being represented by TRS MLAs. He said the development brought by Mr Uttam Kumar Reddy in Huzurnagar was unmatched and incomparable. He asked people to reject TRS propaganda. He said Mr Rao had had targeted senior leaders like Jana Reddy, Komatireddy Venkata Reddy, Dr Gita Reddy, Damodar Rajanarasimha and others, promising development in their constituencies if the TRS wins the elections. People fell prey to these misleading tactics and voted for the TRS in the last elections in those constituencies. But development has come to a standstill in those constituencies, he said. Therefore, people should not make the mistake of trusting the TRS again.

## KCR AND JAGAN ARE RULING AS DICTATORS: VHR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, OCT. 18

Congress former MP V. Hanumantha Rao alleged that Chief Ministers K. Chandrasekhar Rao and Y.S. Jagan were ruling their respective states as dictators. Mr Rao said that KCR had accused Congress leader Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy of trying to privatise public sector companies. "What is KCR doing now?" he asked. He said the TRS government has to take responsibility for the deaths of five RTC employees. He lauded the Governor for speaking to the government regarding the RTC strike.

## Contamination bigger issue than adulteration: FSSAI

From Page 1

These prescribed norms pertain to permissible levels of substances such as aflatoxin-M1, antibiotics and pesticides. The problem of Aflatoxin-M1 was found to be more dominant in processed milk than raw milk. Highest residue of Aflatoxin was found in samples from Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Kerala. The substance comes into milk through feed and fodder, which is not currently regulated.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI, said, "The study shows that contamination is a bigger problem than adulteration. It is unacceptable to see contaminants in processed milk." In safety parameters, 10.4 per cent of 2,607 samples of processed milk were found non-compliant, higher than 4.8 per cent found in raw milk samples. Such a study on aflatoxin residue is the first, according to Agarwal. In an attempt to check the problem, FSSAI has decided to put in place a "testing and inspection" system across the value chain by January 1, 2020. However, Ashish Anand, senior general physician, Apollo Hospitals, Jubilee Hills, said that these findings need to be taken with a pinch of salt. "In a country with one billion people, a sample size of 6,000-odd is not adequate of sufficient enough," he said. However, Anand said that the study could not be dismissed since contaminants and adulterants in milk were a given.

## KTR PRESENTS INDUSTRIES AWARDS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, OCT. 18

Municipal administration and urban development Minister K. T. Rama Rao on Friday gave away the Industries Awards, 2019, at an event organised jointly by the Conference of Indian Industries and the state government here. The event "Manufacturing Excellence 2019" on the theme 'Smart Manufacturing' was also attended by principal secretary Jayesh Ranjan and Telangana CII chairman D. Raju. Instituted in 2017, the awards recognise "exceptional achievements" by businesses based in Telangana. This year, the awards were divided into four categories - financial performance, innovation, CSR, and employee practices. Companies that won the awards had nominated themselves on the Telangana GlobalLinker platform. Commending the winners, Jayesh Ranjan said, "This year awards were bagged by diverse companies with incredible achievements ranging from innovation in biotechnology to special purpose machinery."

■ INSTITUTED IN 2017, the awards recognise "exceptional achievements" by businesses based in Telangana. The awards were divided into four categories.

## CBI special court reserves verdict on Jagan's petition

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, OCT. 18

The CBI special court at Hyderabad on Friday reserved its verdict on Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's plea to exempt his personal appearance before the court for every trial in the cases lodged by CBI related to disproportionate assets case. After hearing the contentions of from both sides, Jagan and

CBI, the court reserved its judgment and it will be pronounced on 1st November. In the petition, YS Jagan sought exemption on various grounds stating that he was to perform constitutional duties as the chief minister and it will burden the state ex-chequer in attending the court at Hyderabad from Amaravathi. The Counsel for CBI submitted that it was almost six years from date of filing of last charge

sheet in the case but the trial proceedings are yet to start. This was an indication that the accused has been able to procrastinate the proceedings on one pretext or other. Reminding the High Court rejection of Jagan's plea seeking the exemption of appearance, the counsel argued that Jagan has to file the case before the supreme court, not before the CBI court.

## IoT and LoRaWAN crucial in cutting cost of water supply

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, OCT. 18

Metropolitan Water Board managing director, M. Dana Kishore, said Internet of Things (IoT) and LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network) could be crucial in reducing the cost of water supply. He said that in India, non-revenue water (NRW), water that is deemed lost before it reaches a customer due to leaks, theft or inaccuracies, varies between 30 per cent and 50 per cent. "At HMWS&SB, this figure is 37 per cent. In countries such as Israel and Singapore, this figure could be as low as five per cent," he said.

Mr Kishore said low-cost, long range and long-term technological solutions were important in the context of water management. "To reduce the NRW to five per cent, we have to spend more than ₹5,000 crore. There are technologies that can help us do this, but they are expensive," he said.

He said that if a company could design a sensor that allowed the board to monitor manholes from a central room, it would be of great help. "This sensor has to be cheap since we have 2.5 lakh manholes spread across the 2.5 lakh km road network in the city," he said.

## GOVT IMPLEMENTING MANY PILOT PROJECTS WITH IoT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, OCT. 18

Principal secretary, IT, Jayesh Ranjan, said the state government was implementing several pilot projects with Internet of Things. One of these is 'rural health kiosks' that had been set up in the hamlets in the state. "A person can sit inside this kiosk and without any human intervention, his medical details will be sent to a doctor sitting in a remote studio in Hyderabad. This initiative has received a great response," he said. He was speaking at the inaugural of the second edition of the Things Conference India on LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network) on Friday. The convention features talks and exhibits on the implementation of IoT technologies in real life scenarios. Another example was of sensors embedded with the help of Centre for Development of Advanced Computing in groundnut farms.

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU / PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
BUILDING ORGANISATION, BLDGS (C & M) CIRCLE, CHEPAUK, CHENNAI - 5.  
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE No. 22 BCM / 2019-20 / DATED: 17.10.2019.  
FORM OF CONTRACT : LUMPSUM / TWO COVER SYSTEM

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Sealed tenders are invited from PWD eligible registered contractors by the Superintending Engineer, PWD., Bldgs (C & M) Circle, Chepauk, Chennai - 5 for the following work:-

Sl. No.	Name of work and EMD	Approximate value of work	Period	EMD in favour of
1.	Construction of additional buildings with modern Infrastructure facilities to the Government Observation Home for boys at Kellys, Chennai - 10.	Rs. 412.95 Lakhs	9 Months	Executive Engineer, PWD., Buildings (C) Division - I, Chennai - 5.

Tender schedule can be Downloaded at free of cost from the Website "http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in (or) http://www.tenders.gov.in" and also available in the O/o the undersigned at a cost of Rs. 1500/- + Rs. 1800 (GST). Tender schedule will be made available from 19.10.2019 to 13.11.2019. Last date of receipt of tender is 14.11.2019 upto 03.00 P.M. and opened on the same day at 04.00 P.M. by the undersigned. Contractors Eligibility conditions and all other conditions are available in the above Website.

DIPR/3658/Tender/2019 Superintending Engineer, PWD., Buildings (C & M) Circle, Chepauk, Chennai - 5.

**SPECIAL BRANCH POLICE HEADQUARTER, M.P., BHOPAL**  
No. SB/Store/2019-25 (332), Bhopal, Dated 14.10.2019  
"ONLINE E-TENDER NOTICE (Third Tender)"

e-tender are invited by Assistant Inspector General of Police, Special Branch (G), M.P. Bhopal on behalf of DGP MP Bhopal for the following item on website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgcp/app>-

S.No.	Name of Item (s)	Qty.	Tender Fees (Rs.)	EMD (Rs.)
1	Professional LED Display	01 Nos.	1,000/-	13,000/-
2	Personal Digital Assistance (P.D.A.)	70 Nos.	1,000/-	25,000/-
3	Internet Evidence Finder	1	1,000/-	3,000/-
4	Satellite Personal Tracker	25	1,000/-	40,000/-
5	Door Frame Metal Detector	226	1,000/-	1,20,000/-
6	Hand Held Metal Detector	466	1,000/-	30,000/-
7	LED Search Light Small	52	1,000/-	6,000/-

- Cost of tender document (Tender Fee) is non refundable and cannot be exempted in any condition & must submit online through website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgcp/app>.
- Tender document can be download from the website of MP Police ([www.mppolice.gov.in](http://www.mppolice.gov.in))
- Bids shall be submitted online only at MP Tenders website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgcp/app>

**Tender Schedule:**

No.	Tender Activity	Date & Time
i	Submission of written queries - through e-mail: <a href="mailto:sec24-sb@mppolice.gov.in">sec24-sb@mppolice.gov.in</a>	22/10/2019 up to 1700 hrs
ii	Pre Bid Meeting along with written queries	23/10/2019 at 1200 hrs.
iii	Bid Submission Start Date	04/11/2019 at 1000 hrs.
iv	Last date of online e-Tender submission	18/11/2019 up to 1700 hrs.
v	Bid will be opened on	19/11/2019 up to 1700 hrs.
vi	Demonstration from	26 & 27/11/2019 at 1200 hrs.

Sd/- A.I.G. of Police  
Special Branch (G) M.P. Bhopal  
Tel.No. 0755-2443654

G-18078

**NIDM NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT**  
(Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India)

### VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Applications are invited for appointment to the following vacant posts in National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), Southern Campus, Andhra Pradesh:

Name of Post	Mode of Recruitment	No. of Posts
Joint Director	Deputation (Including Short-Term Contract)	1 (One)
Professor	Deputation (Including Short-Term Contract)	2 (Two)

The details for the above positions and prescribed format of application are available at [www.nidm.gov.in](http://www.nidm.gov.in)

Executive Director  
NIDM

davp 19107/11/0004/1920

**SAMEER-Centre for Electromagnetics**  
CPT Campus, 2nd Cross Road, Taramani, Chennai-600113  
(Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Govt. of India)

ADVERTISEMENT No. S-CEM/ESTT/APP-02/2019

### Walk-in-Interview for ECE Graduate Apprentice Trainees on 01.11.2019 (Friday)

For Detailed Notification, please visit our website <http://cem.sameer.gov.in>

davp 06119/11/0008/1920

**PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited**  
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001  
Corporate Identity Number (CIN): U40109PB2010SC033813, Website: [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in)  
(O/o CE/TS, B-1, Shakti Vihar, Patiala)  
Phone No. 0175-2301537, Fax No. 0175-2220143.  
Email : [ssd1.pspcl@gmail.com](mailto:ssd1.pspcl@gmail.com)

OPEN e-TENDER NOTICE  
OFFICE OF THE  
Chief Engineer/Transmission System,  
C-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala-147001  
TEL: 0175-2301537, FAX: 0175-2220143  
EMAIL : [se-ss-design@pspcl.in](mailto:se-ss-design@pspcl.in)  
E-tendering page: [pspcl.abcpocure.com](http://pspcl.abcpocure.com)

Online Tenders are invited for the supply of the following material as per Tender Specification No 198/SSD-1/2019 of PSPCL :-

Item No.	Description	Qty Nos.	Enquiry No/Year.
1	70 Nos 66 KV Line C&R panel CLIP (Non- SCADA)	70	198/SSD-1/2019

Last date & time for downloading of tenders: 04.12.2019 11.00 A.M.  
Last date & time for bid submission: 06.12.2019 11.00 A.M.  
Date & time of opening of bids: 06.12.2019 11.30 A.M.

Detailed NIT and Specification may be down-loaded from PSPCL e-tendering website <https://pspcl.abcpocure.com>

It is informed that in case tender process is not completed due to any reason, NO CORRIGENDUM will be published in newspapers. Details regarding corrigendum may be seen on PSPCL website [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in) and [www.pspcl.abcpocure.com](http://www.pspcl.abcpocure.com)

C-417/19  
RO: C-7529

Dy. CE/SS (Design)  
PSPCL, Patiala.

**Office of the Commandant, 27th Battalion Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force MHA/Government of India**  
P.O.: Nooranad Sanatorium, Distt: Alappuzha, Kerala 690571

### NOTIFICATION

Regimental No. 130270951 Constable (GD) Bhokya Ramesh, S/o Sh. Bookya Hatya, House No. 01-138, Village - Bhallu Thanda, P.O.-Sirkonda, Tehsil - Mothey, District - Nalgonda, Telangana - 508 212 of 27th Bn, ITB Police is absenting from leave w.e.f. 03.06.2019 (AN) without prior permission / approval of the competent authority. The individual was directed to report on duty through protracted correspondence but he failed to comply with the orders.

2. In view of his absence a 'Court of Inquiry' was conducted by this unit and subsequently declared "Deserter" from the Force w.e.f. 04.06.2019 (FN). The competent authority is of the opinion that he is not a fit person to be retained in Govt. service and before taking a final decision in the case, he is given an opportunity through this notification to submit his plea if any in his defence or by appearing in person before the undersigned within 30 days after publication of this notification otherwise ex-parte decision will be taken in the case which includes "Dismissal" also.

Sd/- (Vishal Anand)  
Commandant  
davp 19112/11/0354/1920 27th Bn ITB Police



## Probe begins

### The ED grilled former Union minister Praful Patel in connection with his business links with Iqbal Mirchi



PM, FM should 'steal' ideas from Cong manifesto to tackle fiscal mess

— Rahul Gandhi  
Congress leader

## Ghar Wapsi



Indian nationals, who were deported by Mexican immigration authorities for illegally entering the country, show their allergy-affected legs, on their arrival at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, in New Delhi on Friday. As many as 311 Indians, including a woman, from various parts of the country were repatriated by Mexico amidst its stepped up efforts to check people illegally crossing its borders following pressure from the US.

— PTI

## BGB TROOPS YET TO RELEASE 3RD FISHERMAN

RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANMOY BRAHMACHARY  
KOLKATA, BERHMAPORE, OCT. 18

The third Indian fisherman from Murshidabad, caught by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) at the Indo-Bangla border on Thursday, is yet to be freed despite assurances to the Border Security Force (BSF) as senior BSF officers paid their tribute to head constable, Vijay Bhan Singh who was shot dead by the BGB troops along the International Border while he was returning from a flag meeting to secure his release.

Pranab Mondal (41), the fisherman from Saheb nagar at Jalangi of the district, was arrested by the Bangladesh Police after the BGB handed over him to them, according to BSF sources.

A senior official of the BSF South Bengal Frontier said, "During the flag meeting on Thursday the BGB informed that they have given him in custody to Bangladesh Police and assured to hand over him to BSF on Friday. But his arrival is still awaited."

## HINDU SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF KILLED IN U.P.

Lucknow, Oct. 18: The president of a little known Hindu Samaj Party was found murdered at his home in the congested Naka Hindola area of the city here, police said on Friday. Kamlesh Tiwari (45) was earlier associated with a faction of the Hindu Mahasabha, they said.

"Kamlesh Tiwari was found murdered inside his house. Two persons had come to meet him. Both were speaking to Tiwari when the latter sent one of his aides to get paan for them," said Vikas Tripathi, ASP (Lucknow West).

"When his aide returned from the market, he found Tiwari in a pool of blood," Tripathi added.

A senior UP government official said the visitors shot Tiwari dead after talking to him for little over half an hour.

Police reached the spot and gathered the CCTV footage. Senior superintendent of police Kalanidhi Naitani said prima facie it seemed to be a case of personal enmity. He added that teams had been formed to crack the case.

Naka Hindola SHO Sujeet Kumar Dubey said there were brief protests by angry local residents after the incident but there was no law and problem.

## INDIAN TOURIST DETAINED IN BHUTAN

Thimphu, Oct. 18: An Indian tourist has been detained by the Royal Bhutan Police for allegedly desecrating a *chorten* in the Buddhist kingdom, according to a media report on Friday.

Abhijit Ratan Hajare, who is from Maharashtra, was part of a 15-bike convoy touring the Himalayan nation, *The Bhutanese* reported. The group was led by a Bhutanese national.

A *chorten* is a Buddhist shrine, typically a saint's tomb or a monument to the Buddha.

In photographs and videos published by *The Bhutanese* on Twitter, Hajare is seen standing on top of a *chorten*. A second man Jambay, who was repairing the *chortens*, is seen sitting on the *chorten*.

The 'desecration' incident happened when the bikers were resting at Dochula on Thursday and the team leader was trying to arrange parking space for the bikes, the report said.

## TTD to return Kerala cashews

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KOLLAM, OCT. 18

The 'Lord' of Tirupati is not pleased with the first load of cashews sent from here for making laddoos in the temple. The temple authorities rejected the load dispatched with much fanfare by the Kerala State Cashew Workers Apex Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd. (Capex), citing poor quality.

The consignment of five tonnes was flagged off by cashew minister J. Mercykutty Amma from here on October 3.

It is learnt that the load contained substandard cashew and undesirable cashew dust that will affect the quality of laddoo made in the temple.

However, the load sent by the Kerala State

Cashew Development Corporation (KSCDC) has been accepted by the temple. It has also expressed interest in purchasing 100 tonnes of cashew from the KSCDC. The second consignment of 10 tonnes will be sent next week.

The cashew was supplied at a rate of ₹669 per kilogram. Capex MD S. Anil Kumar was not available for comment.

It is alleged that there is no facility for quality assurance in the Capex factories.

The deal was expected to strengthen the market intervention of public sector cashew units in the state which received an order for ₹70 crore.

The KSCDC has to produce some three tonnes of kernels daily as per the order.

## CENTRE FIRM ON NAGA ACCORD DEADLINE

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, OCT. 18

The Centre has set October 31 as deadline for all Naga rebel groups, including NSCN (I-M), to give their final consent on signing the peace accord, besides deciding on the date for surrendering of their arms.

Ministry of home affairs has sent a very strong message to Naga rebels groups in this regard through Nagaland Governor and interlocutor R. N. Ravi, sources in the ministry told *Deccan Chronicle*.

The central government has maintained that talks with threat of guns will not be acceptable and asked National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) and NNPGs (Naga National Political Groups) to suggest a convenient date for surrender of their arms. The Centre has rejected outright the demand for a separate flag and constitution for Nagaland.

Sources disclosed that ongoing peace talks with NSCN (I-M) and working committee of NNPGs have reached an advanced stage, with consensus emerging on majority of the issues.

For example, the Centre has agreed to create an Upper House - Legislative Council besides the Nagaland State Legislative Assembly. It agreed to increase the number of seats in the legislative assembly, so that all Naga tribal groups find political representation.



West Bengal Governor and chancellor of Jadavpur University Jagdeep Dhankhar after attending a meeting of University's highest decision making body in Kolkata on Friday.

## WB Guv takes on 3 ministers

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, OCT. 18

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday attacked three ministers for their take on his statement that he was "blackened out" from the Durga Puja carnival. The three cabinet ministers are Subrata Mukherjee, Partha Chatterjee and Tapas Roy.

He reminded them that he is neither a "tourist" to the state nor a "loose cannon" that he would cross his "Lakshmanrekha."

Describing himself as "active", Dhankhar made it clear that he would continue to discharge his constitutional role within its ambit being in the Governor's office. He also appealed to the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to "restrain" her cabinet colleagues.

At the Jadavpur University, he said, "Some people said why I kept silent for days. I am

really surprised. Constitutional functionaries can not be loose cannons. It is for the CM to examine their statements. I have never reacted in public to what happens between me and the Chief Minister."

Dhankhar elaborated, "It is job of the Governor to be representative of the Centre and also to look into the interests of the state. That is what I am doing. You will always find me acting within my parameters. There have been painful statements by ministers. One of them wants me to be a tourist."

He said, "I am sure none you here will approve that the Governor has to be a tourist. It was a public statement. I thought some editorials would come out on it. I can not be a tourist. I am a Governor. I have to do my constitutional duty. One of them called my visit to Siliguri as a gimmick. I am surprised."

## SECURITY | MATTERS Post-paid mobile phone service operational since Oct. 14

# No pre-paid mobiles for now, says J&K Guv

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, OCT. 18

Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday ruled out possibility of restoration of pre-paid mobile or internet services in Kashmir Valley in near future.

Governor Satya Pal Malik was quoted as saying "There isn't a plan to resume pre-paid mobile service since Pakistani nationals would misuse this. We will start internet services only when situation improves."

Mobile - both pre-paid and post-paid, landline phone and internet services were snapped in J&K on the night of August 4 as part of a complete communication blackout ordered ahead of the Centre's stripping the state of its special status and splitting

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, OCT. 18

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Javed Ahmed Mir, a former chief commander of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) in connection with a case pertaining to the killing of four Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel in Srinagar's Rawalpora area nearly three decades ago.

Mir, 54, was picked up by the sleuths of the CBI from his residence in Srinagar's Jamalatta locality on Wednesday and later taken to Jammu. Mir was later produced before a CBI court in Jammu,

which released him on bail, the officials said.

On January 25, 1990, four IAF personnel including a squadron leader were gunned down by suspected militants at Rawalpora when they were waiting for bus to relocate to an Air Force base near Srinagar airdrome.

Around 40 others, including a woman, had received serious injuries in the attack.

In August and September 1990, the CBI had filed two charge-sheets against Muhammad Yasin Malik, the incumbent JKLF chief, Mir and other accused before the designated Terrorist and

Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (Tada) court at Jammu.

Malik who is currently lodged in New Delhi's Tihar jail is being produced through video conferencing in a special Tada court in Jammu. He was arrested by the J&K police from his residence in Srinagar's Maisuma area on February 22 and subsequently detained under the state's stringent Public Safety Act.

The Centre had in March declared the JKLF as an unlawful association under Section 3 (1) of the Unlawful Prevention Act 1967, saying the outfit is actively engaged in inciting secessionism and ille-

gal funnelling of funds for fomenting terrorism in J&K.

Mir is currently associated with a different faction of the JKLF, the organisation which seeks reunification of J&K to make it an independent, sovereign country.

In 1995, a single bench of the J&K High Court stayed the trial as there was no Tada court in Srinagar. In 2008, Malik approached a special court saying that the trial should be shifted to Srinagar as he was facing security problems in view of the Amarnath land row which had pitted Kashmir Valley against Jammu region.

## Supreme Court transfers Assam NRC coordinator

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 18

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered the Central government to carry out an inter-cadre transfer of Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC) coordinator, Prateek Hajela, from Assam to Madhya Pradesh.

Directing the inter-cadre transfer of Hajela, a bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice S. A. Bobde and Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman further directed the Centre to give effect to its order within a week.

"We order for the inter-cadre transfer of Hajela to Madhya Pradesh on deputation for the maximum period permissible under the relevant rules/regulations," the court said.

It further said, "The notification consequent to the above direction will be

issued by the competent authority of the Union of India/State Government forthwith and in any case within seven days from today (Friday)."

Hajela, an IAS officer of principal secretary rank, belongs to Assam cadre. Madhya Pradesh is his home state.

Apparently, the court has ordered Hajela's inter-cadre transfer for security reasons.

Hajela was the state coordinator of the NRC

right from the beginning when the top court had ordered the updating of the citizens register in the border state hit by influx of people from across Bangladesh.

At the outset of the brief hearing that hardly lasted for a couple of minutes, the moment the CJ ordered inter-cadre transfer of Hajela, Attorney General K. K. Venugopal sought to know the reasons for transfer.

"Can there be an order without reason," quipped the CJ without disclosing any.

Hajela has served in Assam as an IAS officer for 23 years and at present holds the rank of principal secretary - that is equivalent to joint secretary at the Centre.

It may be noted that Friday's hearing was the last hearing by the bench of Chief Justice of India and Justice Nariman.



S. A. Bobde

## BOBDE TO BE CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 18

Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi has recommended to the Centre to appoint Justice S. A. Bobde as next Chief Justice after he demits office on November 17.

Justice Bobde happens to be the senior most judge after Gogoi and according to the seniority, he would be the Chief Justice.

He will assume the office of the CJ on November 18.

As a Chief Justice, Justice Bobde will have a tenure of little over one year and five months as he would be retiring on April 23, 2021.

Justice Bobde is heading the bench that is hearing the BCCI matter and is also likely to preside over the bench dealing with the Assam NRC issue.

He had presided over the bench that junked a PIL seeking fresh probe into the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

Born on April 24, 1956 at Nagpur, Justice Bobde is the son of Arvind Bobde.

## CBI chargesheets PC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 18

The CBI on Friday filed a charge sheet before a Delhi court here in the INX Media corruption case accusing former finance minister P. Chidambaram and others including bureaucrats of causing loss to the exchequer by allegedly committing offences under the

Prevention of Corruption Act.

The charge sheet was filed before special judge Lal Singh.

The accused in the charge sheet include Peter Mukherjee, chartered accountant S. Bhaskaram, former Niti Ayog CEO Sindhushree Khullar, former secretary in ministry of micro, small & medium enter-

prises Anup K. Pujari, Prabodh Saxena, Rabindra Prasad, INX Media, ASCL & Chess Management Services. Accused-turned approver Indrani Mukerjee's also appears in the final report.

The report was filed under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Indian Penal Code.

## Sainik school doors open for girls

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 18

The all-boys Sainik Schools will now start giving admission to girls also.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh has approved a proposal for admission of girls in Sainik Schools from academic session 2021-22 in a phased manner.

The decision has been taken following the success of the pilot project started by the defence

ministry for admission of girls in Sainik School Chhingchhip in Mizoram two years ago.

"Raksha Mantri has directed authorities concerned to ensure availability of necessary infrastructure and sufficient female staff in Sainik Schools for smooth implementation of the directive," said a government statement.

It said that the decision is in line with the objective of the government

towards greater inclusiveness and gender equality.

Sainik Schools act as feeder institutions for preparing cadets for the armed forces. There are around 28 Sainik Schools across the country.

The demand for admission of girl students in Sainik Schools started as defence forces have started inducting more women.

In Indian Air Force (IAF), there were 1,905 women officers till July 2019. Of these, 8 are fight-

er pilots and 17 are navigators.

For the first time this year, Indian Army has started the process of inducting women as soldiers in the military police.

Earlier this year, the defence ministry had also said that all women officers will be granted permanent commission in the Indian Army in all the 10 branches where women are inducted for short service commission.



Security personnel divert traffic during restrictions in Srinagar on Friday. Authorities imposed restrictions in the parts of Srinagar as normal life remained affected on 75th consecutive day.

the government ordered withdrawal of Short Messaging Service (SMS) facility on these within three hours without giving any reason for it. The internet services have remained suspended across all platforms in the

Valley. The authorities have repeatedly sought to justify the denial of access to internet and mobile phone services in the Valley by asserting that such steps were necessary to maintain law and order and prevent violence and

pointed to the relatively limited number of incidents of violence compared with previous bouts of unrest. The Governor had said on Monday, "For us, the life of a Kashmiri was important and not telephone. People were living without telephones earlier also."

The Governor on Friday also said that the killing of an apple buyer from Punjab, truck driver from Rajasthan and brick kiln worker from Chhattisgarh by suspected militants in southern Shopian and Pulwama districts over past few days was of a matter of grave concern.

Claiming Pakistan's hand in these killings, he said, "This is happening on Pakistan's directions to create disturbance in the state. We will not allow this to happen."



## Historic decision

### US senator Mitt Romney says Trump's decision to abandon Kurdish allies in Syria will stand as a bloodstain in American history



Energy secretary Rick Perry will leave his job by the end of the year

— Donald Trump  
US President

## BRIEF

### HK protesters don cartoon masks

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters donned cartoon character masks as they formed human chains across the semi-autonomous Chinese city on Friday night, in defiance of a government ban on face coverings at public assemblies. Gathering along the city's subway lines, many protest supporters masqueraded as Winnie the Pooh or Guy Fawkes while holding up their phone lights and chanting slogans calling for a 'revolution of our times.'

Chinese internet users have joked that President Xi Jinping resembles the talking bear.

### Thai billionaire leader faces court

**Bangkok:** The charismatic frontman of Thailand's anti-military parliamentary bloc appeared in court on Friday accused of breaching election rules by holding media shares, a case which could see him barred from politics and jailed for up to 10 years. Billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit has rattled the kingdom's arch-royalist establishment since seizing the political limelight with his caustic take downs of the army's role in Thai politics. His Future Forward Party became Thailand's third largest political group in a March election which ended five years of outright junta rule. The party was backed by millions of youth weary by the dominance of the conservative old guard.

### Panelist defends Lit Nobel pick

**Stockholm:** A member of the committee which selects the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature defended on Friday the controversial decision to give the award to Austrian author Peter Handke. Henrik Petersen said that in the future, Handke would be considered just as worthy as someone like acclaimed Irish novelist Samuel Beckett, who won in 1969. "In 50 years, Peter Handke, just like Beckett, will be among the most obvious choices the Swedish Academy ever made, of that I am certain," the committee member wrote in an op-ed in the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*.

## 62 KILLED IN AFGHAN MOSQUE BLAST

**Kabul, Oct. 18:** An explosion rocked a mosque in eastern Afghanistan as dozens of people gathered to offer Friday prayers, causing the roof to collapse and killing 62 worshippers, provincial officials said. Attahullah Khogyani, spokesman for the Governor of Nangarhar province, said the militant attack wounded 36 others. He said it was not immediately clear if the mosque was attacked by a suicide bomber or some other type of bombing. "Both men and children are among those killed and wounded in the attack," he said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but both the Taliban and the Islamic State group are active in the eastern Afghanistan, especially Nangarhar province. Zahir Adil, spokesman for the public health department in Nangarhar province, said 23 of the wounded were transferred to Jalalabad, the provincial capital, and the rest were being treated in the Haskamena district clinic. The violence comes a day after a United Nations report said that Afghan civilians are dying in record numbers in the country's increasingly brutal war, noting that more civilians died in July than in any previous month-long the UN began keeping statistics.



Turkish-backed Syrian opposition fighters chant slogans as they wait to cross the border into Syria, in Akcakale, Sanliurfa province, southeastern Turkey, on Friday. — AP

# Clashes despite Turkey ceasefire

## 5 civilians deaths witnessed even as US brokers five-day agreement

**Tal Tamr, Oct. 18:** Deadly Turkish airstrikes on Friday shattered a 13-hour-old US-brokered deal to stop Ankara's military offensive against Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria.

The ceasefire announced late on Thursday was meant to provide a pause for the evacuation of Kurdish fighters from the battleground border town of Ras al-Ain and other areas Turkey wants to control along its border with Syria.

The five-day suspension looked designed to help Turkey achieve its main territorial goals without fighting but its Syrian proxies continued to clash with Kurdish fighters on Friday and an air strike killed five civilians.

"Five civilians were killed in Turkish air strikes on the village of Bab al-Kheir, east of Ras al-Ain," Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said. The Britain-based war monitor said four fighters of the Syrian Democratic Forces — the *de facto* army of the embattled Kurdish autonomous region — were killed in the strike.

The incident took place even as a 200-vehicle con-

## 2,300 people cross into Iraq in 4 days

**Geneva, Oct. 18:** The United Nations said on Friday that more than 2,300 people, mostly women and children, had fled fighting in northeastern Syria and crossed into Iraq in recent days.

"For the fourth consecutive day, UNHCR has been receiving hundreds of refugees crossing the border into Iraq from north-east Syria," UN refugee agency spokesman Andrej Mahecic told reporters in Geneva.

He first said, "over 1,600 Syrian refugees have been transported from the border areas to Bardarash refugee camp," about 150

kms east of the Syria-Iraq border. But he later added that another 734 people had been registered crossing the border overnight. Mahecic said the camp had "been prepped to receive the latest arrivals fleeing the fighting in northern Syria."

The UN currently estimates that around 1,66,000 people have been forced to flee their homes since Turkey launched the offensive. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has meanwhile put the number far higher, saying more than 3,00,000 civilians had been displaced by the assault. — AP

voy headed towards Ras al-Ain to evacuate civilians who have been virtually besieged there since the start of Turkey's cross-border assault on October 9.

Mustefa Bali, a spokesman for the SDF, said Turkey was clearly violating the terms of the agreement reached during a Thursday visit to

Ankara by US Vice-President Mike Pence. "Despite the agreement to halt the fighting, air and artillery attacks continue to target the positions of fighters, settlements and hospitals," in Ras al-Ain, he said.

Under the deal, Kurdish forces are required to withdraw from a border strip 32 kilometres deep,

## MACRON, MERKEL, JOHNSON TO MEET ERDOGAN SOON

**Brussels, Oct. 18:** French President, Emmanuel Macron, said on Friday he and his German and British counterparts will meet Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan soon over Ankara's military offensive in Syria. He said he would use a NATO summit in London in December to confront the Turkish president over the operation against Kurdish forces. He said he had learned of a US withdrawal from Syria by Twitter. "I understood that we were in NATO, that the United States and Turkey were in NATO," Macron said. — AFP

clearing the way for a 'safe zone' sought by Turkey. The Kurdish-led SDF had said they were ready to abide by the ceasefire in border territory between Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad to its west.

The Turkish offensive was sparked by US President Donald Trump's announcement of a US withdrawal from northern

Syria, leading critics to accuse him of betraying Washington's Kurdish allies.

On Thursday evening, Trump said he allowed the two sides to fight for a few days before brokering a truce as they were like "kids in a lot."

The Turkish military and its Syrian proxies — mostly Arab and Turkmen former rebels used as a ground force — have so far seized around 120 kilometres of territory along the border.

Kurdish forces have put up fierce resistance in Ras al-Ain, with a network of tunnels, berms and trenches that held off the Turkish onslaught for a week. Ankara considers the Kurdish forces to be terrorists linked to Kurdish rebels inside Turkey.

Turkish forces and their allies had taken control of half of Ras al-Ain on Thursday when its hospital was hit, trapping patients and staff inside, Abdel Rahman said.

Kurdish authorities sent a medical team to rescue the wounded but it was prevented from entering the town, said Hassan Amin, a director of the hospital in nearby Tal Tamr. — AFP

# Clashes over arrest of El Chapo's son

## WHO IS EL CHAPO?

**Culiacan, Oct. 18:** Heavily armed gunmen waged an all-out battle against Mexican security forces on Thursday as soldiers arrested — then reportedly released — a son of jailed drug kingpin Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman in his home state, Sinaloa.

Security minister, Alfonso Durazo, said soldiers on a routine afternoon patrol came under fire from a residence in the state capital, Culiacan.

He said they responded by taking the house and detaining four people inside, including Ovidio Guzman, one of several sons of El Chapo who have partly taken over the Sinaloa cartel since he was extradited to the United States in 2017.

Cartel gunmen then "surrounded the house, outnumbering the soldiers," and began a massive assault on various parts of the city, Durazo said.

That triggered an hours-long battle that left blazing vehicles strewn across the street and sent terrified residents running for shelter.

"In order to protect the greater good, the people of Culiacan's safety and well-being, the security cabinet decided to suspend said actions," Durazo said in a video message. According to Mexican media reports, that included freeing Ovidio Guzman.

Neither Durazo nor the President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's office immediately responded to requests for further information and details on the day's incidents remained murky.

Durazo said the security cabinet would travel to Culiacan to personally oversee the next steps.

Officials were due to give a press conference in

the western city on Friday. Images carried on Mexican television showed army and police personnel under assault by men armed with heavy weapons. Some panicked drivers abandoned their cars in the middle of the street to take cover from the deafening gunfire. Gunmen blocked roads and highways into the evening, bringing the city of 7,50,000 people to a standstill. Sources in the Sinaloa state government speaking on condition of anonymity said police officers had been wounded. — AFP



Vehicles burn in a street of Culiacan, state of Sinaloa, Mexico, on Friday. — AFP

## FAT FOUND IN OVERWEIGHT PEOPLE'S LUNGS

In a shocking revelation, researchers have shown for the first time that fat can accumulate in the lungs of people, particularly those who are overweight or obese

● Scientists already know that people who are overweight or obese are more likely to suffer wheezing and asthma, but the reasons for this were not completely known



■ For the first time, the study showed that fatty tissue accumulates in the walls of the airways

■ The analysis revealed that the amount of fat present increases in line with increasing BMI

● A recent study published in the *European Respiratory Journal* suggests that this fatty tissue alters the structure of people's airways and this could be one reason behind the increased risk of asthma

■ The researchers examined post-mortem samples of lungs of 52 people, including 15 who had not reported asthma, 21 who had asthma but died of other causes and 16 who died of asthma

● Looking at samples of lungs, we spotted fatty tissue that had built up in the airway walls. We wanted to see if this accumulation was correlated with body weight — John Elliot, senior research officer, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Australia

## Johnson scrambles to pass Brexit deal

**London, Oct. 18:** Britain's exit from the European Union hung on a knife-edge on Friday as Prime Minister Boris Johnson scrambled to persuade doubters to rally behind his last-minute European Union divorce deal in an extraordinary vote in parliament.

In one of the most striking flourishes of the three-year Brexit drama, Johnson confounded his opponents on Thursday by clinching a new deal with the EU, even though the bloc had promised it would never re-open a

treaty it agreed to last year. Yet, Johnson, the face of the Brexit campaign in the 2016 referendum, must now ratify the deal in the British parliament where he has no majority and opponents are plotting maximum political damage ahead of an imminent election.

The numbers are too close to call: Johnson must garner 318 votes in the 650-seat parliament to get a deal approved. Yet his Northern Irish allies are opposed to a deal and the three main opposition parties have pledged to vote it down. — Reuters

## ACT FAST OR GET BLACKLISTED: FATF TO PAK

VINEETA PANDEY | DC WITH agency inputs NEW DELHI, OCT. 18

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Friday made it clear to Pakistan that it is running out of patience and Islamabad needs to act fast to complete the action plan given to it to curb terror financing by February 2020, else it faces the potential to be blacklisted.

"Pakistan needs to do more and needs to do it faster. The FATF is giving this very clear warning: if by 2020 the country has not made significant progress we would consider further actions," said FATF president Xiangmin Liu at a press conference at Paris on Friday, the last day of the FATF plenary. Mr Liu, a Chinese national, added that the actions include placing Pakistan in the blacklist.

Pakistan was placed on the grey list by FATF in June 2018 and was given a plan of action to complete by October 2019, with the risk of being placed on the blacklist along with Iran and North Korea. "All deadlines in the action plan have now expired," FATF said while expressing serious concerns with the lack of progress by Pakistan to address its terrorist financing risks.

## NEW | MILESTONE Historic mission launched after first attempt was aborted over spacesuit

# Nasa begins first all-female spacewalk

**Washington, Oct. 18:** US astronauts Christina Koch and Jessica Meir became the first all-female pair to carry out a spacewalk on Friday, following a space-suit flub earlier this year that caused the historic mission to be aborted.

"Christina, you may egress the airlock," space-craft communicator Stephanie Wilson told the pair shortly after they set out to replace a power controller on the International Space Station.

They began their mission making standard

safety checks on their suits and tethers, before making their way to the repair site.

In a call to reporters a few minutes earlier, Nasa administrator, Jim Bridenstine, emphasized its symbolic importance.

"We want to make sure that space is available to all people, and this is another milestone in that evolution.

"I have an 11 year old daughter, I want her to see herself as having all the same opportunities that I found myself as having when I was growing up."

The first such mission was supposed to take place in March but was cancelled because the space agency had only one medium-sized suit, with a male-female combination performing the required task at a later date.

Traditionally male-dominated Nasa's failure to be adequately prepared was denounced in some quarters as evidence of implicit sexism.

Koch, an electrical engineer, was leading Meir, who holds a doctorate in marine biology and is making her first ever

spacewalk. The two were working to replace a faulty battery charge/discharge unit, known as a BCDU.

The station relies on solar power but is out of direct sunlight for much of its orbit and therefore needs batteries, and the BCDUs regulate the amount of charge that goes into them.

The current task was announced on Monday and is part of a wider mission of replacing aging nickel-hydrogen batteries with higher capacity lithium-ion units. — AFP



Astronauts Christina Koch and Jessica Meir at the International space station on Friday. — AFP

Centre  
mulls  
export  
booster

Costly labour  
makes US car  
cos lose edge



### quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,298.38	+0.63
Nifty 50	11,661.85	+0.65
S&P 500	2,990.66	-0.24
Dollar (₹)	71.14	-0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	91.66	+0.01
Euro (₹)	79.30	+0.25
Gold (10gm) (₹)	38,925.037	145
Brent crude (\$/bbl)	59.56	-0.58
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.692	-0.008
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	1.747	-0.008

\* As of 9:30 pm IST

### SBI chief Rajnish Kumar elected IBA chairman

The Managing Committee of IBA at its meeting held on Oct. 18, 2019 elected Rajnish Kumar, chief-SBI as the Chairman, IBA for the term 2019-20. The other members elected were G Rajkiran Rai, MD & CEO, UBI, S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao, MD & CEO, PNB, Madhav Kalyan, MD & CEO, JP Morgan Chase Bank, NA., Mumbai as Deputy Chairmen and Rakesh Sharma, MD & CEO, IDBI Bank, as Honorary Secretary of the Association for the year 2019-20.

### J&J to recall baby powder as FDA finds asbestos



Johnson & Johnson said it is recalling around 33,000 bottles of baby powder in the US after the USFDA found trace amounts of asbestos in samples taken from a bottle purchased online. The voluntary recall is limited to one lot of J&J's Baby Powder produced and shipped in the US in 2018, the company said.

### Sebi bans ex-dir of Bishal Distillers from mkt for 4 yrs

Acting against the illegal mobilisation of funds, Sebi barred the former director of Bishal Distillers from the securities market for four years. The Sebi, in a probe, found that the firm had mobilised ₹4 crore by issuing redeemable preference shares (RPS) to 238 persons without complying with the public issue norms.

### Sebi to auction Sai Prasad's 200 properties in Nov.

Sebi said it will auction nearly 200 properties of Sai Prasad Group firms and three of its directors next month in order to recover funds worth thousands of crores raised by the entity through illicit collective investment schemes. Sebi has been auctioning properties and their directors for the past two years. Besides, it had put up on sale, jewellery, ornaments and other valuables of Sai Prasad Group.

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## Rate was cut due to slowdown, fall in investments RBI feels bank rates will drop after benchmarking

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, OCT. 18

The members of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee were of the view that monetary transmission continues to remain staggered and incomplete but were hopeful that the new set of norms on external benchmarking would improve the transmission, according to the minutes of the October 4 bi-monthly monetary policy review released on Friday. All the six members of the MPC had voted in favour of a rate cut.

On October 4, the MPC lowered interest rates for a fifth straight time after data showed economic expansion slowed to a six-year low of five per cent in the quarter ended June. Since February 2019, the

RBI has delivered 135 basis points (bps) of cuts in its key lending rate. However, the decline in the lending rates by banks on new loans was just 29 basis points while rates shot up for old borrowers by seven basis points. One basis point is one hundredth of a percentage point.

RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said, "Overall liquidity in the system remained in surplus in August and September. However, monetary transmission has remained weak. As against the cumulative policy repo rate reduction of 110 bps during February-August 2019, the weighted average lending rate (WALR) on fresh rupee loans of commercial banks declined by 29 bps. The WALR on outstanding rupee loans, in contrast, increased by 7

basis points. However, with the external benchmark framework coming into force from October 1, the transmission is expected to improve in the coming weeks and months."

"Compared to the last review, monetary transmission has become worse," noted external member Chetan Ghate.

"This is despite the MPC cutting rates by 110 bps in the February-August window. The RBI should be commended for implementing a new set of norms on external benchmarking. This will help with monetary transmission. But as Milton Friedman said, monetary policy works with long and variable lags. In the Indian case, these lags are made worse by frictions in the banking system, complicating the MPC's efforts

to implement counter-cyclical policy," added Ghate.

"With respect to transmission, between February and August 2019, the cumulative reduction in the policy repo rate has been 110 basis points, much of which is yet to be transmitted, although the financial markets have taken cognizance. While the importance of transmitting existing rate cuts before committing to fresh ones cannot be overstated, the recent linking of lending rates to external benchmarks is expected to expedite the process," said Pami Dua.

Das said that overall, domestic demand has moderated and the weakening of private consumption, which for long has been the bedrock of aggregate demand, is a matter of concern.

## 4th depositor dies as funds for surgery stuck in PMC Bank

Mumbai, Oct. 18: An 83-year-old depositor of the troubled PMC Bank died on Friday, with his family claiming that it could not raise money for his heart surgery after restrictions were imposed on fund withdrawals.

This is a fourth incident of the death of a depositor of the Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative Bank after the RBI appointed administrator on the city-headquartered lender.

Two of the depositors had died of cardiac arrest, while another, a woman doctor, allegedly committed suicide.

Murlidhar Dharra (83) died at his home in suburban Mulund on Friday, his son Prem Dharra told PTI. The family had a total of ₹80 lakh in deposits with the bank (which was placed under restrictions since September 24), he said.

Doctors had recommended heart surgery for his father, but they could not arrange the money as the deposits are stuck at the bank, Prem said.

It can be noted that under the RBI directions, exceptions can be made for medical emergencies. It was not known immediately whether the PMC Bank refused a request from the family under this provision.

After an alleged ₹4,355 crore scam came to light at the bank, the RBI initially capped withdrawals at ₹1,000 in view of liquidity crisis, and later hiked it to ₹40,000 in three moves.

The depositors have been protesting over the

## SC refuses to admit PMC depositors plea

New Delhi, Oct. 18: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea filed on behalf of scam-hit PMC Bank account holders seeking lifting of restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank of India on cash withdrawals.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi said, "We are not inclined to entertain this petition under Article 32 (writ jurisdiction). Petitioner can approach the high court concerned for appropriate relief."

The Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative Bank has been put under restrictions by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) following the discovery of a ₹4,355-crore scam.

Deposit withdrawals have been capped at ₹40,000 over a six-month period, causing panic

and distress among depositors.

During the hearing on Friday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the government is aware of the seriousness of the situation and the Enforcement Directorate is taking appropriate action against the culprit.

Advocate Shashank Sudhi, appearing for petitioner Bejon Kumar Mishra, said he has filed the petition on behalf of 500 PMC Bank account holders seeking lifting of restrictions imposed by the RBI on cash withdrawals.

On Wednesday, around 50 depositors of the PMC Bank staged a protest outside the RBI demanding revoking restrictions on cash withdrawal, currently capped at ₹40,000 over a six-month period.

—PTI

## China's GDP growth rate at 30-yr low

KEVIN YAO &  
GABRIEL CROSSLEY  
BEIJING, OCT. 18

China's third-quarter economic growth slowed more than expected and to its weakest pace in almost three decades as the bruising US trade war hit factory production, boosting the case for Beijing to roll out fresh support.

Gross domestic product (GDP) rose just 6.0 per cent year-on-year, marking a further loss of momentum for the economy from the second quarter's 6.2 per cent growth.

China's trading partners and investors are closely watching the health of the world's second-largest economy as the trade war with the United States fuels fears about a global recession. Asian stocks stumbled after the data, reversing gains made on the UK and European Union striking a long-awaited Brexit deal.

Downbeat Chinese data in recent months has highlighted weaker demand at home and abroad. Still, most analysts say the scope for aggressive stimulus is limited in an economy already saddled with piles of debt following previous easing cycles, which have sent housing prices sharply higher.

—Reuters

## Slump forces people shift to cheap liquor, hits top brands

AGAM VAKIL  
OCT. 18

Pernod Ricard's India sales growth tumbled as consumers switched to cheaper brands in a slowing economy. The maker of Chivas Regal scotch and Absolut Vodka saw sales of its India division grow 3 percent year-on-year in the quarter ended September, according to its earnings statement. That compares with a 23 percent rise in the preceding three months and a 20 percent revenue growth in the fiscal ended June.

The management attributed the muted growth to higher sales a year ago and slowing demand in India.

Chief Executive Officer

Alexandre Ricard, in a phone interview with Bloomberg, said the pace will moderate from last year in India and China in an uncertain environment. It guided for low double-digit growth in the medium term in India.

Macquarie, in a note quoting the management, said flooding in key states of Maharashtra and Haryana, and downtrading in select regions impacted its earnings. That comes as Indians are consuming less amid liquidity shortage and a slowing economy, dragging economic growth to its lowest in six years.

While Pernod's earnings have no conclusive implications for rival United

Spirits, Macquarie said there is a risk of a potential general slowdown in the alcoholic beverages market.

Pernod Ricard is the market leader in India's premium liquor sales category — called prestige and above segment.

According to Macquarie, growing sales of Imperial Blue whisky helped the company gain share from Diageo Plc-owned United Spirits's McDowell's No. 1. And Pernod has been aggressive in its pricing in Maharashtra, the brokerage said, adding that it lowered the cost of its mass-market Royal Stag brand by 11 per cent per unit. And it's been growing at a faster pace than United Spirits in the last two years.

—Bloomberg

## India's GDP data is not biased: IMF

VISHWANATH NAIR  
OCT. 18

Despite all the debate around the quality of India's macroeconomic data, the International Monetary Fund said the country's accounts data is not biased in one direction.

The quality of India's macroeconomic data is "not bad" when compared with other emerging market economies, said Ranil Salgado, mission chief for

India at the fund. "We have actually had some of our statistical experts look at the national accounts data. Generally they find that for an emerging market, India is not bad. There are areas it needs to improve, but relative to other emerging markets it is not bad. And what we are fairly confident about is that there is no systematic bias in the numbers," Salgado told BloombergQuint in an

interview in Washington. To improve the quality of its macroeconomic data, India needs to work on its price indices and measure its informal sector better, he said.

Talking about India's growth, Salgado said the recent slowdown in India is largely cyclical led by environmental and regulatory uncertainty, slower rural income growth and issues in the financial sector.

—Bloomberg

## G7 tells Facebook to defer Libra launch

Washington, Oct. 18: Facebook should not launch its global digital currency Libra until proper regulations are in place to handle the potential risks, the Group of Seven said Thursday.

And France's Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire warned that a currency like Libra could undermine sovereign nations' control over their exchange rates.

"It's a matter of democracy, not just a simple economic question," Le Maire told reporters, saying Facebook's currency could have an "immediate global reach" through the social network's huge membership.

Le Maire presented the Group of Seven nation's statement on Libra, saying "no global stablecoin project should begin operation until the legal, regulatory and oversight challenges and risks are adequately addressed," including the potential for money laundering and terror financing.

But, he told reporters, "The key question is the question of sovereignty." "Do we want a pri-

vate company to have... the same power, and the same sovereignty, as democratic states" over currencies.

Libra, which would be backed by reserve assets unlike cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, has faced a steady drumbeat of stern warnings from central bankers and financial regulators.

European Central Bank board member Benoit Coeure presented a report on digital currencies to the G7 finance ministers, who are gathering on the margins of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

The report said a framework for oversight of Libra "is an absolute prerequisite," and urged regulators to coordinate their work to prevent issuers from seeking out the most favorable country from which to operate.

If it enters circulation, Libra would offer an alternative to traditional bank financial transfers, a disruptive change that has aroused resistance and skepticism.



Facebook's digital currency chief David Marcus told reporters in Washington that the issues raised by Le Maire "legitimate concerns." "We're determined to answer these concerns with real solutions that will meet or exceed the standards of the current system," he told a small group of reporters at an event in Washington.

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's co-founder and Chief Executive, was in Washington as well Thursday, and is due to testify before the US Congress next week on the social media network's impact on financial services.

The Libra Association, which will oversee Facebook's proposed currency and officially launched Monday in Geneva, also said in a statement that Libra "is being designed to respect national sovereignty over monetary policy in the digital space, not undermine it." But central bankers remain concerned about the prospects.

Lael Brainard, an influential member of the US Federal Reserve board, said Facebook's proposed currency presented a host of risks and regulatory challenges for preventing money-laundering and assuring financial stability, and could be a challenge to the traditional role played by banks.

"There are likely to be financial stability risks for a stablecoin network with global reach,"

she said in a speech Wednesday. "If not managed effectively, liquidity, credit, market, or operational risks — alone or in combination — could trigger a loss of confidence and a classic run."

China, which is not a G7 member and decided two years ago to block cryptocurrency transactions, has recently sped up plans to introduce its own digital money.

Libra also has faced challenges from within after major financial and commercial players in recent weeks have backed out of the project, including Visa, Mastercard, eBay, Stripe, PayPal and the online travel firm Bookings Holdings.

The 21 founding members include the online payments company PayPal, the telecoms firms Vodafone and Iliad, as well as tech outfits Uber, Spotify and Farfetch, blockchain operations such as Anchorage, Xapo and Coinbase and the venture capital firms Andreessen Horowitz, Ribbit Capital and non-profits Kiva and Mercy Corps.

—AFP

## Jio adds 84L users, others bear the brunt

New Delhi, Oct. 18: Reliance Jio was the only net gainer adding 84.45 lakh subscribers in August, while other telecom operators including Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea were on the losing side, a report by regulator Trai showed on Friday.

"The number of telephone subscribers in India increased from 1,189.28 million at the end of July 2019 to 1,191.81 million at the end of August 2019," Trai said in telecom subscription report for the month of August 2019.

The wireless subscriber base with 117.1 crore customers accounted for over 98 per cent of the total telephone users.

"Total wireless subscribers (GSM, CDMA and LTE) increased from 1,168.31 million at the end of July 2019 to 1,171 million at the end of August 2019," the report said.

The Mukesh Ambani-led Jio added 84.45 lakh mobile customers alone during the reported period.

Among the losers were, Vodafone Idea 49.56 lakh customers, followed by Bharti Airtel 5.61 lakh mobile subscribers, BSNL 2.36 lakh, MTNL 6,701 and Reliance 63 users.

Government-run BSNL was the only operator gaining customers along with Jio since October 2018 but the public sector firm lost the steam in August 2019 with a dip in the subscriber base.

During the reported month 48.6 lakh customers ported out their number.

The wireline subscriber base declined by 1.5 lakh to 2.08 crore with BSNL alone losing 1.41 lakh fixed line customers. Private telecom operators Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel posted growth in their fixed line connection base.

—PTI



### Sacked

Sarfaraz Ahmed was on Friday sacked as Pakistan's Test and T20 captain following the team's humiliating 0-3 defeat in the home series against Sri Lanka

# Will dead rubber come to life?

## India aim to go for the kill against South Africa in Ranchi

Ranchi, Oct. 18: It would have been a dead rubber but with valuable World Test Championship points on offer, India would be eyeing victory while South Africa would be desperate for some consolation in a wretched tour when the third and final Test starts here on Saturday.

There are 40 points on offer and a 3-0 series white-wash, both of which India would be targeting against the hapless visitors.

Dominating the Proteas in all the departments, India won the first Test in Visakhapatnam by 203 runs before inflicting an innings and 137-run defeat on the hapless visitors in Pune to regain the Freedom Trophy.

India, who have 200 points from four games, have a massive 140-point lead over nearest rivals New Zealand and Sri Lanka in the WTC standings. Skipper Virat Kohli has also made it clear that there is plenty to play for in the final Test and the team cannot afford a drop in intensity.

The Mumbai's opening partner Maynak Agarwal on the other hand went on to convert his maiden hundred into a double in the Visakhapatnam and followed it up with another century in Pune. Then it was the turn of 'King Kohli' who came to the party in the Pune with a career-best double hundred — a majestic 254 not out — and made it look like a routine job.

Rohit will be eyeing a big score after not firing in the first innings of the Pune

Test while Cheteshwar Pujara, who has scored two fifties in the series, would be looking to cross the three-figure mark. That India have lost only 16 wickets while routing South Africa in both the Tests sums up their dominance. Toss has also been kind to India so far and things are likely to get exciting if the luck favours the South Africans.

— PTI

## Injured Kuldeep replaced by local boy Nadeem

Ranchi, Oct. 18: Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem has been rewarded for his stupendous show on the domestic circuit with a call-up in the Indian Test squad after chinaman Kuldeep Yadav was ruled out due to a shoulder injury.

Nadeem has been a prolific performer for Jharkhand and India A over a period of time. He has had back-to-back 50-plus wicket seasons for Jharkhand.

"The decision to add Nadeem was made after Kuldeep complained of left shoulder pain on Friday," chairman of selectors MSK Prasad was quoted as saying in a BCCI press release.— PTI



## Women question staff appointment

New Delhi, Oct. 18: COA member Diana Edulji and BCCI's new apex council member Shantha Rangaswamy on Friday questioned the "unconstitutional" appointment of the support staff of the women's national team in a letter to board CEO Rahul Johri.

GM (Cricket Operations) Saba Karim, who is in-charge of women's cricket, is the one under the scanner for these appointments. A day after the Hemlata Kaledi women's selection panel wrote to the CEO, claiming they were kept out of the hiring process of the support staff, former India captains Edulji and Rangaswamy has lashed out at the shabby treatment handed out to the national team.

As per the BCCI constitution, selectors are supposed to appoint the support staff of the national teams, both men and women. Due process was followed for the appointment of men's team support staff recently. "I am shocked reading the article quoting the e-mail from women selectors to you regarding the sham process being followed for selection of the video analyst. "It is even more worrisome that the person Mr Pushkar Sawant, wanted by Saba Karim (GM cricket operations) and NCA is already booked on the flight to West Indies. The whole process looks like an eye wash," Edulji wrote in the letter.

Selectors have claimed that they were not even kept in the loop for the appointment of women's bowling

and fielding coach. They were only asked to conduct interviews for the role of a video analyst, for which the process ended on Friday.

NCA bowling coach Narendra Hirwani and T. Dilip will be travelling with the team to the West Indies, as bowling and fielding coach respectively.

"I have also received an e-mail from Shantha Rangaswamy, nominated member on the BCCI apex council, which has been marked to you and the selectors, wherein she has stated that these things are being done deliberately to accommodate persons chosen by the powers that be and not following the established practices. A very serious allegation. The article and the mail cast serious aspersions and doubts about the dealings of the cricket operations especially Saba who is heading it and despite repeated instructions by COA, he is defying and wanting to place persons to these positions without due process. I am marking this to my colleagues so that they are aware of what is happening behind the COA's back. I will not be giving my consent to this sham interview that is taking place today for the video analyst as Mr Pushkar Sawant has already been nominated for the tour," wrote Edulji.

"This is the national Indian Team that is travelling and such shabby treatment is being doled out to them. I wonder if you would do this to the men's team." When Karim, who is in the centre of this whole controversy was contacted, he said: "Since the mail has been addressed to the CEO, it is best to speak to him." — PTI



## Dhoni to watch opening day's proceedings

Ranchi, Oct. 18: He has quit longest format five years back but local boy Mahendra Singh Dhoni is expected to watch the third and final Test against South Africa beginning here Saturday, his manager Mihir Diwakar confirmed.

"Mahi will definitely come and you will see him during the first day's proceedings tomorrow. I was there with him in Mumbai and he will fly down tomorrow morning," Dhoni's manager Diwakar said.

The Jharkhand State Cricket Association president, Nafis Khan, has personally sent an invitation to Dhoni's family.

"We have sent an invitation to his family. Yeh to unka hi stadium hai (It's his stadium only). He is most welcome anytime," Khan said.

However his friend, Diwakar, who is the founder of Aarka Sports that runs MS Dhoni Cricket Academy, said Dhoni is likely to come alone.

— PTI



The Indian women's team at a practice session in this file photo.

A balanced, exceptional bowling attack is always what is going to win you crunch games.

— Kumar Sangakkara, former Sri Lankan captain

### SHORT TAKES



Gulam Bodi

## Five-year jail for former batsman

Johannesburg: Gulam Bodi, who played three limited-overs internationals for South Africa, was sentenced to five years in jail on Friday after pleading guilty to eight charges of corruption. The batsman had been banned for 20 years by national body Cricket South Africa (CSA) for his role in attempting to fix or influence matches in a 2105 domestic T20 competition. CSA said no fixtures were affected as the plans of Bodi and other would-be conspirators were foiled. Bodi handed himself over to the police last year and was sentenced by a commercial crimes court in Pretoria after multiple postponements. He will appeal the sentence and seek an extension of his 3,000 rand (\$202) bail. — AFP

## Open trials to pick women U-23 side

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD OCT. 18

The Hyderabad Cricket Association is conducting open selections on Saturday and Sunday to pick the women's Under 23 state team for the forthcoming domestic tournaments.

Selections will be held from 11 am to 4.30 pm on Saturday and from 10 am to 2 pm on Sunday at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Uppal, Hyderabad.

Players born on or after 1-9-1996 are eligible for the trials. They should report along with original and copies of their bonafide certificates for verification and return, the HCA secretary said in a press release.

## Du Plessis might send someone else for toss

Ranchi, Oct. 18: Having lost nine successive tosses in Asia, an exasperated South Africa captain Faf du Plessis won't mind sending "someone else" in his place for the toss of the coin in the third and final Test against India, beginning here Saturday.

"We really want to make sure that we compete with this team in their own condi-

tions. We have done it in stages in the first Test. So, hoping that we can start with the toss on Saturday. Probably we will change... send someone else to the toss tomorrow. I can give you that... because my records so far has not been great," said du Plessis, in lighter vein.

# Katyayani, Nihar swim champions

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD OCT. 18

Katyayani Golem of Vidyaranya High School (Saifabad), Sai Nihar Bikkina of The Creek Planet School (Bachupally) and Raj Lakshmi Gogalupaati of Om Vidyalaya (Mansurabad) underlined their supremacy in the swimming competition of the Hyderabad edition of Sports For All, emerging winners in their respective categories at the Gachibowli Stadium here on Friday.

Katyayani emerged the best swimmer in the U-14 Girls Freestyle event, finishing her 50 metres with a timing of 28:60 seconds while Vritti Agarwal of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Atmakuri Rama Rao School (Jubilee Hills) and Toomukunta Yogitha Reddy of Johnson Grammar School CBSE won the silver and bronze at 32:05 seconds and 34:76 seconds respectively.

Sai cornered gold with an impressive 27:90 seconds in the U-16 Boys 50m freestyle while Pranay Sai Nardagiri won the silver with a timing of 28:52 seconds as Duansh Sharma clocked 28:84 seconds to take home the bronze.

### KEY RESULTS

Swimming — Girls U-14 50m freestyle: 1. Katyayani Golem (Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad) 0:28:60; 2. Vritti Agarwal (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Atmakuri Rama Rao School, Jubilee Hills) 0:32:05; 3. Toomukunta Yogitha Reddy (Johnson Grammar School CBSE) 0:34:76.

Boys U-18 50m freestyle: 1. Aryan Mohit Konyala (World One School, Kondapur) 0:45:49; 2. Bharat Kumar Donikena (Meluha International School) 0:45:56.

Girls U-18 50m freestyle: 1. Keerthi Devendra Bolusani (Prerna Waldorf School) 0:50:29.

Boys U-16 50m freestyle: 1. Sai Nihar Bikkina (The Creek Planet School, Bachupally) 0:27:90; 2. Pranay Sai Nardagiri (Oakridge International School Newton Campus) 0:28:52; 3. Duansh Sharma (Delhi Public School, Hyderabad) 0:28:84.

Girls U-16 50m freestyle: 1. Raj Lakshmi Gogalupaati (Om Vidyalaya, Mansurabad) 0:32:94; 2. Kashyapi Vishal Galvankar (Johnson Grammar School) 0:33:10; 3. Adhya Balakrishnan Beeravalli (Glendale Academy, Suncity) 0:37:00.

Boys U-14 50m freestyle: 1. Ishan Dubey (Oakridge International School, Newton Campus) 0:29:00; 2. Navaneeth Bala Sai Srikar (Madam Johnson Grammar School) 0:30:23; 3. Sesidhar Reddy Karumuru (Bhavan's Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, Sainikpuri) 0:30:40.

Boys U-12 50m Freestyle: 1. Goutham Shashi Vardhan Bagu-SR Digi School, Secunderabad) 0:33:08; 2. Jordan Dominic Franklin (Delhi Public School) 0:33:79; 3. Varshith Dhulipudi (Pragathi Central School) 0:33:87.

Girls U-12 50m freestyle: 1. Rajrasi Laasya Gogalupaati (Om Vidyalaya, Mansurabad) 0:32:64; 2. Preethika Manduri (Army Public School, Golconda) 0:35:34; 3. Vedasri Uppala (Chirec International, CBSE) 0:36:62.

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## Goodbye

### Former Olympic champion Li Xue Rui announces her retirement from international badminton



When you sign for Manchester United, this is the first game you look for.

— Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, Manchester United manager on his team's Premier League match against arch-rivals Liverpool

## RACISM ROW

### Bulgarian coach, president resign

Sofia: Bulgaria's coach, Krasimir Balakov, quit on Friday over the 0-6 loss to England in a Euro 2020 qualifier which was overshadowed by racist abuse that sparked a storm of protest. Monkey chants and apparent Nazi salutes during Monday's match in Sofia caused indignation in the football world and led to the resignation of Bulgaria's football federation chief Borislav Mihaylov. — AFP



Indian women's Under 15 football team manager G. P. Palguna (right) of Hyderabad poses with the trophy and captain Shilky Devi Hemam after the side won the South Asian Football Federation U-15 Women's Championship at Thimpu in Bhutan. India beat Bangladesh 5-3 in the penalty shootout after the match ended goalless in regulation time to win the final.

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# City plan Palace coup

## Guardiola's men would like to make things Crystal clear

London, Oct. 18: Manchester City must bounce back to winning ways after a shock 0-2 home defeat to Wolves two weeks ago to at least apply some pressure on Liverpool when they visit Crystal Palace on Saturday.

The champions badly missed Kevin de Bruyne and should have the Belgian international back from a groin strain as they look to become the first visiting side to win at Selhurst Park this season.

City have scored 25 goals in the six Premier League games De Bruyne has started this season, but been beaten in two matches he has not.

Meanwhile, Tottenham have won just three of their opening 11 games in all competitions, but the visit of Watford this weekend. — AFP



Barcelona's Lionel Messi vies for the ball with teammate Jordi Alba during their training session on Friday. Barcelona play Eibar on Saturday. — BARCELONA

# Clasico at Camp Nou deferred

Madrid, Oct. 18: Barcelona and Real Madrid have agreed a new date of December 18 for the Clasico after Spain's biggest football match was postponed on Friday due to protests in Catalonia.

The fixture was set to be Barcelona's first home game since nine pro-Catalan independence leaders were earlier sentenced to imprisonment for their role in the illegal referendum in 2017.

Barca and Madrid swiftly came to an agreement, hours after the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) announced they had until 10:00 am (0800 GMT) on Monday to find a revised date for the game.

All that remains is for the RFEF to confirm the change with La Liga, although the league would prefer the match take place on December 7.

December 7 is a Saturday and has more potential for broadcasters but it would require moving both Barcelona against Real Mallorca and Madrid against Espanyol.

December 18 is a Wednesday and would clash with the Copa del Rey but neither Barca nor Madrid will be involved at that stage of Spain's domestic cup competition. — AFP

# Marquez warms up in style

DEEPIKA DAS | DC MOTEGI (JAPAN), OCT. 18

With the title already in his pocket, eight-time world champion Marc Marquez continued his consistent performance during the first free practice of the 2019 MotoGP Championships on Friday.

The Honda racer finished first day as the third fastest even as teammate Jorge Lorenzo made a step forward.

Cool conditions at the Twin Ring Motegi Circuit didn't deter the local fans who filtered into the track from early

in the morning. A track temperature of 21 degrees Centigrade kept the riders some distance from the outright lap record in Japan but potential rain on Saturday meant they still had to push hard for a Q2 spot in the closing moments of Free Practice 2.

Fresh from being crowned the 2019 MotoGP world champion, Marc Marquez showed no signs of relenting his fearsome work ethic.

Working towards Sunday's 24-lap race, Marquez was fourth in Free Practice 1 and

improved his time by just under a second to go third on the combined time sheets.

The world champion is not resting on his laurels and is determined to find more speed on Saturday.

"The attention and the way to approach a weekend is the same. But, I must say that we struggled a little bit today.

We started with a normal pace but the feeling was not the best one. We tried to adapt the set-up of the machine to the circuit and it was a great job," he said.

"I am clear with my mind and I always go out there and try to finish on

the podium in all the races. And, that's my first target here," he added.

"It is not easy as well to win the last four races because in some circuits the Yamaha will be very fast and in some the Ducati. But we need to focus and try to keep the momentum going. If we cannot win I will try and finish close to victory," he said.

The top honours on the opening practice session however, belonged to Yamaha as Fabio Quartararo finished at the top of the pile with teammate Mario Vinales a close second.

# Rijiju ringside in Nikhat trial

New Delhi, Oct. 18: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday steered clear of the controversy triggered by boxer Nikhat Zareen's demand for a trial bout against M.C. Mary Kom, saying he "should not" get involved beyond advising the federation to make the best choice.

Zareen had written a letter to Rijiju on Thursday, demanding that she be given a trial bout against Mary before the squad for next year's Olympic qualifiers in China is decided.

This was after the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) stated that it intends to pick six-time world champion Mary Kom (51kg) for the event in China on the back of her recent bronze medal at the world championships in Russia.

"I'll surely convey to Boxing Federation to take the best decision keeping in mind the best interest of the NATION, SPORTS & ATHLETES. Although, Minister should not be involved in the selection of the players by the Sports

Federations which are autonomous as per OLYMPIC CHARTER," Rijiju tweeted in response to Zareen's letter.

Mary Kom has maintained that she would go by the BFI's decision.

Responding to Rijiju's post, Zareen said she hopes for a fair chance. "Thank you so much sir for your immediate action. I just hope favouritism and nepotism doesn't take place for athletes who all work very hard," she said. — PTI

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