



Bhushan challenges validity of ‘criminal contempt’

New Delhi: Senior journalist N Ram, former Union Minister Arun Shourie and activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan have moved the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of Section 2(c)(i) of the Contempt of Courts Act and termed it as a violation of the Articles 19 and 14 of the Constitution. The petition has been moved days before the apex court is slated to take up two contempt petitions against Bhushan for allegedly making derogatory remarks against the judiciary and bringing it under disrepute. ►P3

It's unfortunate Gehlot govt is working from hotels: Raj Guv

Jaipur: As the MLAs of the Ashok Gehlot-led Rajasthan government camp in a palatial hotel in Jaisalmer fearing poaching threats from Sachin Pilot-led rebel camp and the Opposition BJP, Governor Kalraj Mishra, in an exclusive interview, says "It's unfortunate that the state govt is working from hotels". He rues the fact that seasoned politicians did not guide the younger lot and that is exactly why this situation arose in the first place. Terming the situation "strange", the Governor revealed that no one, right from the state government to the Opposition have approached for a floor test on paper.

TV anchor who interviewed Kailash Kher hangs self in Delhi

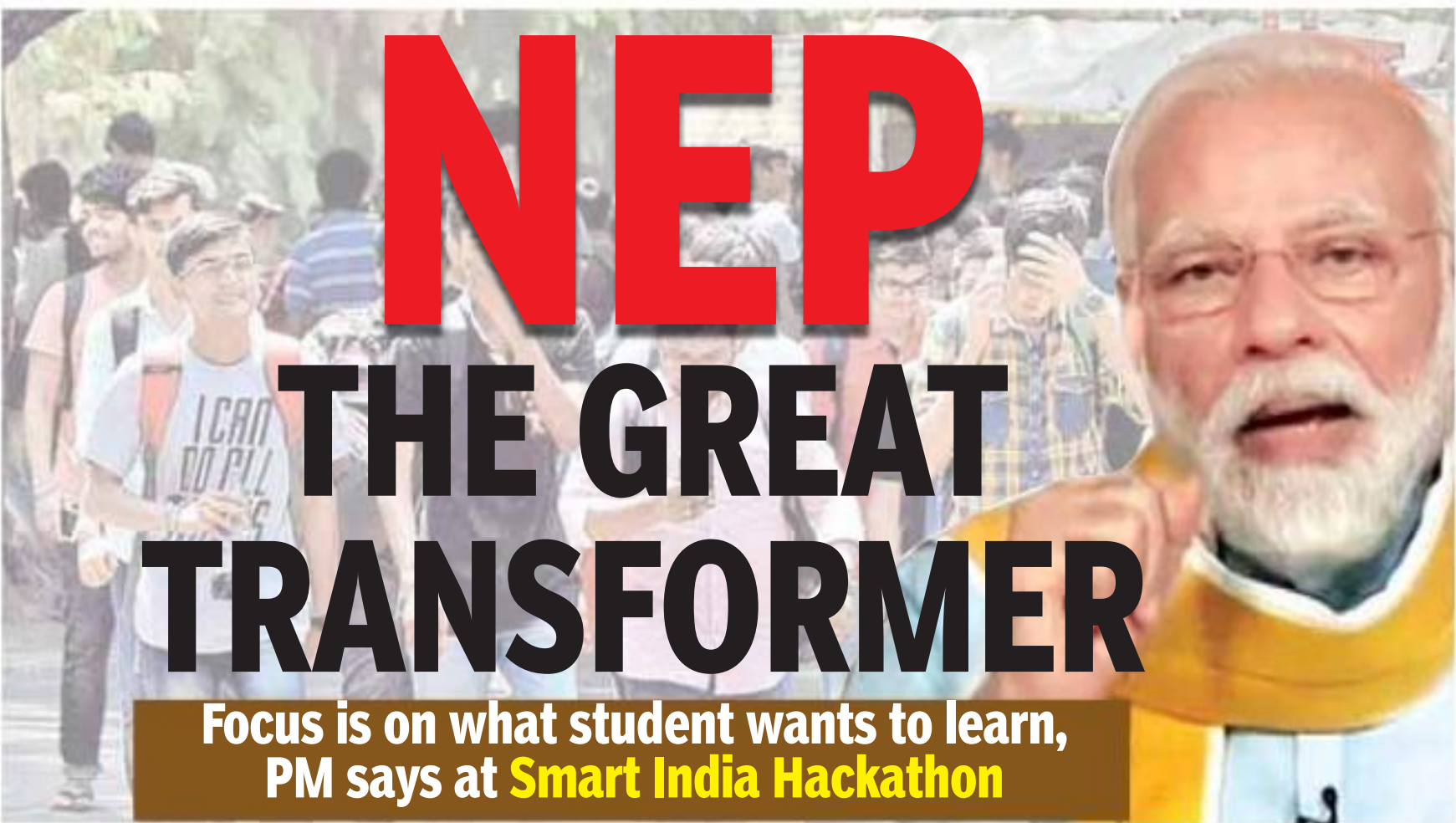
New Delhi: A television anchor with a news channel committed suicide in North East Delhi's Welcome area on Friday. Priya Juneja (24), who hanged herself from a ceiling fan of her house, had recently interviewed singer Kailash Kher and talked about how a person can remain positive and think positive in these difficult times of Covid-19 pandemic in a TV show.

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- New policy will convert job seekers into job creators
- Aims at building equitable, vibrant knowledge society

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday addressed the grand finale of Smart India Hackathon 2020 and interacted with the finalists via video conferencing. Addressing the event, the Prime Minister mentioned India's bold new National Education Policy, which was approved by the government recently, emphasises on inter-disciplinary study and "will ensure focus is on what student wants to learn." "We are focussing on the quality of education in India. Our attempts have been to make our education system the most advance and modern for students of our country," Modi said.

“There is a systematic reform in India's education system and attempt is being made to transform intent and content of education

Interacting with the finalists, Modi also said that NEP has been framed keeping in mind the aspirations of the youth of 21st century of the country. "21st century is the era of knowledge. This is the time for increased focus on learning, research, innovation," he said. He said the role of youth is very important in achieving goal of 'ease of living' to give better life to the poor. "NEP emphasises on making 'job creators' instead of 'job seekers'. There is now systematic reform in India's educa-

tion system and attempt is being made to transform intent and content of education," Modi said. Speaking on the flexibility of choosing subjects from any stream and the option to opt for either three or four-year undergraduate program, he said, it was much needed. "In the National Education Policy, flexibility has been given great importance. There are provisions for multiple entry and exits. No one-way streets for a student. The undergraduate experience can either be a three or

four-year journey. Students will enjoy the advantages of an Academic Bank of Credit, which will store all the academic credits acquired. These can be transferred and counted in the final degree. Such flexibility was long needed in our education system. I am happy the National Education Policy has addressed this aspect," he said. On the terms of proposing mother tongue or home language for the medium of education, Modi said, "Languages of India will progress and develop further due to the changes brought in the education policy. This will not only increase India's knowledge but will also increase its unity." Continued on Page 6



(File photo) BJP leaders MM Joshi and LK Advani

Advani, Joshi likely to get invite for Ayodhya event

New Delhi: Veteran BJP leaders LK Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi will 'definitely be invited' to the groundbreaking ceremony for building of a temple in UP's Ayodhya on August 5, sources in the trust set up to oversee the construction said on Saturday, hours after it seemed that neither would receive such an invitation. Both will be invited via phone, as all other leaders have been too, sources added. The invitations are being co-ordinated by Champat

Rai, the General Secretary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, which was set up by the Supreme Court after its landmark verdict in November last year. Former Union Minister Uma Bharti and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh got their invitations on Saturday. They have said that they will be at the event, for which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also been invited and will attend.

Continued on Page 6

China moves PLA battalion across India's Lipulekh Pass

New Delhi: China has mobilised a battalion strength of People's Liberation Army soldiers near Uttarakhand's Lipulekh Pass, one of the locations along the Line of Actual Control that have witnessed movement of Chinese troops over the last few weeks outside of the Ladakh sector, indicate reports. India and China have been engaged in a standoff in East Ladakh beginning early May that flared up on June 15, leading to the bloodiest clash between soldiers of the two countries in 45 years. Three weeks later, both sides agreed to start the disengagement and de-escalation of troops at the standoff points after a conversation between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. There has been thinning of troops at the standoff points, but the disengagement is still work in progress. Simultaneously, Indian military officers in Ladakh noticed a huge effort by Chinese troops to bolster its strength in the depth areas, and give infrastructure projects on its side a hard push. Continued on Page 6

Covid robs the sheen off Eid

- Most Muslims offer prayers indoors
- No prayers in Eidgahs, open grounds

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Eid ul-Adha was celebrated in Hyderabad and other parts of Telangana on Saturday on a low-key in view of coronavirus crisis, as the Muslims offered prayers in mosques and sacrificed animals. Namaz-e-Eid was offered in mosques and worshippers maintained social distance and took other precautions as per the COVID-19 protocols. There were no prayers in Eidgahs or open grounds which otherwise witness large congregations of the Muslims twice a year. Like Eid ul-Fitr, which was celebrated in May, the prayers were not held in Eidgahs. However, this time, the congregational prayers were allowed in mosques but subject to certain restrictions. Most of the mosques saw prayers in two spells to ensure social distancing among the worshippers. There were no congregational prayers in the Historic



Members of the Muslim community offer namaz on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, at Jama Masjid in New Delhi on Saturday

Mecca Masjid and Shahi Masjid in Hyderabad. The two mosques remained closed for worshippers as a precautionary measure. Historic Mir Alam Eidgah and Mecca Masjid, near Charminar, used to witness biggest gatherings on Eid. In most of the mosques, people who offered a 'Fajr' or

pre-dawn prayers stayed back for Namaz-e-Eid held half-an-hour to one hour after the sunrise. Eid ul-Adha or Bakrid is the second major Muslim festival celebrated to commemorate the sacrifice by Prophet Ibrahim, who offered to sacrifice his son Ismail on Allah's command. Continued on Page 6

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11 killed as crane collapses at HSL

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Visakhapatnam: In a grave mishap, 11 people were killed when a massive 70-tonne jetty crane collapsed during a load test in the Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) here on Saturday, said to be the first such tragedy in its 75-year history. The victims were crushed to death on the spot when they came under the massive iron structure that crashed on the ground with a loud thud after its cabin and base snapped during a trial run. HSL had brought the 70-tonne capacity crane from the Mumbai-based manufacturing company Anupam Cranes about two years ago but was not yet commissioned for regular operations due to change in contractors. While the operation of the crane is endorsed to Green Field,



Rescue operations underway after a heavy-duty crane collapsed at the Hindustan Shipyard Limited in Visakhapatnam killing 11 people on Saturday

the maintenance part is done by Lead Engineers organisation. Besides, regular operation of the equipment is accorded to Squad-7. As a part of the commissioning exercise, a complete load testing was taken up between the building dock and shipway berth. About 15 workers were on the crane during

the trial run. Suddenly, the crane started collapsed on one side, claiming 11 lives. Among the dead, four are HSL permanent employees, including a supervisor and three workers, three contract workers from Green Field, two from Lead Engineers and one from Squad-7. Another worker was also killed on the spot. Continued on P6

WILL BAN TIKTOK IN US: TRUMP

Washington: US President Donald Trump has said that he will ban the popular Chinese-owned video app TikTok from operating in the country through an executive order as early as Saturday, according to media reports. Speaking to reporters on board the Air Force One on Friday, the President said: "As far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them from the US." Trump said he could use emergency economic powers or an executive order as early as Saturday to officially bar the company from the US. The Hill news website reported. "Well, I have that authority. I can do it with an executive order or that," the President said, while signalling that he was not supportive of allowing an American company to acquire TikTok. Trump's announcement came hours after reports that Microsoft was in talks to purchase TikTok from Beijing-based company ByteDance. Continued on Page 6

Resurgence of Covid-19 cases worries world

New Delhi: With lockdowns and travel restrictions gradually being lifted amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, governments are bracing themselves for a possible second wave of infections. A sudden swell of cases in countries like Singapore and South Korea, which were earlier considered success stories for quickly and efficiently containing the outbreak, has also set off alarm bells across the world. The government of

China, the country of origin of the pandemic, was able to largely stem the spread of the virus through aggressive testing and strict lockdown measures. However, a little over two months after it declared containing the pandemic has started to record over 100 new cases per day. China is not alone. Several countries across the world are showing signs of a similar resurgence of Covid-19 infections despite reporting a signifi-



cant decline in cases merely a few months ago. **South Korea:** In June this year, health officials in South Korea confirmed that a second wave of infections was being witnessed in the country. The east Asian nation had been regarded as one of the world's leading examples on how to combat the pandemic, as it was able to contain the spread of the virus as early as April through aggressive testing and contact tracing. However, in May new clusters

began to grow across the country. The number of cases quickly began to escalate particularly in the capital city of Seoul and in Gwangju. "Imported cases" were largely seen as the major factor contributing to the sudden rise in cases. **Australia:** Over the last few weeks, Australia has been experiencing an unprecedented spike in the number of new coronavirus cases through community transmission. Continued on Page 6

'Govt is taking measures to promote oil palm cultivation'

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Kothagudem: The State government would extend all possible support to oil palm cultivation in the State, said Transport Minister P Ajay Kumar.

He also said that the government was taking all required measures for the promotion of oil palm cultivation by providing subsidies on the procurement of seeds, drip system, fertilisers and to help farmers earn profits.

Ajay Kumar inspected a palm oil factory at Apparaopet in Aswaraopet mandal in Kothagudem district on Saturday and interacted with the officials.

He appealed the farmers to make use of subsidies given by the government and take up oil palm cultivation. With the support extended to the palm oil industry by the CM, K Chandrashekhara Rao, the extent of land cultivated and the factories have been expanded in Aswaraopet and Dammamet mandals in recent times, he said.

At present, oil palm was being cultivated in about 40, 872 acres across the State. The crop was cultivated in 33, 812 acres in Kothagudem district and 6,845 acres in Khammam district, Ajay Kumar informed. There was a good demand for cooking oil in the country which was facing short-



Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar inspecting oilfarm seeds in a factory at Apparaopet in Kothagudem on Saturday

age for the oil and oil products.

The country needs 21 metric tonnes of oil while the production was only 7 lakh metric tonnes. About 15 metric tonnes of oil was being imported from abroad.

The State government would extend all possible support through the Telangana State Co-operative Oilseeds Growers' Federation Limited, which would look after marketing of the products and related matters, he

added. MLC B Lakhmi Narayana, MLA M Nageswar Rao, ex-MLA T Venkateswar, the Oil Fed Chairman K Ramakrishna Reddy, its MD Nirmala, Horticulture officer J Mariyanna and others were present.

District Collector examines works of reservoir, acquisitions

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Yadadri-Bhongir: District Collector Anitha Ramchandran directed the irrigation officials and contract agency to maintain quality in construction of Basvapur reservoir.

She examined the works of Basvapur reservoir, land acquisition and resettlements in the district on Saturday. During her visit she directed the officials to acquire required pending lands for reservoir from BN Timmapuram, Jangampally, Basvapuram, Vadaparthy and Rustapur villages of the mandal and at the same time directed the revenue officials to pay attention on the compensation and rehabilitation of oustees.

She inquired the details of compensation and rehabilitation



Engineers explaining the Basvapur reservoir Canal distribution system to Collector Anitha Ramchandran during her visit to project site on Saturday

status of BN Timmapuram and Jangampally with facts and figures along with directing the officials to finish the 1.5 tmc capacity Basvapur reservoir by the end of

December 2020.

Project Engineer Srinivas explained her the reservoir canal distribution system with the help of a map.

Collector inspects construction works at MLA's camp office

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Mahabubnagar: Collector S Venkat Rao has directed the concerned engineering department officials to speed up the construction works of the MLA's camp office in the district.

While inspecting the site of the MLA camp office in the district headquarters on Saturday, the district collector observed that there are many other works like erection of electrification, setting up of tiles and painting of walls which are still



pending. "As the government had allocated adequate funds for the construction of MLA camp office, we have directed the officials to complete the pending works and hand it over to the government, so that the MLAs can carry on their official duties from their new camp offices," said the collector. Municipal Commissioner of Mahabubnagar Surendar and other concerned officials from the engineering department accompanied the collector during the inspection.

Lecturer loses job, turns maize cob seller



Ramesh waiting for customers on the roadside on the outskirts of Madhira town on Saturday

PV SATYANARAYANA

Khammam: With a number of cases coming forward wherein people have started resorting to becoming sellers for alternate source of income, the lockdown forced yet another 33-year-old lecturer Pagidipalli Ramesh to sell maize cobs on the roadside to lead his family and pay EMIs in Madhira town, here.

The lecturer had completed MA BEd in 2009 from Andhra University and joined a reputed junior college in Vijayawada where he was earning Rs 30,000 per month before lockdown.

After lockdown was imposed, the college management had asked 20 lecturers including him to leave the job after which he returned to his native place, Madhira along with his wife and 5-year-old kid on March 24. Sub-

sequently, his wife Nagamani who completed MSc BEd had also lost her job.

Ramesh had initially tried to organise tuition classes for the children but no one turned up due to lockdown and corona pandemic.

During his job in Vijayawada, he had purchased a bike, washing machine and freezer on loan and had been paying EMIs for them before lockdown. Unable to pay the EMI for 5 months for them, financiers had taken away the bike from him. Distressed Ramesh lost his hopes and went into depression when he was advised to start selling maize cobs which has lesser investment. He said that he is able to earning Rs 200 to 400 per day depending on the demand.

He appealed to the State government to provide a

Man found dead at railway station

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Kothagudem: A person infected with coronavirus was found dead at Kothagudem railway station on Saturday, a few days after he ran away from the District Hospital.

According to sources, the patient who belongs to Nacharam village of Dammamet mandal in Bhadrachari Kothagudem district was admitted in the hospital sometime back for treatment, after he was tested positive.

He escaped from the hospital on Thursday (July 30) after he witnessed the death of two persons infected with coronavirus at the hospital. The man was said to have reached the railway station on Friday night and slept on the station premises.

When the workers at the station tried to wake him up in the morning he did not respond. They then informed the police and the doctors who confirmed his death and shifted the body to the District Hospital mortuary.

30-yr-old man dies in Suryapet

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Suryapet: A barber shop owner of Kodad town died of coronavirus on Saturday.

According to the sources, 30 years old man has been running a hair salon near new LIC office

in the town, gone for corona tests when he suffered with fever, one week ago and was admitted to area hospital in for corona treatment but, he died while undergoing treatment at hospital.

The deceased was survived with wife and two children.

Meanwhile, Health officials of Kodad region urged the persons who worked along with him and visited his shop for the past ten days have to be careful and advised to go for tests and maintain home isolation for few days.

Miryalguda home guard dies in Hyderabad

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Nalgonda: A home guard of Miryalguda rural police station in the district was dead of coronavirus while undergoing the treatment at Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad on Saturday.

According to the sources, Circle Inspector, Sub-Inspector, three constables and one home guard of Miryalguda rural police station were tested corona positive, one week ago.

Home guard was admitted into Covid ward at district government hospital for treatment, six days ago and was shifted to Hyderabad Gandhi Hospital for better treatment, three days ago. But, he took his last breath while undergoing treatment in Gandhi.

It is said that, deceased have been rendering his services in Miryalguda rural police station for the past five years and was survived with wife and a daughter. Meanwhile, other corona victims of staff are getting treatment in home quarantine.

Mayor monitors district sanitation from camp office

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Warangal: With the city reeling under the impact of coronavirus and rains around that trigger common contagious diseases, the civic body has its task cut out to keep the city clean. The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) Mayor Gunda Prakash Rao who is down with Covid-19 is under home quarantine for the last few days.

However, the 66-year-old Mayor is keen to return to his duty specially to ensure hygiene and sanitation in the city.

He held a teleconference from his camp office on Saturday with the officials and enquired about the measures being taken to collect the garbage. During the review, he directed the officials to focus on clearing clogged drains, the breeding ground for mosquitoes besides removing the refuse every day.

"The officials need to warn the owners failing to keep their open land and vacant plots clean. If the landlords fail to oblige, the civic body will take care of cleaning those plots, but the owners have to face the penalty," Mayor said.



Mayor Gunda Prakash Rao holding teleconference with municipal officials from his camp office on Saturday

He further asked the sanitary inspectors to sensitise the denizens about the importance of hygienic practices and instructed the sanitary workers to carry out sprinkling of sodium

hypochlorite besides fogging in the city. Municipal Health Officer Narayana Rao and sanitary supervisor Sudhakar were among others present during the teleconference.

Adopt utmost precautions to avoid Covid: Collector

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Mahabubnagar: While inspecting the Covid-19 containment zones set up in various colonies, the District Collector S Venkat Rao advised the people living in these areas to make sure they adopt utmost precautions like wearing masks, regular sanitisation of their surroundings, make hand washing a habit so that they do not become victims of the deadly virus.

Inspecting the containment areas of Panchayat Raj and Padmavathi colonies in the district on Saturday, the collector said that corona pandemic has spread like a wildfire and now it is high time we all learn to live with it. However, each and every individual must take care to keep them safe. This is possible only when we adopt the regular hand wash, keeping our surroundings clean and neat, take good food and follow health tips like physical exercise so that our body immunity level is maintained high which is very important to defeat the deadly virus in the early stages.

The collector also advised the people not to venture out of their homes unless and until it is very essential.

Panchayat secretaries turn whipping boys

ADEPU MAHENDER

Warangal: No wonder the Junior Panchayat Secretaries have become the whipping boys in the administration. Be it the severity of unemployment or the dream of government job due to security, prestige and stability assigned with it, nearly 4.5 lakh candidates who appeared for the secretary posts in 2018 were engineering graduates and post-graduates of various academia. When the government filled 9,355 posts in 2019, those who made the cut were on cloud nine. However, it didn't take much time for them to realise what the hell of a job it has been.

In fact, the Secretaries' travails began with the agreement they executed to the authorities at the time of appointment stating that their services can be terminated at any time without assigning any reason. Even though their job profile is similar to that of the regular panchayat secretaries, the juniors get a consolidated pay of Rs 15,000 a month and are not eligible for any allowance or monetary benefit. It

may be noted here that a panchayat secretary is entitled to a pay of around Rs 26,000 a month at the start of his appointment.

Against this backdrop, the newly recruited commenced their service without any proper training even though their long list of responsibilities include conducting Gram Sabhas and implementing its resolutions, tax collection, sanitation, street lighting, drinking water, maintenance of nearly 32 records like registration of births and death and other developmental programmes etc. In addition to this, the secretaries have to look after all the works being implemented under the Palle Pragathi programme such as Haritha Haram, graveyards, dumping yards etc.

"It is really tough to work more than 12 hours a day under immense pressure, especially with the government adding responsibilities constantly. It is not that easy to work in a village environment where politics are dynamic and often of personal nature. Virtually, we were caught in pincers during the Palle Pragathi with the ward members

not cooperating and our higher-ups pulling us up for no progress in the works. On the other hand, the fear of losing the job is weighing us down immensely," a Junior Panchayat Secretary told The Hans India on the condition of anonymity.

Under constant pressure, some of the junior secretaries have already left the job, he said referring to the ordeals they were facing.

As if the responsibilities were not enough, recently the government had entrusted the duty of Field Assistants to carry the employment guarantee scheme, another junior panchayat secretary who works in Urban District said. Above all, we were not getting salaries regularly, he added.

Even though it's an unpalatable truth, the secretaries keep mum at the State's labour exploitation hoping good days after their three-year stint. It may be noted here that the bond they executed before the appointment, forbids them from joining any service, union or organisation.



Kids offering prayers at their house on the eve of Bakrid

Muslims go ahead with low-key Bakrid celebrations

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Karimnagar: Bakrid, the festival of sacrifice was celebrated with enthusiasm and religious fervour in a low-key by the Muslim community, in view of the coronavirus spread, here in old Karimnagar district on Saturday.

Earlier, people used to hug each other to convey their wishes and shake hands on the occasion, but this year, people were found wearing face masks and maintaining the social distance while greeting others. They were seen following the suggestions and advice of the health officials to protect themselves from getting infected with coronavirus while celebrating the festival.

Following the orders issued by the Police Commissioner VB Kamalasan Reddy asking them not to conduct namaz holding large gathering in mosques under the Commissionerate limits in view of the spread of coronavirus at an alarming rate, the people were seen celebrating the festival in a low-key manner.

The celebrations were held with people dressing in new attire, a limited number of people visiting the masjids of Kashmir-

gadda, Elugandula, Chintakunta, Boyawada, Subashnagar and Geetha Bhavan areas with many of them offering special prayers at their houses and celebrating Bakrid.

The religious leaders of the muslim societies sent a special Bakrid message to the followers on various social media platforms and appealed the Muslims to live harmoniously with people of other communities and take preventive measures to get rid of the deadly coronavirus.

Biggest single-day jump of over 57,000 cases, 764 deaths

New Delhi: India's COVID-19 tally reached 16,95,988 on Saturday with a record single-day increase of 57,118 cases, while the recoveries surged to 10,94,374, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The death toll due to COVID-19 climbed to 36,511 with 764 people succumbing to the disease in a day, the data updated at 8 am showed.

At present, there are 5,65,103 active cases in the country.

The recovery rate among COVID-19 patients was recorded at 64.53 per cent, while the fatality rate further dropped to 2.15 per cent, the data stated.

This is the third consecutive day that COVID-19 cases have increased by more than 50,000. The total number of confirmed cases also includes foreigners.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 1,93,58,659 samples have been tested up to July 31 with 5, 25,689 being tested on Friday.

Of the new 764 deaths reported, 265 are from Maharashtra, 97 from Tamil Nadu, 84



from Karnataka, 68 from Andhra Pradesh, 45 from West Bengal, 43 from Uttar Pradesh, 27 from Delhi, 23 from Gujarat, 16 from Punjab, 14 each from Bihar and Telangana, 12 from

Jammu and Kashmir and 11 from Rajasthan.

Ten fatalities have been reported from Madhya Pradesh, eight from Odisha, four each from Assam, Haryana and Ut-

tarakhand, three each from Goa, Jharkhand, Kerala, two from Chhattisgarh while Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Manipur and Puducherry recorded one fatality each.



Stalin steps up attack against new edu policy

Chennai: Stepping up his attack against the Centre's new National Education Policy 2020, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam president M K Stalin on Saturday said it was an attempt at "imposition" of Hindi and Sanskrit and vowed to fight against it by joining hands with like-minded political parties and chief ministers of other states.

The sweeping reforms were not new education policy but "a glossy coat on the old oppressive Manusmriti," he alleged.

In a letter to partymen, Stalin said the party was committed to the struggle against such policies of the government, and recalled it (also) moving the Madras high court on the issue of OBC reservation in All India Quota in medical admissions.

There was an "undeclared emergency" in the country, he said referring to detention of political figures in Jammu and Kashmir among others.

Unable to locate Rhea: Bihar Police

Patna: The Bihar Police investigating the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput has said that officials are unable to locate his friend, actress Rhea Chakraborty.

"The investigation is in its initial stages and is in the court... We have not been able to locate her (Rhea Chakraborty) yet, but we are trying to," said Bihar Director General Of Police Gupteshwar Pandey, adding that the Supreme Court is yet to give a verdict on her petition. A four-member Bihar police team arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday to probe the "abetment to suicide" case registered against Ms Chakraborty and others in Patna. Sushant Singh Rajput had died by suicide in his apartment in Mumbai's Bandra on June 14, the city police had said.

The top cop said if Sushant Singh's father wants, he can demand a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the case but the police are against it. He also dismissed reports that the Mumbai Police was mistreating Bihar officials.

"Sushant was not only Bihar's son, he was entire India's son," Mr Pandey added. "We are giving our best efforts to bring justice to Sushant Singh." Earlier, Bihar Po-



lice official Manoranjan Bharti said that the Mumbai Police is co-operating. "They are helping us (in the investigation)." Another official, Kaisar Alam, said Rhea Chakraborty will not be questioned as of now. "It is not needed right now. She is under our watch." Bihar minister Sanjay Kumar Jha, a close aide of state Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, according to news agency PTI, said: "The Chief Minister will definitely act if demand for a CBI inquiry comes from the family of (Sushant) Rajput." Rajput's father, Krishna Kumar Singh, had lodged a complaint against Rhea Chakraborty and six others, including her family members, for alleged "abetment to suicide", in Patna this week. The Mumbai police, who are already investigating the matter, have questioned several people from the film industry in connection with the case.

Toll in Punjab hooch tragedy rises to 62

Tarn Taran: The death toll in the Punjab spurious liquor tragedy rose to 62 on Saturday as 23 more casualties were reported from the state's Tarn Taran district, officials said. Till Friday night, the district had reported 19 deaths.

"In Tarn Taran, the death toll has reached 42," said Deputy Commissioner Kulwant Singh on Saturday, adding the maximum deaths took place in the Sadar and city areas of district.

Apart from Tarn Taran, the authorities had reported 11 casualties in Amritsar and nine in Gurdaspur's Batala since Wednesday night.

A senior police official said families of several victims were not coming forward to record their statements but had been persuaded them to do so.

"A majority of the families were not coming forward and did not want any action. Some



of them are not even getting the post-mortem done," said a police official. Meanwhile, Gurdaspur Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ishfaq said some families have refused to accept that their kin died after con-

suming spurious liquor.

"The wards of some of those who died are not accepting that they died because of spurious liquor. They are saying their family member died of heart attack," said the DC.

TN: Video confirms brutal assault on father, son in police custody

Chennai (IANS): A video hosted by Tamil magazine Nakkheeran shows the brutal injuries on the buttocks of P. Jeyaraj and his son J Bennicks as if they were skinned alive confirming police torture.

The video was taken when bodies of father and son were being shown to Kovilpatti Magistrate M.S.Bharathidasan during the post-mortem of the bodies.

Some relatives of the victims were also allowed to be present.

One can also see and hear the relatives of Jeyaraj and Bennicks breaking down on seeing the brutal injuries on their buttocks and also on the blood clotted face of Jeyaraj.

Jeyaraj and Bennicks had been booked for not closing their mo-



bile shop in time on June 19 by the Sathankulam police. They were sent to judicial custody and lodged in the Kovilpatti jail on June 21.

Jeyaraj died on June 22 night and Bennicks on June 23 morn-

ing in judicial custody, allegedly due to the police torture.

Five policemen working in Sathankulam police station have been arrested.

The Madras High Court while hearing the case had said there

was prima facie evidence to register a murder case against the Sathankulam police officials.

The court also transferred the probe into the deaths of Jeyaraj and Bennicks to the CBCID to gather and protect the evidence.

Later the case was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The court has also initiated criminal contempt cases against three police officials -- Additional Superintendent of Police Kumar, Deputy Superintendent of Police Prathapan and constable Maharajan -- for their behaviour at the Sathankulam police station in front of Kovilpatti Judicial Magistrate Bharathidasan who had gone for an inquiry.

Yediyurappa's son made K'taka BJP vice-president

Bengaluru (IANS): B.Y. Vijayandra, second son of Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, has been appointed vice-president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) state unit. "BJP's state unit president Nalin Kumar Kateel appointed Vijayandra as one of the 10 vice-presidents along with four general secretaries, 10 secretaries, two treasurers and seven heads of morchas (organisations)," a party official told IANS. The other nine vice-presidents are Arvind Limbavali and Nirmal Kumar Sumarana (from Bengaluru Central), Tejaswini Ananthkumar and M. Shankarappa (Bengaluru South), Pratap Simha and M. Rajendra (Mysuru), Shoba Karandlaje (Udupi), Malikayya Guttedar (Kalaburagi) and M.B. Nandish (Tumakuru). Though Vijayandra hails from Shivamogga in Malnad in the



state's northwest region, he stays with Yeddiyurappa in this tech city. Vijayandra's elder brother B.Y. Raghavendra is the party's third time Lok Sabha member from Shivamogga since 2009. He was also a legislator from the Shikaripura assembly seat, which Yediyurappa represents currently.

AMAR SINGH PASSES AWAY

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha member and former Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh died Saturday after battling an illness. He was 64. Singh was undergoing treatment for kidney-related ailment at a hospital in Singapore for several months. Singh had undergone kidney transplant in 2011 and was not keeping well for a long time.

MP Minister takes matters in own hands, cleans women's toilet

Gwalior (IANS): Infuriated over the condition of an office toilet used by women employees in a state government office building here, Madhya Pradesh Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar decided to set an example in public hygiene -- or perhaps put officials concerned to shame -- and proceeded to clean it.

Tomar had gone to Moti Mahal building on Friday to discuss some issues with the Divisional Commissioner. While returning, some women employees complained to Tomar that the toilet reserved for them in the office building was not cleaned regularly and they were thus inconvenienced.

On hearing the complaint, Tomar inspected the toilets on the premises and found them dirty. He ordered the officials to bring toilet cleaner and brush etc and proceeded to clean these



himself. Tomar also urged the employees to take responsibility for keeping toilets in government offices clean. The officers too should constantly monitor and regularly get the toilets cleaned, he added.

The Minister also asked Revenue Department Joint Commissioner RP Bharti to take special care of public conveniences

made available to women staff in government offices and take punitive action against those responsible for dirty toilets on the premises.

It is not the first time that Tomar has come forward to clean up the mess. Earlier, he had cleaned a stormwater drain with a shovel and swept a public park with a broom.

Soldier killed in Pak ceasefire violation on LoC in J&K

Jammu (IANS): An Indian soldier was killed in ceasefire violation by Pakistan troops on the line of control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Saturday. Defence Ministry spokesman Colonel Devender Anand said that Pakistan Army resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation in the Rajouri Sector. "Own troops responded strongly to the enemy fire. In the incident, Sepoy Robin Kumar was critically injured and later succumbed to his injuries. Sepoy Robin Kumar was a brave, highly motivated, and sincere soldier. The nation will always remain indebted to him for his supreme sacrifice and devotion to duty."

Ahead of contempt hearing, Bhushan challenges validity of 'criminal contempt'

New Delhi (IANS): Senior journalist N. Ram, former Union Minister Arun Shourie and activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan have moved the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of Section 2(c)(i) of the Contempt of Courts Act and termed it as a violation of the Articles 19 and 14 of the Constitution.

The petition has been moved days before the apex court is slated to take up two contempt petitions against Bhushan for allegedly making derogatory remarks against the judiciary and bringing it under disrepute.

On July 22, the top court issued notices to Bhushan and



Twitter Inc for his tweets allegedly scandalising the judiciary.

Two days later, a bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra

decided to begin hearing on another contempt case against Bhushan pending since 2009. The two cases will be taken up for hearing on August 4 and 5.

The petitioners argued that this sub-section is unconstitutional, as it is incompatible with preambular values and basic features of the Constitution, and violates Article 19(1)(a). They claimed the sub-section is unconstitutionally and incurably vague, and is manifestly arbitrary.

The Section 2(c)(i) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, defines 'criminal contempt' as publication of anything - whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever - which scandalises or tends to scan-

dalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of any court.

The petitioners have asked the top court to issue directions declaring Section 2(c)(i) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 as being violative of Articles 19 and 14 of the Constitution.

"The impugned sub-section, despite setting out penal consequences, is incurably vague. It uses vague terminology whose scope and limits are impossible to demarcate. In particular, the phrase "scandalises or tends to scandalise" invites subjective and greatly differing readings and application which is incapable of being certain and even-handed," said the plea.

Congress MP Tewari flays party colleagues for questioning UPA rule

New Delhi (IANS): Even as the veterans vs Team Rahul war within the Congress is out in the open, former Union Minister Manish Tewari on Saturday hit out at party leaders who questioned 10 years of the United Progressive Alliance rule at the Centre, calling them "ill-informed".

Interestingly, he gave the example of BJP to put out a contrasting picture on party unity.

"The BJP was out of power for 10 years (2004-14). Not once did they ever blame (Atal Bihari) Vajpayee or his government for their then predicaments. In @INCIndia (Congress), unfortunately, some ill-informed (leaders) would rather take swipes at Dr Manmohan Singh-led UPA government than fight the NDA/BJP. When unity is required, they divide," the member of Parliament from Anandpur Sahib in Punjab tweeted.

The verbal tongue-lashing from the former Minister for Information and Broadcasting comes after a number of party MPs questioned the UPA rule and demanded introspection on Congress debacles within the party.

The members of Team Rahul had asked for introspection when the Congress' Rajya Sabha MPs met on Thursday. The issue of the 2014 election debacle was raised by Rajeev Satav, IANS had reported on Friday. He was countered by party senior and former Union Minister Anand Sharma and others.

Tewari said on Friday: "Was the UPA responsible for the decline in the Congress fortunes in 2014 is a valid question. It must be gone into. Equally valid is the point that the UPA was sabotaged from within."

The New Education Policy 2020 promises a sea of opportunities

PRABHAKARAN VALLATH

Education is the cornerstone that determines the intellectual power and wisdom of a nation. Thus the overall development of a country depends upon the quality of education imparted and the proficiency of the educated youth. Kothari Commission begins its reports with the remark "the Destiny of India is being shaped in its classrooms". In this scientific and technological world it is the education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people of a country.

As per the National Education Policy 2020, education is fundamental or essential for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society and promoting national development. Independent India has witnessed a number of education policies. Education is a fundamental right of every citizen. Unfortunately most of the educational institutions under the government sector are being found on the verge of extinction since the standard of Infrastructures and quality of education have been proportionally diminishing.

Commercialisation of educational Institutions turns the situation worse. Educational institutions established under private sector have converged into a common motto i.e get rich today and go hell tomorrow. Policies and reforms have been found only in paper. Mushroom-



ing of schools and colleges under private sector led to an indecorous and immodest competition between and among the institutions intending to multiply their profits and reputation.

Quality education is replaced with quantity education or result oriented education. Irregular pattern of fee structure for the professional courses under management seats brought a disparity among the students of the rich and the poor. The plight of the school education is not an exception. Fast growing urbanization and the emergence of Corporate schools turned the situation further more worse.

Education should not be denied to any individual. Universalisation of education is the ultimate goal of our government. To achieve this goal a special act Right to Education was passed in 2009. The first and foremost pri-

ority of this act is to provide free and compulsory education to the children between the age group of 6 and 14.

Under this Act, all Indian private unaided primary schools have been mandated to reserve 25 per cent free seats for children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups. Contrary to it, many children from poor financial and social background are being denied admission in the posh and corporate schools. These children will have to seek admission in the government schools which are run without basic amenities or Infrastructures. This further augments the process of increasing dropouts.

Right to education is one of the most important mandates for the ruling government of India. The ultimate aim of universalisation of education in India

is to enhance the literacy rate of our country and helps individuals in acquiring knowledge and wisdom. We foresee an India with 100 per cent of literacy rate within a short period of time.

NEP 2020 replaces the 10 + 2 pattern and establishes a new pedagogical structure 5 + 3 + 3 + 4. Anganwadis or playschools and the kindergarten classes come under the formal education. Foundational stage (for ages 3 to 8 years), preparatory stage (for ages 8 to 11 or classes 3 to 5), middle stage (classes 6 to 8) and secondary stage (classes 9 to 12) are the new pedagogical structure of the 2020 National Education Policy. One of the most remarkable features of this policy is introducing mother tongue as a medium of instruction till grade 5. If children between the age of 3 and 18 get free and compulsory education, it will be a revolution in the field of education.

The new National Education Policy provides a sea of opportunities for the students of higher education with the inclusion of multiple exit option where students should have an option to exit at different stages and rejoin at any time. Another enduring feature of this education system is the introduction of Vocational courses or skill oriented education from class 6 onwards. This should enhance the children's practical and creative skills with which they can learn some sort of life skills that will be further useful for them to eke out a living in future.

PAST AND PRESENT

The overpowering effect of technology

M RAMA KRISHNA

During my youthful days, I could remember the long list of important phone numbers of friends and relatives. When the numbers changed, I used to note them in a phone book. With the advent of mobile phones, there is no use anymore remembering numbers or noting down in phone book, as the phone piece can store all the important and unimportant numbers. The sophisticated smart phones are performing all works I used to do earlier using my mind regularly and sharpening it. Now there is no need to use my brain as the cell phone does all the thinking on my behalf. It reminds me of my marriage and birth days and my friend's birth days and advises me on time when to pay any bills due.

The phone is so smart when I try to scribble something on screen it correctly predicts what I am about to type and suggests me several choices of words to choose from the display, I merely have to tap on the right option without worrying to type the whole word further weakening my grip on vocabulary.

During my student days and when preoccupied in my profession as engineer, I used to be a voracious reader and I used to spare at least two hours



for reading. Today that habit has turned to watching WhatsApp messages and the lion's share of leisurely time is devoured in watching real and mostly fake messages.

I often get the doubt whether I am getting addicted to smart phone. Luckily I have no Facebook account, Twitter and Instagram bondages; otherwise I would have drowned myself in that intoxication and turned recluse.

The usage of smart phone made me lethargic, I can shop for anything and everything under the sun sitting cozily in my revolving chair or in the privacy of my bedroom as I am able to do all these works without stepping out of my house which makes my muscles stiff and joints inflexible. Once a very busy

person as a professional always on my feet/mobike/car all day, I now spend more and more time indoors. Adding to this the novel Covid-19 pandemic restrictions forced me to confine myself at home. I got a genuine doubt, do I prefer the company of virtual friends to real? I almost hardly leave my home and self quarantined for the past several years and presently for the last 4-months glued to smart phone.

I shudder to think if voice drafting also comes in force, I shall soon forget how to write, speak and walk and turn a robot in flesh and blood. God! Help me from extricating from this unavoidable dangerous state as I have already turned myself a sloth and an absolute loner.

Dear corona, peace time!

RUKMA VASUDEV

You invisibly appeared at a maddening pace,
And you silenced the power of human race!
We know mankind had been on an overdrive,
Just to be able to competitively thrive.
Looks like the Earth had been seething in anger,

And, she called out to you, alerting there is danger.
You obeyed the commandments of the Nature,
Only to make us feel so insanely immature.
Well, you have created enough disruption,
Much to our dismay and dejection!
Lessons learnt, and we're feeling docile.
At your end, are you ready to reconcile?
Here's a petition from humankind...
Beseech your Highness to bestow peace of mind!

For BJP, even defeat seems to be a victory, ultimately!

Congress party has poached BSP MLAs and has merged them in their party. BSP chief Mayawati has urged her MLAs not to support Congress. But Congress is accusing BSP party's stand in supporting BJP. BJP is trying its level best to topple Congress government in Rajasthan with the help of horse trading. Congress party has lost power due to horse trading in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh and now it seems it is not far to lose power in Rajasthan. Congress party had been mostly affected by the defection bug in many states. Rajasthan CM has accused that horse trading rate has been increased from 35 crores to 50 crores. It is shame that money has become the backbone of democracy. MLAs gets elected on some party and then switch over to another party is a great shame to democracy.

All parties are shamelessly promoting Aaya Ram Gaya ram culture. Nowadays defection is not projected as immoral but is accepted currency of Indian politics. BJP is poaching Congress MLAs and Congress is shouting to save democracy. Congress is accusing that BJP is indulging in horse trading. Earlier Congress has done



same thing. Congress party should know that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others.

In our country there is a flawed democracy. The elections have become meaningless. It seems BJP party wins even when people are rejecting or disenchanted with it. If an opposition party does wins a state election there is no problem for BJP. The MLAs can be wooed and bought over and a BJP government can be established. In this way BJP wins even it loses.

Defeat is also a victory for

BJP. The elected MLAs of Congress will soon switch over to the BJP for few suit cases, Ministerial birth or for fear of investigating agencies or for the endless tax raids. Poaching MLAs, buying them with suit cases, hoarding MLAs in resorts has become a common practice in Indian politics. Democracy under BJP has suffered as much as it suffered under the Congress. Anti defection law needs to be changed. Until then elections in our country are meaningless.

Zeeshaan, Kazipet

The NEP is a mixed bag



world. India is a multi-lingual country and English serves as a connection. English has already established its supremacy as a global language, and we are left with no choice other than to learn it for progressive development. However, there is no way this language policy is going to be implemented in private schools or so called 'corporate', 'international' schools. It is highly likely that it is only going to be implemented in government schools which ultimately ceases the development of students of marginalised communities who make a major part of government schools. This is only going to increase the barrier further between private and public schools. In today's world English is not just a language it gives the student a self-confidence and chance to feel the breeze of never-ending knowledge, which is highly unlikely in one's mother tongue. The shrinking percentage of students in the universi-

ties, who did their schooling in their mother tongue reflects the failure of primary education in mother tongue. The other language that National Education Policy gives significant importance is 'Sanskrit'. It is baffling that why on this earth one should have to study a language that is extinct and spoken nowhere under the sun. Sanskrit also has no script and today's Sanskrit is written in "Devanagari" script, which is Hindi. The Sanskrit is taken as an optional language by many students only to score high marks.

Is it that Sanskrit is given importance because it was spoken by people of divinity or to teach the spirituality again in the name of Sanskrit. It will be highly useful for a student to learn a foreign language (like French, German, Spanish etc.) than studying a language which is extinct and no longer spoken. We should not look back when the world is moving forward in the race of devel-

opment. The irony is that all leaders who speak against English have their children studying in corporate English medium schools. Why don't they join their children in government schools? Does this mean that they only want the children from marginalised and poor sections to study in local languages and backtrack from higher education?

It is high time to make the public education system stronger and provide equal education for all sections of society. We must know the fact that private schools are better, only because government schools are not, despite the fact government schools have highly qualified teachers than private schools. We should save the common man from the burden of paying high fees in private schools.

In the current spotlight, we can turn our eyes on the visionary decision taken by the government of Andhra Pradesh to implement to implement English medium right from primary education along with the mother tongue Telugu as one of the subjects. Finally, all this does not mean that our mother tongue is any less. It will always be a part of our daily life and culture. Wherever, whichever place may we be, we should never forget our mother, mother tongue and motherland.

Gahan Gandhi, Mandi (HP)

Slavery has been an all-pervasive malaise

It has taken decades for Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives to recognise the existence of slavery in some form or the other. The members of Commonwealth were once colonies under the Crown of United Kingdom subsequently liberated with the moral support of the U.S.S.R.

India, claimed to be the largest democracy in the world lived with the labour Acts framed by the colonial master for its subjugated subjects to carry on its exploitation without any sort of hindrances. It is known to one and all that the work force of this country played a pivotal role in liberating this country from the clutches of the colonial rulers. But much to the surprise and desperation of the work force the independent India did not effect any major improvements in the labour Acts excepting some tinkering.

It is not only that improvements were not made in the Acts but even effective implementation of the existing Acts were not addressed rendering the Act redundant due to the callous attitude of



the successive rulers. But a number of changes were made in the Acts and all were in favour of those who were impatient in hastening exploitation of the work force. Most of the authorities were assigned the responsibility of ensuring implementation of labour Acts without proper training to handle the grievances and complaints. To quote an example a number of complaints from Sales Promotion Employees were rejected claiming that they did not have the jurisdiction under the provisions of Shops and Establishment Act.

Most of the authorities were not aware of the Sreenath Vs Bayer case in which the High Court had

categorically confirmed that SPes are entitled to avail the provisions of the Shops Act. A suggestion to train them with periodic refreshing sessions were not considered at all making the intentions of the rulers clear. As a result the victimised section of the work force could not effectively avail even the little benefits.

When things are in shabby condition like this the present ruling dispensation has proved worse than even the colonial masters. Instead of ensuring effective implementation of existing Acts and improving them to ensure exploitation free atmosphere the entire set of 45 Acts are dispensed

away and 4 Codes are introduced stripping away all the rights and privileges of the work force and virtually rendering them to be utilised as mere slaves for the benefit of the managements, in the name of 'Ease of doing Business'.

The codes are so stungulating in nature that workers can neither agitate and strike their work if needed to get their grievances redressed nor even form a union to establish their collective bargaining rights nor even have a person of their choice to effectively bargain on their behalf.

Work force is the real section that creates wealth under any social and economic order. Ensuring their welfare results in enhancing the productivity of the nation. Reducing them to be slaves will enhance the wealth of the exploiters resulting in increased social and economic disparity that inevitably leads to social crisis. If member countries are really sincere and benevolent to its subjects it cannot be a problem in eradicating modern slavery prevailing in any form.

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur

Three capitals - a right step in the right direction

The 2020 July 31 Friday will be a 'green letter day' in the history of Andhra Pradesh of 13 districts after the fateful division of the state from United Andhra Pradesh. The Governor's approval of the repeal of CRDA and Capital Decentralisation Bill will be a significant and a right step in the right direction.

Consequently, Visakhapatnam will now be the administrative capital, Amaravati the legislative capital and Kurnool the legislative capital. Thanks to all the machinations by the main opposition party in the state, this approval did not happen fast and straight, despite the voluminous and scientific reports submitted by all the expert committees that studied where and what kind of a capital or what model of development the new state needs.

The assent of the Governor to the said bills gives us a hope that



a Hyderabad-like development is averted in the state thanks to the determined efforts of the Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. The road ahead by the state government must be for a decentralised development that guarantees irrigation, industry, institutions, education, health and employment to all the regions of the state and people in general and the backward regions and vulnerable sections in particular.

Let us hope that the litigation by the vested interests sponsored by political pessimists in favour of centralised development stops here. This is also the time for all public intellectuals in the state to call a spade a spade while assessing the functioning of the state government and the role of the opposition also, which alone makes the system more accountable and beneficial to the people.

A Raghunatha Reddy, Kadapa

Remembering Muthulakshmi Reddy...

THE DOCTOR AND FEMINIST WHO LED THE BATTLE AGAINST INDIA'S CASTE-BASED MISOGYNY

“How dare you call them fallen sisters. The man falls before the woman falls. The men are always older and know what they are doing. Without male chastity, female chastity is not possible. All laws should be equal to men and women and both should be equally responsible,” Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy — legendary medical practitioner, social reformer and legislator from Pudukkottai in erst-while Madras Presidency — thundered, after a highly placed speaker commended her work for her “fallen sisters”, or Devadasis, at an event to felicitate her. This followed the passing of the 1930 bill for ‘prevention of dedication of young girls as Devadasis’ by the Madras Presidency on 5 December 1947.

Decades later, a well-known intellectual said in a speech: “Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, herself a Devadasi, went abroad, and because of that felt ashamed of the system, and with a stroke of pen rendered all these illegal”. Where was the legality, is the question.

The Devadasi system was nurtured by upper-class men who wanted to have their cake and eat it too. In the system, young women were made to undergo a religious ritual at a pre-pubescent age, and subsequently marked as a potential concubine. This ritual and the acceptance of the ‘concubine’ status qualified the girl for learning music and dance, and performing in public spaces. Either a patron would choose her, or one would be chosen for her by her mother. This male benefactor would then be granted access to her art, which she would subsequently pass on to her children. However, he would not give her rights to his name or inheritance.

If the patron did not have a male heir with his legal wife, but begot one with a Devadasi, the child would still not be granted legal rights to cremate his biological father on the occasion of his



death. He would have to remain only his mother's son, and would be forced to pursue the art even if he lacked interest or talent in the field.

Similarly, Devadasis also practised adopting young girls as daughters in the absence of a female child, in order to pass on their craft and keep the profession alive, irrespective of the girl being interested or skilled in the craft. Their femininity was a burden they had to bear.

A renowned academic had once mocked lawyer and activist E Krishna Iyer for not wanting to include a ‘Javali’ (musical composition on love) — in which the woman teases her man, claiming that she is yet to be satisfied — in performances. One wonders if the Javali would have been accepted in the context of ‘freedom of female sexuality’ had it actually been written by a woman instead of Kshetragna, the prolific Telugu poet. Also, one imagines if a dancer would have been brave enough to perform it for a large, young audience, such as a men's college, instead of at a private salon, where the predominantly male audience would be connoisseurs.

She was made the first member of the Women's Indian Association, and was subsequently nominated to the Madras Legislative Council

Articles and books abound on the dauntless spirit of the Devadasi women, their sexual freedom, and the influence they held in society. But the exploitation of these women hardly finds mention.

“Annam, a dasi in 1842, had her pottu tied at the age of ten and she, according to records, was entitled to one kalam paddy every month, and one-and-a-half handfuls of cooked rice a day,” writes Daves Soneji in Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory and Modernity in South India. Therefore, one can surmise that the Pottukattuthal ceremony was a ‘transaction that secured a girl's commitment to local economies of land and guaranteed her sexual and aesthetic labor’.

Writer Samhita Arni has stumbled upon an important revelation in her research on the Tamil epic Silappadhikaram (probably written around the end of the Sangam period in 2nd century AD). According to Arni, the story of Kannagi and her husband Kovalan, who fell for the court dancer Madhavi, could be based on a real woman named Kannagi, whose story has been written in Purananuru by Kapilar and Parananar. Kannagi was grief-stricken because her husband, the chieftain Vel Pakan, had been enticed by the charms of a dancing girl.

Dancing girls were feared and envied in the Sangam Age too, thereby offering a counter-narrative for the theory that the British stigmatised them. There was envy for the education the women could avail, besides the public gaze on them

while they performed. The fear was rooted in the thought that one's son or husband might succumb to the charms of these women.

They were also appealed and invited to rituals at homes to ward off the evil eye, and to bless the mangalsutra at marriage ceremonies on account of being Nityasumangalis, or immune to widowhood, as they were not compelled to marry.

In this light, the ascent of Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy changed the reality of Devadasis and women across the country forever. When Narayanaswamy, the Brahmin principal of Maharaja's College in Pudukkottai decided to marry Chandramal, a Devadasi, and bring her home, his family ostracised him. Muthulakshmi, their first daughter born on 30 July 1886, grew up to be close to her maternal cousins, who also belonged to the Devadasi tradition.

Muthulakshmi was enrolled at a local thinnai, or a school run out of a portico. When she decided to study further, young boys ran behind the bullock cart she travelled in, screaming that a “Devadaradial” (Devadasi in Tamil) is going to school. Soon after, all hell broke loose in Pudukkottai, which back then, only had a high school for boys. Some parents threatened to withdraw their sons from the school, stating that the presence of a girl born to a Devadasi would corrupt their minds, even after a curtain was drawn between the three girls and 40 boys in the class. A teacher decided to resign as well. But the Maharaja of Pudukkottai went on to support Muthulakshmi and gave her a handsome scholarship of Rs 150 when she expressed her desire to study medicine in Madras.

The Madras Medical College was shocked when she opted for surgery, as girls were considered faint-hearted and unable to withstand the sight of blood. Muthulakshmi, however, was adamant,

and at the end of her four years, the white principal of the college was found running in the corridor of the institute, screaming with a piece of paper in his hands: “The first girl student for surgery has scored 100 percent in surgery!”

Even as a student, Muthulakshmi would attend lectures at the theosophical society. She had also witnessed her 13-year-old cousin die at childbirth. While studying medicine, she would put her cousin's baby to sleep on her thighs, consequently making up her mind that she would work to end the system of dedication of young girls as Devadasis, and remove the stigma attached to them.

She was made the first member of the Women's Indian Association, and was subsequently nominated to the Madras Legislative Council. Besides initiating the bill to pass a law against dedicating Devadasis to Hindu temples, — which, according to her, dehumanised young girls and ultimately pushed them into prostitution — she also fought for abolishing the practice of hiring wet nurses for babies born into upper-class families, and helped Sister Subbulakshmi in her struggle for widow remarriage and education. She even rallied for raising the marriageable age for girls to 16, and for the voting rights of women.

While she was arguing for the bill, three young girls came and knocked on her door. They told her they were running away from being dedicated to temples, and wanted to know what other options they had. She hosted them at her house, and tried admitting them to hostels. The hostels, however, were ruled by caste, while the schools rejected the girls. Finally in 1931, she decided to open ‘Avvai Home’ in Chennai, named after the ancient Tamil poet who advised kings. The institute admitted older girls too, who could “work in the hostel and study for three hours.” A nursing institute, teacher training programme, courses on carpentry, handi-

crafts, home science, among others, were taught to make young girls vocationally equipped for jobs, while they pursued dance and music on the sides if they wished to.

Thousands of poor women, including many from the Devadasi community, graduated from the institute, and thrived in the anonymity granted by the bill. Those who desired to learn music and dance learnt them too.

Expectedly, upper-caste and upper-class men put up stiff resistance to her proposition of increasing the legally marriageable age for women, and abolition of the Devadasi system. She had to argue with the likes of S Satyamurthy, acclaimed for his rhetoric, and the erudite C Rajagopalachari. After 17 long years of struggle, the bill became an act. Her husband Dr Sundara Reddy supported her at home, and the story of their marriage also makes for an interesting read.

When she saw her younger sister die of cancer, Muthulakshmi decided to specialise in cancer treatment. She flew to London on a limited budget with her sons, and came back to establish the Adyar Cancer Institute in Chennai, which has now gone on to attain legendary status.

On the occasion of her 134th birth anniversary, some of her poignant words come to mind: “Any art and culture worth surviving will certainly hold its own against all times and against all conditions. Our attempt should be to free it from its ugly associations and the incrustations of ages which now keeps it dim and repulsive to many so that the divine art may be learned and practiced by all. Then only India's art, the rich legacy of ages will shine brighter and will command the respect and admiration of the world” — a rather succinct word of advice in the prevailing times.

Courtesy: www.firstpost.com (This article was first published at <http://www.firstpost.com>. Reprinted with their permission)

Importance of technology in Indian agriculture

KAILASH CHOUDHARY

Indian civilisation is one of the oldest civilisations in the world and similarly Indian agriculture is also of the same age. Ancient Indian farmers were quite rich because agriculture was the most advanced and prestigious occupation of that time. Fifty per cent of the population is still dependent on agriculture and occupations related to agriculture.

Indian traditions, customs and religious culture were adversary affected along with agriculture due to foreign invaders and rulers and our advanced agriculture lagged behind as compared to other countries.

After achieving freedom, with the support of our farmers and the manpower related with agriculture, our country has become independent in terms of food grains, cotton, sugar, milk, meat and poultry products. Today India has become the main producer of cereals, milk, sugar, fruits, vegetables, spices, eggs etc. The contribution of rice, meat and sea foods is 52 per cent in the total export.

Although India occupies only 2.4 per cent land of the world, proportionately we have more cultivable land in the world which is capable to fulfill our requirement of food grains. Moreover, we can supply food products all over the world through exports.

The farmer-friendly Modi government has initiated a new export policy to double the export price by 2022. The government is planning to increase the export price from \$30 billion to \$60 billion. A broad agriculture policy has been initiated to take care of issues related to agriculture and agri-cells have been established in many Indian embassies under this policy.

The government has decided to develop the field of transport of goods and courier facilities through innovations. As a result of the efforts made by this government, the export of agricultural produce and products related to agriculture has been increased to Rs 2.73 lakh crore. Today, India is capable of supplying food to the other countries of the world. Favourable climatic conditions, vast cultivable land, our hardworking farmers etc. are factors which will certainly increase our agriculture export.

With a view to prepare Indian farmers to compete with the farmers of other countries in a better way, opportunities are



being provided to them to adopt new and advanced technologies with the help of the Centre and state governments, but this area needs further development. It is the need of the hour to give priority to research for the development of various high producing crops.

If we want to compete with the world with respect to production, our farmer brothers will have to use advanced technologies available in the global community. Private investors will have to play an important role in export oriented activities and the basic structure will have to be developed.

Loss of food items could be reduced with structural development work like godowns, cold storages and market yards etc. We can encourage value added services by promoting the food processing industry. By increasing quality of our products, we can attract other countries to import our food products. These measures will help us establishing/recognise “Brand India” at the international level.

Combined efforts of the Centre and states are required to address the challenges of export related problems. The Central government has provided new financial packages to the agriculture sector to provide them all possible help and the targets of the government to double their income could be achieved.

The government is promoting agri-business with a view to provide maximum benefit to the farmers. Amazon, Alibaba, E-bay and Walmart E-commerce agencies have brought revolutionary changes through artificial intelligence and machine learning. In line with the revolution of E-commerce, a platform of E agri/digital agriculture is being prepared with the help of which agri-business schemes will reach the major

urban and town areas.

Home delivery agencies like Big Basket and Grofers have helped in paving the way to develop beneficial agri-business for their own with the help of agriculture specialists. Green farm house, poly house and small bio farms for growing vegetables etc. are becoming beneficial for the farmers due to their quality and fair prices.

These days organic farming is becoming popular among women farmers also. Today a farmer can start agricultural business plan as a startup, develop it as a source of permanent income and sell his products in the open market. Medicinal plants like Aloe vera, Neem, Tulsi can be produced on a large scale for medical and pharmaceutical sectors.

All efforts are being made by the government to enable farmers to have freedom and facility to sell his products as per his choice. The government is encouraging innovations and advanced scientific agricultural techniques for paving the way for reforms in agricultural sector and rural development to ensure inclusive development.

Some of the important advanced agricultural techniques which can transform Indian Agriculture are as follows:

- **Bio Technology:** This is a technique which helps the farmers produce more in lesser area by use of advanced agricultural systems. This technique is also environment friendly and helps in increasing food production by the use of plant and animal wastes/residues.
- **Nano Science:** This is a technique which provides information to the farmers through use of smart delivery system and nano sensors as to whether or not plants are receiving water and other nec-

essary inputs in adequate quantity. Besides, it also provides information about the quality of food produced.

- **Geo Spatial Farming:** By adopting geo spatial farming, agricultural production can be increased on a large scale. Higher production can be achieved on the basis of factors like weeds, quality of soil and its moisture content, production (fertility), rate of seeds, need of fertilisers and other such factors.
- **Big Data:** Big data will help in smart farming and it will help the farmers in taking appropriate and timely decisions. This will help in forecasting and advance estimates and will strengthen the agricultural development.
- **Drones:** They help in increasing production by reducing costs and loss in agricultural produce by supervision work. Advanced sensors, capability of digital imaging, soil analysis, crop spraying, crop monitoring, analysis of health of crops including fungus infection is possible with the help of drone technique. Necessary permissions from the Central government is to obtain for agriculture and other works. Recently in Rajasthan, the role of drones has proved to be important in safeguarding agricultural produce from locust attacks.

We can transform this challenge of worldwide spread of the Corona pandemic into an opportunity as due to the epidemic, there is matter of concern of lack of food items in the whole world. Due to this concern, there is a big gap being observed in the supply and demand because people have started storing food items. India can use this situation as an opportunity so that it can pave the way of economic prosperity for our farmers. This step will automatically provide opportunity in doubling farmers' income by 2022 and will play a vital role in giving India an important place in the agriculture sector.

Today's world is of science and technology. Going with time, we should also develop agriculture by using technologies in such a way so that they can be helpful for us. Through technologies we can achieve our desired goal of inclusive agricultural development.

(The writer is Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India)

Calypso, reggae is all that's left in WI cricket

YAJURVINDRA SINGH

The two most popular sports teams in the world were Brazil in football and the West Indies in cricket. The flair, subtleness, skill and natural talent of their players was what made them special. The artistry and attitude of playing positive even in the most dire state got them the adulation and respect in a win as well as in defeat.

The West Indian cricket team was always one that cricketers and lovers of the game around the world followed. The West Indian side of 1960-61 led by Sir Frank Worrell, after a tie in the very first Test, lost the series to Australia narrowly but the cricket that they played had fans honouring them which has never ever been seen before or after. The team was paraded in an open top bus through the streets of Melbourne with crowds of people bidding them farewell.

Cricket was kept alive by the Calypso kings at a time when the other nations were moving towards professionalism. A defensive approach became then, the mode of success not only in a teams' performance, but also in the way in which a cricketer approached the game. Eliminating risks while batting or keeping to a steady line and length while bowling was the way cricket was being popularised.

Cricket gradually became boring and monotonous, whereas, the West Indians still played it in their fun loving, carefree bohemian manner with music and laughter to follow. Cricket for the Caribbeans was a sport played to enjoy and hence their cricketers were there to give enjoyment to the people who came to watch it.

In the 70's, the West Indian side became a professional and well-structured unit under the captaincy of Clive Lloyd, who made the skillful geniuses play as one under the West Indian colors. The team went on to become one of the best teams ever to play the game and for a decade remained the champion side of the world.

Cricket lovers around the globe came in droves to watch them unleash their skills and cricket in the Caribbean was at its peak as a sport. The success of West Indies cricket changed the way cricket was being played then. Daring stroke play, lethal fast bowling and a positive approach to win came into play. Limited-overs cricket accentuated the West Indian ap-



proach even further, as power hitting and aggressive stroke play became important. The West Indians, therefore, ruled the cricket turf like never before.

Unfortunately, in the last few decades West Indies cricket is on a downward slope. Cricket, needs the Caribbean flavour to garnish the sport. Some of the West Indian professionals playing the T20 leagues around the world are the most popular players in the franchise-owned teams.

One was, therefore, thrilled and excited when the West Indian side won the first Test match against England in Southampton. They looked a young outfit that played positively and also showed that they had the resilience to fight back when cornered. They performed splendidly and after being 1-0 in a three-match series, one felt confident enough that the West Indian side were back to conquer the world.

The great Brian Lara was very vociferous in his statement before the series that the present West Indian side's batting is not good enough for a five-day match. The initial victory made one feel that Lara was wrong. However, the subsequent Test matches proved him to be completely right.

Playing a Test series is a very serious matter. Players need to have the stamina and toughness, both physically and mentally to take on the load. The West Indian players had just the right infusion, after their initial win. Rather than carrying on with their positive mindset after their win, they looked to be a side who were complacent with what they had already achieved. They made a common error that teams have made in the past and that is going for a safe approach.

Jason Holder won the toss in both the subsequent matches and rather than batting first put England in to bat. The West Indian star bowler and man of the match of the first Test match, Shannon

Gabriel, looked tired and jaded in the second Test match on a wicket where he should have had England in all sorts of trouble. He started off with bowling wides, lacking any rhythm and bowled without putting in any effort.

The other pace bowlers too were not effective and once Dominic Sibley dug himself in and Ben Stokes took control, rain was the only saving factor in their agenda. This did happen with the third day's play being washed away, but the mentally battered West Indian side was not good enough to salvage a draw.

A similar performance is what took place in the deciding Test match and the hopes of the revival of calypso cricket diminished radically. One failed to understand that even after a month of serious practice, with no outside distractions due to the restrictions imposed, the West Indian players looked an unfit bowling, batting and fielding side.

England, on the other hand, with their new found battery of fast and good swing bowlers, continued to be a very difficult side to beat at home. They have the best all-rounder in present day cricket in Stokes, but one still feels their batting is a weak link when exploited under pressure.

However, the beauty of Test cricket is that a team needs to take 20 wickets to win and therefore, bowling does play a major part if a side has to be consistently victorious. England has shown that they have not only a good front line attack but also an equally good back-up in reserve if needed. The England versus West Indies series was a super start to Test match cricket after the COVID-19 hiatus. However, Calypso and reggae that popularise the Caribbean life style is still flourishing, whereas, their cricket is dancing somewhere way up in the sky.

(Yajurvindra Singh is a former Test cricketer. Views expressed are personal)

58.42 lakh beneficiaries get pensions at their doorstep

- The figure accounts for 95.4% of beneficiaries
- 2.68 lakh village/ward volunteers perform the feat for successive sixth month despite raging Covid pandemic
- With addition of 2.2 lakh members, a total of 61.28 lakh beneficiaries will receive their pensions in Aug

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati: For the sixth successive month, pensions were distributed at the doorstep of beneficiaries by the impeccable delivery system of village and ward volunteers on Saturday. Despite going through the Covid-19 pandemic, 2.68 lakh village/ward volunteers completed the commitment of the state government by distributing pensions at the doorstep of beneficiaries on the first day of the

month. Under YSR Pension Kanuka on Saturday, by 5 pm, 58,42,796 beneficiaries received the pension on Day-1, accounting for 95.44 per cent, while the state government is spending Rs 1,478.89 crore towards the initiative.

In the month of August with a new addition of 2.2 lakh members, as many as 61.28 lakh beneficiaries will be receiving their pensions.

Also, 1,52,095 beneficiaries who were unable to receive the pension from the past six months due to various reasons will be receiving the entire amount this month.

In addition to these, 15,68 health pensions were also added to the list and even the pensions that are being offered through various corporations like Brahmin Corporation, Kapu, SC, ST, BC, EBC, and Minorities corporations have been brought under YSR Pension Kanuka and the beneficiaries shall receive their pension of Rs 2,250 at the doorstep.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mo-



A ward volunteer handing over pension to a beneficiary at Krishnalanka in Vijayawada on Saturday

han Reddy has been firm on his promises in delivering welfare schemes to the public even at these tough times. The old-age pensioners, physically handi-

capped are facing difficulties due to lockdown, and now, providing them the pensions at their doorsteps has built confidence among them.

Covid cases breach 1.50L mark

Amaravati: Coronavirus cases crossed the 1.50-lakh mark in the state on Saturday as another 9,276 were added but a record high of 12,750 patients had recovered and been discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours.

According to the latest government bulletin, the states Covid-19 cumulative tally showed 1,50,209 confirmed cases, 72,188 active, 76,614 recoveries and 1,407 deaths till 9 am on Saturday.

The state completed 20,12,573 tests at the rate of 37,689 per million population, with a positivity rate of 74.6 per cent.

Owing to a record number of discharges in a day, the recovery

Total number of deaths climbs to 1,407 with 58 new deaths in 24 hours

rate again climbed to 51 per cent while the mortality rate dipped further to 0.94 per cent.

Of the 58 deaths reported in the last 24 hours, East Godavari and Visakhapatnam accounted for eight each, Guntur seven, Anantapuramu, Chittoor and Kurnool six each.

With 201, Kurnool became the first district in the state to register over 200 Covid-19 deaths while East Godavari is behind with 172.

East Godavari, which tops the state with 21,271 total cases, showed a remarkable improve-

ment on Saturday after 5,880 patients recovered in the last 24 hours and brought down the number of active cases to 7,782. But Visakhapatnam showed a worrying trend as it added another 1,155 new cases, pushing its overall tally to 11,920, with 8,698 of them active.

Anantapur district also added 1,128 fresh cases, making its cumulative count 15,827, with 8,822 active.

Kurnool recorded 1,234 and Guntur 1,001 more cases in the last one day, taking the aggregate to 18,081 and 15,669 respectively.

Portal to show beds availability

Amaravati: Following the instructions of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, department of health, medical and family welfare has initiated a unique portal where people in Andhra Pradesh can now view the live status of beds available in the hospitals for Covid-19 treatment.

People can get the details of bed availability through the dashboard http://dashboard.covid19.ap.gov.in/ims/hospbed_reports/. The dashboard would display the details of ventilators, oxygen beds, general beds and ICU beds across 13 districts. The dashboard contains the data of total beds, beds occupied and available in all categories. It is real time data which gets auto updated every time there is an admission or discharge from the hospital.

Glitches in ICMR server delay testing

V PRADEEP KUMAR

Tirupati: Pointing at the lapses in strengthening the systems, technical glitches have hindered the swab collection process for Covid testing for the last four days. Making a mockery of the country's Covid preparedness, the ICMR servers have been facing problems continuously for four days due to which the testing centres could not connect to them. With this, the registration process of patients has halted and the code number could not be generated which is required for collecting swabs from people.

Entire AP has been facing the same problem as the central server at ICMR was unable to reach. With this, the people and Covid suspects, who approach testing centres in

- People have been waiting from early morning but to return homes without giving swabs for tests
- Chittoor district crosses 12,000 positive cases
- With several doctors and other staff infected, SVIMS has suspended the OP services for fourth time up to Aug 15

their eagerness to get tested from early in the morning have been returning home after waiting till afternoon.

People from several parts in the

district and other neighbouring districts also come to Tirupati for Covid testing. They have been facing difficulties to stay here as they could not stay in hotels and even the known people and relatives are not allowing anyone during the pandemic.

District Medical and Health Officer Dr M Penchalaiah told The Hans India that the problem is not related to the district alone. As soon as the central server can be connected, swab collection will automatically start. Still, for emergency cases about 1,000 Rapid Antigen tests were being done to take further action. To a question, he said that about 4,000 – 5,000 swabs are being collected in the district daily including rapid anti-

body tests. The delay in swab collection and testing may lead to more spread of the virus as the people are moving freely even with the symptoms. Meanwhile, the district has crossed 12,000 Covid positive cases by Saturday evening. Tirupati accounts for about 48 per cent of the total cases which has reported more than 5,700 cases so far.

Within 24 hours from Friday 9 am to Saturday 9 am, Tirupati city reported 535 cases while the district tally during the period was 949. While the cases are skyrocketing, the doctors and other staff were getting infected with the virus one after another making it a tough task for available staff to supervise the treatment of all active cases.



Ex-Minister Manikyala Rao dies of Covid

He has been undergoing treatment at a hospital in Vijayawada for the last one month

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Vijayawada: BJP leader and former minister in the Chandrababu Naidu Cabinet Pydikondala Manikyala Rao who was afflicted with coronavirus and undergoing treatment in a hospital here for the last one month breathed his last on Saturday.

He was 60.

Manikyala Rao was the endowments minister in the TDP Cabinet.

Starting his career as photographer, he became the minister in the later years.

He was elected to the state Assembly from Tadepalligudem in West Godavari on the BJP ticket and was inducted into the Cabinet as endowments minister as part of the electoral tie-up between the TDP and the BJP.

He worked as minister from 2014 to 2018 till the differences cropped up between the BJP and TDP.

Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan expresses shock over the demise of the BJP leader.

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu expressed condolences to the bereaved family of the former minister.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock over the sudden demise of the former minister. He ordered state funeral for Manikyala Rao.

Jana Sena meet today on capitals

Pawan supported Amaravati as capital, expressed support to farmers on several occasions in the past

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati: Now that the state government is getting ready to shift the capital to Visakhapatnam, Jana Sena Party led by Pawan Kalyan has been pushed into a piquant situation.

With Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan accepting the Bills pertaining to three capitals and the BJP taking a U-turn on the issue saying that it has no role in the matter, Jana Sena has decided to convene a virtual meeting of the political affairs committee on Sunday, August 2.

This meeting assumes importance since during his visit to the villages in Tulluru area in January this year, Pawan Kalyan went on record saying that he had agreed to sail with BJP with the condition that capital would not be shifted from Amravati. He extended his support to the farmers and said that Jana Sena was opposed to shifting of capital and would stand by the farmers. The meeting would also discuss party's its next course of action on the issue and how to support the farmers of capital region. An official statement after the meeting is likely to be made in the name of Pawan Kalyan.

YSRCP leaders hail 3 capitals, slam Naidu

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati/Visakhapatnam/Srikakulam: Reiterating that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy wants development of all regions through decentralisation, YSRCP leaders and ministers slammed TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu for trying to promote commercial activity by concentrating development only at Amaravati.

Speaking to media at separate venues, they said that the TDP leadership has no moral right to talk on the capital issue as it planned to create wealth for a few and in one region while depriving others of any benefit and demeaning the institutions of the Governor and the Legislative Council.

Minister for animal husbandry and fisheries Seediri Appalaraju said that the previous government made Amaravati into a commercial venture to benefit the coterie of leadership.

The previous government made a tall claim of initially requiring Rs 1 lakh crore for capital but had spent only Rs 10,000 crore on Amaravati.

The minister criticised Naidu for ignoring recommendations of Sivarama Krishnan Committee that suggested decentralisation to avoid an imbalance of development in the state and hence Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy brought this decentralisation after appointing three committees.

He said that the opposition TDP leaders tried to stall the Bills in Legislative Council and even went to the extent of holding up the Appropriation Bill for salaries.

Appalaraju also said that Naidu completed Pattiseema in one year to draw water for Amaravati region from the right canal of Polavaram but did not touch the left canal which benefits north coastal Andhra. The Chief Minister took interest in it and sanctioned Rs 2,022 crore for the project.

Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu hit out at the opposition leaders for finding fault with the Governor in approving the two Bills passed by the Assembly.

The minister asked why

- Ministers Appalaraju, Kurasala Kannababu blast Chandrababu
- Appalaraju says Naidu promised Rs 1 lakh cr for Amaravati but spent hardly Rs 10,000 cr
- Kannababu questions why the TDP chief is opposing distribution of lands to the poor in Amaravati

Naidu was opposing the executive capital in Visakhapatnam, which is a developed city next to Hyderabad having all the natural resources.

He came down heavily on Naidu for claiming that capital in Amaravati was opposed to downgrade a particular caste and asked why Naidu was opposed to lands being given to the poor in Amravati.

He questioned Naidu whether the people of that caste were not well established in Vizag. He said it was a monumental decision taken by Jagan Mohan Reddy for decentralisation which would bring about the all-round development of the state.

Meanwhile, senior YSRCP leader and MLA Dharmana Prasada Rao said decentralisation of administration by bringing about three capitals was a novel initiative by Jagan Mohan Reddy. He said people had already realised the benefit of having village secretariats which was the first step in the decentralisation process of administration for better outreach.

MLA Gudivawada Amarnath said that Visakhapatnam has the potential to be the capital and the decentralised administration would result in equitable development of all the regions. People of the state were pretty confident that Jagan's vision would bring back glory to all regions.

Meanwhile, MLA Jogi Ramesh said that any amount of mudslinging by Naidu cannot stop the decentralisation process set in by the Chief Minister. He challenged Naidu to make his 23 MLAs resign and go to polls and said the TDP would not even win a single seat.

NEP, THE GREAT TRANSFORMER

Continued from P1

The Smart India Hackathon is a nationwide initiative to provide students with a platform to solve some of the pressing problems people face in daily lives, and thus inculcate a culture of product innovation and a mindset of problem-solving.

Students from MLR Institute of Technology, Hyderabad, Shri Krishna College of Engineering and Technology, Tamil Nadu, JECRC University, Jaipur, Graphic Era University, Dehradun and Chandigarh Engineering College interacted with the PM and discussed their innovative ideas. The first edition of Smart India Hackathon in 2017 saw participation of 42,000 students, which increased to 1 lakh in 2018 and to 2 lakh in 2019. The first round of Smart India Hackathon 2020 saw participation of more than 4.5 lakh students.

China moves PLA battalion across India's Lipulekh Pass

Continued from P1

Chinese troops have augmented its presence on its side of the LAC elsewhere too.

"There has been accretion of PLA troops across the LAC at Lipulekh Pass, parts of North Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh," a top military commander said.

Lipulekh Pass, which falls on the Mansarovar Yatra route, has been in the headlines for the last few months after Nepal objected to a 80-km road built by India to the Himalayan pass. The Lipulekh Pass is also used for annual barter trade during June-October between tribal populations living on either side of the Indo-China LAC.

WILL BAN TIKTOK IN US: TRUMP

Continued from P1

That report emerged around the same time news outlets reported that Trump was considering signing an executive order requiring ByteDance to divest the American portion of TikTok due to concerns that the company may be giving sensitive US data collected through the app to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), said The Hill news website.

Trump administration officials have for weeks floated taking action against TikTok due its connections to China. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made similar comments earlier this month, announcing that the administration was considering banning Chinese apps, including

TikTok, due to national security concerns.

The US President's announcement also came nearly a month after India on June 29 banned 59 Chinese apps, including TikTok, over national security concerns.

Pompeo had welcomed India's move, saying the "clean app" policy will promote New Delhi's national security against the CCP spying on the country. "We welcome India's ban on certain mobile apps that can serve as appendages of the CCP's surveillance state. India's 'clean app' approach will boost India's sovereignty, will also boost India's integrity and national security as the Indian government itself has stated," he had said.

Advani, Joshi likely to get invite for Ayodhya event

Continued from P1

Last week Advani appeared before a special CBI court in Lucknow via video link to answer questions relating to the mosque's razing. Advani, 92, who is among the accused in the case and was asked more than 1,000 questions over four-and-a-half hours, has denied all charges, according to his lawyer.

Joshi, another senior BJP leader who recorded his statement before the same court, said that those who had deposed against him done so for political reasons and that all allegations against him were false. Advani, Joshi and Uma Bharti are among the BJP leaders accused of conspiracy.

Resurgence of Covid-19 cases worries world

Continued from P1

In the first week of July, Victoria's total caseload crossed that of New South Wales, and has only risen further since. The state's capital Melbourne has become the epicentre of the second wave of the pandemic in the country. New cases in Melbourne have continued to surge despite a three-week lockdown.

Hong Kong: Despite an initial lull in the number of coronavirus cases being reported city-wide, Hong Kong is now in the midst of a third wave of the pandemic. This time around, the numbers are higher than ever.

Iran: After the country began to relax lockdown restrictions in April, Iran witnessed a rapid spike in coronavirus cases from mid-May onwards. The rise in in-

fections has also been accompanied by a steadily increasing death toll. In June, the total number of Covid-related deaths crossed 100 for the first time. Since June, the country has been recording an average of 3,000 cases per day. Due to the rising numbers, Iran is now vigorously testing its citizenry.

Spain: Ever since Spain lifted a nationwide state of emergency on June 21, the number of new coronavirus cases has steadily surged. A majority of the new clusters were reported in Catalonia and Aragon. As a result, fresh lockdowns were imposed across the country and several other European countries, including Britain, barred the entry of Spanish tourists. The country recorded 1,229 new cases since Thursday, the sharpest surge on record

since April 30. **Vietnam:** Earlier this week, Vietnam recorded its first Covid-19 case in over three months. Since then, Vietnam has been bracing for a rise in cases after multiple new infections were reported across the country. Health officials are claiming that the fresh cases have been caused by a more virulent new strain of the virus that originated outside the country.

Fiji: On August 1, the island nation of Fiji recorded its first Covid-19 death. Fiji had declared itself coronavirus-free as early as in June, this year. Soon after, as residents stranded in foreign nations began to return home, the country recorded nine new cases. With the death of the 66-year-old man, the total number of active cases now stands at eight.

Smartphone market set to recover by 40% in 2nd half

The path to potential recovery will be led by pent-up consumer demand, driven by need for upgrades. In the run-up to the festive season, consumers will seek to go for meaningful value propositions

After going through disruptions in supply chain and curtailed domestic production, the India smartphone market is now showing encouraging signs of revival that sets it on a potential course for market recovery for over 40 per cent in the second half this year, according to a new report.

Over the short-term, the mobile market will improve in mid-Q3, spurred by early online sales festivals, setting the smartphone market on a potential path to recovery towards the all-important festive season. During this period, smartphone brands will focus on showcasing their consumer-centric value propositions, focusing more on hyperlocal delivery models, and launching more 5G-ready smartphones, according to market research firm CMR's 'India Mobile Handset Market Review Report.'

CMR's current estimates point to a better performance for the India smartphone market in H2 2020, with the market anticipated to recover by more than 40 per cent in comparison to the first half.

"As a consequence of the pandemic, Q2 2020 was, in essence, a lost quarter. While the mobile handset industry faced multiple challenges with respect to their supply and demand side dynamics, the industry looks set on the path to a potential recovery in the coming months," said Amit Sharma, Man-

ager-Industry Intelligence Group, CMR. The initial consumer demand in the unlock phase was driven predominantly through online channels and driven by need for urgent replacements. "Facing up to the pandemic, smartphone brands debuted innovative hyperlocal delivery models, some of which have the potential to gain permanence," Sharma added.

The path to potential recovery will be led by pent-up consumer demand, driven by need for upgrades. In the run-up to the festive season, consumers will seek to go for meaningful value propositions that bring devices and compelling content ecosystem offerings, together.

"This, coupled by smartphone brands bringing more value for money offerings and backed by aggressive messaging, will potentially drive the market," said Sharma.

Thus far, a key challenge for the smartphone market in India to grow has been the inability to offer value propositions that will help feature phone users to migrate to smartphones.

"We believe recent announcements, such as the Jio-Google deal, augur well for the future of the mobile handset industry in India, and in potentially enabling the migration of feature phones to smartphone users, with its focus on driving affordability," said analyst Anand Priya Singh. (IANS)



Non-local suppliers barred from govt contracts

As part of its initiative to bring down import content in the sensitive power sector, particularly from countries such as China, the power ministry has issued a new public procurement order that bars participation of non-local suppliers in the case of 110 goods and services required by the thermal power sector.

These goods which include power equipment such as transformers, switch gears, cables and insulators, will henceforth be supplied only by Class-I category companies where local content is 50 per cent or more and sufficient capacities are existing in the country.

The procurement by govern-



ment entities or projects funded by the Power Finance Corporation and REC Ltd of such goods and serviced will only be through this category of suppliers while all others will be barred to participate in bids.

The power ministry has also listed another 69 items in its public procurement order. This group included goods and services that are being manufactured under license from foreign manufacturers holding intellectual property rights. These can be sourced from class-II suppliers that have localisation level between 20 per cent and 50 per cent.

Overseas suppliers with no manufacturing base in the country will only be allowed to participate in global tenders floated by state and central government companies or state funded projects for orders above Rs 200 crore. Along with non-local suppliers, such tenders will also be opened for Case-1 and Case-2 suppliers. Moreover, government entities floating global tender for less than Rs 200 crore will have to take the prior approval of the competent authority before progressing. (IANS)

SOLAR EQUIPMENT

Double tax to check Chinese imports



In addition to the 15 per cent safeguard duty on solar equipment, a 10 per cent basic customs duty may be levied on solar modules while a 5 per cent duty may be considered for solar cells

SUBHASH NARAYAN

The government proposes a double layered taxation structure on imports of solar cells and modules in a bid to check proliferation of Chinese equipment in the critical power sector.

Two sources in the government said that in addition to the 15 per cent safeguard duty on solar equipment, a 10 per cent basic customs duty may be levied on solar modules while a 5 per cent duty may be considered for solar cells.

This is lower than the Power Ministry's earlier proposal to levy 20-25 per cent duty on solar equipment imports, but with continuation of the safeguard duty for one more year, the proposal on basic customs duty has been lowered.

The Power Ministry has revised its proposal on basic customs duty on solar equipment as the Director General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has extended the levy of safeguard duty at 14.9 per cent on solar cells and modules imported from the China, Thailand and Vietnam for another year till July 29, 2021. This duty will come down to 14.5 per cent from January 30, 2021.

The Power Ministry has earlier proposed basic customs duty of 20-25 per cent on solar module imports for the current year that will go up to 40 per cent level in the next year. Also, the duty on solar cells was proposed at a lower 15-20 per cent level for the first year and a higher 30-40 per cent level in the next year.

"The basic customs duty proposal has been revised as it was framed keeping in mind that safeguard duty would stand withdrawn from August

and a higher customs duty would maintain check on solar equipment imports. But as the safeguard duty is continuing, customs duty will be the difference between our earlier proposal on duty and the quantum of safeguard duty," said a source in the Power Ministry, asking not to be named.

While the Finance Ministry has notified levy of safeguard duty for an additional period of one year, it is yet to notify levy of customs duty on solar equipment. Sources said it would be done soon and may be made applicable retrospectively from August 1. The level of customs duty would go up to the levels proposed by the Power Ministry earlier after the safeguard duty is withdrawn in July next year.

Though the two-tier duty will be for all solar equipment imports coming from different countries, it would largely impact China that till recently was supplying 80 per cent of India's requirements.

By virtue of FTA with ASEAN, India may not impose customs duty on countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. But this may not upset the plan to restrict imports as these countries together meet just about 10-15 per cent solar equipment requirements in the country. In 2018-19, the total imports in conventional power sector were to the tune of Rs 75,000 crore, out of which imports from China stood at over Rs 21,000 crore. In the renewable segment, imports stood at \$2.9 billion in FY19 with close to 70 per cent from China.

Power Minister RK Singh had said earlier that even in renewables, sufficient domestic capacities for both

solar modules and cells existed in the country which should discourage imports. The minister had said that in solar cells, the existing domestic capacity is being increased by more than three times from the present 2,500 MW. About 4,000 MW of fresh cell manufacturing capacity is coming up while 3000 MW additional capacity will be added under manufacturing linked bids for solar projects.

The Power Minister said that in case of solar modules as well, 7,000 MW of capacity is being added. These, he said, should be sufficient to meet the country's need as well as exports.

Apart from higher tariff, the Power Ministry also proposes to check imports through an approved list of models and manufacturers (ALMM). It will only allow imports from entities approved by the Power Ministry. The Power Ministry has also suggested to fix stringent quality standards for imports of all kinds of power equipment and sub-standard products would be outrightly rejected with the supplier being blacklisted. Goods so imported shall be tested in Indian laboratories for adhering to Indian standards and checks would also be to see the presence of malware that has the potential to jeopardise the security of critical infrastructure installations of the country. There is also plan to put another layer of check at the ministry level that will first clear all import proposals. So, equipment/items required to be imported from prior reference countries will be done only after obtaining prior approval of Power Ministry and the Ministry of MNRE. (IANS)

P MADHUSUDHAN REDDY

What is the economic cost of Covid-19 pandemic in India?

That's a tricky question now, for which there is no accurate answer yet. But going by the way the novel coronavirus is spreading its deadly wings across the country, India is most likely to pay a heavy economic toll in this financial year and beyond. In mid-July, the rating agency ICRA forecast that the Indian economy would contract by a whopping 9.5 per cent in FY21. Just two months prior to that in May, the same agency pegged this fiscal year's economic shrinkage at five per cent. In June, former union finance secretary Subhash Chandra Garg estimated the GDP fall would be at a disappointing low of (-)10 per cent in FY21. These estimates are clear signals that economic dynamics are fast changing in the country.

But all these projections look conservative by a mile. The Indian economy is mostly likely to contract by around 20 per cent this financial year. The reason for such a steep fall in GDP is obvious. Covid cases are rising by the day and there is no end to the upward trajectory of the pandemic tally in sight. On Saturday, our country witnessed a record daily surge of over 57,000 cases, taking the total Covid-19 count to 17 lakh. As observed in many countries, increase in total cases will lead to rise in daily count as the pandemic's spread expands. If this expansion theory is taken into account, the day is not far off when India's daily Covid count touches a daunting one lakh mark. Furthermore, there is every likelihood of our country outpacing the US and taking the global top position in Covid tally. That's intimidating, isn't it? But it's going to be reality unless some miracle happens and a vaccine for the deadly virus becomes a reality. Also, there will be some relief if the pandemic peaks by September or October.

But the fact of the matter is that the economy will not come back on a recovery track unless the pandemic is contained. The other terrifying aspect is that Covid is fast spreading its tentacles into hinterlands and rural areas. If this continues unabated, the rural economy will also lose the steam and agricultural output

The other terrifying aspect is that Covid is fast spreading its tentacles into hinterlands and rural areas. If this continues unabated, the rural economy will also lose the steam and agricultural output will take a severe beating



will take a severe beating. Till now, it is being expected that the agriculture sector will provide some succour to the Covid-hit economy. But that is going to be very unlikely now. So, it's a chaotic situation out there which will push the economy into a bigger crisis. The impact on the healthcare infrastructure will also be enormous. But the sad part is that barring a few, most of the State governments have thrown up their hands. So is also the Centre. This can be gauged from the fact that most of the leaders in power have gone silent on the pandemic.

But they can't escape from the responsibility though. Leaders in power need to realise that this pandemic will play a key role in the next elections whenever the elections come. For, it has impacted every family and every member of each family in one way or the other. Therefore, people will rate the governments on how they have handled this once-in-a-century crisis. All other achievements and developmental activities will obviously take a back seat. That's so because people's first worry is their physical health. And the second worry is their own financial health. The governments that handle both worries dexterously will come up trumps. Others will be shown the door. That's as simple

as that. However, some ruling parties and their leaders may be an exception to this rule as weak Opposition may work in their favour. But this rule is dynamic in nature. If people are vexed with the current dispensation beyond a critical point, they will go with whichever alternative is available. In that case, 'Weak Opposition' theory will also not work. But it is unfair to blame the governments alone. A section of people are also equally responsible for the sorry state of affairs in the country. India is a poor country. That's the reality beyond any doubt. So, the debilitating impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the economy is going to take a heavy toll on the financial health of each and every individual irrespective of whether he or she is infected with the virus or not. If someone gets unlucky and falls prey to a serious attack of the virus, the healthcare bill will cripple the infected person financially for many years to come.

But Indians are not poor when it comes to attitude. That's adding fuel to the 'Covid' fire. Recently, I was waiting at a bill counter of a popular vegetable mart. A man in his thirties was standing behind me. We were

the only two customers in that queue. As he was very close to me, I requested him to step back a bit. But he refused to move back. Furthermore, he moved closer to me, saying there was no need for any more distance between us. That's the typical Indian attitude which needs to be discarded during these trying times. There is a golden chance of protecting ourselves from the deadly Covid-19 pandemic by maintaining a safe physical distance from others, wearing a proper face mask, sanitising hands at regular intervals and keeping surroundings clean. And all these cost hardly anything when compared to the Covid treatment expenses and associated issues. Furthermore, maintaining physical distance from others comes at free of cost. But unfortunately, people like the one I cited above are behaving foolishly, putting others at risk. As a consequence, our country, our economy and some unlucky people are paying a heavy price.

People who escaped from the jaws of Covid-19 by paying hefty hospital bills know how costly such silly mistakes are. It's time people realise that they can save their families, country and its economy if they behave responsibly for a few months. That's what is the need of the hour now.

QUIZ NO.
134

HANS BIZ QUIZ

Theme: 'Rise of Retail Investor'

1. The economic and financial liberalisation that took place in the early 1990s has transformed India's capital markets, giving markets a more significant role in economic development. Historically, what is the growth rate of the number of retail investors in India?
a) 4.5% CAGR b) 7% CAGR
c) 11% CAGR d) 16.5% CAGR

2. According to the SEBI guidelines until August 2003, which criterion defines a 'Retail Investor' in India, based on the eligibility requirements for participating in an IPOs?
a) An individual investor applying for securities worth Rs 50,000 or less
b) An investor applying for allotment of 10 or less marketable lots in a fixed issue
c) An individual investor applying for allotment up to 1000 units in a book building offer
d) All of the above

3. As per the survey of household saving and investment behaviour conducted by the NCAER in 2011, only 10.75 per cent of households in the country invest in equity instruments, mutual funds and bonds. What was the proportion of retail investor households in urban and rural India?
a) 8% in urban and 2% in rural
b) 16% in urban and 8% in rural
c) 21% in urban and 6% in rural
d) 47% in urban and 19% in rural

4. The definition of the retail investor was subsequently revised from time to time by the SEBI under its 'Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements' guidelines. A retail investor can bid for shares worth a maximum of Rs 2 lakh in an IPO. When did the SEBI revise the limit for maximum application for retail investors from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh across all public issues?
a) October 2016 b) November 2010
c) April 2008 d) March 2005

5. Sensex, which swung back and forth and was crawling at the 5000 mark during the 1990s, has since crossed 40,000 more recently. In terms of value, individual investors account for what per cent of equity market volumes in 2020?
a) 46% b) 38% c) 31% d) 27%

6. Over the last decade, we have recorded a significant spike in the number of new registrations and charted an exhilarating journey - from 17 lakh new investors in FY09 to 28 lakh new investors in FY19. In absolute numbers, which are the top five states that lead the new retail investors?
a) Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh
b) Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Delhi and

West Bengal
c) Gujarat, Haryana, AP, Uttaranchal and Assam
d) Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Manipur

7. Investors from tier-2 and tier-3 towns have been actively contributing to India's growth story and changed the definition of the retail investor over the last five years. Which top four tier-2 towns recorded a high volume of new retail investor registration?
a) Faridabad, Raipur, Rourkela and Ujjain
b) Gurgaon, Jamnagar, Jaipur and Vijayawada
c) Ghaziabad, Nellore, Noida and Madurai
d) Rajkot, Vadodara, Lucknow and Nagpur

8. Retail investor presence in the past decade appears smaller when assessed relative to the population as per the Indian School of Business study



in 2011 that estimated that there were around 2.02 million retail investors in India. Which four metro cities were the main drivers of the growth of new retail investors?
a) Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai and Pune
b) Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kolkata
c) Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Bengaluru
d) Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Pune and Kolkata

9. Surprisingly, retail investors' presence in the stock market has taken an upturn, even the unprecedented lockdown amid Covid-19 that ravaged consumer demand and economic outlook. Identify the country's top two stockbrokers which has the largest number of active retail investor clients?
a) HDFC Securities and Motilal Oswal
b) Zerodha Broking and ICICI Securities
c) SBI Securities and Angel Broking
d) Kotak Securities and Sharekhan

10. The role of individual investors or 'retail' investors had been less important in the securities market during the last few decades as retail investors accounted for merely less than one per cent of India's population. About 78 lakh retail investors had participated in the cash market in 2019. What percent of total retail investors in India participated in derivatives in 2019?
a) 4.8% b) 13.7%
c) 23.5% d) 38.2%

The Hans Biz Quiz has been compiled by **Sunil Dhavala**, CEO, The Third Umpire Media. He had held senior management roles at Bertelsmann, NGC, Fox Broadcasting, Star TV and others. He is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Foreign Trade

KEY

1C 2D 3C 4B 5B 6A 7D 8C 9B 10A

Women’s cricket should have come under BCCI earlier, feels Mithali

New Delhi (IANS): Women’s cricket star Mithali Raj has said that women’s cricket in the country should have come under the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) earlier. Mithali believes that this would have given more financial security to the players because of which many wouldn’t have had to leave the sport at the age of 23 or 24.

Women’s cricket was governed by the Women’s Cricket Association of India until 2006 when it was merged with the

BCCI. “I feel if it had happened 5 years before, it would have been better,” Mithali said while speaking on Star Sports 1 Telugu show Girl Power-Sarileru-Manakevvaru.

“Many talented players at that time, because of lack of money, lack of financial stability through this game, they had to shift to different fields. After turning 23-24, parents will ask what is next? So, being a women cricketer what can you tell parents? I don’t earn money, I am playing for passion? Nobody will

buy it.

“Because of that reason, a lot of talented people, they had to let go of their profession (cricket). So, at that time if BCCI was there, they would have added an extended career and we would have more pool of players in women’s cricket.”

The 37-year-old, widely regarded as the greatest female cricketer the country has produced, said that as a child she wanted to become an IAS officer. “Honestly cricket happened to me. It didn’t come by choice. I

didn’t choose to get into cricket,” she said.

“My dad took me to the academy there, whatever transpired, and I was straight away into a full-fledged academy for girls. I was too young to make a choice. If at that time somebody could ask a 10-year-old Mithali, what you want to become, I would have said that I wanted to become an IAS officer. Not a sportsperson, not a dancer. I always felt I had it in me to be an IAS officer.”



Pollard to lead Trinbago Knight Riders in CPL 2020

Port of Spain (IANS): Trinbago Knight Riders will stick with veteran all-rounder Kieron Pollard to lead the team in the 2020 edition of the Caribbean Premier League. Pollard led the team to play-offs last time around after regular captain Dwayne Bravo missed the tournament due to injury. Bravo had earlier led the team to back-to-back CPL titles in 2017 and 2018. The management, however, seems to be happy will Pollard leading the side, who is currently the skipper of West Indies T20I team as well. “We are happy that Kieron who is the West Indies captain is our leader at TKR,” Venky Mysore, the CEO of the team as well as Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, told T&T Guardian. The 2020 edition of the CPL will take place in Trinidad & Tobago from August 18 and September 20. The tournament will have a full season and will feature overseas and Caribbean players. The matches will be played behind closed doors with COVID guidelines in place for the teams and officials.

Felt Bhajji was wronged: Kumble opens up on Monkeygate incident

New Delhi (IANS): Former India captain Anil Kumble has recalled the infamous Monkeygate incident of 2008 that threatened to sour the relationship between two of the biggest powerhouses in world cricket.

During India’s tour of Australia, the Sydney Test had made headlines for all the wrong reasons. While it was known for the umpiring errors during the match, the biggest story to come out of it was the Monkeygate incident involving Harbhajan Singh and Andrew Symonds.

The controversies ended up overshadowing what was otherwise a high-quality match featuring as many as five centuries, including an unbeaten 162 from Symonds. Australia dramatically won the game by 122 runs with minutes to spare on the final day.

The saga between Harbhajan and Symonds snowballed into a hearing and the latter was even handed a ban. Kumble, who was the captain at the time, recalled the entire episode and stated that the off-spinner was wronged and that was the general consensus in the team dressing room.



“As a captain you’re generally tuned to take decisions on the field. Here I was faced with something, which was off the field, to take a decision in the larger interest of the game,” Kumble told Ravichandran Ash-

win during latter’s YouTube show ‘DRSWithAsh’. “And one of our players (Harbhajan Singh) was obviously banned for three matches because of a racist remark - that was what the pronouncement was and we

appealed. I felt he was wronged. “We had to obviously be together as a team but the challenge was that there was a lot of talk about the team wanting to come back at that point in time, and leave the tour and come back.

LA 2028 chief urges IOC to allow anti-racist advocacy at Olympics

Los Angeles (IANS): 2028 Los Angeles Olympics organising committee Chairman Casey Wasserman, in a letter to International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach, has pushed for allowing for advocacy of anti-racism at the Games.

Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, which the IOC says is designed to protect the neutrality of the Olympic movement and sport, states: “No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.”

“Sport is not separate or clear of racism; it is a microcosm of our world where racism exists,” Wasserman wrote in the letter according to Sportico. “I urge you to allow and encourage athletes to advocate against racism anywhere they can, including on and off the field of play.”

“We can start now by having the IOC amend the guidelines that support Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter to allow anti-racist advocacy on the Olympic stage.

Winning FA Cup stays with you forever: Lampard ahead of Arsenal final

London (IANS): Chelsea manager Frank Lampard issued a rallying cry to his players ahead of their FA Cup final against rivals Arsenal at the Wembley Stadium on Saturday.

Chelsea secured a place in the final by getting the better of Manchester United 3-1 while Arsenal stunned Manchester City 2-0 to enter the championship clash.

Lampard, who won the trophy four times with Chelsea as player, now has a chance to lead them to glory as their manager. According to the Englishman, “The Blues’ stand a good chance of winning the title this time around.

“Winning the Cup still means the same. It stays with you for life,” Lampard told reporters via videoconference as per Daily Mail. “If you win this title, it stays with you forever. If we can find the standards we have found this season then we have a really good chance to win.

“It would be a boost but then any experience of a cup final for



young players is a good one anyway,” he said.

“There is a different feel to a cup final as there is a necessity to win. That can change the feel of the game,” he added.

Arsenal, however, hold the record for most FA Cup wins as they have lifted the title a record 13 times. Manchester United come a close second with 12 titles while Chelsea complete the top-three with eight trophies.

“Everyone’s worked so hard since I joined here to try to bring this club back to winning titles so if we can achieve that, I will be delighted,” Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta told reporters ahead of the clash.

I think Dhoni is past his best: Binny

New Delhi (IANS): Former India cricketer and selector Roger Binny feels wicket-keeper batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni is past his prime now and that is evident from the way he has been playing cricket in the last two seasons.

Dhoni last played for Team India in the semifinal of the 2019 ICC World Cup in Manchester where they suffered a heart-breaking 18-run defeat against New Zealand.

“He (MS Dhoni) has lost a bit of fitness. There are younger players coming through the system. He was good enough to pass on the gloves to the younger players which is good of him but yeah, I think he is past his best,” Binny said during an interaction on Sportskeeda’s Facebook page.

“Seeing him the last couple of seasons, he is easily past his best cricket which he has played, which we have seen him capable of doing,” he added.

Dhoni was gearing up to take part in the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League in March, knowing a good performance in the cash-rich league for Chennai Super Kings could help him seal a place in the squad for T20 World Cup Down Under.



However, due to coronavirus pandemic, the IPL was initially postponed indefinitely before BCCI finally deciding to host the tournament in UAE starting September 19. The decision came after ICC postponed the T20 World Cup.

According to his teammates, Dhoni looked in good touch in the training sessions that were held before the original starting date of the tournament i.e. March 29. The CSK management held a training camp at the Chepauk Stadium in early March where Dhoni was present.

“Honestly speaking, whenever a cricketer makes a comeback after such a long break, people



think that he will be a bit rusty. But I am sure he was doing something at Ranchi because when Dhoni landed in the camp, he didn’t look rusty at all. His routine work was -- he played five-six balls and then used to clear the fence,” CSK spinner Piyush Chawla told Aakash Chopra on the latter’s YouTube channel, last month.

“He batted for long. In fact, Suresh Raina, Ambati Rayudu, Dhoni and Murali Vijay...there were limited players in the camp and there were a number of bowlers. So everyone batted for long - 2-2:30 hours every day. Every batsman played 200-250 balls,” he added.

Inter looking to give Messi bigger contract than Ronaldo’s Juve deal

Rome (IANS): Speculation has been rife about Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi’s imminent departure from the club and Serie A side Inter Milan have emerged as the frontrunners to land the signature of the Argentina captain.

According to Gazzettadello Sport, Inter’s owners are willing to table an outrageous four-year contract offer that would see Messi earn 50 million euros net a year. Messi’s current contract runs through to June 2021 at the end of which he can leave the club for free.

If Inter’s reported plans go through, Messi will end up earning more than his arch-rival Cristiano Ronaldo, whose current contract at Serie A champions Juventus sees him earning 31 million euros per year.

Barcelona last month lost out on the LaLiga title for the first time since the 2016/17 season and Messi cut a visibly frustrated figure who said that the Catalan giants are currently a “weak” team.



“We are a weak team who can be beaten with enough intensity and enthusiasm,” he had told Spanish TV. “We have lost a lot of points which we shouldn’t have done (and) been very inconsistent. We need to be self-critical, starting with the players but also across the entire club. We are Barcelona, and we are obliged to win every game.”

Messi has also had run-ins with the Barcelona board, particularly over their failure to bring Neymar back from PSG, which added fuel to the speculation. Inter manager Antonio Conte however laughed off any possibility of Messi playing under him at San Siro.

East Bengal turns 100: ASEAN Cup win, Derby hattrick my best moments: Bhutia

Kolkata (IANS): Club legend Bhaichung Bhutia has placed his sizzling Federation Cup semi-final hat-trick against Mohun Bagan along with the historic ASEAN Cup and National Football League title triumphs as his top three memories with East Bengal on a day the iconic club celebrated its centenary year.

Iconic former India captain Bhutia, regarded as one of the finest strikers the country has ever produced, began his career at East Bengal in 1992 and went on to win every single trophy with the club including one National Football League title and the famous ASEAN Cup in 2003.

He had five different stints donning red and gold starting from 1993 to 2011. “I have had the best memories of the club playing well for 10 years. It is one of the most iconic clubs in India with such great history,” Bhutia told IANS in an interview.

“For me, it’s just about great memories,” said Bhutia.

Asked to pick his top moments with the outfit, Bhutia said his 1997 Federation Cup semifinal hat-trick against traditional rivals Mohun Bagan would be right up there along with the ASEAN Cup triumph and the National Football League win.

“I would say the ASEAN Cup win,



then my hat-trick and winning the league with East Bengal will be the moments I will always cherish fondly,” said Bhutia, who is still adored by East Bengal fans despite him also turning out for arch-rivals Mohun Bagan during his illustrious career.

It was on July 26, 2003 that history was made when East Bengal scripted one of the greatest victories in Indian football by winning the ASEAN Cup under coach Subhash Bhowmick.

East Bengal had become the first Indian club to win an officially recognised Asian football tournament as Bhutia emerged as the top scorer with eight goals.

The club though is not having the best of times at the moment.

East Bengal are currently without any sponsors after their former investors Quess Corp, who had a 70 per cent stake in the club, terminated their tie-up on May 31 despite having a three-year deal.

Meanwhile, Indian Super League (ISL) organisers Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), during a meeting with club representatives have made it clear that they would stick to 10 teams for the upcoming season starting in November. It is still not confirmed whether East Bengal will eventually take part in the country’s top

division or continue playing in the I-League.

“It is a difficult time and more difficult with the COVID-19 scenario,” said Bhutia.

“I think they will have to keep working hard. Try and maybe play the ISL and keep trying to get the investors coming. So that I think they will have to keep working,” insisted the ace forward.

Bhutia said the Quess saga could have been handled in a better way.

“It is difficult for me to blame anyone but whatever has happened so far, especially with Quess...it couldn’t really happen in a very professional manner.