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CORONAVIRUS CASES CROSS 50 LAKH MARK IN INDIA

RS 58,000 CR FOREIGN FUNDS TO
NGOS IN 3 YEARS: MHA

Over Rs 58,000 crore foreign funds were received by NGOs registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act between 2016-17 and 2018-19, the Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said Rs 18337.66 crore foreign funds were received by NGOs across the country in 2016-17, Rs 19764.64 crore in 2017-18 and Rs 20011.21 crore in 2018-19. There are around 22,400 FCRA registered NGOs in the country, Reddy said the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010, is granted to associations or NGOs for five types of programmes i.e. religious, social, economic, educational or cultural, as mandated under section 11 of the Act.

EXPORTS FALL 12.66 PC IN AUG; TRADE
DEFICIT NARROWS TO USD 6.77 BN

Contracting for the sixth straight month, India's exports slipped 12.66 per cent to USD 22.7 billion in August, on account of decline in the shipments of petroleum, leather, engineering goods and gems and jewellery items, according to the government data released on Tuesday. The country's imports too declined 26 per cent to USD 29.47 billion in August, leaving a trade deficit of USD 6.77 billion, compared to a shortfall of USD 13.86 billion in the same month last year, as per the data. Oil imports declined by 41.62 per cent to USD 6.42 billion in the month under review. Gold imports jumped to USD 3.7 billion in August this year as against USD 1.36 billion in August 2019.

VIDEO OF MP VILLAGERS CHASING AWAY
COVID AMBULANCE GOES VIRAL

A video of villagers in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh chasing away an ambulance with sticks and stones to stop it from ferrying a coronavirus positive resident to hospital went viral on social media on Tuesday after which the administration had to ask the local BJP MLA to intervene. The incident happened in Kakardha village on Sunday where four people have been detected with COVID-19, and while three have been hospitalised, the ambulance had gone to get the fourth one, said Sheopur District Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr BL Yadav on Tuesday. People there are having some apprehensions about hospitalisation during the outbreak.

LOK SABHA PASSES BILL TO CUT
SALARIES OF MPS BY 30 PER CENT

Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill to reduce for one year the salaries of LMPs by 30 per cent "to meet the exigencies arising out of COVID-19 pandemic". The Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was introduced in the Lower House on Monday. It will replace the Salary, Allowances And Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020. The ordinance was cleared by the Cabinet on April 6 and promulgated the next day.

Working for a
corruption-free
India

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China's attempt to
alter status quo not
acceptable: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Firmly articulating the country's position on the tense border row with China in eastern Ladakh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said Beijing has been very clearly conveyed that any attempt to "unilaterally" change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control is not at all acceptable, and that India's armed forces are ready to deal with "all contingencies" in the high-altitude region.

Making a statement in Lok Sabha, Singh said he would not hesitate to share that India is facing a "challenge" in Ladakh but at the same time added that the House should have "full confidence" that the armed forces will always rise to the challenge and make the country proud.

"I will not hesitate to share



with this august House that we are facing a challenge in Ladakh and I urge the House to pass a resolution in support of our armed forces who have been defending our motherland at great heights and most inclement weather conditions," he said.

Continued on Page 2

Hyd now India's
best city to liveNAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has hit bustling cities hard, Hyderabad continues to be the best city to live in and work in the country, as per a survey by destination discovery website, Holidify.com.

According to the portal, Hyderabad is "fast turning into the New York City of south India" and describes it as, "A densely populated metropolitan city with people bustling in and out of cafes, offices, temples and even nowhere".

According to the survey of 34 cities, while Hyderabad stands first, it is followed by Mumbai, Pune, Bengaluru and Chennai. The portal states that the best time to visit the

- 'TS capital fast turning into New York City of south India'
- Vizag ranked 19th best among 34 cities surveyed



city is between September and March.

Vishakapatnam has been ranked as the 19th best city in the country to live among the 34 cities. The survey describes as Vizag as "a gem of south India."

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy congratulated Telangana Minister K T Rama Rao on the state capital being ranked number 1 and conveyed his best wishes.

Why China wants to
go to war with India

KINGSHUK NAG

Going by appearances- the massing of troops and armour on the border - an Indo-China war seems to be nearly imminent. Of course, there are talks between the two sides that have progressed upwards from the military to the foreign ministers' level now. Yet, the pervasive feeling in India now is that a conflict cannot be avoided. It is also clear that this conflict would be in the north of Kashmir region. But the million-dollar question is: Why should China go to war with India in this region? What is behind the conflict and why in this region? And what is the need for a conflict now? Hereby lies a tale.

In 2001, looking for an easier way to China from the Gulf area, Beijing proposed to develop a new port in the south-western corner of



Pakistan at a place called Gwadar, located on the western end of the Arabian Sea in Baluchistan. This was nearly 200 km west of Karachi and, as per the Chinese plan, goods unloaded at the new port here could be transported (through new road and rail links) northward through Pakistan; passing over ultimately to the Xinjiang province of China. After the port proposal languished for a few years, the Gwadar port is now ready.

Continued on Page 2

HC rejects
postponement
of UG/PG exams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday disposed of a batch of petitions filed seeking postponement of degree and PG examinations or to conduct them through an online method keeping in mind the situation with regard to Covid-19 in the state.

A division bench of the high Court, comprising the Chief Justice of the State Justice RS Chauhan and Justice B.Vijaysen Reddy, directed the state government to follow Standard Operating Procedures and take all safety measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic while conducting examinations.

During the course of arguments, the state government told the High Court that it had taken a policy decision to hold the semester and final year examinations of undergraduate and postgraduate courses through physical mode.

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Centre's Power Bill
is dangerous and
draconian: KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Describing The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020 as a "dangerous and draconian" measure, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Tuesday made it clear that the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) party would oppose the Bill in Parliament.

The Chief Minister maintained that there were many flaws in the Electricity Bill. The rights of states would be curbed if the Bill came into force. Many states were opposed to the Bill as the power loads of the states would go to the Centre, the Chief Minister said.

The Telangana Assembly passed a resolution unanimously demanding the Centre to withdraw The Electricity (Amendment) Bill-2020.

During the short discussion on power problems in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, the Chief Minister



said that he was requesting the Centre not bring this new Act. The Bill was nothing, but an axe on the states' autonomous rights and their federal spirit, he suggested. "We have big scope for hydropower generation. However, there is a provision in the new Bill that renewable power must be 20 per cent only. The states need to purchase power according to the new Act.

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Talks between AP, TS fail
again, bus services hit

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Talks between the two Road Transport Corporations of the two Telugu States, held on Tuesday amid high hopes, however, failed once again as there was no consensus on the crucial issue of whether the services should be run in both states route-wise or kilometre-wise.

TSRTC MD Sunil Sharma and APSRTC MT Krishna Babu participated in the discussions held at Bus Bhavan.

The meeting between the managing directors of the two RTCs ended abruptly apparently due to lack of consensus. Andhra Pradesh State proposed to run its buses on the basis of kilometers. However, Telangana State wanted to run its buses on the basis of routes. At the meeting the states opposed each other's proposals vehemently.

Later, speaking to media persons, TSRTC MD Sunil Sharma made it clear that TSRTC would run buses to AP route-wise. He said that he



had kept the route-wise proposal before the APSRTC officials. However, APSRTC officials informed him that they would reveal their stance after discussion on it. Sunil Sharma maintained that the two RTCs would get benefits only if buses were run route-wise. He said that TSRTC would suffer losses should it run buses in AP on the basis of kilometers.

Andhra officials said that they would come for discussions again after studying the proposal of TSRTC. Sunil Sharma also mentioned that there was no consensus at the meeting with regard to running

250 buses in each state between Hyderabad and Vijayawada.

This being so, APSRTC MD MT Krishna Babu said that there was no system of running of the buses route-wise. Interstate buses must run on the basis of kilometers. Andhra Pradesh State buses were running on 71 routes in Telangana State; however, Telangana State buses were running on only 28 routes in Andhra Pradesh state. He said that they ran 3.43 lakh kilometers before the division of the state. They were running 2.65 kilometers after division of the state. There was 1.1 lakh kilometers gap between the two states.

"We asked TSRTC to increase 50,000 kilometers and at the same time we offered to reduce 50,000 kilometers. Then Telangana came forward to run 1.1 lakh kilometers to 1.60 lakh kilometers and made it clear that TSRTC has no capacity to run beyond that and said that running beyond 1.60 kilometers was not beneficial to them.

Continued on Page 2

Hawala racket
busted, 4 heldDURGAPRASAD SUNKU
■ HYDERABAD

Sleuths of the West Zone task force team busted a hawala racket and seized unaccounted money totaling Rs 3.75 crore from four money mules in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad on Tuesday. All the four persons were apprehended. They were identified as Eshwar Dileepi Solanki, Harish Ram Bhai Patel, Ajith Singh R Dodiya, and Rathod Kanak Singh Natubha.

"On a tip-off that huge stacks of money was being transported in two cars, West Zone task force team intercepted them and found around Rs 3.75 crore in the vehicles.

Continued on Page 2

COVID-19 EFFECT

Monsoon session
may end todayK VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Legislative Assembly's monsoon session may end on Wednesday.

For, at the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting held on Tuesday, the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti party proposed that the session be concluded on Wednesday in view of the increasing corona cases, particularly on the Assembly premises.

On Monday, 14 positive cases were registered among officials and employees, including Nampally MLA, with the tally

going up to 52 after the commencement of the monsoon session. In this connection, Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy had a meeting at the Assembly Committee Hall with floor leaders and discussed the possibility of reducing the number of business days during the current session.

However, the Congress Legislature Party asked the Speaker to continue the session for a few more days as the House needs to discuss several important issues, including Krishna River water issue and welfare schemes.

Continued on Page 2

Google faces grilling on ad business before US Senate

REUTERS ■ WASHINGTON

Alphabet Inc's Google will be questioned about its ad business in a hearing on Tuesday, with a particular focus expected on whether it misused its dominance in online advertising to drive profits.

Senator Mike Lee, a Republican and chair of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee's antitrust panel, is likely to also press Google on allegations that it is opaque in pricing advertising services, as its critics complain.

Lee is expected to express concern that Google may have broken U.S. antitrust law, a source close to the panel said.

The tech giant made a series of purchases, including DoubleClick and AdMob, to



help make it the dominant player in online advertising. Google maintains a tight grasp over each of the many steps between an advertiser looking to place an ad and a website looking to host it.

The panel will hear from Don

Harrison, who took over as head of Google's corporate development, which oversees advertising partnerships with other companies, in 2012.

Harrison, who testifies at a time when Google has few friends in Washington, will

The hearing comes as the U.S. Justice Department is expected to file a lawsuit against Google within weeks, according to sources familiar with the matter.

Senator Amy Klobuchar, the top Democrat on the committee, has expressed support for the Justice Department probe. Also on the panel are two other lawmakers who have raised questions about Google, Senators Josh Hawley, a Republican, and Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat.

Google's critics say it uses search to tout its shopping, mapping and other services rather than giving neutral responses. Others allege it unfairly favors its services in Android.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Bhadrapada & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturdashi: 07:56 pm

Nakshatram: Magha: 12:20 pm

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 12:10 pm - 01:41 pm

Yamagandam: 07:38 am - 09:09 am

Varjyam: 07:30 pm - 08:55 pm

Gulika: 10:39 am - 12:10 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 10:09 am - 11:36 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: -

HYDERABAD
WEATHER

Forecast: Haze

Temp: 28/23

Humidity: 83%

Sunrise: 06:04 am

Sunset: 06:17 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated September 15, 2020 5:00 PM

Corruption has taken such deep roots that it's now almost a part of life in India, stated a former prime minister about four-and-a-half decades ago.

These words remain true even today; the malaise has percolated to every sphere of life, more so, public life.

A corruption-free society and a political system that is squeaky clean has been a long-cherished dream of this country of over a billion people. It is the same people that queue up at polling booths, with the hope that their candidate of choice would keep his promise of eradicating corruption.

However, thousands of law-makers, one after the other, over the years have disappointed their electors.

The initiative shown by the Supreme Court in laying the road to a corruption-free political India is considered a welcome and inevitable development.

In the run-up to the 2014 elections, Narendra Modi

WORKING FOR A CORRUPTION-FREE INDIA



PIN POINT

promised that a special court would be set up, if he won, for expeditious trial of corruption cases in which countless politicians are involved. These courts, he promised, would try any person in public life involved in corruption cases. "These courts would complete the trial within one year. The accused would either be jailed or would return to the legislature..." Modi said, mesmerising millions.

People began to believe that the day India, especially its legislatures, becomes corruption-free, was not far off.

About six years on, not a single stone has been laid to build the edifice of a corruption-free India.

Though the obvious lack of commitment to fulfilling this promise is a surprise, it is not inexplicable.

In any country, a system

BJP leader Arun Jaitley said in the Rajya Sabha that post retirement appointments of judges influence their pre-retirement judgments. He called upon the then government, headed by Manmohan Singh, to stop such appointments. It's a different matter that the Modi government did not follow Jatley's suggestion

defined by its Constitution rules, but in our country, politics and political leadership control the very system that should actually function according to the Law of the land. Naturally when a political setup is riddled with corruption, it automatically influences other organs of democracy.

Judiciary, another organ of democracy, is supposed to be fully independent. However, people are noticing cracks appear in this independence and some judgments are com-

ing handy for the rulers and serving their political purpose.

BJP leader Arun Jaitley said in the Rajya Sabha that post retirement appointments of judges influence their pre-retirement judgments. He called upon the then government, headed by Manmohan Singh, to stop such appointments.

It's a different matter that the Modi government did not follow Jatley's suggestion.

Coming back to the issue of



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

political corruption, the Supreme Court's initiative in pursuing corruption cases against both sitting and former lawmakers will turn the political scenario in the country topsy-turvy.

The Supreme Court has given the Union Government six weeks to respond on the issue. Once the Centre

responds to the apex court's notice, it may be the start of the much-awaited process towards a corruption-free India, at least politically.

Understandably, political parties did not welcome this move as none is left untouched by the malaise.

If indeed such courts are established and steps taken to try cases of corruption, both the dominant political parties in Andhra Pradesh will face turmoil. The supremos of both these parties face cases of impropriety — YS Jaganmohan Reddy faces cases of economic offences and disproportionate assets. He is currently on bail in those cases and if by any chance this bail is cancelled, a situation similar to what happened in Bihar in 1997 will take place in the state.

TDP chief N.Chandrababu Naidu also faces accusations in the cash-for-vote case that lit-

erally affected the fate of the joint capital of the two Telugu states.

In an attempt to deliver a political blow to his one-time confidant, Naidu walked right into the trap set by Telangana Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

He had to drop plans of ruling AP from capital Hyderabad for ten years, as allowed by the AP Reorganisation Act, and migrate to Amaravati.

There is no guarantee of such special courts being set up, despite the initiative taken by the Supreme Court, unless the Union Government responds with commitment, paving the way for cleansing of politics.

Will the country's Prime Minister do the needful? Especially considering the fact that a good many members of his own party, and of his allies, may end up behind bars?

Secret 'adjustments' are inevitable in politics. If a party is compelled, it would strike deals with its rivals. The promise of a corruption-free India can wait.

It is precisely for this reason that the apex court's initiative may peter out.

Friends-turned-foes of KCR and Naidu would have seen their own political end due to cases like cash-for-vote and phone tapping, but a deal here and a deal there, struck behind the scenes, suits everyone.

Industrialists too need political parties to bail them out of problems. Since elections have become a costly affair, political corruption suits the interests of both.

Meanwhile, the Modi government claims that there is no corruption.

This might be true, but what about the waiving of loans worth crores given by nationalised banks to the bigwigs of the industry?

Millions of people want to know whether those industries are really in need of getting their loans waived.

TRS Corporator, husband booked for cheating

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Neeredmet Police booked a case against TRS local leader GK Hanumanth Rao and his wife Sreedevi, GHMC 136 Div Corporator (Neredmet-Malkajigiri) for allegedly cheating public in the name of various schemes. The complainant, M Srinivas Yadav alleged that the couple has been lending huge amounts, under the name of the chit fund company 'Swarnaganga' by going against the norms of chit Fund Company.

The complainant alleged that Sridevi, being the GHMC Corporator of 136 Div Neredmet is using her official position and allegedly transferred money to her husband's partnership firms, companies headed by GK Hanumantha Rao, who is circulating the money through their chit fund / finance companies / money lending agents/ private financiers. Neeredmet police have booked a case against the couple under various sections of Indian penal code.

State aims to procure 70 lakh tonnes of paddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Civil supplies Minister G Kamalakar Reddy on Tuesday said that the Civil Supplies Corporation has targeted to procure 70 lakh tonnes of paddy during the current Vanakalam season. Accordingly, it has been making extensive arrangements for paddy procurement.

Disclosing this to FP dealers and rice millers at separate meetings held here, the Minister noted that the area under various crops during the current season increased by 36.94 per cent compared to the last season. The Telangana state ranked number one in the country in terms of cultivation of land under various crops, he said adding that the Department has been making extensive arrangements to procure paddy in tune with the increase in paddy production.

The Minister said that the paddy procured during the last Vanakalam season was 47.54 lakh tonnes, while the



production in last rabi was 64.50 lakh tonnes. Thus, last year the total paddy procured was 12 lakh tonnes. Rice millers and ration dealers, who are part of the Civil Supplies Department, should extend their cooperation to the government in paddy procurement treating it as their social responsibility, he said.

The government would have no intention to trouble either the FP dealers or the rice millers, he said asserting them to resolve their legal problems after taking them to the notice of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. In undi-

vided Andhra Pradesh, the rice millers faced difficulties for want of adequate paddy production. Now the situation turned for good, he said.

Hundreds of rice mills were set up in the state, which he said is emerging as the rice bowl of the country. The Minister said that 10 crore new gunny bags and nine crore old bags are required. There is no scope for new gunny bags to be supplied from Kolkata, he said adding that there is need for old gunny bags.

Therefore, the FP dealers should raise to the occasion by selling the gunny bags with

them to the Civil Supplies Corporation. It would save at least Rs 15 on each gunny bag, he said. Corporation Chairman Mareddy Srinivas Reddy said that the government paid commission to FP dealers for the rice distributed free of cost during Corona period. Therefore, he wanted the FP dealers to cooperate with the government in selling gunny bags.

In fact, 3.96 crore gunny bags should be returned to the civil supplies corporation for the Jan-Aug period. But only, 47.11 lakh bags were received so far. The rice millers are not exhibiting the same enthusiasm, which they exhibit at the time of receiving paddy bags, while handing over the custom milled rice to the government. Delay in handing over custom milled rice is putting additional burden on civil supplies corporation, he said urging the rice millers to ensure that no delay takes place in handing over the custom milled rice to the government.

With 2,058 cases TS Covid tally breaches 1.60L mark

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's Covid-19 tally crossed 1.60 lakh with the state adding 2,058 new cases in the last 24 hours, health officials said on Tuesday. With 1,60,571 cases, Telangana overtook Bihar to have the eighth highest numbers in the country.

Ten more people succumbed to the disease, taking the death toll in the state to 984. The case fatality rate in the state stands at 0.61 per cent against the national average of 1.64 per cent. The state saw more recoveries than new cases during the last 24 hours ending 8 p.m. Monday. With 2,180 more patients recovering from the virus, the total number of recoveries mounted to 1,29,187.

The recovery rate has also further improved to 80.45 per cent against the national average of 78.26 per cent. The number of active cases in the state stands at 30,400 including 23,534 in home isolation. The daily count of Covid-19 cases, which had dropped to 1,417 the previous day with the



weekly dip in testing level, crossed 2,000 again as authorities conducted over 51,000 tests. With this the number of samples tested so far mounted to 21,69,339.

A total of 17 government and 38 private laboratories and 1076 rapid antigen tests centres across the state conducted 51,247 tests. These include 22,548 primary and 6,149 secondary contacts. However, no break-up of RT-PCR and rapid antigen tests was available. The state health authorities said samples tested per million population improved further to 59,811. This is much higher than the daily testing target of 5,600 per

day as per the World Health Organisation (WHO) benchmark of 140 per million per day. During the last 24 hours, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) reported 277 new cases. Neighbouring districts Rangareddy and Medchal Malkajigiri reported 143 and 97 cases respectively. Sangareddy, another district bordering the state capital, recorded 24 cases. Outside Hyderabad and surrounding districts, Karimnagar recorded the highest single-day jump of 135. Warangal Urban district saw 108 new cases. Siddipet added 106 cases, Khammam 103, Nizamabad 84.

Centre's Power Bill...

Continued from Page 1

We have to put meters to 26 lakh borewells as per the new Bill. We have to put meters to every borewell. We have to spend Rs.700 crore for new meters. We will oppose the new Electricity Bill in Parliament" observed.

The Chief Minister said that DISCOMS, TRANSCO and GENCO could be developed only if the power sector stayed in the hands of the state government. Power bills would be collected forcefully by taking meter readings if the new Act came into force. States would lose control over the power sector if the new Act took effect. The Congress and the Telugu Desam Party were the reason for power problems in the state and hence he had

come out from TDP and launched the Telangana movement, KCR pointed out.

He said there was 70,000 TMCs of water in the nation; however, Chennai city was facing a severe drinking water problem. About 75 percent of people were facing drinking water problems. He alleged that the BJP and the Congress parties had no intention of meeting the primary needs of the people of the nation. Both the parties were trying to destroy the public sector by centralizing the institutions, instead of decentralization them. He introduced a resolution on behalf of the Telangana government demanding the Centre to withdraw immediately the new Electricity Bill, which he said would burden farmers heavily.

Why China wants...

Continued from Page 1

Along with it has come a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) that will lead to location of some value-added industry in Pakistan and creation of many jobs in the region.

The road carrying wares from Gwadar passes from Pakistan to China over Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) that is legally India's land, but illegally in the control of Pakistan.

Both China and Pakistan know this fully well and therefore they have apprehensions that the proposed Pakistan-China road can be the target of the Indian armed forces. Hence, the flexing of muscles by the Chinese beforehand to protect what is called as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Even more troublesome for the Chinese, the road could be targeted by long-range precision bombing from Aksai

Chin, which is a snowy height from where there is a clear sight over two hundred kilometers. Aksai Chin, under illegal occupation of China, belongs to India; it came under the Chinese from 1962. Similar firepower can be deployed from Ladakh as well.

Ladakh is the place through which the river Indus and its various tributaries pass downwards into Pakistan. The water is not only pristine clear, butis also seen China-watchers as a potential resource for the Chinese who are presently setting up the 5 G telecom industry in their country. 5G requires large quantities of fresh water and for the Chinese the region is an allurements to set up the industry for availing of the fresh water. The eastern side of China --in the belt between Beijing and Shanghai - contains advanced manufacturing units. However, this area is highly water-deficient, which will only

increase over time. Therefore, the likely choice of a fresh area, for locating the 5G industry.

With the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) becoming operational, Pakistan is likely to come into the grip of China fully. Earlier, Pakistan was in the camp of the US but ever since international terrorist Osama Bin Laden was found in a location close to that of an important military office, Washington has downgraded Islamabad. This is more so after the termination of the Taliban operating from Afghanistan. Thus, Pakistan is in search for a country to take care of its interest and protect it.

Many analysts perceive that now Pakistan will become a satellite state of China. Beijing also knows this and is promoting Pakistan to establish a new front that will compromise India. Nepal is also being promoted as another partner. How? This is another story.

Hawala racket busted, 4 held

Continued from Page 1

The action also led to arrest of four members who were transporting the unaccounted cash," said Anjani Kumar, Hyderabad City Police Commissioner.

Investigations revealed that the apprehended men are working in P.Vijay & Company, Mumbai. One of the firm's branch offices is located at Anand Banjara Colony, in Road No.12, Banjara Hills.

Two persons, Dinesh and Giri, are the company incharges of the Hyderabad branch.

Ajith Singh R Dodiya and Rathod Kanak Singh Natubha and are working in

the Hyderabad branch.

Two of those apprehended, Eshwar Dileepji Solanki and Harish Ram Bhai Patel, had come to the city for collecting cash from Dinesh and Giri. Accordingly, after collecting the amount in cash from Giri, they were proceeding in two Solapur-bound vehicles to hand over the consignment.

"The amount will be handed over to the Income Tax Department for further necessary action. The persons who were in possession of the money will be examined by the Income Tax Department," Kumar said.

Further investigation is under way.

COVID-19 EFFECT Monsoon...

Continued from Page 1

Likewise, the AIMIM asked the Speaker to take up the discussion on the problems of Greater Hyderabad.

However, the Speaker said he would take a call on Tuesday. It is learnt that the Speaker stated during the BAC meeting that corona virus was spreading on the Assembly premises as 1,200 persons were gathering at one place every day.

So, it appears that the government might conclude the session after taking up the issue of development of Greater Hyderabad on Tuesday. The BAC had originally decided to run the House till September 28. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had assured the opposition parties that the government was ready to run the House "any number of days".

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 49, 020 (10 gm)	
SILVER	
₹ 69, 500 (1kg)	
₹ 1,200	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹184
Without Skin	₹210
Broiler at Farm	₹125
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	504
VIJAYAWADA	501
VISAKHAPATNAM	502
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹5.04

HC rejects...

Continued from Page 1

Referring to the autonomous educational institutions, it said that they were given freedom to decide whether to hold the examinations in online or offline mode. After hearing the government's submissions, the Court refused to interfere in the issue by stating that it was a policy decision of the state government and added that it can't interfere with the policy decision of the state.

Intervening at this juncture, the counsel for the petitioners urged the HC to ask the state government to furnish the details of the schedule to hold the supplementary exams. The counsel for the JNTU said that they would hold the supplementary exams in two months' time.

China's attempt to alter status...

Continued from Page 1

Referrin to the Galwan Valley clashes of June 15, the defence minister said Indian soldiers "inflicted costs including casualties on the Chinese side."

Singh also referred to his talks with the Chinese defence minister on the sidelines of a multilateral meet in Moscow recently, and said it was made clear to him that though India wants to resolve the row peacefully, there should be no doubt about its determination to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"I conveyed in clear terms our concerns related to the actions of the Chinese side, including amassing of large

number of troops, their aggressive behavior and attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo that were in violation of the bilateral agreements," he said.

The defence minister said amassing of the troops by China and violent conduct of Chinese military were in violation of all mutually agreed norms and pacts.

"A key element of both the 1993 and the 1996 Agreements is that the two sides will keep their military forces in the areas along the Line of Actual Control to a minimum level," he added.

Singh also talked about the five-point agreement reached between External Affairs

Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow on September 10 and said: "if implemented sincerely and faithfully by the Chinese side, it could lead to complete disengagement and restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas."

On Galwan Valley clashes, he also said the Chinese side "created" a violent face off and "our brave soldiers laid down their lives and also inflicted costs including casualties on the Chinese side."

Twenty Indian Army personnel were killed in the clashes which have significantly escalated the tensions between the two countries.

Talks between AP,TS fail...

Continued from Page 1

We got permission from other states to run the buses. However, TSRTC asked us to give route-wise clarity of running other states buses", he said.

Krishna Babu said that they would study the route-wise proposal of Telangana State and discussions would be held at the level of EDs after two days. He said that Andhra Pradesh proposed to run 250 each buses of AP and TS between Hyderabad-Vijayawada route as the demand was more, pending discussions.

Water bill: OTS scheme nets only Rs 130 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has extended the one-time settlement scheme to pay water bill dues to October 31.

In fact, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board is yet to recover Rs 400 crore and Rs 200 crore towards dues on the power bills.

Earlier the government gave an offer to waive the interest if consumers clear dues at one go. The offer ended on September 15. So far, the government could realise only Rs 130 crore.

Some more consumers are likely to come forward to pay the water bills because of extension of the one-time settlement bill up to October 15.

Many people are not paying water bills for over two years, but drawing water.

In greater Hyderabad, there are over 10.60 lakh tap connections. Over five lakh consumers are yet to clear the water bills. Over 2.5 lakh used the one time settlement scheme. Till September 14, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board could recover Rs 130.90 crore. On September 14 alone, the amount received was Rs 14 crore.

Children busy playing games online, parents foot the bill

Parents who gifted mobiles to students are worried over inflated bills

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Parents are worried over the inflated mobile bills they are receiving for the mobile phones used by their children to attend online classes.

Some parents complain of receiving mobile bills in excess of Rs 10,000 per month for the past three months. To get the problem resolved, they are making a bee line to telecom service providers. They are astonished at the reply from the service providers. Children normally attend online classes through Zoom mobile application or Google Classroom.

A student from the city used to attend virtual classes on his mother's mobile phone. He was also playing online games in between the classes. Therefore, the family received a postpaid phone bill of Rs 23,000 instead of Rs 2,000. When the parents approached the service provider, the reply was that they have to pay the bill at any cost since the boy inadvertently agreed to buy the online games after playing one or two stages. According to Nallamotu Sridhar, cyber expert, some



online video games are free and some are not. Similarly, downloading certain mobile applications, one has to pay for the application. For some, payment should be done through credit cards for some others it should be done through debit cards.

In fact, one time password protection would be there. But the telecom operators, without the knowledge of elders, are pricking holes in the pockets of the elders in the form of

non-Google data. Under it, children play one or two phases of video games free of cost. Later, the software wants them to exercise purchase option. Many children are exercising the option to buy the video games. The children are playing games worth Rs 1000 a day.

When parents question the telecom providers about it, they would reply that the inflated bill was generated under the non-Google data. One of the consumers said that he paid Rs

23,000 bill and wants to know how the poor would be able to face such a situation. Ever since the online classes commenced, the parents are getting inflated mobile bills. The post-paid consumers generally pay bills through Auto Pay application. If the amount is less than Rs 2,000, the bill amount would be deducted directly from the bank account of the customer. If the bill amount exceeds, the consumer would get an alert. Users of zoom application would be questioned about their preference of use weather on the basis of calls or on the basis of data. Majority of the people, rather unmindfully, exercise the option "calls".

The server is located in a remote place overseas. Inadvertently, international calls are placed. While playing video games and while downloading apk files, while pressing the pop-ups appear on mobile screen, inadvertently international calls can go which can charge Rs 15 per minute. The TRAI has asked telecom service providers to alert the consumers about it.



1,799 urban parks to be developed in TS: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao said around 1,799 urban parks were being developed across the State in addition to the existing 1,893 parks. He said the State government was working towards development of urban parks on a large scale.

Responding to questions in the State Assembly on Tuesday, Rama Rao said of the 1,799 new urban parks, 587 parks are being developed under GHMC, and 1,109 under other municipalities and municipal corporations.

HMDA took up development of the remaining 103 parks. "Some of these parks are being developed as tree parks, while others are being developed as landscape, urban and Panchayatva parks. Around 797 parks have already been developed," he said.

The Minister said Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu was a lover of greenery and hence, was promoting Haritha Haaram on a large scale. He pointed out that under the new Municipal Act, the State government had made it mandatory for all the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to set aside 10 per cent of their

budgets as green budget to develop greenery.

KTR said the state government has initiated strict measures to ensure that at least 80 per cent of the saplings survived. As a result, the green cover in the State has increased to 29 per cent of its total area from 24 per cent after the State formation. He said more than 1,000 nurseries were being operated in all ULBs. He said the largest urban eco park in the country was developed in about 297 acres on the outskirts of Mahabubnagar. He responded positively to develop an urban lung space in Chennur constituency.

IN BRIEF

UGC-NET exam postponed from September 16 to 24

The National Testing Agency postponed the National Eligibility Test (NET) because the dates were clashing with those of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) exam. The NET was scheduled to be conducted from September 16 to September 25. It will now be conducted September 24 onwards.



The National Testing Agency will be conducting ICAR exams on September 16, 17, 22 and 23. In view of that, UGC-NET 2020 examination will now be held from September 24 onwards, said Sadhana Parashar, senior director, NTA. "This is due to some common candidates in both exams and the requests received thereof. The exact schedule of subject-wise and shift-wise details will be uploaded subsequently," she added. The UGC-NET June 2020 admit card with the candidate's roll number, examination centre details, date, shift, and timing of the examination can be downloaded a few days before the test — the date of which is yet to be finalised. Once the dates are released, candidates can download the hall ticket from the official website of NTA.

T-Hub inks MoU with Hiroshima government to nurture startups



T-Hub, which leads India's pioneering innovation ecosystem that powers next-generation products and new business models, today signed an MoU with the Hiroshima Prefectural Government. Through this association, T-Hub will collaborate with the Hiroshima Government in the areas of creation

of innovation, entrepreneurship, and open innovation, which will help nurture the startup ecosystem between the Telangana and Hiroshima. The association will bring together cultures and ideas from both the innovation ecosystems to transform customer experience and foster digital transformation. As the first step of this partnership, T-Hub will lead a virtual innovation program which is called "ROAD TO SHINE (R2S)" in partnership with Infobridge India Pvt. Ltd. The program is centered on the theme 'The Future City You Want to Create.' It will empower the next generation leaders to generate new technologies and solutions that address the future challenges of India. Through this program, T-Hub and Hiroshima Prefectural Government will collaborate with students and engineers, including the startup ecosystems in Hyderabad - Telangana. T-Hub will call for applications from the student innovators and early growth-stage startups, with a background in computer science and related engineering fields.

TS partners with DSCI to launch digital payment Abhiyan Telugu

Principal Secretary of IT&E& Industries and Commerce Departments, Jayesh Ranjan (IAS) virtually launched the digital payment Abhiyan Telugu Campaign. Speaking at the event Jayesh Ranjan said, "The Cybersecurity Centre of



Excellence and DSCI has been doing an excellent job in spreading cyber-awareness to various stakeholders in these testing times. The launch of this Telugu campaign that will educate us on the benefits of making digital payments and adopt best practices for secure and safe transactions is one of them. Telangana has always been an advocate of transparent processes and digitisation on all fronts, we have been the pioneers in this direction to launch many unique initiatives. T wallet was first of its kind initiative taken by a state government to promote digital payments. TS is a campaign partner of this initiative and has taken a special interest since the content of the brochures and pictures making it quick and easy to grab and practice for everyone".

Temple burgled at Chandrayangutta

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Unidentified persons broke into a temple at Chandrayangutta and decamped with donation boxes on Tuesday.

The burglars broke into the Sai Baba Temple in Bandlaguda early on Tuesday. The temple priest, who reached the temple around 5.30 am, noticed the lock of the temple broken and alerted the managing committee members, who in turn alerted the police.

The police are checking footage from CCTV cameras. A few weeks ago, offenders had broke into the Chenna Keshavaswamy temple and attempted to break the lock of the hundi.

TS-bPASS: Boom ahead for realty

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CREDAI said that with reforms such as TS-bPASS, the real estate will see a massive surge in activity and will drive the growth and employment generation in the state.

CREDAI said that the government has swiftly acted on the Revenue side by making the right moves in making registration and mutation of agricultural and non-agricultural properties easier, more transparent and accountable.

According to President CREDAI Hyderabad R K Rao, "This is a first of its kind reform which will shape the way real estate projects will be approved, significantly increasing the ease of doing business. In spite of the impact of Covid,



Telangana has adopted the policy of cautious working, enabling a faster recovery. We are confident that Hyderabad will see the fastest growth in development, particularly in the real estate sector as the world recovers from Covid. The buyers, should move forward and benefit from the proactive measures by the government to facilitate and spur growth in the state."

CREDAI has played a pivotal role in the formulation of this policy by convincing the government to allow us to appoint a consulting agency E&Y to study the best practices across the country to help them to frame the policy. After a research, CREDAI submitted the recommendations to the government which helped to pave the way for the approval of this policy.

Need for automated HRMS in police dept

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Police Department has a sanctioned strength of over 80,000 Police personnel. Keeping in view the size of the Human Resources of Telangana Police Department, there was an imperative need to put in place a fully automated sound HRMS system in place.

Therefore it was decided to develop and deploy fully automated Human Resource Management System in Telangana State Police Department.

Effective Human Resource Management System application will provide efficient management of Human Resources leading to optimal service deliveries to both internal stake holders as well as external stake holders. Given the size of the personnel in the Telangana State

Police Department and the complexities of the problems related to personnel, the modernisation of the Human Resources Management System will be a major enabler for an efficient, effective and citizen-centric administration.

Therefore, it is imperative to leverage the use of information technology as an enabling tool to provide efficient and effective personnel management that is responsive to the needs of its employees.

Human Resource Management System is designed to enhance internal efficiency and to align with department's strategic objectives. Conceptualisation of HRMS has been initiated in 2018 which has now taken the complete frame which can be a repository of the employee data of the Telangana state police organisation.

Three burglars nabbed in two different cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Police arrested three burglars including a couple in two different cases on Tuesday.

The accused couple were identified as Ravi Kumar, 25, a resident of Kondapur and a native of Narsaopeta, Andhra Pradesh and his wife mekala Geetanjali, 21. Previously he was arrested by AP police and served some term in jail. With police keeping surveillance on his activities, he moved to Kondamallepally in Nalgonda.

In another case, police arrested a property offender D Mahesh while he was moving suspiciously at Balapur on Tuesday. Cops found that 10 cases were registered against him. The police recovered valuables all worth Rs 3,26,000 from him.

CRAFTSMEN AT WORK



The Qutb Shahi Tombs Complex in Hyderabad, nominated to the World Heritage List, is being developed as urban Archaeological Park, to showcase and ensure long-term preservation. The conservation and landscaping works at were undertaken by Aga Khan Development Network agencies with their own financial resources. The works are undertaken by craftsmen using traditional tools, building techniques and traditional materials.



Salaries workers rely on retirement savings

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

The maximum impact of lockdown was on low salaried employees as lakhs of workers had to withdraw their retirement savings this year. About 6.2 lakh salaried employees from Telangana and 3.12 lakh from Andhra Pradesh had filed claims for Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) during Covid pandemic. In India, 1 crore salaried workers claimed provident fund.

Of the 1 crore claims filed in India, nearly 82 lakhs who earn a salary of less than Rs 14,999 per month withdrew money. This reflects on how the low-salaried employees were impacted maximum during the pandemic. According to the data tabled in Lok Sabha, 78.7 per cent claims across the country were by those who earn less than Rs 15,000 a



month.

In Telangana, nearly 72 per cent claimants were those who earn less than Rs 15,000 a month. About 4.45 lakh employees in Telangana earning less than Rs14,999 had to fend for themselves through

their EPF. Likewise in Andhra Pradesh, 80 per cent claimants were those earning less than Rs 15,000 per month. About 2.5 lakh employees in Andhra Pradesh earning less than Rs 14,999 claimed their EPF during pandemic. According to

data tabled in Lok Sabha, salaried employees of Andhra Pradesh withdrew Rs 304.85 crore from EPF accounts while those in Telangana withdrew Rs 776.5 crore between 25 March and 31 August during lockdown.

72% claimants were those who earn less than Rs 15,000 a month in TS. About 4.45 lakh employees in TS earning less than Rs14,999 had to fend for themselves through their provident fund

After the government imposed lockdown, the increase in claims by low-salaried was related to the Covid advance under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana wherein, members can withdraw up to three months' basic wages plus dearness allowance or 75 per cent of the amount in their EPF account, whichever is less.

However, EPFO had earlier this month said that 55 per cent of advance claims settled during April-August 2020 were related to the recently introduced Covid-19 advance while remaining were due to illness.

The subscribers could submit online claims and the services of EPFO also has been integrated and offered through UMANG application of the Government of India. The entire payment to subscribers is done electronically through Nation Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT) System.

Man gets life for assaulting LKG student

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A local court on Tuesday convicted a man to underhouse imprisonment who sexually assaulted an LKG student and murdered her on Holi Day last year. The accused has been identified as Rajesh.

According to the police, on March 21, 2019, the accused along with his friends consumed liquor and was partying in front of victim's house. The accused lured the minor girl under the pretext of buying colours and took her to an isolated place and raped her.

When the girl resisted, the accused gashed her neck with an iron wire. The girl succumbed to her injuries and died. Later the victim's father lodged a complaint with the police. The police investigated and arrested the accused.

Covid-19 casts shadow on Tungabhadra Pushkaralu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The pushkaralu for River Tungabhadra, once in a 12-year affair, will commence from November 20, but there seems to be no preparations going on to conduct the event. In Telangana, the river flows in Jogulamba Gadwal district alone. Criticism is that the state government is showing no initiative in conducting the celebrations. Barring the Endowments Ministry identifying works to be taken up for the event, no other activity is going on to celebrate the event.

In fact, the event is just two months away. In the neighbouring Karnataka, the government is taking a series of measures like holding a meeting with seers, identifying the pushkar ghats and holding a series of meetings to host the event. Though the Mantralayam seer had written to the government of Telangana on the issue, there is no much response from the government to it. In spite of Coronavirus, at least 50 per cent of the usual devotees will throng Telangana from Telugu states to have a holy dip in the river.



Identification of bathing ghats, setting up of dressing rooms, widening of roads, electrification, provision of drinking water and many other works have to be taken up. The local residents of Jogulamba Gadwal district allege that the Chief Minister is more obsessed with Yadadri development rather than paying attention to Jogulamba temple and Tungabhadra Pushkar arrangements.

The Jogulamba Seva Samiti leaders have consulted the BJP and Congress to use their good offices to get a clear picture from the government. The BJP and Congress leaders will confront with the state government on the Tungabhadra

Pushkarams issue on the floor of the State Legislative Assembly. Former Minister and BJP leader DK Aruna of Gadwal demanded the state government to pay attention to the Tungabhadra Pushkarams which will soon commence in Alampur. Moreover, to develop the region in all respects the event like pushkarams presents a perfect opportunity to the state government, she observed. Former MLA and AICC secretary Sampath Kumar alleged that the Chief Minister who visited here to commence Pushkarams to Krishna River made promises on development of Alampur, which still remained unimplemented.

With pushkaralu set to be commence from November 20, there seems to be no preparations from Telangana government to conduct the event

He said that he was at a loss of comprehension whether the government would conduct the pushkarams or not under the prevailing circumstances. He said that the state government is subjecting not only people of the country to inconvenience but also to the presiding deity at Jogulamba temple. Vice president of Jogulamba Seva Samiti BV Babu demanded that the government should conduct the pushkarams. The Chief Minister should show initiative in this regard. He urged the government to give clear picture on the conduct of pushkarams.



Minister KT Rama Rao, along with Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar and others at a review meeting on Tuesday

State's Mission Bhagiratha is unprecedented project: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao reviewed the progress of Urban Mission Bhagiratha works on Tuesday along with Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar and senior officials from MA&UD Department. The Minister said that the Mission Bhagiratha project is unprecedented in the history of the country.

The project was launched with the lofty goal of providing safe drinking water to every household. On Tuesday, KTR reviewed the work of Urban Mission Bhagiratha in 141 municipalities in the state except Hyderabad. Officials were directed to complete the

works keeping in view the future needs as towns and towns tend to expand a bit faster as compared to villages. Officials were asked how the work was progressing in different towns and whether coordination with other government departments was needed anywhere.

The Minister directed the officials to constantly monitor the quality of water supplied under the Urban Mission Bhagiratha, for which they should regularly visit the field level and test the water quality. It may be recalled that Telangana State was ranked number one in the country under the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) with an incred-

ible 53,45,962 Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs). The figure works out to about 98.31 per cent households having functional tap connections, while only 1.69 per cent (91,777) households are in the process of getting one.

Thanks to Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao's for pioneering 'Mission Bhagiratha' which is aimed at providing potable water to every household in the State. The Mission Bhagiratha was implemented in the State with an estimated cost of Rs 43,791 crore. Bulk water connections have been already given to more than 23,960 of 23,968 habitations in the State.

Heavy rains lash Jagitiyal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Heavy to very heavy rainfall was recorded in different areas of the district during the last 24 hours. Tanks, rivulets and ponds were overflowing due to heavy rains.

The highest rainfall of 184.3 mm rainfall was recorded in Medipalli followed by Jagitiyal 175.5 mm, Gollapalli 128.2 mm, and Mallial 113.8 mm. Korutla, Raikal, Velgator, Sarangapur, Dharmapuri and other mandals also experienced heavy rain.

Flood waters entered houses in Govindpalli village as the bunds of nearby water bodies breached. Cars and cattle were washed away for some distance in flood water. Vehicular traffic between Jagitiyal-Dharmapuri-Sarangapur came to a halt as flood water submerged roads. Renigunta rivulet, Kondacheruvu of Paidimadugu village of Korutla mandal, Peddacheruvu in Joginalli and other rivulets are also overflowing.

Meanwhile, heavy rainfall was also recorded in other parts of erstwhile Karimnagar district such as Rajanna-Sircilla, Karimnagar and Peddapalli districts.

Govt working out modalities to include Covid under Aarogyasri

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Medical and Health Department is working on modalities to include Coronavirus under Aarogyasri scheme since the Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao has favourably inclined in this regard. In a meeting held here on Monday, the authorities concerned discussed about fixing the cost of treatment.

The government received many complaints from the people over the extortion of money by private and corporate hospital while extending treatment to Covid patients. Once the treatment for Covid is brought under Aarogyasri, over 77.19 lakh would receive benefit under the scheme.

However, the officials say it is not easy to fix the cost of treatment for Covid-19. The

The officials of the Medical and Health say it is not easy to fix the cost of treatment for Covid-19. The number of days of treatment that a Corona patient requires is not easy to predict

number of days of treatment that a Corona patient requires is not easy to predict. Having fixed the cost of treatment for Coronavirus in private sector, the department is conducting an exercise to fix the cost of the treatment on the basis of the tariff already fixed by the state government.

Earlier, the government issued GO fixing the Covid-19 tariff as Rs 4,000 per day in general ward, Rs 7,500 per day for

beds with oxygen facility and Rs 9,000 per day for treatment in the ICU. It allowed the private hospitals to collect additional charges for PPE Kits, masks, cost of medicines and diagnostic tests. The authorities say that a Covid-19 patient requires treatment, once admitted to a hospital, for seven to 10 days. Taking all these into consideration, the tariff for hospitals under Aarogyasri would be fixed, the authorities said.

Bandi Sanjay in self quarantine

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP affairs in-charge Krishna Das tested positive for Coronavirus. Telangana BJP state president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar went into self quarantine for five days as he met Krishna Das on September 14 to discuss the political situation prevailing in Telangana state.

However, the state unit chief Sanjay came to know that Krishna Das tested positive on Tuesday. Sanjay Kumar went into self quarantine as a precautionary measure though Sanjay tested negative. Sanjay informed the Speaker of the Lok Sabha Om Birla and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi in this regard.

FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS



With Telangana State's floral festival of Bathukamma fast approaching, the work for the production of Bathukamma sarees has picked up pace in Sircilla.

Kodandaram slams govt over graft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TJS Chief Prof M Kodandaram on Tuesday examined the disputable lands at Matampally in Suryapet district along with tribals. Speaking on the occasion, Kodandaram stated that the huge corruption took place in regard to Matampally lands. He alleged that the government gave pattas to Andhras instead of giving

Pulichintala project oustees. He alleged that the government gave pattas to 150 persons, who have no link with the project, and demanded the state government to cancel the pattas and give the same to eligible people. He warned the state government that he will take up padayatra on behalf of victims in case the government fails to act on it.

Raja Singh unhappy with BJP leadership?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP lone MLA Raja Singh has not been attending the Assembly Monsoon session. It is said that he was reportedly offended with the attitude of the Telangana BJP leadership. It is learnt that he disclosed to his close associates that the state leadership is not cooperating with him and extending their support to speak on various Bills in the Assembly. He stated that he is abstaining from attending the House as he was unable to bear the criticism made by the ruling party leaders and ministers against the Centre.

It is learnt that Raja Singh is angry at the state leadership that the leadership is not giving ample respect to him while chanting that the BJP is an alternative party to the ruling TRS party in the state. According to sources, the state leadership didn't care about Raja Singh's letter addressed to the state leadership before the commencement of the session



asking the leadership to reveal as to what issues to be raised in the Legislative Assembly's session.

However, the state leadership is least bothered about it, it is learnt though the meeting was held with state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar. Raja Singh thought to corner the state government over Coronavirus spread in the state, however, there was no response from the state leadership, it is learnt. In this context, Raja Singh decided to abstain from attending the House and not to cooperate with the state leadership at the same time.

TS man returns home after UAE waives visa fine

PNS ■ DUBAI

A 47-year-old Indian man, who stayed in the UAE without any documents for over 13 years, has been repatriated home after getting a waiver of half a million Dirhams (Rs 1,00,21,000) in visa dues, according to a media report on Tuesday. Pothugonda Medhi, a migrant labourer from Telangana, approached the Indian Consulate here after he lost his job following the Coronavirus outbreak, the Gulf News reported.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, he came to us as he could not find any odd jobs that he used to do earlier for his survival," Jithendra Negi, Consul, Labour and Consular, at the Indian Consulate, was quoted as saying by the paper. Pothugonda told the Indian mission that he had come to the Gulf on a visit visa in 2007, however his agent abandoned him soon after. The agent had not returned Medhi's passport, the paper reported.



Don't keep passbooks of farmers for loans: Niranjan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy on Tuesday said instructions would be given to officials concerned to sanction loans to farmers without keeping passbooks with them. "We will issue instructions immediately asking officials not to create problems for farmers by keeping their passbooks with them before sanctioning loans to them," he said, replying to questions posed by members in Telangana Legislative Council.

The State government decided to waive off farm loans in four phases and loans below Rs.25,000 were completely waived off in the first phase and efforts were on for the second phase of loan waiver.

As many as Rs.7,279 crore were disbursed to farmers under the Rythu Bandhu scheme during Vaanakalam season and another Rs.7,500 crore were to be disbursed during the forthcoming 'Yasangi'. "There are certain problems because of Covid-19 and once they are solved, the government will release the necessary funds," he clarified.

50,000 cusecs of water released from SRSP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the second consecutive day, authorities released 50,000 cusecs of water from the Sri Ram Sagar Project by lifting 16 flood gates by about two feets, on Tuesday.

The SRSP project received 74,354 cusecs of inflows, following which 50,000 cusecs were released through flood gates, while the remaining 16,354 cusecs were released to floodflow. Kakatiya, Saraswathi, and Lakshmi canals and another 8,000 cusecs released through the escape gates for generation of power.

Maharashtra irrigation officials released nearly 75,000 cusecs from the Balegaon project on Monday night. On Monday evening project officials started releasing 12,500 cusecs water from project by



lifting four flood gates, then after they increased outflows to 25,000 cusecs from eight gates. On Tuesday early morning, project officials lifted eight more flood gates and increased outflows to 50,000 cusecs and continuing it till Tuesday evening. If this rainfall continues for the next few days, outflows would further be

increased, authorities said.

Meanwhile, due to heavy rains in erstwhile Nizamabad district, various medium and small irrigation projects have reached FRL (Full Reservoir Level). Flood gates of Singintam, Kalyani, Pocharam and Koulasnala Project were lifted to the release the water.

Innovations essential for nation's development: Guv

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Tuesday said that innovations play a vital role in nation's development and engineers must inculcate the spirit of innovative mindset to serve as the problem-solver. "In order to realise Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for self-reliant India, innovations in engineering, especially those in reducing the imports and promoting the exports are very important," the Governor said. The Governor was addressing the



53rd Engineers' Day virtual celebrations organised by the Institution of Engineers of India, Telangana State Centre, here, coinciding with the 160th birth anniversary celebrations

of Bharat Ratna Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya.

On the occasion, she stated that the field of engineering is fast changing and it was necessary for the engineers to get constantly updated with the changing times and trends. "This is the era of engineers. Engineers are seen as innovators and problem-solvers. Their role assumed greater importance in the present Covid-19 pandemic time. I salute all the engineers for their role in nation building, the Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan said.

Forest cover rejuvenated in 8.65L acres

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests R Sobha called upon Forest Department personnel to work with more dedication since the government gives top priority to forest restoration. Quoting Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao as saying, she said that restoration of forest cover in all forest blocks should be done on saturation basis.

She was reviewing the progress of forestry development programmes in all forest circles and district forest officials. The extent of forest regeneration should be done in the state was 32 lakh acres, including 11 lakh acres where



the forest cover should be restored using artificial methods. So far, in 740 forest blocks forest cover was regenerated in

8.65 lakh acres by planting over 35,267 lakh saplings. During the next four years, the forest cover to be regenerated in an

extent of over 10.25 lakh acres.

Fencing of forest lands, digging of trenches, restoration of forests through natural methods, strengthening the bunds of trenches by planting saplings, plantation programme in vacant areas in forests, dewatering activities, planting bamboo plants around natural water springs, identifying causes for fire accidents and preventing them, soil and moisture conservation, planting twenty crore saplings where the forest cover is not dense are some of the activities identified to restore the forest cover. Chief conservators of all forest circles, forest officials of all districts and others took part in the meeting.

SHORT READS



'IAC, AAP propped by RSS-BJP to bring down UPA govt'

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that the India Against Corruption movement and the Aam Aadmi Party were propped by the RSS-BJP to subvert democracy and bring down the UPA government. Gandhi cited AAP founder member and civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhusan's reported claim that the movement was to a large extent supported and propped by the BJP-RSS to bring down the Congress government and get themselves in power. "What was known to us has been confirmed by a founding AAP member," the former Congress chief tweeted, tagging a media report on Bhusan's remarks. "The IAC movement and AAP were propped up by the RSS/BJP to subvert democracy and bring down the UPA government," Gandhi, who is accompanying his mother Sonia Gandhi to the US for her medical check-up, said. Bhusan was part of the India Against Corruption movement which was the precursor to AAP led by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. In 2015, Bhusan along with Yogendra Yadav was expelled from AAP over alleged "anti-party activities". The India Against Corruption movement was particularly prominent during the anti-graft protests of 2011 and 2012, concerned with the introduction of the Jan Lokpal bill.

Sharad urges Centre to rethink ban on export of onions

Mumbai: NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday met Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal and demanded that the Centre reconsider its "sudden" decision to ban the export of onions. Pawar tweeted Goyal assured him that the government will rethink the decision if there is consensus among the ministries of commerce, finance, and consumer affairs on the issue. The NCP chief told the minister that the export ban will "hurt" India's image as a "reliable" supplier of the commodity in the international market. The Central government on Monday banned the export of all varieties of onions with immediate effect to increase availability and curb prices of the bulb in the domestic market. The former Union agriculture minister told Goyal that the decision evoked "sharp" reactions from Maharashtra's onion-producing belt. "There is a good demand internationally for onions (exported from India) and we (India) have consistently been exporting onions. "But due to the Centre's sudden decision, India's image in the international market as a reliable exporter of onion will be hurt," Pawar tweeted. In the wake of the decision, there is a possibility that India may emerge as an "unreliable supplier" of the commodity internationally. Pawar said, adding that the move will benefit nations like Pakistan and others. In another tweet, Pawar said Goyal told him that the proposal to ban the export was moved by the Union Consumer Affairs Ministry based on the rising prices of the commodity.

40 lakh people kept under surveillance as part of COVID contact-tracing: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Around 40 lakh people have been kept under surveillance as a part of the contact-tracing efforts in the country and 5.4 crore samples were tested for coronavirus till September 10, Union minister Ashwini Choubey told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. The minister of state for health said there were 15,290 COVID-treatment facilities with 13,14,171 dedicated isolation beds till September 10. There are also 2,31,269 oxygen-supported isolation beds and 62,694 ICU beds (including 32,241 ventilator beds). Guidelines on clinical management of COVID-19 have been issued and are being updated regularly. States are being supported in terms of supply of logistics, Choubey



said. So far, 1.39-crore PPE kits, 3.42-crore N-95 masks, 10.84-crore hydroxychloroquine tablets, 29,779 ventilators and 1,02,400 oxygen cylinders have been supplied to state and central government hospitals till September 10, according to the minister. More than 30 vaccine candi-

dates have been supported and they are in different stages of development. Three candidates are in advanced stage of Phase I, II and III trials, and more than four are in advanced pre-clinical development stage, Choubey said. A national expert group on vaccine administration for COVID-19 has been constitut-

ed on August 7 under the NITI Aayog. Thirteen clinical trials of repurposed drugs have been undertaken to build a portfolio of therapeutic options for coronavirus patients, he said. "The government of India has taken a series of actions to prevent, control and mitigate the impact of COVID-19. India followed a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach," Choubey said. The prime minister, a high-level group of ministers (GoM), cabinet secretary, committee of secretaries and Health Ministry officials continue to monitor the public health response to COVID-19 in the country, he said. "The public health actions were taken in a pre-emptive, pro-active, graded manner based on the evolving scenario," the minister said.

Choubey pointed out that a number of travel advisories were issued to restrict the inflow of international travellers before commercial flights were suspended on March 23. Till then, a total of 14,154 flights with 15,24,266 passengers have been screened at airports. Screening was also done at 12 major and 65 minor ports and land border crossings, according to Choubey. "In the initial part of the pandemic, India evacuated a large number of stranded passengers from then COVID-affected countries (China, Italy, Iran, Japan, Malaysia) and again in the un-lock-down phase, a total of 12,43,176 passengers have been brought back (as on September 9) and followed up," he said.

'Insidious and rabid', says SC on Sudarshan TV show

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



There should be some kind of self-regulation in the media, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while raising questions over a "rabid" Sudarshan TV programme, claimed by the channel as a 'big expose on conspiracy to infiltrate Muslims in government service' in the promos. The apex court, while hearing a plea which has raised grievance over the programme, said that the manner in which some media houses are conducting debate is a matter of concern as all kind of defamatory things are said. "Look at this programme, how rabid is this programme that one community is entering into civil services," observed a bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud. "See how insinuating is the subject of this programme that Muslims have infiltrated the services and this puts the examinations of UPSC under scanner without any factual basis," said the bench, also comprising Justices Indu

Malhotra and K M Joseph. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the top court that freedom of journalist is supreme and it would be disastrous for any democracy to control the press. Senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Sudarshan TV, told the bench that the channel considered it as an investigative story on national security. "Your client is doing a dis-service to the nation and is not accepting India is a melting point of diverse culture. Your client needs to exercise his freedom with caution," the bench told Divan. The hearing in the matter would continue in the post-lunch session.

Sasikala may be released on Jan 27, 2021, says Karnataka Prison dept

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalithaa's aide V K Sasikala, serving a four year-term in a corruption case here, may be released from jail next January provided she paid the fine amount of Rs 10 crore, Karnataka Prison department has said. Sasikala, lodged at the Parappana Agrahara Prison here, was convicted and sentenced in February 2017 in the Rs 66 crore disproportionate assets case. "As per prison records, convict prisoner number 9234 Sasikala's 'probable date of release' is January 27, 2021, provided in-default fine amount is paid as awarded by the honourable court," Superintendent of Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara, R Latha said in response to an



RTI query. The reply was to the query by activist T Narasimha Murthy on September 11. Latha added Sasikala's "probable date of release" would be February 27, 2022 if the fine is not paid. The officer explained the probable date of release may vary if Sasikala utilises a parole facility. She will have to pay Rs 10 crore to walk out of prison on January 27, 2021, else spend another 13 months behind bars.

After the Supreme Court restored the trial court judgement in toto against Sasikala and two of her close relatives in the disproportionate assets case, (V N Sudhakaran and J Elavarasi), she surrendered before the court in Karnataka on February 15, 2017 and has been lodged in Parappana Agrahara Central Jail. Her two relatives are also undergoing four years simple imprisonment and all three of them were slapped with a fine of Rs 10 crore each. With the death of Jayalithaa in 2016, who was the first accused in the case, the appeal by Karnataka against her stood abated. Last week, Sasikala's counsel had expressed hope of her early release, possibly by the end of this month, citing remission for good conduct.

Elephant tramples woman to death

PNS ■ COIMBATORE



A 70-year-old woman was trampled to death by a wild elephant near Pannimadai on the city outskirts, early Tuesday. The incident occurred when Neelavathi was on her way to a temple at Varapalayam around 5 AM, police said. The woman noticed an elephant standing in the area and attempted to run for safety. However, the jumbo chased and lifted her with its trunk before hurling the woman on the ground killing her on the spot, police said. Some passers-by who noticed the

body alerted the police and forest department officials. A large number of villagers gathered at the spot and staged protests with the victim's body demanding immediate action by the district administration. The protesters dispersed after officials assured to take necessary steps to prevent such incidents.

Govt monopolising airports: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday demanded a probe into the privatisation of six airports in the country alleging violation of rules and corruption, a charge denied by the BJP which said there is complete transparency under the Modi dispensation. Initiating the debate on "The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020", Congress member K C Venugopal alleged that the government was promoting crony capitalism by privatising airports in the name of developing them. "There is a move to monopolise the Indian airports. In future, all Indian airports will be owned by only one company. How can you allow this...There is a clear violation of norms and regulations in



giving airports to a single private entity. This is a clear scam of public money," he alleged. "I am asking for an inquiry into all this. This is a clear case of corruption," he said. Venugopal alleged that the government was bypassing norms and guidelines to favour a private entity and has ignored the advice given by its own ministries.

The recommendations of the Department of Economic Affairs and Niti Ayog on technical, financial and legal aspects of bidding process were ignored by the government, he said. "There is an international attempt on the government to help crony capitalists. The government is paying red carpet for monopolisation of airports in the country," he alleged.

'Re-purposed hydroxychloroquine being used for mild cases'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Re-purposed hydroxychloroquine is being used for mild but high risk and moderate COVID-19 cases, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. According to the data shared by the minister, the Department of Pharmaceuticals has increased the production of hydroxychloroquine manifold and the health ministry has issued 10.84 crore tablets of the drug to states and union territories as on



September 11. "India has also exported it (hydroxychloroquine) to more than 140 countries," Vardhan said. He also said there is a plan to conduct trial of ayurvedic medicines such as aswagandha, guduchi, pippali etc to prevent people from getting infected from COVID-19. The minister said no specific antivirals have been proven effective so far and symptomatic treatment for fever and cough, appropriate rehydration, supplemental oxygen therapy remains the mainstay of treatment.

Puducherry clocks 380 fresh cases

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

The Puducherry government tested 5,496 blood and swab samples, the highest ever in the union territory, and identified 380 new coronavirus cases on Tuesday, taking the tally of infections to 20,601. Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release that as many as 5,496 samples were tested. While Puducherry region registered 270 cases out of the fresh cases.

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Sharing pictures of Revenue Minister R Ashoka with an accused in the drugs case, the Congress in Karnataka on Tuesday said there was a need for leaders from the ruling BJP, who are making allegations against those from other parties, to face the inquiry first. In a tweet, the state Congress said, "The pictures of R Ashoka with drugs scandal kingpin Rahul Thomshe suggests that it was not a casual meeting, but



a close association. There is a need for leaders from the ruling BJP, who are making allegations against those from other parties to cover up their scandals, to be made to face inquiry first." In the pictures shared along

with the tweet, Ashoka can be seen posing for a picture with Rahul along with others at some function. There are also pictures showing the two feeding each other sweets. The Minister had on Monday denied any links with Rahul. "I had gone to a naming ceremony function relating to a party worker in my constituency, when a celebrity goes to such events normally several people take such pictures... it is common such pictures are taken during public func-

tions, so can we be linked? If I had gone to his house it is a different thing," he said. Ashoka in response to a question said the photo might have been taken some four years ago and since the coronavirus outbreak, he had not attended any such events recently. Earlier, Congress MLA Zameer Ahmed Khan's name has been linked to the drugs case, following his photos with one Shaik Fazil, who is linked to a casino in Colombo where allegedly such activities take place, emerged.

NGT seeks report on rules over plastic pens

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the environment ministry and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to file a report on whether plastic pens have been covered under Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules, 2018. A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel noted that the issue has not been been finalised and sought an action taken report (ATR) on this matter by October 14. The order came after CPCB told the green tribunal that the items covered under EPR in PWM Rules, 2018 are multi-layered plastic sachets or pouches or packaging, thus,

items such as pens and other plastic products have not been covered under Extended Producers Liabilities. "National Framework for EPR under PWM Rules, 2018 is under consideration at MoEF&CC. CPCB has communicated to MoEF to clearly enumerate the items to be covered under EPR," the apex pollution monitoring body said. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) told the NGT that it has suggested three measures to producers, importers, and brand owners for disposal of plastic waste including pens. The tribunal was hearing a plea filed by Avani Mishra against unchecked use of plastic pens having adverse impact on the environment.

'India's role in production of vaccine critical in containing pandemic'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates has said India's willingness to play a "big role" in manufacturing COVID-19 vaccine and allow it to supply to other developing countries will be a critical part in containing the pandemic globally. In an exclusive interview to PTI, Gates, whose foundation is focusing on fighting the pandemic, called it the "next biggest thing" the world has been confronted with after the World War. The Microsoft co-founder said the world is looking to India for large scale production of COVID-19 vaccine once it is rolled out. "Obviously, all of us want to

get a vaccine out in India as fast as we can, once we know that it's very effective and very safe, and so the plans are coming into focus that sometime next year, it's very likely that roll-out will take



place and take place in fairly big volume," he said. "The world is also looking to India for some of that capacity to be available to other developing countries. Exactly what that allocation formula looks like will have to be figured out," Gates added. Scientists and pharmaceutical companies globally are racing against time to find a vaccine for the coronavirus pandemic which has killed about 9,32,000 people and infected around 24 million. Some of the vaccine candidates have entered the third and final phase of testing. "This is not like a world war, but it's the next biggest thing after that that we've ever had," he said.

Arabian Sea saw five cyclones in 2019 against average of one per yr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There were five cyclones over the Arabian Sea in 2019 against the average of one per year, the Ministry of Earth Sciences said on Tuesday. Also, 2019 witnessed the development of more intense cyclones over the Arabian Sea, the ministry said in response to a question in Rajya Sabha. "Based on the statistics during 1891-2017, on an average five cyclones develop over North Indian Ocean in a year



with four developing over Bay of Bengal and one over Arabian Sea," the ministry stated. In the recent past, an increase in frequency has been observed in formation of cyclones in the North Indian

Ocean, it noted. "The occurrence of five cyclones over Arabian Sea in 2019 against the normal of one per year equals the previous record of 1902 for the highest annual cyclone frequency over Arabian Sea," it added. There were one, three and five cyclones over the Arabian Sea in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively, the ministry said. There were two, four and three cyclones over the Bay of Bengal in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively, it said.

No dignity of labour

Govt coldly denies compensation to dead migrants saying it doesn't have data. Can it heartlessly ignore facts or credible media reports?



Benjamin Disraeli once said, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics." Perhaps this is what the Government has internalised in dealing with a national crisis. Since it doesn't believe in any kind of data collection that has not been commissioned by it, it denies that there has been any migrant death during the pandemic-induced lockdown. It doesn't matter that its white lies are caught out by countless heart-breaking stories in the media of labourers turfed out of their city jobs overnight, forced to trudge back to their villages and without money, succumbing to hunger and illness on the way or even to destitution at their homes,

without relief or dole of any kind. This denial of reality by the Government is not only brutal in its insensitivity but also a shabby disowning of its responsibility in keeping a nation together in the middle of an unprecedented crisis. Worst, its inhuman response came on the floor of the Parliament where, to a question on whether families of those who had lost their lives while trying to reach home during the lockdown had been compensated, the Union Labour Ministry put out a clinical statement that since there was no data on migrant deaths, the "question does not arise" of relief and aid. Even if one were to assume that the concerned Minister, his office and bureaucrats had for some curious reason blacked themselves out from news about India's worst reverse migration, how does the Ministry explain its own admission that more than one crore migrants made their way back to their home States from various corners of the country? Can it blithely assume, therefore, that no hazard befell them, considering most were daily wage earners and had nothing to fall back upon? Hungry, sick and walking for days, were they in an endurance test on a reality show where their deaths could be easily dismissed as collateral damage? Is the figure not an indication of the jobs lost in the country's largely unorganised labour market? For once, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi reacted rightly, tweeting, "If you haven't counted, have the deaths not taken place?" Also, how can the Government discount the deaths recorded by its own Railway Ministry of the many migrants who died on Shramik trains that were organised much later to ferry them back home? Or were run over by trains as they fell asleep on tracks, exhausted and beaten? More than 1,400 road accidents killed 750 people, including 198 migrant workers, between March 25 and May 31.

Even if the Government doesn't believe in statistics, the world does. Especially, those that come from credible organisations of long standing and which are relied upon by policy-makers themselves. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have already listed that 41 lakh jobs were lost in the country during the pandemic. A World Bank report in April indicated that the livelihood of nearly 40 million internal migrants had been affected. Recently, the Centre for Monitoring India Economy (CMIE) said that five million salaried people had lost their jobs in July alone while that figure had peaked in April at 17.7 million unemployed. Further, 37.5 million students have been out of campus and are staring at a year without prospects. Without direct cash transfers, the credit-based stimulus packages, which address structural facets of the economy, have made little sense to the wage earners. A lot of them have sought refuge in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), participating in schemes with a 100-day work assurance. Such is the plight that there has been a surge in enrolment with even degree holders (MA, BBA) and self-employed youth signing up for project work and digging as they have lost their jobs in the cities. About 14 crore people across the country have MGNREGA job cards. The Government will need a massive ₹2.8 lakh crore if each card holder can get a guaranteed 100 days of work this year. Still MGNREGA, in its present form, alone cannot take care of the returning migrants unless its scope is extended to include agricultural activities. The Centre did well by raising the allocation for this scheme but a chunk of this has gone in clearing arrears. Even this financial year began with pending wage and material liabilities of ₹16,045 crore. An allocation of ₹1 lakh crore for FY 2020-21 would mean that ₹84,000 crore is available for employment generation this year. Besides, even with the scheme receiving the highest allocation since it was first rolled out, it accounts for just 0.47 per cent of the GDP. This is much lower than the World Bank's recommendation of 1.7 per cent for optimal functioning. The second challenge is of uniform implementation as States with differing priorities and machineries are entrusted with it. With fund leakages and corruption at the level of local self-Government, the scheme has gone askew in many places. There has been a consistent demand for expanding the number of work days beyond the existing 100 days but the national average number of days employed per household in the last four years has been just 47. May be this is an opportune moment to align the scheme with economic imperatives. But more needs to be done. While individual States are already setting up job portals to list returnee workers with their skill sets and allocate them appropriate work zones, this ought to be pan-India so that labour-starved States can benefit too. Till we value the labourer, recovery will be a chimera, a smart India a paper town. Besides, *atmanirbharata* can truly take off when we value and respect fellow human beings and not deny their existence.

Equality in marriage

Going through courts will only harden extremist viewpoints on same-sex spouses. There needs to be a public debate



When the Supreme Court struck down the penal provisions of Section 377 that criminalised all but vaginal intercourse, it effectively removed the legal persecution of homosexual relationships. Now a group of petitioners has approached the Supreme Court asking that it mandates that same-sex marriage be legalised in India. Surprisingly, for some in the LGBTQ community, this petition is being led by Right-wing agent provocateur Abhijit Iyer-Mitra, who has identified himself as a homosexual for many years. Yet the Solicitor-General (SG) of India Tushar Mehta, arguing before the Division Bench, has toed the cultural line that our values will not allow us to recognise same-sex marriage.

Make no mistake, a same-sex marriage has been a contentious and highly debated issue for many years in many parts of the world. In Australia, the debate ran for years until a much-publicised direct referendum approved it and allowed lawmakers to legislate to that effect. This newspaper feels that same-sex marriages should ideally be first debated in the public sphere and then in Parliament because any changes to laws governing marriage would have to be effected in the legislature, not in courts. That will take a certain amount of time and that will allow for the hardest views against such a move to soften as happened in the US. Going through the courts will only harden the viewpoints of religious and social extremists of every hue. The signature of a judge does not do away with centuries of discrimination and hate, which are very often wrapped up in what we call "values." This is why the view of the SG is disappointing, and ideally he should have argued that this is something for Parliament to discuss and the time is right for the discussion to start. Anyone who understands the legislative process knows that such a major change will take time but unless a process is started, no change can ever take place. Is the time right for India to start discussing how to legalise same-sex marriage? Yes, it is. And we should have no pretence that our values do not allow such things. The law should not discriminate against same-sex marriages and the shared rights of partners. And like in most other nations where same-sex marriage is now legal, the happiest people are always the divorce lawyers, because same-sex marriage means same-sex divorce as well.

opinion06

PLA's 'Peace Disease'

Battle experience cannot be bought and this could expose the Chinese chimera on the battlefield



BHOPINDER SINGH

None less than the Chinese leader Xi Jinping himself has conceded that the world's largest standing military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), with more than 2.1 million active-duty strength, is afflicted by the "Peace Disease." Since taking over the reins of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the General Secretary and chairmanship of the Central Military Commission (CMC) in 2012, Xi has unleashed transformational investments and restructuring in the PLA in terms of doctrinal, strategic, technological, cultural and on-boarding of weapon platforms. Yet, he remains acutely conscious of the combat inexperience that besets a military force that has not been tested since 1979, where it came a cropper against a decidedly inferior Vietnamese force. Importantly, the Vietnamese forces that had fought the Chinese in 1979 were still blood-soaked from fighting the American forces for nearly two decades, and had even worn out the supposedly better organised, trained and equipped military then. The essential mass of the Chinese PLA in 1979 had last seen a full theatre-level combat only in the early 1950s (Korean War) and soldiers, therefore, were raw and untested when they had taken on the Vietnamese. They were soon made to pay a price for lazily assuming that a larger force, better equipment and aggressive posturing could compensate for combat inexperience. It is this foreboding pertaining to the obvious inexperience of today's PLA that Xi has been alluding to in the context of "Peace Disease," even as it continues its optics of aggressive posturing, intimidation and global expansionism.

There are other elements compounding the "Peace Disease" that are pertinent in questioning the core spirit of PLA's fighting abilities. First, the perennial concern of ensuring PLA's loyalty and subservience to the civilian CCP – this got magnified by the purges initiated against the PLA Generals in the initial Xi years and elevating his own "young guard." Not only was this "young guard" of post-1979 vintage but the essentiality of "unity of command" in a Chinese combat unit (at compa-



ny levels) is always diluted and compromised with the shared command responsibility of the political officers, who are responsible for ensuring the non-military task of loyalty to the party, i.e. CCP. A vital chink in the structural formation of the PLA is the relative under-development of the non-commissioned officers (NCO cadre), which is invaluable for operational efficacy. The steel of the Indian Army that shone in the Kargil operations was attributable among other things to the "junior command" that led from the front, where the role of NCO cadre was significant. Unlike the militaries of India (or even Pakistan), which are bloodied in real time operational experience in internal urgencies or restive borders, the Chinese "Peace Disease" comes with accompanying laxities. Even the 1967 Nathu La and Cho La border clashes in the Indo-China history were symptomatic of a recalibrated Indian military that was by then battle-hardened and in a very different frame of mind from the Indian military of 1962.

Undoubtedly, China has embarked on mammoth military investments that ensure that its annual budgetary allocation (estimated at \$261-266 billion in 2019) towards its armed forces is almost four times that of India. There is debatable realism about the Chinese claims in cutting-edge military technologies (the Chengdu J-20 Stealth 5th gen-

“XI HAS UNLEASHED INVESTMENTS AND RESTRUCTURING IN THE PLA IN TERMS OF DOCTRINAL, STRATEGIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND ON-BOARDING OF WEAPON PLATFORMS. YET, HE IS CONSCIOUS OF THE COMBAT INEXPERIENCE THAT BESETS A MILITARY FORCE THAT HAS NOT BEEN TESTED SINCE 1979”

eration fighter plane) or about the quality of training, restructuring, command systems and so on. Despite its claimed proficiency in indigenous weaponry, China has openly sought S-300 and S-400 anti-aircraft systems, SU-27 and SU-35 fighter jets from Russia, among other platforms and technologies to "reverse engineer." But where the Chinese score over countries like India is in the way they have internalised "security" as an integral component of their national vision, international manoeuvres and strategic calculus for all policy decisions, be it internal or external. Whereas, beyond selective invoking of the "Indian soldier" whenever tensions looms, the Indian governance has diminished the role, relevance or priority on defence matters and only displays knee-jerk or politically competitive "investments" in the said domain. Ironically the mismanagement of India's domestic affairs by its political classes has ensured that the armed forces have not suffered any "Peace Disease."

Battle experience is one of the most important features that determines the fate of forces, along with others like the lethality of weapons, processes, leadership, numerical strength or even environmental factors like social, cultural or political moorings. Japan's "banzai" culture and motivation levels could compensate for material disadvan-

tages. The numerically far-superior and experienced Iraqi military (after the decade long Iran-Iraq war) got decimated within 100 hours by the superiority of American weapons, training and professionalism in the first Gulf War. At the same time, the same battle-experienced and obviously more professional American military has been forced to "pull out" of Afghanistan when faced by the rag-tag Taliban militia who neither have the matching weaponry, training, nor the infrastructural wherewithal.

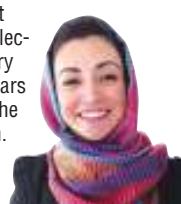
The Chinese awkwardness with the reciprocal stare-down at Doklam, Galwan gallantry and recent operations of the Indian Army in occupying advantageous heights is reflective of the "Peace Disease" that has been sought to be compensated by sabre-rattling, deceit and troops/infrastructural build-up.

Lieutenant General He Lei of the PLA had famously remarked a couple of years ago that his biggest regret before retiring was that he never fought a war – his successors are even more distant from war experience, whereas, those on the other side may have other concerns and deficiencies, but "Peace Disease" is certainly not one of them. Battle experience cannot be bought and this could expose the Chinese chimera on the battlefield.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

SOUND BITE

AFG winning with the highest votes the competitive CSW election today represents a victory for the process started 19 years ago when we committed to the empowerment of our women.



Afghanistan Ambassador —Adela Raz

I have worked on a few deliveries especially for the T20 format. It will be there for all to see during the IPL. You have to plan every time.



Cricketer —Kuldeep Yadav

Pakistan has fully facilitated the process that culminated in the US-Taliban Peace Agreement in Doha on February 29 and has reached this juncture.



Pakistan's Foreign Minister —Shah Mahmood Qureshi

I am Black, son of a Black, grandson and great-grandson of a Black. I am proud and do not see myself as different from anyone. Racism exists.



Footballer —Neymar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Where is the logic?

Sir — The recent statement by the Government in Parliament about not maintaining records or the non-availability of data about the actual number of deaths of migrant labourers and the total number of job losses is immature and illogical. On one side, the Government had proudly announced a package of ₹20 lakh crore to meet the losses occurred due to the lockdown along with infinite advertisements about it. On the other hand, it has simply denied sharing the actual position of the migrant labourers. The working class, along with the farmers, are regarded as the backbone of the economy and if they remain unemployed, then the GDP of the nation will never recover. The Government must seriously consider the situation as the GDP is at an all-time low and unemployment has broken all previous records. It cannot disown labourers.

Navneet Seth
Punjab

Fair play

Sir — It is noteworthy that Janata Dal (United) MP

Crime graph shoots up in Goa

Considering the sudden spate of high-profile exposures, involving drugs, gambling and fake-currency notes in Goa, one is led to believe that crime is a perennial affair and not the consequence of the vagaries of the economic scene prevalent at any time of the year. Although revelling in its fame as a highly sought after tourist destination, it would not be wrong to state here that Goa has also been much maligned by activities of criminal gangs and their nexus.

Goa has frequently been in the news for gambling, sex and drugs. Crimes like rape, murder and gang wars are the inevitable consequences. Sadly, the Government has not done anything exceptional to dispel notions of the State being a vice capital of the nation. While it is contended that Goa witnessed virtually zero crime between March and May, when the lockdown was in force, it would imply that the policing during this period was at its best, where the stern measures adopted deterred any criminal activity. Or was it the fear of the virus that kept those with a criminal bent of mind indoors?



It would, however, be unfair to criticise Goa Police for failing to take advantage of the lull period to subsequently improve the law and order situation in the State. Simply because alertness levels and vigilance are dependent on manpower and there is an acute shortage of personnel.

Pachu Menon
Goa

Abe's legacy

Sir — Japan's governing party has elected Yoshihide Suga as its new leader to succeed Shinzo Abe. Suga received 377 votes and won the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) elections, which were held after Abe resigned on health grounds. Suga received support from the party, whose members expect

him to continue Abe's policies. Suga is known for his iron fist and getting the job done. He is reformist and has worked to achieve policies by breaking territorial barriers. His efforts in achieving a boom in tourism and decreasing cellphone bills are praiseworthy. He is expected to continue the stepped up alliance with India, one that Abe had worked hard on with our Prime

Minister Narendra Modi.
Sanjana Soni
Ujjain

A clarification

In an article dated August 5, 2020, titled *Turning liability to asset*, authored by Prof Gourav Vallabh, the following paragraphs were inadvertently attributed to him. They were in the nature of collaborative information. "...Merely privatising the PSBs will get us nowhere. Along with this move, the need is for sector-specific reforms. In his book, *What the Economy Needs Now*, Rajan (former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan) has suggested that privatisation be just one element of the overall reform process. It should not become the foremost plank in banking sector reform and is fraught with adverse consequences. To put it simply, Rajan is of the view that 'simple' solutions like privatising PSBs may be no panacea. Consolidation and privatisation of PSBs can have little to do with setting Indian banking right as these actions may be necessary but will not be sufficient by a long chalk..."

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FIRST COLUMN

US showing ominous signs

It would be a very big deal if the US started distributing a vaccine that has not been properly tested. Yet the signs are that this is just what is going to happen



GWYNNE DYER

Line of the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies have just promised not to apply for regulatory approval for any new COVID-19 vaccine before it has gone through all three phases of clinical study. Why would they do such a thing? You'd be surprised if brain surgeons got together and promised not to operate while drunk, or if the bus drivers' union publicly pledged that its members will not drive recklessly. They don't do that because operating sober and driving carefully are just part of the job. So is ensuring that new vaccines are safe and effective. Yet nine major players in the international pharmaceuticals market — AstraZeneca (UK-Sweden), BioNTech (Germany), GlaxoSmithKline (UK), Johnson & Johnson (US), Merck (Germany), Moderna (US), Novavax (US), Pfizer (US) and Sanofi (France) — all felt obliged to reassure the public that they won't cheat. What's up? Obviously, it's the perception that other players in the same market may indeed be cutting corners. We're not talking here about Russia and China, both of which have begun inoculating some key workers with vaccines that are still listed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as being in clinical trials. No surprise here: Everybody knows that those regimes break the rules whenever they feel like it.

Usually the Donald Trump Administration's actions are viewed with weary resignation by the rest of the world, but it would still be a very big deal if the US started distributing a vaccine that had not been properly tested. Yet the signs are that this is just what is going to happen. Last month at the Republican national convention, the US President told the delegates and the country: "We are developing life-saving therapies and will produce a vaccine before the end of the year, or maybe even sooner." On September 4, the US Government's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) told American health officials that "limited COVID-19 vaccine doses may be available by early November 2020."

More specifically, the CDC urged State authorities to consider "waiving requirements" and grant permits to McKesson Corporation so they can start distributing a vaccine by November 1. You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. The presidential election is on November 3, two days later: That's long enough for the glad news to get around and floating voters to be swayed in favour of Trump, but too short for any defects in the rushed vaccine to come to light. Donald Trump is going to liberate Americans from the curse of COVID in a little less than two months. If the vaccine's miraculous properties subsequently fade, even if it turns out to kill large numbers of people, that won't matter. The votes will have been counted and Trump will be back in office for another four years. That, at least, is the scenario that is currently envisaged by the people around Trump.

It is a plausible one, especially if the race has tightened by then. Just 1,00,000 votes in three States, mostly from people who had previously voted Democratic, put Trump in the White House in 2016. A miracle vaccine could certainly swing that many votes again.

The nine pharmaceutical majors, who felt the need to issue a "historic pledge" to uphold scientific and ethical standards, were doubtless driven by this scenario. Even if there really has been an American breakthrough, they would still have to cope with the public's suspicion that Trump is cheating — and the mistrust that will also attach to any other early vaccines. It is possible that the vaccine or vaccines that Trump is about to unleash on the American public really do work and are safe. It would be a historic first in the development of vaccines — having a COVID vaccine ready for general use by next June or July would normally be seen as a remarkable achievement — but miracles do happen. The problem is that they don't happen often, and if the full testing regime is not followed, you don't know if this is one of those times.

It's only because the AstraZeneca/Oxford University vaccine was going through the full third phase of tests, involving tens of thousands of individuals and many months of testing, that they spotted a bad reaction requiring hospitalisation and paused the tests. Now they have resumed them again. The American miracle vaccine will only start third-stage tests at the same time that it is made generally available. Pauses like AstraZeneca/Oxford University's happen often in the development of a vaccine. And the pause was temporary because one person in the UK had a side effect but later it was deemed safe to continue with the testing. But even a very low-frequency bad reaction can be a mass killer when tens of millions of people are being vaccinated, and these are not desperately sick people willing to risk anything for a cure. They are people in good health, and you mustn't kill them.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work'.)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE PROBLEM OF DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ADDICTION IS INCREASING. DRUGS COME TO INDIA VIA CHINA AND PAKISTAN. OUR FILM INDUSTRY TOO IS AFFECTED.

—BJP MP AND ACTOR RAVI KISHAN





YESTERDAY ONE OF OUR MEMBERS IN THE LOK SABHA, WHO IS FROM THE FILM INDUSTRY, SPOKE AGAINST IT. IT IS A SHAME. THE INDUSTRY NEEDS PROTECTION.

—SP MP AND ACTOR JAYA BACHCHAN

Move the needle on cooling

After experiencing the catastrophic effects of climate change, it's high time for all nations to join hands in adopting low carbon pathways to restore the ozone layer



SHANMUGANATHAN K



ASHISH SARASWAT

The ozone layer, the Achilles' Heel of our Earth's atmosphere, is responsible for protecting our terrestrial and marine life. The layer, which is a highly reactive and made of trace gas, constitutes about three molecules for every 10 million molecules of air and absorbs bits of the sun's ultra-violet (UV) radiation that hits the Earth. However, decisive research in the early 1970s underlined signs of trouble in this vital blanket. In 1974, late Professor Sherwood Rowland and Professor Mario Molina at the University of California, Irvine, published an article in *Nature* elucidating the detrimental threats to the ozone layer from chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) gases.

It was found that CFC, which is commonly used in refrigerants for cooling applications and aerosols, was eating away at the ozone layer once it was released into the Earth's atmosphere. The situation got worse as the consumption of CFC exponentially increased in various business and industries due to its low cost and properties, namely non-inflammability and non-toxicity.

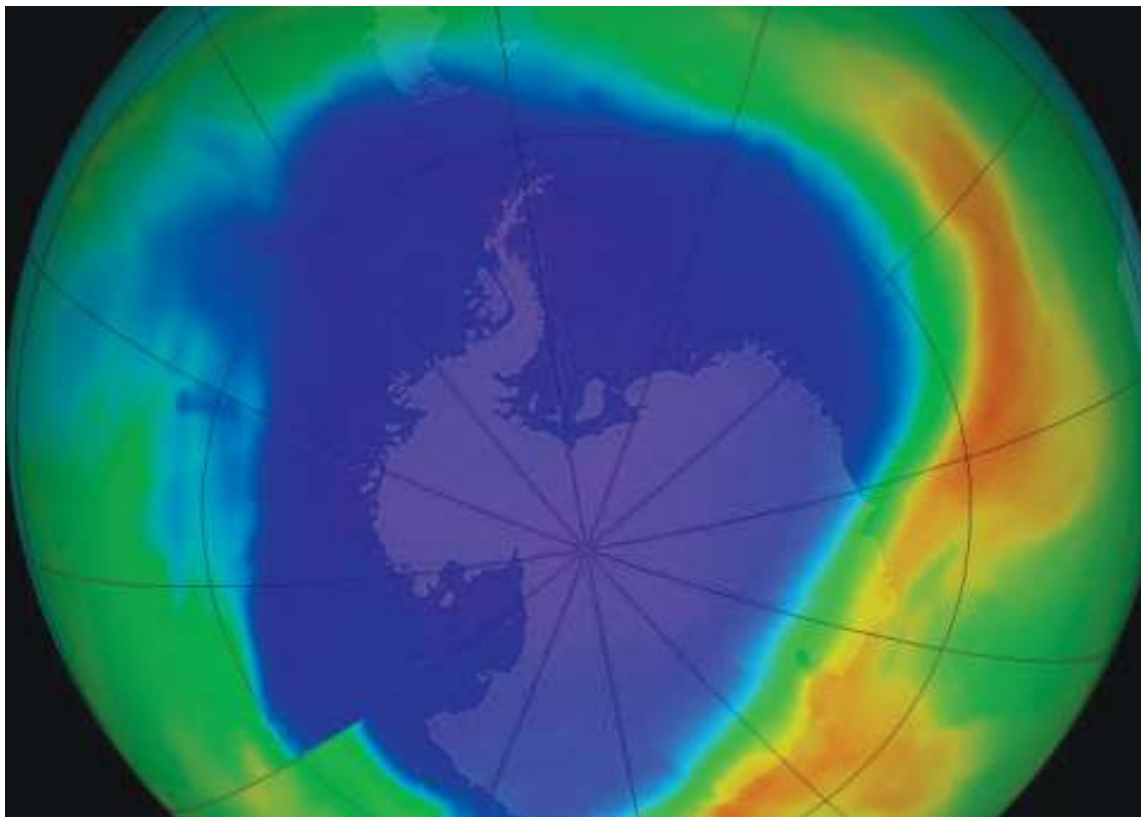
Beginning of the world's most successful environmental agreement: Eleven years after the findings of Professor Rowland and Professor Molina, a team of English scientists, too, learnt about the thinning of the ozone layer, which is popularly known as the "Ozone Hole." They realised that the CFCs had started to break down the ozone, leading to the entry of harmful UV rays into the Earth's surface. This had led to an increase in skin cancer cases among humans and was harming terrestrial and marine ecosystems, too. With the objective to preserve human health and protect the environment from the harmful effects of the depleted ozone layer, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer came into existence on March 22, 1985.

The convention provided the framework for the Montreal Protocol (MP), the most successful environmental agreement till date to achieve universal ratification. On September 16, 1987, the United Nations (UN) and 45 other countries signed the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. It aimed to preserve the protective shield through worldwide control, reduction and phasing out of production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances (ODS). Three decades ago, the speech of a 12-year-old girl, Severn Cullis-Suzuki from Vancouver, Canada at the 1992 Earth Summit caught the attention of leaders of parties and the UN in strategising expeditious measures for phasedown of ODS. "I am afraid to go out in the sun now because of the hole in our ozone. I am afraid to breathe the air because I don't know what chemicals are in it. If you don't know how to fix it, please stop breaking it," said Cullis-Suzuki in her landmark speech.

In 1994, the UN General Assembly proclaimed September 16 as the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol. Today, the Parties to the Montreal Protocol have phased out 98 per cent of their ODS, which saved an estimated two million people from skin cancer annually.

Refrigerants, the key determinants: The establishment of a regime for refrigerants started taking shape during the 18th century when the world embraced the technological advancement

“ IN 1994, THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROCLAIMED SEPTEMBER 16 AS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER, COMMEMORATING THE DATE OF THE SIGNING, IN 1987, OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL. TODAY, THE PARTIES TO THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL HAVE PHASED OUT 98 PER CENT OF THEIR ODS, WHICH SAVED AN ESTIMATED TWO MILLION PEOPLE FROM SKIN CANCER ANNUALLY ”



known as the vapour compression refrigerating system which later became the most successful commercial technology.

The unprecedented need for cooling resulted in the application of early adopted natural refrigerants (carbon dioxide, ammonia, sulphur dioxide, water and air). The first generation of refrigerants was gradually succeeded by the fluorochlorochemicals, commonly known as Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) and Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) like R13, R123, R22 due to their varied properties like stability, non-flammability and so on. Initially, this regime of refrigerants was hardly looked at by researchers from the environmental perspective.

Later, their detrimental impacts on the ozone layer led to usage of Hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) and Perfluorocarbons (PFC), which are not ozone depleting, but had global warming potential that can be thousands of times more potent than carbon dioxide in contributing to climate change. During the early 2000s, the unprecedented adoption of HFC refrigerants in majority of applications led to the rise of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the associated global warming effects.

Continuing the momentum: Realising the colossal impact of the carbon footprints caused by HFC refrigerants, world leaders and the UN had convened at the capital of Rwanda for the 28th meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol in October, 2016. The convention led to the formation of the Kigali Amendment, intending to reduce the emissions of GHGs in a move that could prevent up to 0.5° Celsius of global warming by the end of this century, while continuing to protect the ozone layer. Aiming at a sustainable climate, as a course of action under the Kigali Amendment, the world economies are now making efforts in a phased manner to scale down the currently-used HCFC

and the high global warming potential (GWP) HFC by the late 2040s to countermeasure global warming.

Thus, swift adoption of low-GWP refrigerants can be well addressed by exploring environmental benefits as well as market readiness. However, while pushing the envelope, it is important to see the refrigerant transition from the perspective of market adaptability, maintaining the business-as-usual scenario. The overall environmental impact of the refrigerant can only be reduced by integrating refrigerants with low upfront costs, energy efficiency of overall refrigeration systems and safety aspects.

For instance, merely changing a refrigerant in an existing refrigeration system without modifying it may reverse the desired economic and environmental benefits. To avoid such scenarios, the cooling industry has been putting its efforts into designing systems to ensure commercial viability of next-generation low-GWP refrigerants. However, the use of such new systems is very limited and primarily depends on end users who are inclined to the existing systems with commonly-used refrigerants due to their low costs and already proven results.

This year, the theme of the Ozone Day is "Ozone for life: 35 years of ozone layer protection", commemorating the success of the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. At the same time, the continuous release of GHG emissions into the atmosphere has resulted in the decade of 2010-2019 being the hottest-ever. After experiencing the catastrophic effects of climate change, it's high time for all nations to join hands in adopting low carbon pathways for our future generations. The deployment of sustainable energy options and the adoption of environment-friendly refrigerants in the cooling sector are expected to avoid upto 0.5° Celsius of global warming by 2100.

Cooling: India harbours 16 per cent of the world's population but currently only around seven to nine per cent of its people have access to air-conditioners. Cooling is cross-sectoral, spanning wide thematic areas like space cooling, industry, transport, food security and so on. According to the 2018 International Energy Agency (IEA) report, India's cooling industry is expected to grow exponentially by 2050. Recognising the accelerated growth of cooling needs in the future, India proactively introduced its strategic document, *India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)* in March, 2019 to show its commitment to explore and adopt cutting-edge solutions for more sustainable cooling with less environmental impacts.

To tackle this unprecedented growth, it is imperative for the Indian cooling industry to strategise accelerated methodologies by promoting indigenous research and development activities to practise the best energy-efficient technology options and adopt the next generation environmentally-friendly refrigerants in a business-as-usual scenario.

This can be well-supported by actions like ensuring the synergies among inter-ministerial actions, creation of a strong institutional framework to identify, certifying and financing innovative cooling technologies, fast-tracking the patenting procedures for new cooling technologies and effective implementation of existing cooling policies.

In the long-term on the demand side, the emphasis should be placed on factors like creating a user demand pool in favour of cooling aided by public-private-partnership and facilitating credit-linked incentives to the manufacturers and users adopting newly-developed cooling technologies and so on.

(Shanmuganathan is Associate Fellow and Saraswat is Project Manager, Cooling Centre for Global Environment Research, TERI)

The death of a credible media with a backbone

Those in charge of publicity policies hardly realise that by attacking critics they are instigating an equally vitriolic counter-narrative



SIDHARTH MISHRA

The criticism of the present turmoil in the Indian media, particularly television, comes with the rebuttal of the critic being a Libtard. The next volley is about the media being sympathetic to the earlier regime too and why then no questions were asked for such sympathies. There is no denying the fact that many present-day vociferous flag-bearers, protesting the slant being brazenly projected in the media, were themselves guilty of enjoying undue access and patronage, blighting the line between honest journalism and patronised pen-push-ing.

Having said this, the aforementioned premise cannot be justified as the only factor for acrimony and rancour, which has come to define the

state of Indian television. It has more to do with the market and the revenue models. This writer worked with *The Pioneer* at a time and in an era when it was seen as the only major Right of the Centre English daily. But to the credit of the editorial leadership of the newspaper, despite the slant, it never discouraged contrary opinion and gave prominent space to it.

More importantly, it held the ideological position, paying a commercial price as many Government agencies and departments worked overtime to demolish the revenue model of the newspaper. It indeed was a challenging task to be the paper of the Opposition and also being the paper of the Right of the Centre thought.

The same cannot be said about the present-day votaries of the Right of the Centre ideology. It's more a case of being on the right side of the Government. Being honest to an ideology demands a price, which these present-day pretenders did not pay then, nor are they paying now, as on both the occasions they were on the right side of the Government.

Then there is another issue.

Does being supportive of a political thought make a media house mortgage its right to question a Government of the same ideology? During the prime ministership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, there was this instance of a border skirmish with Bangladesh in which a Border Security Force officer was killed. His corpse was returned in a most undignified manner. The images made one shudder and at the same time angry even as the Government talked of peace.

The front-page editorial in *The Pioneer* said, "Bend, don't genuflect." Now this was a startling criticism coming from the newspaper known for its ideological proximity to the Government of the day. This must have needed much courage on the part of the editor, and a real large heart on the part of the Government to take the criticism in the right spirit.

The current news trend followed by the media houses, of the Government never going wrong, should make the powers that be worry. This worry should be on two counts: First, the loss of credibility of

these media houses and anchors known to be sympathetic to the Government. Second, by giving no space to the Opposition, the mainstream media has pushed it into a situation where it has launched its own agitprop vehicles, expressing distrust in the media houses, calling them vehicles of Government propaganda.

Those in charge of the publicity policies of the Government, by unleashing a vendetta towards critics, realise little that they are instigating an equally vitriolic counter-narrative. With social media and technological advancements completely democratising the media space, a Government's image cannot be lynchpinned on mere whataboutery of prime-time anchors.

We live in times where troll armies are ever-ready to provide their services at mud-slinging. It's just the question of who is hiring them. While it has taken more than half-a-century to create memes of Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being subjected to this obnoxious criticism in his lifetime. Nehru and several Prime Ministers

after him were lucky that they were subjected to such criticism by erudite scholar-cartoonists like RK Laxman. They were at the same time fortunate that the space of social media did not exist then, which could have dragged them into the muck.

Today counter-narratives on Government claims make it to various social media platforms within moments of being released in the public domain. Dependence on fake and misrepresented facts has come to create an atmosphere of distrust, where ready acceptance of a news, howsoever true, is not easy.

This situation has given rise to such an atmosphere that reason is the biggest casualty. When fake information becomes a marketable commodity, there would not be very many clients for evidence-based, well-reasoned information. Let's take the case of the "infodemic", a term coined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on the surge of information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The contagion in fact has hit the media hardest both in matters of finances and credibility. The failure of journalists, both television and

newspaper, to go beyond the Government's briefings on the pandemic and its opinionated criticism has left the consumers of news absolutely chary. Nobody has a clear picture on where the virus is steering the world.

If there is distrust for a product, there obviously would not be a market for it. The market searches for such products which can be easily consumed. So here is a case of a market looking for news products. In fact, the present situation reminds one of Italian dramatist, novelist, poet and short story writer Luigi Pirandello's early 20th century play titled, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. The initial reception to the play from the audience was it being incomprehensible. It was only after Pirandello added a foreword to the play a few years later that it came to be better appreciated. The connoisseurs of news are today eagerly waiting for the foreword to the current incommensurable media scenario.

(The writer is professor-chairperson, Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication, VIPS, GGSIPU, Delhi)

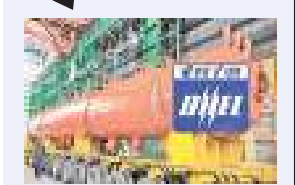


FOREIGN EYE



DO NOT ISOLATE THE ELDERLY

A survey of British doctors has found that almost nine in 10 expect a second peak of the Coronavirus in the next six months. Data suggest the rate of viral transmission nationally is again lurching out of control. A national lockdown may be only weeks away. The Government must find a way to ensure that the elderly and vulnerable do not endure an autumn and winter of total isolation from their loved ones. (The Guardian editorial)



OKAYA bags order from BHEL for power storage
New Delhi: Energy storage solution provider OKAYA on Tuesday said it has bagged an order from BHEL for commissioning power storage systems at three locations in Delhi. OKAYA will deploy lithium-ion-based battery energy storage system (BESS) solution at three locations, the company said in a statement. "OKAYA, a flagship company of Okaya Power Group, has bagged a major contract from Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) for supply, installation and commissioning of 410 KWH Lithium ion BESS solution in Delhi for TERI (The Energy Resource Institute) Project," the statement said. Okaya Power Group is one of the largest manufacturers and suppliers of electric vehicle charging stations, lithium-ion batteries and lead acid batteries in India.



'Sales, after-sales showing very positive results'
New Delhi: Optimism over COVID-19 vaccine and gradual opening of the economy has resulted in improved business outlook and is helping Italian super sports car maker Lamborghini generate new orders in the Indian market, according to a top company official. With 'Unlock' gaining momentum in the country after the phase of lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Lamborghini India is finding that positive consumer sentiment is driving both its sales and after-sales services. "Business is moving good given the scenario. Yes, we have started delivering cars," Lamborghini India Head Sharad Agarwal told PTI. He further said, "there are new models which are coming in. We have a long waiting time (for the cars). People know that their cars are only going to arrive next year. I will say that our order inflow is pretty positive," Agarwal added.



Paytm First Games names Sachin as brand ambassador
New Delhi: Fintech major Paytm on Tuesday said its subsidiary Paytm First Games (PFG) has roped in cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar as its brand ambassador. The company has also earmarked Rs 300 crore to invest in growing the market for fantasy sports and other online gaming events this fiscal. The icon of a billion cricket-loving Indians, Sachin would be instrumental in creating awareness about the exciting genre of fantasy sports in the country. Other than Fantasy Cricket, he would help PFG promote and generate excitement around all sports including kabaddi, football and basketball," Paytm said in a statement.

Indian economy to shrink 9% in FY21, says ADB

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
India's coronavirus-battered economy will shrink by 9 per cent this fiscal, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) predicted on Tuesday saying growth outlook remains highly vulnerable to either a prolonged outbreak of the pandemic or a resurgence of cases. This will be the first time in four decades that the Indian economic growth will contract. In its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 Update, ADB forecasts a strong recovery for the economy in FY2021, with gross domestic product (GDP) growing by 8 per cent as mobility and business activities resume more widely. "India imposed strict lockdown measures to contain the spread of the pandemic and this has had a severe impact on economic activity," said ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada. Sawada further noted that "it is crucial that containment measures, such as robust test-



ing, tracking, and ensuring treatment capacities, are implemented consistently and effectively to stop the spread of COVID-19 and provide a sustainable platform for the economy's recovery for the next fiscal year and beyond." With lockdowns stalling private spending, ADB said GDP will shrink by 9 per cent in April 2020 to March 2021, sharply down from its June's forecast of (-) 4 per cent. "The growth outlook remains highly vulnerable to

India imposed strict lockdown measures to contain the spread of the pandemic and this has had a severe impact on economic activity," said ADB Chief

either a prolonged outbreak or a resurgence of cases, with the country now having one of the highest number of COVID-19 cases globally," It said. Other downside risks include increasing public and private debt levels that could affect technology and infrastructure investment, as well as rising non-performing loans caused by the pandemic that could further weaken the financial sector and its ability to support economic growth. ADB joins a chorus of inter-

India's rank slips to 54th in terms of rise in housing prices: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
India's rank slipped 11 places to 54th in terms of appreciation in residential prices, as housing rates declined nearly 2 per cent during June quarter compared with the year-ago period, according to property consultant Knight Frank. India is at 54th spot amongst the 56 countries and territories tracked in terms of appreciation in residential real estate prices, the consultant said. As per the 'Global House Price Index Q2 2020', housing prices in India declined 1.9 per cent year-on-year (YoY). "As compared to Q1 2020, India moves down 11 spots in the global index, from 43rd rank to 54th rank in Q2 2020," Knight Frank said. The Index tracks the movement in mainstream residential prices across 56 countries and territories worldwide using official statistics. In the 12-month percentage change for the period Q2 of 2019 to Q2 of 2020, Turkey led the annual rankings with prices up 25.7 per cent YoY, followed by Luxembourg at 13.9 per cent and Lithuania



with 12.4 per cent. Hong Kong was the weakest-performing territory in Q2 2020, with home prices falling to 2.8 per cent. "Mainstream residential prices across 56 countries and territories worldwide rose at an annual rate change of 4.7 per cent on average, compared to Q1 2020 at 4.4 per cent," the consultant said. According to the report, 9 per cent of the surveyed global countries and territories registered a decline in a yearly price growth. European countries occupy eight of the top 10 rankings in Q2 2020, which provides representations from the Baltic and Central and Eastern European nations as well. From the Asia Pacific region perspective, New Zealand and South Korea, which were ini-

tially seen to have effectively handled the pandemic, have registered mixed results. New Zealand slumped from second to 11th place in the rankings between March and June. However, the country recorded an annual price growth of 9 per cent, making it the top-performing market of the Asia Pacific region. South Korea has seen an annual price growth pick up to 1.3 per cent in Q2 2020. Knight Frank India CMD Shishir Bajjal said: "The residential sector has been impacted by low demand across most markets in India. Further, the slowdown due to the pandemic in the global economy has adversely affected the real estate sector and the purchasing power of homebuyers."

Dutch govt to unveil budget amid Covid scare

PNS ■ THE HAGUE
The Dutch government is unveiling its annual budget plans Tuesday, providing an indication of how one of Western Europe's most prosperous nations foresees the ongoing economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The budget announcement comes a day after the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said that the gross domestic product in the world's 20 major industrialized nations dropped by a record 6.9% in second quarter from the previous three-month period. The Dutch statistics office said in August that the national economy suffered an unprecedented 8.5% contraction in the second quarter, calling it "an economic catastrophe of exceptional proportions."



Measures to rein in the virus outbreak mean that the pageantry that normally accompanies the traditional state opening of Parliament has been dialed back significantly to ensure lawmakers adhere to the government's social distancing guidelines. There will be no horse-drawn carriage ride through the city by King Willem-Alexander, no joint meeting of the two houses of the Dutch parliament in the historic Knights Hall. Instead, lawmakers will make their way to a church near parliament for the ceremony, where the king delivers a speech outlining the government's policy plans for the coming year.

'Some states against borrowing options to meet GST shortfall'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Some states have objected to the proposed borrowing plan of the Centre to fund the GST revenue shortfall and they are being requested to exercise either of the two options, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur said. The Centre late last month gave two options to states to borrow either Rs 97,000 crore from a special window facilitated by the RBI or Rs 2.35 lakh crore from market and also proposed extending the compensation cess levied on luxury, demerit and sin goods beyond 2022 to repay the borrowing. "Some states have objected to the proposed two options. They are being requested to exercise one of the two options," Thakur said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. In reply to a separate question, Thakur said the provisional GST com-



pensation due to the 31 states and UTs stands at Rs 1,51,365 crore in the April-July period. "GST compensation cess collected in current FY 2020-21 is not sufficient to release the admissible GST compensation for period April-July, 2020. "Moreover, the GST compensation cess collected till July 2020 has been partly utilized for the purpose of GST compensation released to states for the period till March 2020," he added. In the current fiscal year, states are staring at

Global stocks rise on improved data

PNS ■ BEIJING/AP
Global stock markets were mixed Tuesday after Wall Street rose on a flurry of corporate deals and China's economic activity improved. London opened higher while Shanghai and Hong Kong gained. Tokyo declined and Frankfurt opened lower. U.S. stock futures gained. On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 index closed 1.3 per cent higher on Monday, erasing much of last week's loss. Wall St. appears to have recovered some of its mojo," Mizuho Bank said in a report. "The question to ask, though, is whether we are dealing with optimism or there is just optimism about deals." In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London gained 0.2 per cent to 6,038.41 while the DAX in Frankfurt sank 0.2 per cent to 13,162.48. The CAC 40 in France lost 0.2 per cent to 5,039.71. On Wall Street, futures for the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average were up 0.3 per cent. In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index gained 0.5 per cent to 3,295.68. The Chinese statistics agency cited it as a sign of "stable and continuous" economic recovery. The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo fell 0.4 per cent to 23,454.89 while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong added 0.4 per cent to 24,734.71. The S&P-ASX 200 in Sydney was down less than 0.1 per cent at 5,894.50.



US partners with Mekong nations to counter China

PNS ■ WASHINGTON
The Trump administration has announced the ambitious Mekong-US partnership which aims to curb China's growing influence in Southeast Asia and promote economic independence of partner nations. Apart from the US, the coalition includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam from Southeast Asia. It was formally launched after a virtual meeting on September 11. The Mekong-US partnership reflects the importance of the Mekong region to the United States, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Monday. He said these efforts will include working closely with Japan, Australia, South Korea,

India, and other like-minded partners. The cooperation name is derived from the Mekong river, which starts in Tibet and flows 4,180 km southeast through China, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, ending in the South China Sea. It forms the boundary between Laos, Burma and Thailand. "Our relationship with Mekong partner countries is an integral part of our Indo-Pacific vision and our strategic partnership with ASEAN," he said. "With more than USD 150 million in initial investments in regional programmes, we will build on the good work of the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) and the USD 3.5 billion in regional US assistance dur-

ing the last eleven years," he added. The LMI is the pre-existing regional cooperation programme of the US. The Mekong-US partnership will continue to strengthen water security and the work of the Mekong River Commission, Pompeo said, noting that now USD 55 million will be allotted to combat transnational crime, viz-a-viz., human trafficking, smuggling of narcotics, arms, and banned wildlife products. We need to be candid, however, about the challenges we face, including those from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which increasingly threatens the Mekong's natural environments and economic autonomy," Pompeo said.

Zoya looks to redefine luxury jewellery in India

PNS ■ MUMBAI
As India's retail environment gears up for the new normal, Titan, India's largest jewellery retailer is betting on brand Zoya, that has been redefining the luxury jewellery segment in India. Ajoy Chawla, CEO of Titan's Jewellery Division, was a panellist at Luxe Talks this weekend, sharing his insights into how Zoya is looking to enhance the experience of luxury, by engaging with customers in personalised and purpose filled ways. The concept of luxury has moved away from status display to being an expression of personal identity. The Zoya woman is well travelled, aesthetically astute and extremely discerning in her taste. Her journey is a heroine's journey, on which she reconnects with her own feminine self, break-



The concept of luxury has moved away from status display to being an expression of personal identity. The Zoya woman is well travelled, aesthetically astute and extremely discerning in her taste

her identity. Zoya is an expression of this connection," said Ajoy Chawla, CEO. To appeal to his target audience, Chawla believes there must be two dimensions; "There is the cultural capital that the brand dips into, bringing it alive by creating authentic stories, and there is the impeccable craftsmanship and international design language which appeals to this discerning group. India's cultural capital was so rich and diverse that we felt there was an opportunity. However, while the soul of the brand is Indian, we wanted Zoya to be the best in the world because luxury is about indulgence in fineness, which is very unique," he said. Zoya, the exquisite diamond boutique from the House of Tata, is a luxury brand of fine jewellery, renowned for its precision craftsmanship and distinguished design.

ing away freely from the patriarchy and dominance that may have influenced her for several years. It is a connection with

YouTube launches its TikTok rival, 'Shorts'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Competition in the short-video space in the country continues to intensify with YouTube being the latest entrant in the segment with its 'Shorts' offering as the Google-owned platform attempts to fill the void created after the ban of TikTok in India. In a blogpost, YouTube said it is building YouTube Shorts, a new short-form video experience (15 seconds or less), for creators and artists who want to shoot short, catchy videos using their mobile phones. "Over the next few days in India, we're launching an early beta of Shorts with a handful of new creation tools to test out. This is an early version of the product, but we're releas-

ing it now to bring you — our global community of users, creators and artists — on our journey with us as we build and improve Shorts," it added. YouTube said it will continue to add more features and expand to more countries in the coming months as it learns from users' feedback. On June 29, the Indian government banned 59 mobile apps with Chinese links, including the popular short video platform TikTok, terming these apps prejudicial to sovereignty of the country. Since then, a number of home-grown apps have been launched in the country, including Reposto, Chingari, Josh (Dailyhunt) and Moj (ShareChat). Facebook's Instagram, too,

are in the world," it said. The company said its team is focused on building its foundation across three main areas - create, getting discovered and watching. YouTube said it is starting to test new tools for creators and artists with its early beta in India. This includes a multi-segment camera to string multiple video clips together, the option to record with music from a large library of songs, speed controls, and a timer and countdown to easily record, hands-free. "We also recently rolled out a prominent new spot for the create icon on Android, starting in India. We'll continue to expand to iOS devices and in more countries soon. You can also expect more creation features in the coming months," it added.

US bans import of 5 Chinese goods produced using 'forced labour'

PNS ■ WASHINGTON
Washington, Sep 15 (PTI) The US has banned the import of five goods from China, including computer-parts, cotton and hair products, alleging that they are produced in forced labour camps in the restive Muslim-majority Xinjiang province. The US-China relations have deteriorated after the COVID-19 outbreak, with President Donald Trump squarely blaming Beijing for allowing the disease to spread across the world. The relations have further worsened over allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang province, autonomy of Hong Kong,



Tibet, and technology theft. In a statement on Monday, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said the products subject to the import ban are cotton, apparel, computer parts, and hair products. The fifth ban is on all products made with labour from the Lop County Number 4 Vocational Skills Education and Training Center in Xinjiang. In line with the WROs, the CBP will now detain shipments of these goods. The ban on goods produced using forced labour is in line with the US customs laws.

Hyderabad



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Wednesday
September 16, 2020

THIS SATURDAY, Kick out lockdown blues with long drive and barbeque

Monsoon calls for some delectable bingeing and weekends are for brunches to satiate our hunger pangs. While the pandemic is making us all conscious about eating outside, Novotel Hyderabad Airport, with utmost safety precautions, has introduced exclusive Saturday barbeque grill offering a magnificent range of specialties infused with fusion flavours. *The Pioneer's* **K RAMYA SREE** writes about this Saturday's spread, the flavours, hygiene maintained, and more.



A picturesque drive to the hotel, and unparalleled dining experience with dishes curated by Chef Varun M B, the culinary mastermind, will make this Saturday barbeque grill experience all the more special. The barbeque grill day has a huge spread of items that will enthrall the taste buds of both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. The spread has Fish Tikka, Mutton Kadhak Seekh, Ajwaini Murg Boti Kebab, and much more for the meat lovers, while vegetarians can feast into the mouth-watering Spice Baby Potato and Paneer Tikka, among others. The main course offers a range of vegetarian and non-vegetarian options to choose from, including Biryani, Noodles, Indian breads, and special curries. Guests can relish the free mocktails and delicacies like special marination meat, seafood, cheese and vegetables, corn on the cob, potatoes, homemade barbeque sauce, mustard, and more at Saturday's Barbeque.

Confident that guests will join them for a special culinary ride, Rubin Cherian, the General Manager, said, "We are happy to organise the 'Saturday Barbeque'. Our style

of food and service is the perfect fit for dining, all the guests can relish and enjoy the scrumptious vegetarian and non-vegetarian barbecues on live grills, embedded on the tables at the square restaurant. We are confident that our guest will join us for a special culinary ride."

While it is difficult to munch on every item, we did get to savour the must-eats recommended by the chef. First of all, was the butter garlic prawns, chermoula spiced chicken, fish tikka, and paneer tikka. The chermoula spiced chicken remains to be the most favourite item of all. Besides the live counters of grills, there were also live spreads of burgers, soups, chaat, biryani, and a sizable dessert counter. The dinner was concluded with the chef's special amla icecream with jaggery and chocolate soufflé, a unique taste that one will enjoy till the last bite.

The hotel is surrounded by lush green and manicured lawns, which are perfect for a leisurely walk or to enjoy a cup of coffee in the company of chirping birds. If you book your table well in advance, you will get to enjoy the cozy weather and enjoy the scrumptious food by staying close to nature. If you plan to



walk in during the day, ensure you take a stroll in the herb garden "The patch" where the hotel grows its organic produce of vegetables and various

other herbs. Next to the herb garden, is a site which is ideal to pitch a tent and camp under the starry skies. This can be accompanied by live

barbeque, some music along with our impeccable service and hospitality.

If you are a person who enjoys long drives, nature,

then walk into the Novotel Hyderabad Airport and enjoy dining with your family and friends to forget your lockdown blues.



Ruling TV, cinema, and our hearts since the '90s

Born on 15th June 1988 in Hyderabad to a Marathi mother and a Telugu father having a deep interest in cultural activities, Karuunaa Bhushan joined Bal Bhavan as a child, and since then, has been trained in classical and western dances, which helped her bag several roles in the Tollywood film industry and television too. She talks to **SHIKHA DUGGAL** about her journey thus far, her family, films and TV, and more



Karuunaa spent a majority of her childhood in Maharashtra that has helped develop her command over Marathi than Telugu, despite which, she went onto making her acting debut as a child artist in the Telugu film *Aahaa* that starred Jagapati Babu and was directed by Suresh Krishna. Today, she's a mother to a nine-year-old son. Be it her role in *Yuva* produced by Nagarjun Akkineni, Dr Kavitha on Maa TV, or, Narmada in *Pasupu Kumkuma*, she has been winning hearts with her roles. Let's get to know more about this excellent actress who is striking a fine balance between home and work.

TV ACTOR'S JOURNEY

She has been active in films and shared the screen with South India's top actors like Mega Star

Chiranjeevi, Akkineni Nagarjuna, Nandamuri Balakrishna, Jagapati Babu, Mahesh Babu, Pawan Kalyan, and many others. "My father served as a Central Government Employee in ESIC Hyderabad. I have worked under eminent directors like Koratala Siva, Gunashekhar, Lawrence to name a few. My performance in Akkineni Nagarjuna starrer and Lawrence Master's *Mass* movie got me a good recognition and was later chosen for a prominent role in *Shankar Dada MBBS*."

Vihari The Traveller made her the first anchor in the Telugu television history to host a programme for more than 10 years of telecast, giving a kickstart to her television career with *Yuva* in 2007 produced by Akkineni Nagarjuna that aired on Maa TV.

UNFORGETTABLE ROLE

Telugu soap opera *Sravana Sameeralu* directed by Manjula Naidu telecasted on Gemini TV, gave Karuunaa her most catchy role that's "Poojanathi". An intelligent lawyer who loves a ferocious man - the role gave her seven prominent awards in the Telugu television industry. "My television career is filled with memorable moments, impactful enough to have been seen by most television fans. The serial

was a blessing in disguise that gave me a beautiful friend for life, with some crazy built fandom," she adds.

MOST-LOVED CO-STAR

"The fabulous actor Nagamani Amma has been my favourite co-star to date. Though she's older to me, there was never a time where she poised a dominant attitude. Instead, we were always like those 'bantai' friends," the eccentric actress shares. Her confidence and a hidden self-assured tomboyish persona made her comfortable around male co-stars as well. She's admired by all of her co-stars, and she says the feeling's mutual.

CHANGING TRENDS IN SOAP OPERAS

Daily soaps have evolved drastically, taking a new shape with completely different concepts, characters, plots, and casts. Believing that daily soaps shouldn't depart due to stale and obsolete stories, Karuunaa longs for something fresh stories with an ample amount of entertainment and a bit of logistics cum socially driven messages. "If you take a look around, you are going to find many serials that have been inspiring the audiences, so the docile women are now seen fighting for their rights and taking important decisions which are

refreshing to watch."

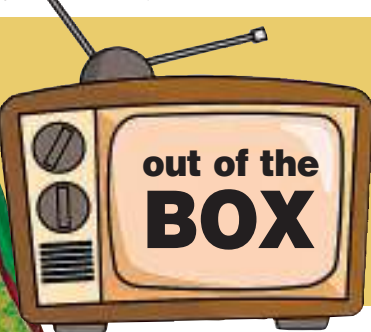
OTT V/S CINEMA

Karuunaa expresses her view on what she prefers between OTT and cinema. "We are cinema driven beings but both the mediums, in fact, web series too, only work on content! Content is what matters, it's incorrect to exaggerate the impact of OTT to an unconvincing death of films/theatre. It's safe to assume that today's audiences love a plethora of options to view entertainment and that's about it."

WORLD OF TELEVISION POST COVID

Karuunaa Bhushan shares with us that amid the pandemic she refrains from shooting as she doesn't want to communicate risks either to her family or neighbourhood — "I am not weak, I am cautious! Neither am I scared, am seeking optimism as we can party on later. In fact, I am going to throw a huge reunion bash once the pandemic ends. COVID-19 has come like a teacher to us, I walked down the memory lane with my family and got to spend a lot of time with my beloved son. My work isn't going to suffer because I am not bowing down in front of a monster-like virus. With self-reliance in our hearts, let's move forward with gratitude."

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New campaign on stories of India's courage amid Covid

Putting India's common citizens — tailors, kirana shop owners, autorickshaw drivers, teachers and more — at its centre, a new inspirational anthem titled 'Himmat Hai Toh Jeet Hai' launched on Monday, kickstarting with it a two-month-long campaign to celebrate 'himmat' or fortitude Indians are displaying in their fight against Covid-19.

This celebration of stories of courage and hope amid Covid-19, has been launched by Population Foundation of India (PFI). As the country tries to slowly recover some semblance of normalcy even in the face of rising Covid-19 cases and an economic downturn, the campaign and anthem spotlight stories of everyday courage and hope displayed by ordinary people who rose to the occasion.

With powerful lyrics that speak of jeet (victory) over challenges faced due to the pandemic, the newly-launched anthem features a cross-section of society impacted. It reinforces the need for India to stay strong: To Win. The campaign is guided by renowned film and theatre director Feroz Abbas Khan, who is PFI's Creative Advisor. According to Feroz Abbas Khan, in the worst of times the best in us must shine. "Covid is the biggest challenge humanity has faced in almost 100 years, and we are still grappling with it. We can either let the enormity overwhelm us or we decide to counter it with determination and use hope as a powerful weapon," he told IANSLife. "Being a public health organisation that specialises in social and behaviour change communication, PFI has been

working with the government in its emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic since the national lockdown began. PFI supported MyGov India, a citizen engagement platform of the Government of India and multiple state governments towards carrying out emergency risk prevention communication. PFI produced, created and curated educational material on masks, steps to stay safe, myth-busters on Covid-19 and physical distancing under #TogetherAgainstCOVID. As the country is reopening, we believe it is important to reinforce people's sense of unity and solidarity to emerge stronger together out of this pandemic. Hence the Himmat Hai Toh Jeet Hai campaign will be highlighting stories of extraordinary courage and hope in the face of challenges," Poonam Muttreja,

Executive Director of Population Foundation of India told IANSLife. She adds, the campaign has been envisaged to encourage everyone to look ahead with hope and fortitude as life resumes within the context of the pandemic and people have to embrace the 'new normal'. This campaign will feature true stories of everyday Indians who have overcome challenges caused by the pandemic with resilience. We will also release an anthem, with empowering lyrics and music that can become the mantra of victory — as India slowly but steadily emerges out of the pandemic. Many of the stories featured in the campaign are from PFI's own work, and also come out from their collaborative work with People's Archive of Rural India (PARI), civil society organisations and development partners.

Here's your protein report card

Celebrating the National Nutrition Month, Right To Protein, a nationwide public health awareness initiative, launched Protein Report Card for Indian citizens to self-assess and improve their nutritional intake.

This Protein Report Card is designed to help people understand if their protein consumption is adequate or requires immediate intervention. People looking to receive their own Protein Report Card this nutrition month can log-on to the freely available Protein-O-Meter (Protein calculator tool) and access their customised Protein Report Card.

The launch of the programme is a direct result of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recommendations of introducing nutrition cards to increase awareness in India. The Prime Minister had shared this recommendation August 30, 2020, keeping in mind the impor-

tance of focusing on quality and nutritious food intake, along with increasing awareness regarding this topic in the country, especially among the younger generation and students.

This is a step to address the gap of self-assessment and awareness. The Report Card can be generated by visiting the online site, wherein alongside a detailed breakup of protein consumed, it will also recommend protein-rich whole foods that can be included in your daily diet to eliminate any gaps in protein consumption.

Nutritionist Nnamdi Agarwal asserted that the focus on nutrition must be instilled early on in life - starting interventions in schools and at home and catalyzed by government efforts. "An asset like the Protein Report Card is a significant tool that citizens may use to take charge of their health and wellbeing, which is now more critical than it has ever been. It is important to increase awareness about quality

food intake and embedding this value into the country's education curriculum as a starting point towards nutrition security for India's future generations."

THE LAUNCH OF THE PROGRAMME IS A DIRECT RESULT OF PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI'S RECOMMENDATIONS OF INTRODUCING NUTRITION CARDS TO INCREASE AWARENESS IN INDIA.

"Starting National Nutrition Month this year, the Protein Report Card will continue to reiterate the importance of focusing on monitoring our food intake and making better food choices for overall better nutrition, especially among the growing generation of India," said Dr Suresh Itapu,

Nutraceutical Expert, Director — NutriTech India, Supporter of the Right To Protein initiative

It will help Indians monitor their protein intake and help focus on nutritious food consumption from time to time considering the fact that although protein awareness exists among citizens, there is low knowledge of protein sources which is causing poor protein consumption in Indian households (India's Protein Paradox Study, 2020). This study also draws attention to the responsibility of educational institutions in creating awareness among students and parents about adequate protein consumption.

Dr Itapu added, "Such recommendations from India's Protein Paradox study are key pillars of building a general understanding and awareness about adequate protein consumption and complete nutrition in India."

The Report Card can be generated by visiting www.righttoprotein.com.



FUN

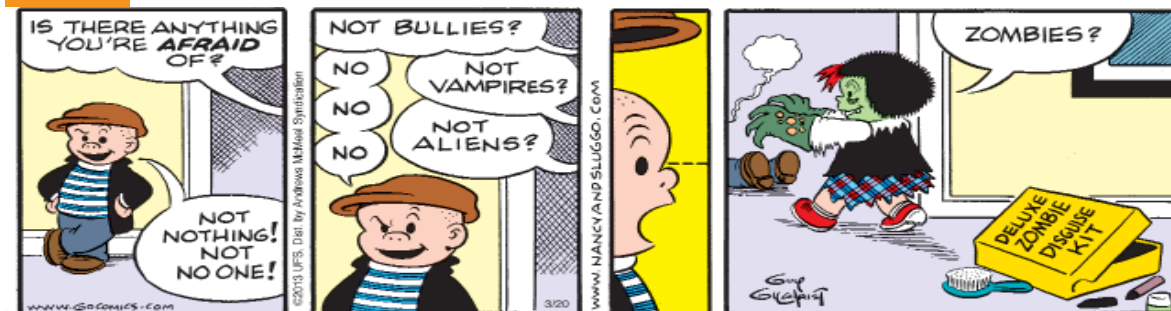
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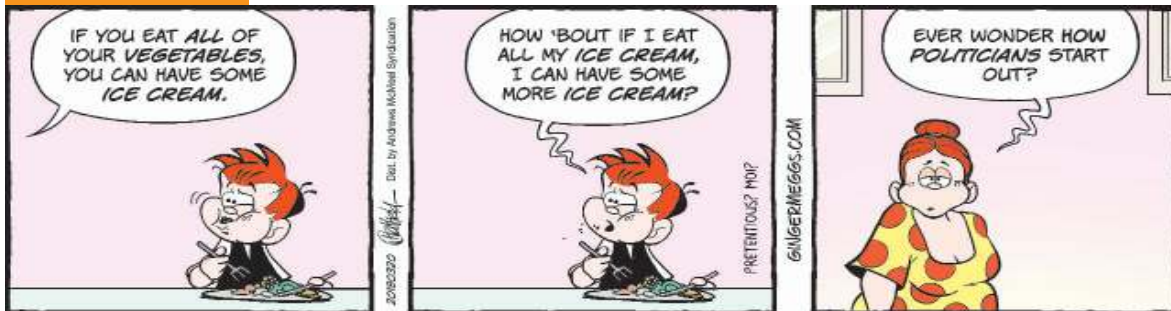
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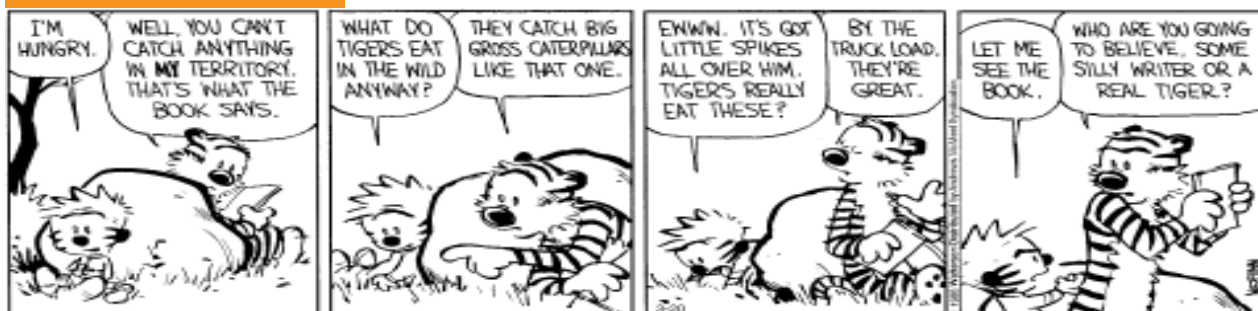
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GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



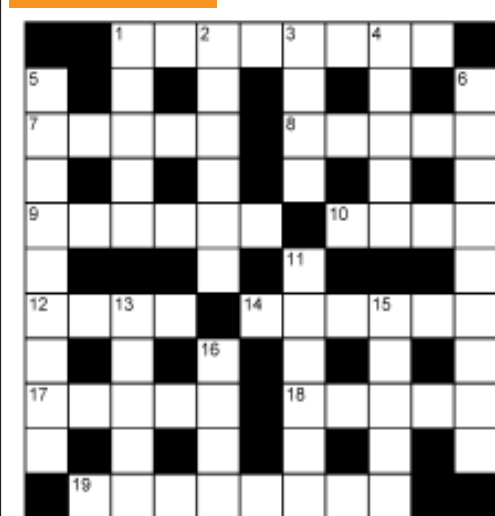
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 A water sport
- 7 After eighth
- 8 Worship
- 9 Hurt someone's feelings by being rude to them
- 10 Fewer
- 12 This metal goes rusty
- 14 A fruit
- 17 A large serving spoon
- 18 Book name
- 19 Someone in jail

- 4 Rope loop
- 5 Not able to be seen
- 6 Read this daily
- 11 Cardboard box
- 13 Command
- 15 Change
- 16 Untidy shambles

DOWN

- 1 Musical pieces for the voice
- 2 Breathe in
- 3 A ditch around a castle



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution								
9	1	4	3	7	2	6	8	5
5	2	7	4	6	8	3	9	1
8	3	6	9	5	1	4	7	2
1	9	2	5	3	6	8	4	7
4	7	8	2	1	9	5	6	3
3	6	5	7	8	4	1	2	9
2	8	3	1	4	7	9	5	6
7	4	1	6	9	5	2	3	8
6	5	9	8	2	3	7	1	4

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.



Ramya celebrates her 50th b'day with family, friends

Popular actress Ramya Krishna rang in her 50th birthday with family and friends at her Hyderabad residence on Tuesday. The actress, who has been entertaining the south audience for over 30 years, has taken to her social media pages to share a picture of the celebrations. "Fifty and fabulous n what better than a FAMJAM to bring it on!!!!" she captioned the picture in which her director-husband Krishna Vamsi, son Ritwik and other members of her family are

seen.

In a separate set of pictures doing the rounds, the actress seems to have participated in a bash attended by the likes of Surender Reddy, his wife Deepa, Sridevi and Ram Charan's manager Praveen among others.

On the work front, the Sivagami of Baahubali has interesting projects lined up in Telugu. While she has shot for her portions in Akash Puri-starrer *Romantic*, she needs to complete filming for Vijay Deverakonda's untitled next with Puri Jagannadh and Sai Tej's next with Deva Katta.

The actor has resumed shooting in adherence with the COVID-19 safety protocols and in a couple of working days; it will be curtains down for the filming, finds **NAGARAJ GOUD**

Like many films, Avasara Srinivas-starrer *Nootokka Jillala Andagaadu* bore the brunt of the pandemic when it was inching towards the finish line earlier this March, deferring its release plans. The actor has now resumed shooting in adherence with the COVID-19 safety protocols and in a couple of working days; it will be curtains down for the filming. "It has been a little tough but so far it's been working out fine. It's difficult to start and finish a movie like this. You can pick up from where you've left behind, but to start a movie, I believe a vaccine is a must," the actor, who has penned the film, tells us.

Resumption of filming after a six-month hiatus came with its own set of issues, he notes. "It is difficult because ours is a small-budgeted film. We can't go back to the loca-

ENJOYING THE CHALLENGE OF FILMING NOW: AVASARALA

tions where we've shot earlier as the shoot allowance rules have changed. Helpless, we had to move some scenes to a location where we can shoot. Plus, sometimes we are visually cheating," he sighs, adding that the crew though is happy to report back to work.

He points out that before they resumed, everybody from the unit underwent a COVID-19 test and luckily, no one was carrying the virus. "On sets, the make-up men are using face masks and shields, while sanitizers and masks are placed at one corner. Sometime back we shot at RFC and there was a small chamber where we got disinfected before we entered the sets. With everyone taking their individual care, the going's been smooth," he maintains.

He admits that his creativity is being challenged because of shooting with such safety measures. "But I'm really enjoying it.

Everything is shaping up better than the original plan. When you are pushed to a corner, you are forced to invent ways to get on with your stuff. The solutions we came up with for some problems were 'wow' literally. Earlier this week, a scene required the presence of a female actor but as she delivered a baby, she couldn't join the shoot. We'll shoot her close-ups when she is ready and at a place she is comfortable with. We'll insert her shots into the scene later. We are confronted with challenges everyday but at the same time there is excitement to conquer them," he declares gleefully.

Directed by debutant Rachakonda Vidyasagar, who earlier assisted Avasara for *Jo Achyutananda*, *Nootokka Jillala Andagaadu*, a social satire, is a take on body shaming that transpires on TV and life in general. It also deals with society's idea

of beauty. The actor informs that the film will be ready by the end of next month. Will it go for an OTT release as cinema halls are stuck in a limbo still? He replies, "That's not the plan yet. The producers (Krish, Y Rajeev Reddy and Dil Raju) are excited about the film and they are looking at a theatrical rollout if there is an option. But the end is not in sight. If the wait gets inordinate, I'm not sure they are going to wait."



Sin girl Deepti to romance Kiran Abbavaram

Seen in Aha's *Sin* earlier this year, actress Deepti Sati has been tapped to play a key role in Kiran Abbavaram's next project, *Sebastian P.C. 524*, *The Pioneer* has learned exclusively. According to a source, she will be one of the two heroines of the comedy and emotional entertainer that will roll after Abbavaram completes *SR Kalyanamandapam*.

The source adds, "Sebastian P.C. 524 director Balaji Sayyapureddy was impressed with Deepti's turn in *Sin* and felt that she is the best bet to play one of the heroines. In fact, the actress was looking for projects in Telugu when she was approached for *Sebastian P.C. 524*. She gave her nod right away after the narration. The role requires her to come out of her comfort zone and she is game."

In the film, a production venture of Pramod and Raju under Elite Entertainments, Kiran will be seen as a constable in Madanapalle police station, Chittoor. — NG



Renu floored by Goreti Venkanna's simple lifestyle

Actor-filmmaker Renu Desai, who is gearing up to direct a film on farmers, recently met lyricist Goreti Venkanna for the lyrics. The lyricist's simple life on a farm now has an admirer in her. Bowled by his hospitality and love, Renu revealed that she feels honoured to have a song written by him. "So much warmth and love...went to Goreti Venkanna garu's farm for the lyrics session. I feel so honoured that he is writing a song for my farmers film. His wife cooked the yummiest annam pappu in mud utensils and the tastiest roti pachadi. Instead of gifting me flowers, Goreti garu gifted me a banana leaf to eat my lunch in...Simple living on a small

farm and big warm hearts is what I experienced with them on a rainy Sunday afternoon (sic)," she wrote on her Instagram page.

While details about her farmer's film are scarce right now, this would, however, be her second shot at direction. Six years ago, she directed and produced a Marathi film *Ishq Wala Love*. In Telugu though, this is her maiden project as a director.

THE LYRICIST'S SIMPLE LIFE ON A FARM NOW HAS AN ADMIRER IN HER.



Nayanthara, boyfriend Vignesh holidaying in Goa

After ringing in Onam together a couple of weeks ago in Kerala, actor Nayanthara and her filmmaker boyfriend Vignesh Shriv are currently on a holiday in Goa. Vignesh took to Instagram to share a picture from their vacation, which has



now gone viral on social media. "Stepping into vacay mood after the mandatory holiday mode," Vignesh wrote on Instagram, sharing a picture of Nayanthara by the pool.

It looks like Vignesh's mother is also on holiday with the couple. In another post, he shared pictures of his mother displaying child-like enthusiasm while in the pool and wrote, "The smile on your mother's face is directly proportional to the happiness in your heart. Nothing gives u more satisfaction & fulfilment than your parents' happiness. the ideal Aim of life should be to keep your parents happy & content!"

On the work front, Nayanthara has an untitled Telugu project and two other Tamil films in the offing.

MEB resumes

The filming of Akhil Akkineni and Pooja Hegde starrer *Most Eligible Bachelor* (MEB) was 70 percent

over when COVID-19 outbreak threw a spanner in the works, derailing the late summer release plans of producers Bunny Vas and Vasu Varma. And after a six-month stoppage, the unit has resumed filming in Hyderabad on Tuesday. Posting a picture with her two assistants who were in PPE suits, leading lady Pooja Hegde wrote on her Instagram page, "The band's back together."

According to a source, the makers are planning to wrap up the filming by October-end or by first week of November, leaving director Bommarillu Baskar a good 60 days to work on the post-production. The film is being planned for a Pongal release.

A Gopi Sundar musical, the film, a romantic family drama laced with humour, also features Aamani, Murali Sharma, Jayaprakash, Pragathi and Sudigali Sudheer in supporting roles.

New German recruits make Blues debut in 3-1 away win against Brighton

POWER OF 3

AP ■ BRIGHTON

Chelsea team featuring just two of its slew of high-profile and expensive signings got off to a winning start in the English Premier League by beating Brighton 3-1.

Timo Werner and Kai Havertz - signed for a combined \$160 million - didn't manage to score at Amex Stadium, either, with Chelsea's goals coming from Jorginho, Reece James and Kurt Zouma.

James' was the most spectacular



TIMO WERNER AND KAI HAVERTZ - SIGNED FOR A COMBINED \$160 MILLION - DIDN'T MANAGE TO SCORE AT AMEX STADIUM, EITHER, WITH CHELSEA'S GOALS COMING FROM JORGINHO, REECE JAMES AND KURT ZOUMA.

Brighton midfielder Steven Alzate lost possession in central midfield as the hosts tried to play the ball out from the back, Werner was played through and was brought down by goalkeeper Mat Ryan. Jorginho sent Ryan the wrong way.

Much-criticized goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga was handed a start by Chelsea manager Frank Lampard but his failure to keep out Trossard's 54th-minute shot from outside the area will likely keep the scrutiny on him. Kepa seemed slow to get down as the ball squirmed beyond his outstretched right hand.

James quickly put Chelsea back in front with a stunning strike that flew into the roof of the net, and the right back sent in the corner that Zouma met with a volley that ricocheted in off Brighton defender Adam Webster's right foot.

Of Chelsea's other offseason signings that combined to cost \$250 million, left back Ben Chilwell and playmaker Hakim Ziyech were injured and center back Thiago Silva wasn't ready after only recently joining up with the squad.

"The players are still working each other out a little bit," Lampard said. "Today we weren't as fluid as we could be... I want us to have a lot more movement up front than we did today."

While Havertz was fairly ineffective in his position on the right of midfield, fellow Germany international Werner - the lone striker - was more impressive and earned the penalty that was converted by Jorginho to break the deadlock in the 21st minute.

Murray gets French Open wildcard

AP ■ PARIS

Andy Murray received a wild card into the French Open.

The former No. 1 was the only non-Frenchman of eight players to be given a free pass into the main draw of the clay grand slam which starts in 13 days.

Murray was also awarded a wild card into the U.S. Open, after his struggles with pelvic and shin injuries dropped his ranking to 129th. He went two rounds in New York, and improved to 110th, but still too low for the French Open when it published its main draw entry list.

Murray's best French Open result was the final in 2016.

Tsvetana Pironkova of Bulgaria and Eugenie Bouchard of Canada were the only non-Frenchwomen to receive wild cards.

Pironkova, who made the U.S. Open her first comeback tournament since 2017 after having a son, achieved an impressive first-time run to the quarterfinals, where she was stopped by Serena Williams.

Pironkova's best result at Roland Garros was the quarterfinals in 2016. Bouchard reached her first final in more than four years in Istanbul on Sunday and lost in a third-set tiebreaker.

She lost to eventual champion Maria Sharapova in the French Open semifinals in 2014, the same year she reached the Wimbledon final.



DC has firepower to go all the way: Axar

PTI ■ DUBAI

Delhi Capitals all-rounder Axar Patel on Tuesday said he has "ticked all the boxes" in every department and reckoned the franchise has the firepower this time to win the IPL title, which has so far eluded them.

Moved out of India due to a surge in COVID-19 cases, the 13th edition of the world's biggest T20 league will be held in the three venues of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah in the UAE from September 19 to November 10.

Delhi Capitals will enter the tournament as one of the top contenders.

Commenting on the team that comprises some fine players, Axar said, "With the new changes, I think



the squad looks good. With fast bowlers, spinners and all-rounders, we have covered all the bases and I

think we can become champions this time.

"Everyone looks positive in the nets and we all are in good shape."

The 26-year-old left-arm spinner, who is slowly adapting to the new normal amid the pandemic, spoke about the challenges that lay ahead and the experience of training while staying in a bio-bubble.

"Obviously, with no crowd, we'll feel empty. Then, the saliva ban is going to make a big difference for the bowlers.

"During initial practice sessions, I was being conscious of not using saliva or sweat on the ball. So, these are the challenges which we will have to be wary of.

"Nevertheless, the positive thing

COVID-19 episode made me mentally stronger: Manpreet

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India hockey skipper Manpreet Singh says going through a stressful isolation period while recovery from coronavirus has made him a mentally strong player who is now equipped to tackle any situation on the field.

Manpreet was one of the six hockey players to test positive for COVID-19 at the team's training base in Bengaluru last month after they arrived for the national camp.

Having started their individual sessions after recovering, Manpreet said they still miss being part of the rest of the squad, even though Hockey India, Sports Authority of India and support staffs are doing their best to keep them upbeat.

"Hockey India officials would check on us almost every day if the food being provided is good, if our tele-treatment was done regularly, if we are monitoring our oxygen levels regularly and so on.

"Coaching Staff and teammates too would check on us through video calls. These things really helped us remain upbeat. Though it did sting a little to know all our teammates were back on the



pitch while we were still in isolation, I feel this experience has made me mentally tougher to face any situation," the skipper said. Recollecting the time spent at the hospital, the star midfielder said it was mentally tough for him and rest of the infected players to remain in isolation.

"It was not easy, especially mentally. I have not done anything for a month and that's a long time in a sportsperson's career especially when every day is about improving and being the best," Manpreet said. "To be honest, initially when the results came out, we were slightly stressed. (But) we received best facilities in the

Feels great as we are slowly getting back into it: Padikkal

PTI ■ DUBAI

Royal Challengers Bangalore's young batsman Devdutt Padikkal says he is feeling as good about his game as it was before the COVID-19 lockdown after a good two and half weeks of skills training ahead of the IPL.

His team will take on Sunrisers Hyderabad on September 21 in its opening match of the league, which begins on September 19 in the UAE.

"Feels great as we are slowly getting back into it. There have been a good number of (net) sessions and we are feeling good like we were before lockdown," Padikkal told RCB's YouTube channel.

The Karnataka left-hander is being talked about highly in the Indian cricket circles after top-scoring in both the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the Vijay Hazare Trophy. The 20-year-old enjoys an astonishing strike rate of 175 plus and an average of 64 in 12 games. He has a hundred and five fifties.

"It's more about movement, getting the legs moving quicker, getting the reactions faster again, the sessions were targeted on what we are doing and what we are aiming to achieve," Padikkal said.



Fuming Paire shows little effort in 1st-round loss

AP ■ ROME

Benoit Paire's anger at being strictly confined at the U.S. Open after contracting the coronavirus boiled over at the Italian Open during a farcical first-round match.

The 24th-ranked Paire threw his racket high into the air twice during one game and showed little effort against Italian teenager Jannik Sinner in a 6-2, 6-1 loss.

Paire was forced to stay in isolation in New York until he tested negative — preventing him from training. The Frenchman criticized Rome organizers for making him play on the opening day of the tournament.

"I made only one request, which is to play Tuesday to have an extra day of training after what happened to me in New York, and because I'm playing an Italian you put me on Monday," Paire tweeted on Sunday.

Twice during the second set, Paire launched his racket high into the air in frustration — the second time coming dangerously close to hitting the chair umpire, Paire, who put on a face mask during some of the changeovers, had numerous verbal exchanges with the chair umpire but received only one warning for his behavior.

During the final game of the match, Paire slammed returns of serve into the net in anger — with seemingly no intent of putting the ball into play. When

he finally managed to get a return into play on Sinner's first match point, Paire seemed surprised and didn't bother running down Sinner's reply.

"I had not played in 10 days, staying in my room," Paire said.

"It was a good training, I'm happy I played one hour. I even played one hour and four minutes. I'm happy I hung on for 1:04. I gave what I could. Jannik played very well.

"The result does not really matter," Paire added.

"I still have the doubles. I will try to entertain myself with Nico (Nicolas Mahut) and try to win a match."

The tournament at the Foro Italico, where spectators are barred, was rescheduled from its usual May slot due to the pandemic.

Sinner said, "On one hand I can understand, after spending so many days under quarantine in New York. ... In the end, I did what I needed to."

He moves on to meet third-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Kei Nishikori — who is returning from right elbow surgery and missed the U.S. Open after testing positive for COVID-19 — won for the first time in more than a year, beating Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-4, 7-6 (3). Also in the first round, Casper Ruud of Norway rallied past Karen Khachanov 6-3, 3-6, 6-1; Borna Coric beat Cristian



Bumrah probably the best T20 bowler: Pattinson



IANS ■ ABU DHABI

While terming Jasprit Bumrah as the best T20 bowler in the world, Australia pacer James Pattinson has said he is looking forward to working with the India pacer and New Zealand fast bowler Trent Boult, among others, in the Mumbai Indians' bowling unit during the Indian Premier League (IPL) starting on

September 19.

"Personally, it's just fantastic to work with some of the best bowlers in the world. Obviously, Bumrah is probably the best T20 bowler in the world. And Boult (Trent Boult) is up there as well. So, for me it will be a great experience to be around those guys," Pattinson said in a video shared on Mumbai Indians' official handle. "I have played a few One-day Internationals here in the UAE before, so I have got a bit of experience over here in UAE."

Reigning champions MI named Pattinson as a replacement for veteran fast bowler Lasith Malinga for this year's IPL.

Pattinson also spoke about the conditions in the UAE, saying the slower ball might be used a lot on surfaces which could be slower and lower as the tournament progresses. "The wickets are drier and there will be three wickets which will be used throughout the tournament so it will be slower and lower as the tournament goes on. May be the slower ball and stuff like that might come into play a lot more."

Finally, Thomas & Uber Cup postponed

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Thomas and Uber Cup in Denmark was on Tuesday postponed to next year by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) following a wave of withdrawals by top teams due to the raging COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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

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

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

"BWF is looking into possible



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

BWF had tried to rope in Singapore and Hong Kong as replacements but they declined the invitation.

There were also reports that Japan was contemplating withdrawing from the event, while China too was awaiting government's approval. September 18 was the last date for confirmation.

Among top players, India's Saina Nehwal had on Sunday raised con-

cerns about the timing of the event, asking whether it would be safe to go ahead with it in the middle of the pandemic.

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

However, the team's preparations were not progressing smoothly with a proposed camp cancelled a few days ago due to the players' refusal to accept the quarantine norms set

by the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

In another decision, the BWF has decided to proceed with the Denmark Open in Odense, a World Tour Event, as originally planned from October 13 to 18.

"The second tournament scheduled for Odense - the VICTOR Denmark Masters 2020 - slated for 20-25 October has been cancelled as it is no longer feasible to conduct this additional event."

In its rescheduled calendar, BWF had also decided to conduct two Super 1000 events in Asia besides the HSBC World Tour Finals in November.

According to reports, the apex body had considered Indonesia as the host for the three events but the country has decided to cancel its application due to the global health crisis.

"...BWF will make further announcements as soon as details are clarified," the world body said.

The Thomas and Uber Cup Final was supposed to mark the resumption of international badminton after it came to a halt in March because of the dreaded virus.

BWF said it had planned to put in place a bio-bubble for the safe return of the sport but it respects the concerns of players and member

Vimal blames Asian nations withdrawal for postponement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The prestigious men's and women's team event was postponed to next year by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) following a wave of pull-outs by top teams, mainly from Asia, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

for the sport," Vimal told PTI.

The event, which was to mark the resumption of international badminton after the coronavirus forced break, was scheduled to be held in Aarhus, Denmark from October 3 to 11.

India had announced both the men's and women's squads for the event.

However, after Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, the BWF decided to push the event to next year.

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

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

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

The decision to go ahead with the Denmark Open has left a few Indian players, including P V Sindhu, Saina Nehwal and Parupalli Kashyap, confused.

"We are still confused what to do under the cir-

cumstances. Saina has got a visa for Denmark and I have applied for it but we are still undecided about participation," Kashyap said.

"There are many questions like what happens if I test positive? Will I be sent back home or I will have to stay there for 14 days? Who takes care of the expenses and responsibility?"

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) on Tuesday wrote to the players who have sent their entries for the Denmark Open, stating that they would be "travelling or participating at their own responsibility due to the current pandemic" and "have to send their consent within September 17".

"These are exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in and while a return to international badminton remains a priority for the BWF, the health and safety of the entire badminton community is of utmost importance."

The governing body admitted

that it would not be possible to deliver a high quality tournament in the current circumstances and hence it decided to defer the event.

"...We are not in a position to deliver the level of competition reasonably expected by fans and all stakeholders..." it said.