

From LoC to LAC. India's fitting reply

PM WARNS PAK, CHINA

Pushes for self-reliant India, announces digital health mission

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday issued a veiled warning to Pakistan and China over deadly border tensions, while also promising to strengthen the country's military.

In his Independence Day ad-

dress to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort for the seventh consecutive time, Modi said: "India's sovereignty and integrity are supreme for us. What we can do, what our soldiers can do — everyone saw that in Ladakh."

"From LoC (Line of Control) to LAC (Line of Actual Control), anyone who casts an eye on the sovereignty of the country, the armed forces have responded

in the language they understand," Modi said. "Whether it is terrorism or expansionism, India is fighting both with determination." Modi's comments came amid India's bitter border row with China along the LAC in eastern Ladakh and rise in incidents of ceasefire violations along the LoC with Pakistan in the last few months.

Referring to the Galwan Valley clashes in eastern Ladakh in June, the Prime Minister said respect for In-

dia's sovereignty is supreme and the world has seen in Ladakh what its brave jawans can do to maintain this resolve. "I salute all those brave soldiers from the Red Fort," Modi said, adding the whole country is united in protecting the sovereignty of the country.

Twenty Indian army personnel were killed during the clashes on June 15. The Chinese side also suffered casualties, but it is yet to give out the details

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'Make for World' Modi's new slogan

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said major global firms are looking at India as a major investment destination, which is reflected by a robust inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) last financial year, and through 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' (self-reliant India initiative) the country is shifting its focus from 'Make in India' to 'Make for world'. *Continued on Page 4*



Won't open schools unless convinced: CM

New Delhi: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said that the Delhi government will not open schools unless it is "fully convinced" about the improved COVID-19 situation in the city.

Delivering his Independence Day speech at the Delhi Secretariat, Kejriwal said the COVID-19 situation in the city is "quite under control" as compared to what it was two months back and thanked all the stakeholders, including the central government, "corona warriors" and different organisations.

He said in view of reports that some patients collapsed due to drop in their oxygen level even after recovering from the disease and testing negative, the Delhi government will start providing oxygen concentrators to them from next week.

The Chief Minister said the safety and the health of school children are very important to the AAP government. "I meet people



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal salutes after hoisting the Tricolor during the 74th Independence Day celebrations, at Delhi secretariat in New Delhi on Saturday

and get messages from them asking not to open schools. I want to assure them that we care about their children as much as they do. Unless fully convinced, we are not going to open the schools," he said.

Kejriwal said Delhi "gave the model" of home isolation and plasma therapy concept to the country in the fight against the pandemic. *Continued on Page 4*

Health IDs for all

PM announces National Digital Health Mission

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday unveiled an ambitious National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) under which every Indian will get a health ID that will ease access to medical services and also announced that the country has made plans for mass-producing Covid-19 vaccine once scientists give a green signal.

In his Independence Day address, the Prime Minister

said the health ID will store every individual's medical records and the Mission will herald a new revolution in the health sector. "From today, a major campaign is being launched in which technology will play a big role. The National Digital Health Mission is being launched today. This will bring a new revolution in India's health sector and it will help reduce problems in getting treatment with the help of tech-

nology," he said.

"Every Indian will be given a health ID, which will work as each Indian's health account," Modi said, adding that it would ease problems faced by citizens in getting healthcare access. The health ID will contain information about medical data, prescriptions and diagnostic reports and summaries of previous discharge from hospitals for ailments.

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Modi earns plaudits for talking about sanitary pads

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who delivered his seventh consecutive Independence Day speech from the iconic Red Fort in Delhi this morning, spoke about his government's efforts for women empowerment. As he made a mention of sanitary pads, many on social media praised him for a step forward in breaking taboos against menstruation.

"This government has been always concerned about the health of poor our daughters and sisters. Through 6,000 Janaushadhi centres, about 5 crore women have got sanitary pads at Re 1.

Also, we have made panels so that the right marriageable age for women can be decided and these panels also work to resolve the issue of malnutrition among women," PM Modi said this morning, adding that a "decision (on marriageable age) would be taken as soon as (these) panels submit a report". "We have worked for women empowerment. Navy and Air Force are taking women in combat roles. Women are now leaders... we've abolished Triple Talaa," he added. Social media was flooded with responses on the remark as many pointed out that it is rare for a prime minister to talk about menstruation during a national address.



Dhoni hangs up the gloves

New Delhi: MS Dhoni, former India skipper and two-time World Cup winner, announced his retirement on Saturday in an Instagram post. "Thanks a lot for ur love and support throughout. From 1929 hrs, consider me as Retired (sic)," read the post of the formal announcement. Though the post did not mention the formats he is retiring from, Dhoni is expected to play in the upcoming PL 2020 in the UAE as he was spotted earlier on Saturday arriving in Chennai for Chennai Super Kings' training camp before they fly out. *► P8*

Air India terminates 50 pilots overnight

New Delhi: Air India pilots have sought the intervention of the management on the issue of "illegal termination" of 50 pilots from service. In a letter to Rajiv Bansal, Chairman and Managing Director, Air India on Friday, the Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) said around 50 pilots have received illegal termination letters from the Personnel Department in blatant violation of company's operation manual and service rules.



India to spend ₹100L cr on 7,000 infra projects

New Delhi: Aimed at eliminating silos, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced that India will spend Rs 100 lakh crore on 7,000 National Infrastructure projects.

For this, the Prime Minister said, a very big plan has been prepared to connect the entire country with Multi-Modal Connectivity. "About 7,000 projects of different sectors have also been identified. It would be like a new revolution in infrastructure. The country is moving towards spending more than Rs 100 lakh crore on this project," Modi said during his speech from the Red Fort on the 74th Independence Day.

Mentioning the need to eliminate silos in the era of infrastructure, Modi said there is a need to give a new direction to the overall infrastructure so that India moves towards modernity at a fast pace. "This need will be met with the National Infrastructure

Pipeline Project." He said many big companies of the world are turning to India presently and that "we have to move forward with the mantra of Make in India as well as Make for World".

At the event, the Prime Minister also announced that a new national cyber security strategy has been drafted in the country. He said India is alert, cautious and is taking decisions to counter these threats and is constantly developing new systems.



Godavari water level reaches 47 feet at temple town of Bhadrachalam in Telangana

I have more Indians with me than Kamala Harris: Trump

Washington: In yet another scathing attack, US President Donald Trump has claimed that he has "more Indians" than Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's running mate Kamala Harris, who is of Indian and Jamaican heritage.

He made the remarks on Friday while addressing the New York City law enforcement union, the Police Benevolent Association (PBA), that has endorsed the President in the race for the White House.

"(If) Sleepy Joe Biden were to become President, he would immediately pass legislation to gut every single police department in America... And probably she's a step worse, Kamala. 'She is of Indian heritage. Remember I said I have more Indians than her... I have more than she does,'" he added.

Referring to Massachusetts' Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren, Trump said: "I was sort of hoping he (Biden) was going to pick Pocahontas... She's another beauty." "We got names for all of them.



What's better Sleepy Joe or Slow Joe?" the President asked, having his crowd cheer louder for the nickname they preferred, reports Fox News.

In his address, Trump also attacked New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, also a Democrat, and said he "has launched a crusade against the police".

The President described how he watched a protestor dump a bucket of water on two police officers and said, "I wish they fought back".

Trump's latest attack on Harris came a day after he said that that the California Senator "doesn't qualify" to serve as US Vice President, while amplifying the fringe legal 'birther' theory that critics decry as racist. "I just heard it today

that she doesn't meet the requirements and by the way the lawyer that wrote that piece is a very highly qualified, very talented lawyer.

"I have no idea if that's right. I would have assumed the Democrats would have checked that out before she gets chosen to run for Vice President.

"But that's a very serious... you're saying that, they're saying that she doesn't qualify because she wasn't born in this country," Trump was quoted as saying in a BBC report.

On August 11, Biden picked Harris to be his running mate for the November 3 election, in a historic move that marked a breakthrough for Indian-Americans in US politics.

Vaishno Devi pilgrimage to resume today

New Delhi: Pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Vaishno Devi in Trikuta Hills of Jammu and Kashmir will resume on Sunday after remaining suspended for nearly five months in view of the coronavirus pandemic. The yatra was suspended on March 18.

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVSB) CEO Ramesh Kumar said the pilgrimage will resume from Sunday, and in the first week there shall be a cap of 2,000 pilgrims each day of which 1,900 would be from Jammu and Kashmir and the remaining 100 from outside. The situation will be reviewed thereafter, and decisions will be taken accordingly, he said.

SP Balu continues to be on life support

Chennai: Singer SP Balasubrahmanyam, who is undergoing treatment at MGM

Healthcare following coronavirus diagnosis, continues to be on life support in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), the hospital said on Saturday. According to the statement from MGM Healthcare, the musician is stable and is being closely monitored by doctors for clinical parameters. The 74-year-old singer was on Friday shifted to ICU after his health condition deteriorated.

Pranab's condition unchanged

New Delhi: The condition of former President Pranab Mukherjee remains unchanged and he continues to be on ventilator support, a health bulletin by Army's Research and Referral (R&R) Hospital read on Saturday. The 84-year-old Bharat Ratna recipient underwent brain surgery on August 10 to remove a blood clot. He later tested positive for Covid-19.

Venkaiah Naidu bats for mother tongue

SRIKANTH GODAVARTHI

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday called for protecting and promoting various Indian languages through the use of mother tongue from education to administration.

Venkaiah Naidu, who completed three years in office as the Vice-President, reemphasized his stance on the importance of primary education being taught in a child's mother tongue and that the government schools and educational in-

'Deeply pained over Balasubrahmanyam's health condition'



stitutions must promote the mother tongue up to the primary level. Speaking to

I always say that the mother tongue is your eyesight and the other language is your spectacle. If you don't have eyesight and if you wear glasses, nothing will be visible. I always stress upon the promotion of 'Matrubhasha'

journalists via Google Meet marking the completion of three years in office as Vice-

President and Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Venkaiah Naidu said, "I am not advoc-

ating that we should not teach our children multiple languages. I always say that the mother tongue is your eyesight and the other language is your spectacle. If you don't have eyesight and if you wear glasses, nothing will be visible. I always stress upon the promotion of 'Matrubhasha' (mother tongue). All languages are important, but one should respect, learn, and understand one's mother tongue. I always tell people that one

should never forget his or her mother, mother tongue, or motherland. Language should become a catalyst for inclusive development."

Venkaiah Naidu said respecting and recognizing the mother tongue and promoting it is vital for the survival of any civilization. Calling for imparting education in mother tongue up to primary school level, the Vice-President said, "Language is the lifeblood of a culture and the very foundation of any civilization.

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COVID TREATMENT

Pvt hospitals in districts piqued over sidelining by govt for talks

- ◆ The Health dept only dealing with corporate hospitals from twin-cities while making key decisions, they rued
- ◆ They rued over that no invitation was extended to them while holding fresh discussions on taking over 50 per cent beds in private hospitals

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Private hospitals from districts are not unhappy with the Health department sidelining them and inviting only corporate hospitals from Hyderabad while taking key decisions concerning covid treatment in their hospitals. They rued over no invitation extended to them while holding fresh discussions on taking over 50 per cent beds in private hospitals.

It may be noted that at present 120 private hospitals from the State were given permission to treat covid patients. The list includes private hospitals from various districts namely Warangal, Karimnagar, Mancheril, Medchal, Nizamabad, Sangareddy apart from noted corpo-



rate hospitals from the State capital.

The other day Health Minister Eatala Rajender held discussions with the Super-specialty Hospitals Association representing mostly the 20-odd corporate hospitals in twin-cities. Commenting on this Telangana Hospitals And Nursing Homes Association (THANA) president Dr Ashok Reddy said that they are clueless on 50 percent beds issue.

“Our view was not taken while fixing treatment charges earlier and even now when discussions

are going on about the Health department taking over 50 per cent of beds in private hospitals,” Dr. Ashok Reddy said.

According to an executive member of the hospitals association, private hospitals from districts might not be averse to the idea of handing over some beds to the Health department.

However, supply of PPE kits and consumables and if needed deploying healthcare workers from the government to private hospitals facing staff shortage has to be taken care of by the Health department if it wishes

to take control of beds in private hospitals, the member said.

Senior officials of the Health department held discussions to finalize modalities on Friday, but the talks ended in an impasse over some demands raised by the corporate hospitals. Another round of discussions is scheduled for Monday.

Thousand-odd complaints that the Health department received on exorbitant charges collected from patients were confined mostly to the Corporate hospitals in twin cities and very few from districts.

Insurance balm for 2.5K TRS workers’ families

The ruling party provides insurance cover to its all 60 lakh members; on death of a worker, his family gets ₹ 2 lakh insurance claim

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Families of about 2,500 workers of the TRS received Rs 2 lakh as insurance claims thanks to the insurance cover provided by the party to all its members registered during the membership drive.

Anyone who joins TRS is given party membership and also an accidental insurance cover facility. The party has 60 lakhs members in the State and has been paying insurance premium to the insurance companies. TRS working president KT Rama Rao had recently handed over a cheque of Rs 14 crore as premium to the United India insurance company at Telangana Bhavan. The insurance cover for the premium paid would be applicable from August 1. According to the party leaders, about 2,500 of the party workers faced unnatural deaths during the last five



years. The deaths caused due to road accidents, electrical shock, snake bite, falling into a water tank are considered as accidental deaths under this insurance policy. The families of the deceased workers would be getting Rs 2 lakh as insurance claim, said a TRS leader.

The party leader further said that this year about 600 unnatural deaths were reported. Last year, the party had paid Rs 9.8 crore as insurance premium to the party workers.

TRS leader said that this was the first of its kind insurance facility for the party workers started by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao. “We are doing the work in a systematic manner and

every insured deceased person would be getting the claims money. It is unfortunate that many of the workers left us but their family members would get some relief with the insurance facility provided by the party,” said the TRS leader.

The families of the deceased workers should contact the office within three months of the death for settling the claims.

TRS working president KTR who is monitoring the insurance had called upon the party MLAs to come to the rescue of the party workers in distress. He wanted the MLAs to learn about the issues of the workers and bring them to the notice of the party for speedy redressal.

KTR inaugurates Intinta Innovator Exhibition

The exhibition aims at encouraging innovation culture across the State

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Minister K T Rama Rao on Saturday inaugurated the online version of Intinta Innovator Exhibition 2020, which aims at encouraging innovation culture across the State by the Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC).

With the success of the first-of-its-kind Intinta Innovator Exhibition last year which took place in 33 districts, the cell this year came up with an online version of Intinta Innovator Exhibition 2020, in wake of the pandemic.

The campaign received more than 250 entries from all the districts, out of which 65 consciously chosen innovations with strict evaluation parameters made it to the exhibition, which is celebrated as a part of Independence Day celebra-



tions. Addressing the exhibition, IT department Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, said “With District Collectors’ consistent efforts to scout and present the innovative minds from all sections- school student to an entrepreneur, housewife to a farmer, innovation will continue to be a force

of unity every Independence Day.”

The exhibition is a part of the larger district-level Independence Day celebrations and aims to build a connection between citizens and innovators.

Innovators from all sectors and categories including rural innovators, school and college student innovators, start-up innovators, and innovators from micro and small-scale industries are part of the exhibition. The exhibition looks at defining the source of innovation that can come from any individual irrespective of the age, place and culture.

CIO of TSIC, Ravi Narayan said that “Intinta Innovator Exhibition is initiated with an aim of making innovation a dinner table conversation in every household across the state of Telangana.”



TSGENCO & TSTRANSCO CMD D Prabhakar Rao saluting the National Flag after hoisting it on Independence Day in Hyderabad on Saturday

India celebrates I-Day amid fear: Cong

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: TPCC secretary Mohd Saleem on Saturday said the Independence Day is being celebrated amid fear as an atmosphere of terror is prevailing in India. In a statement,

Saleem said since 2014 the people of India from all walks of life are living under fear. The BJP government is adopting all undemocratic and unethical practices, Saleem said, adding that the heroes of Freedom Movement are forgotten and the

conspirators, abettors of British & killers of Mahatma are honoured.

To achieve Aatma Nirbhar Bharat, PM Modi must instill confidence among minorities, Dalits, women, children, farmers, students and jawans, he added.

TS Covid tally goes past 90,000 mark

10 people succumb, 1,863 get infected by the deadly virus during the past 24 hours

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Telangana reported 1,863 new Covid cases and 10 deaths till 8 pm on August 14, according to the daily bulletin of the Health department. The total case count crossed 90k to at 90,259 cases. GHMC reported 394 among the fresh cases with Medchal-Malkajigiri accounting for 175, Ranga Reddy 131, Karimnagar 104, Warangal Urban 101, Sircilla 90, Sangareddy 81 cases. With 1912 cured patients on a single day, the recovered figure rose to 66,196. The total number of active cases stood at 23,379 while 16,221 people are under home or institutional isolation. Also, 21,239 tests were conducted on August 14 pushing the total tests figure to 7.32 lakh. With August 15 being Independence Day the number of tests in a single day is going to fall down considerably.



TPCC president and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy addressing the gathering after hoisting the national flag at Gandhi Bhavan on Saturday

Uttam asks partymen to brace for elections

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: TPCC president N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday hoisted national flag at the party headquarters Gandhi Bhavan amid heavy rains.

Addressing the party workers, Uttam said that the Congress workers must derive inspiration from the sacrifices of the freedom fighters who belonged to the party. He also said that as long as Congress ruled the country, continuous efforts were made to strengthen and give full independence to the four pillars of the democracy. He said since 2014, the Central and State governments have been trying to weaken the democracy.

Reddy said that the Congress party would always stand for social justice and justice to Dalits, tribals, OBCs and minorities. He called upon the party cadre to get ready for early GHMC, Warangal and Khammam municipal elections in November. CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikarama, senior party leader VH, Shabbir Ali, Vamshichand Reddy, SA Sampath kumar, M. Anil Kumar Yadav and hundreds of other leaders attended the Independence Day celebration.

GLOWING IN GLORY



Iconic Charminar splendidly lit up in tricolour hues on the occasion of Independence Day in Hyderabad on Saturday. Photo: N Shiva Kumar Meru

Kavitha lauds services of corona warriors

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Former MP and Telangana Jagruti president Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Saturday lauded the humanitarian efforts of all the corona warriors during the pandemic.

She was addressing the corona warriors as part of her campaign “ThankYouWarrior” during the last few days appreciating their efforts during the pandemic. She concluded her ongoing “ThankYouWarrior” campaign with her Independence Day address.

“We must respect and value



the contribution of the frontline

Covid warriors, as we remember the contribution of our forefathers on this day to celebrate our Independence,” said Kavitha.

She wished that the ongoing spirit of unity continues and today’s India fights the pandemic out with the same valour as our freedom fighters did. She applauded the humanitarian ethos of every single worker and volunteer who has been at the forefront of battling every odd situation that the country has faced. She urged people to make right choices as they move ahead in time.

Bandi Sanjay rues country’s backwardness on many fronts

- ◆ State BJP chief asked cadre to take a vow to end TRS rule in Telangana
- ◆ Time to defeat forces trying to weaken the country, says BJP MLC N Ramachandra Rao

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Telangana BJP State president Bandi Sanjay Kumar said that the country remained backward on many fronts despite achieving development in many fields.

Addressing after hosting the national flag marking the 74th Independence Day here on Saturday, he said the intellectual capital and other resources in the country were not properly utilised giving proper direction by those in the power earlier.

However, the government is run by patriots since 2014 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He has been working hard to fulfill the dreams and the ideals envisioned by those who have sacrificed their lives for the independence of the country and freedom of the



BJP State president Bandi Sanjay Kumar saluting the national flag after unfurling it at the party headquarters in Hyderabad on Saturday

people. Kumar listed out the welfare and development initiatives rolled out by the Centre.

Lashing out at TRS, Kumar said contrarily, the Telangana State has once again come under the dictatorial rule, after the creation of separate State, he added.

As the Nizam governed from the King Koti place, under the TRS governance, the government is being run from the Pragathi Bhavan or Farm House place, he said. Criticising the State government for failing on multiple fronts, he said, “Doctor, paramedical staff, Asha and Anganwadi workers, journalist, artisans, daily wage earners

and poor in the State are at the receiving end due to the troubled times caused by the Covid.” He asked the party cadre and leaders to work hard taking a vow to make BJP as an alternative to the TRS and to end the dictatorial rule of the TRS party in Telangana.

Earlier, party MLC N Ramachender Rao said that sacrifices made by the freedom fighters continue to inspire the younger generations and to learn from them. He highlighted contribution to the welfare and the development of the country by the BJP governments under former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee and currently, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

DNA tests confirm Kabul Gurdwara attacker was Kerala resident

New Delhi: Tests conducted by the Central Forensic Sciences Laboratory in New Delhi have concluded that the men responsible for the March 25 suicide bombing in Kabul included one-time Kerala resident Muhammad Muhsin, government sources said. The tests were submitted to the National Investigation Agency earlier this week, according to News18 report.

Blood samples from Muhsin's mother Maimoona Abdulla, collected by the NIA, were matched with tissue collected from the suicide-bomber's remains by Afghan authorities, the sources said.

An NIA spokesperson said the agency had no comment to offer as the investigation was ongoing.

Born in 1991 in the small town of Trikarapur, near Kasargode, Muhsin is believed to have been part of a group of Indian terrorists in Afghanistan, led by one-time Kashmiri jihad commander Aijaz Ahanger. Photographs released on Islamic



State-linked social media channels had proclaimed Muhsin had carried out the Gurdwara attack, which claimed 27 lives.

Following his school education, Muhsin left Kerala to work at a small hotel run by relatives in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He later obtained a job in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, where he lived until 2018, before leaving for Afghanistan to join Ahanger's group. Few details, though, have so far emerged on what led him to join the group. NIA investigators registered a case against the Kabul Gurdwara attack in April, the first using a landmark new law giving the organisation jurisdiction to investigate crimes outside India.

The core of the Indian jihadist group in Afghanistan was

formed by 26 Kerala residents — some of them children — who left for Afghanistan in 2016, led by neo-fundamentalist cult leader Abdul Rashid Abdullah.

Ijas Kallukettiya Purayil, a one-time dentist from Kerala's Kasargod who was among that group, is believed to be among the suicide attackers killed when his jihadist unit stormed a prison in Afghanistan's Jalalabad earlier this month. Twenty-nine people were reported to have been killed in the attack, aimed at freeing jihadists from the prison on Eid.

Purayil's wife, Rafilla Purayil, and has been held in Kabul's Badam Bagh prison along with their five-year-old son, Ayaan, is currently part of a group of nine Indian women held in Kabul's Badam Bagh jail, the wives and widows of the Kerala jihadists.

Purayil's younger brother, Shiyas Purayil, is thought to have been killed in a United States military drone strike in Nangarhar along with his wife Ajmala Purayil.

I-DAY CELEBRATIONS



Border Security Force (BSF) soldiers offer sweets to each other during the 74th Independence Day celebrations, at the Attari-Wagha border, about 35 km from Amritsar



Oxygen disruption: 17 corona patients shifted in Bengaluru

Bengaluru (IANS): Seventeen coronavirus patients needed to be shifted from a city hospital to other medical facilities on the intervening night of August 14 and 15 after a short circuit disrupted oxygen supply, an official said on Saturday.

"There was a short circuit in the oxygen control panel, because of which oxygen supply to the patients was disrupted," CV Raman Hospital Superintendent Radhakrishna told IANS.

The control panel is required to maintain oxygen supply pressure and other crucial parameters of a patient put on oxygen support.

"Though the oxygen supply could have been continued, we did not want to take any risk... we then supplied oxygen to patients directly from cylinders," he said.

"The disruption occurred around 9 pm on Friday. The shifting of patients was done by 12.30 am on Saturday," said Ramakrishna. He said all the shifted patients were doing well.

"Whatever disruption occurred has since been fixed. The oxygen supply is back to normal," he said.

It was learnt that 11 of the patients were on intake of high-flow oxygen, of which 7-8 were taking in very less amount of oxygen while three were dependent.

INDIA FACES COVID, BORDER AGGRESSION: ENVOY IN CHINA

Beijing: Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri on Saturday said that 2020 has been a very unusual year for India as it had to face the "twin challenges" of COVID-19 as well as aggression on the country's borders.

Addressing a large gathering of Beijing-based Indian community at the India House on the country's 74th Independence Day, Misri talked about the problems faced by the Indian expatriates in China. Many family members of the expatriates are stranded in India due to visa-related issues following the COVID-19 pandemic and disruption of flights.

Misri touched upon the "aggression at the borders," in an apparent reference to the situation at the Sino-Indian borders in eastern Ladakh. "I find that the situation that faces us, all of us Indians, is not dissimilar to the one that we faced during our struggle for independence."

"It is axiomatic therefore that the effort that will be required now by us to overcome the challenges that lie before us is not unlike what our nation and our people and compatriots deployed during the struggle for independence," he said.

The same sacrifices too will be required. This is a challenge therefore that one can only face unitedly. All sections of society will need to come to-



ITBP personnel celebrate the 74th Independence Day on the banks of Pangong Tso, in Ladakh on Saturday

'Why people sitting in power scared of naming China'

New Delhi: The Congress asked why those sitting in power are scared of naming China which has "entered Indian territory", and said every Congress worker and every Indian is proud of the armed forces.

Talking to reporters after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation, Congress's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala also said all Indians should ask the government this

Independence Day what it was doing to protect the country and push China back. "Each and every Congress worker and all 130 crore Indians are proud of our armed forces and have full faith in them. We

gether for this, he said.

The country has already begun facing up to this challenge, he said. Despite being preoccupied with facing up to the epidemic, the government has not taken its foot off the accelerator in terms of reforms and the last seven months have actually seen a slew of very important reforms in the fields of education, taxation, labour, agriculture and other associated fields, he said.

"This reform movement and its spirit, I am confident, will help our country overcome present challenges," Misri said. Touching upon the problems faced by Indian expatriates in China, he offered to help them in whatever possible way.

"For us here in China, things have changed also in imperceptible ways and I am sure in certain cases the changes are impacting your daily life," the envoy said.

salute the armed forces for giving China an apt reply every time there has been an attack. But what about those who are sitting in power. Why are they scared of mentioning China's name?" Surjewala asked.



Another struggle for freedom from coronavirus: Uddhav

Mumbai (IANS): Hoisting the national Tricolour at Mantralaya and other locations on Saturday, to mark the 74th Independence Day, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said the country is now fighting another war for freedom from the corona pandemic.

"The Covid-19 has limited our boundaries of personal freedom, but we have to conquer it unitedly with weapons like self-discipline, cleanliness, hygiene and wearing masks. Only then can we achieve independence from the Coronavirus," Thackeray urged.

The Maharashtra Chief Minister lauded the efforts of all corona warriors like doctors, nurses, police, conservancy staff, who have been "working all out, without fear, amid the pandemic at great risk to themselves".

"On this auspicious occasion, I bow before them. I pay my respects to all the soldiers who fought for India's Independence from the British and the jawans who safeguard our borders, Thackeray said. He appreciated the manner in which people of all religions celebrated their major festivals with great restraint in view of the pandemic and the series of lockdowns which proved to be an example to the whole country.

Now online calculator can predict your stroke risk: Study

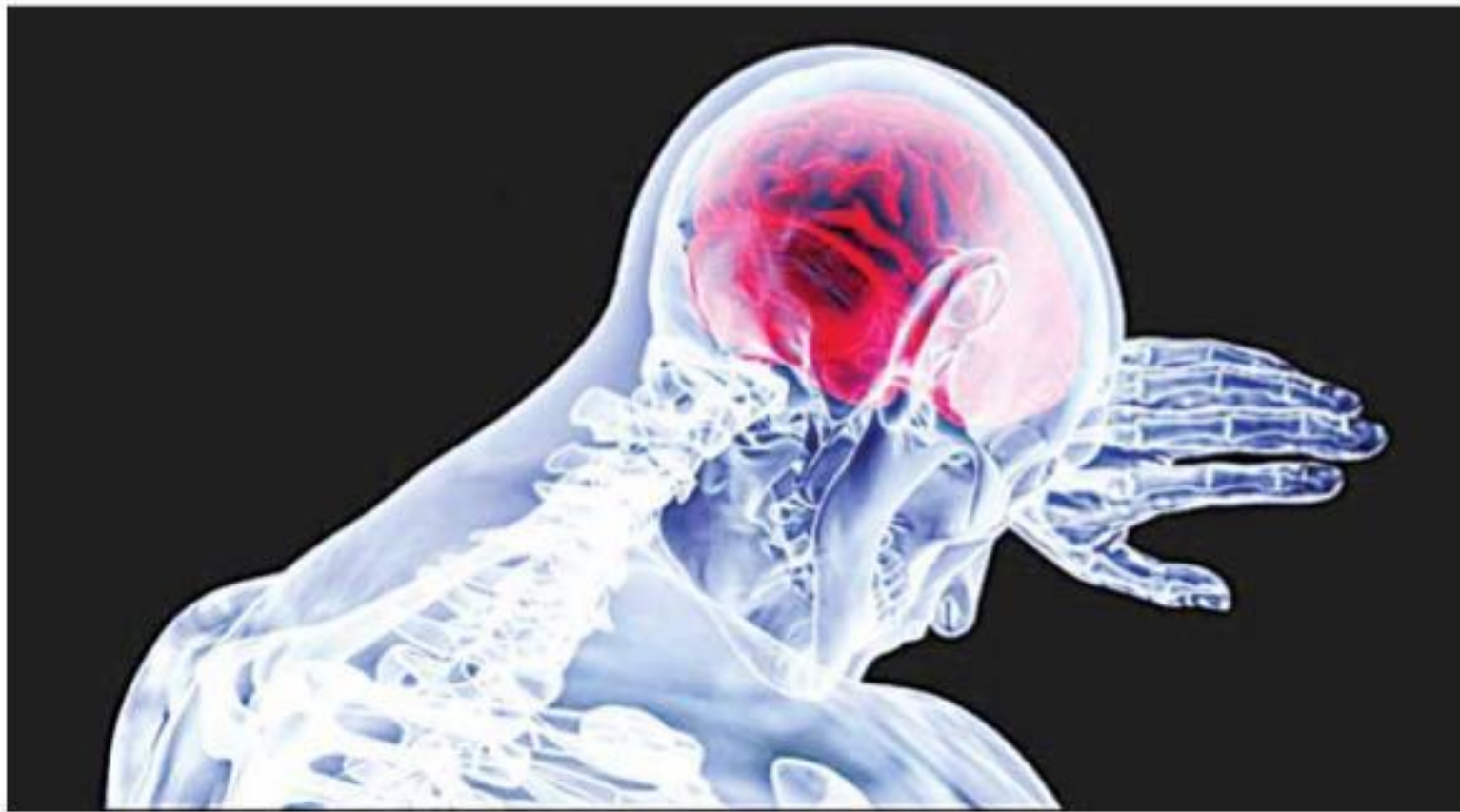
New York (IANS): Researchers have developed an online calculator which can help doctors predict patients' risk for ischemic stroke based on the severity of their metabolic syndrome.

Metabolic syndrome is a conglomeration of conditions that include high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels and excess body fat around the abdomen and waist.

The study, published in the journal Stroke found that stroke risk increased consistently with metabolic syndrome severity even in patients without diabetes. Doctors can use this information - and a scoring tool developed by researchers to identify patients at risk and help them reduce that risk.

"We had previously shown that the severity of metabolic syndrome was linked to future coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes and this study showed further links to future ischemic strokes," said study author Mark DeBoer from the University of Florida in the US.

The research team developed the scoring tool, an online calcu-



lator to assess the severity of the metabolic syndrome.

To evaluate the association between ischemic stroke and metabolic syndrome, the research team reviewed more than 13,000 participants in prior studies and their stroke outcomes. Among that group, there were 709 ischemic strokes over a mean pe-

riod of 18.6 years assessed in the studies. The researchers used their tool to calculate "Z scores" measuring the severity of metabolic syndrome among the study participants.

They could then analyse the association between metabolic syndrome and ischemic stroke risk. The researchers found that

the subgroup with the highest association between metabolic syndrome and risk for ischemic stroke was white women. In this group, the research team was able to identify relationships between the individual contributors to metabolic syndromes, such as high blood pressure, and stroke risk.

Soldiers raise flag in J&K's Gurez

New Delhi: India's Independence Day celebrations may have been muted this year because of COVID-19 but there certainly has been no dearth of patriotic fervour in the farthest corners of the country.

The Indian Army on Saturday shared a video of soldiers marking 15th August by raising the National Flag on top of a snowy mountain in Jammu and Kashmir's Gurez in the Bandipora district.

The video shows a handful of soldiers perched on what feels like the top of the world as a drone circles them, filming the moment in all its glory.

After the flag is raised, the instrumental version of the national anthem plays. Army sources said the flag was raised on a peak between 12,500 and 13,000 feet right on the Line of Control.



Medics scan temperatures of police personnel as they arrive to participate in 74th Independence Day celebrations at Motilal Nehru Police Stadium, in Bhopal on Saturday

India's Covid tally at 25.26 lakh

New Delhi: A spike of 65,002 cases took India's COVID-19 tally past 25 lakh on Saturday just a day after it reached the 24-lakh mark, while 18 lakh people have so far recuperated from the disease pushing the recovery rate to 71.61 per cent, Union Health Ministry data showed.

India has been reporting over 60,000 cases daily since August 7, barring August 11 when the country registered 53,601 new instances of the infection.

The COVID-19 caseload stood at 25,26,192, while the death-toll climbed to 49,036 with 996 people succumbing to the disease in 24 hours, the data updated on

Saturday 8 am showed.

Case fatality rate has declined to 1.94 per cent.

There are 6,68,220 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which is 26.45 per cent of the total caseload, while the number of recoveries has risen to 18,08,936.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in total 2,85,63,095 samples have been tested up to August 14 of which 8,68,679 were examined on Friday, the highest in a day so far.

State records 8,732 new Covid cases, 87 deaths

Now the infection positivity rate crosses 10% mark in the State

Amaravati: State's Covid-19 infection positivity rate crossed the 10 per cent mark on Saturday as the its aggregate number of cases reached 2,81,817, with the addition of 8,732 in the last 24 hours.

The latest bulletin said after a cumulative 28,12,197 sample tests, the infection positivity rate touched 10.02 per cent, the highest so far.

The recovery rate also showed an improvement, touching 67.82 per cent after 10,414 patients got cured, taking the gross to 1,91,117.

In the last 24 hours, 87 fresh coronavirus deaths were also reported in the state, taking the toll to 2,562.

The state now has 88,138 active Covid-19 cases, the bulletin added. East Godavari district continued to report cases in four digits, adding 1,126 afresh, and inched closer to the 40,000 aggregate mark.

Chittoor (959), Visakhapatnam (894) and Anantapuram (851) also reported more cases in the last 24 hours. Chittoor also registered ten more Covid-19 deaths.

Guntur district now climbed to the top spot in the state chart with an overall toll of 284 after nine fatalities were added in a day.

East and West Godavari districts reported eight new casualties each, Anantapur, Kadapa and Kurnool seven each, Nellore, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram six each, Prakasam and Srikulam five each. Krishna added three deaths to its overall count.

Won't open schools unless convinced: CM

Continued from P1

He said reviving the economy is the biggest challenge but expressed confidence that it will be brought back on track with the cooperation of Delhiites. Efforts are being made for this, he said.

This year, the city government shifted its Independence Day event to the Delhi Secretariat from Chhatrasal Stadium due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The government also provided Rs 1 crore ex gratia to the family of "corona warriors" who died while serving the COVID-19 patients, he said, adding that this sent a message that his government cares for them.

"The Delhi model is being talked about in the country and has emerged as a study case in the world. It is an outcome of working by taking everyone together. Home isolation was a scientifically thought model to provide a hospital bed to serious patients and treat mild ones at home," he said.

I-Day tableaux highlight fight against pandemic

- Four out of total 10 tableaux have been allotted for the topics related to Covid and the efforts aimed at tackling it
- They have also been sent to Guntur and Tenali as part of efforts to create awareness among people

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Vijayawada: Tableaus displayed by the state government on the occasion of Independence Day focused to create awareness on Covid-19 and the fight against the pandemic.

The vehicles showcased during the celebrations at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation stadium here attracted the viewers and highlighted the efforts being made to check the spread of disease in the state.

The state government has given top priority to Covid related tableaux by allotting four out of the total 10 tableaux designed for the celebrations.

Tableaus displayed on testing of Covid suspects, contact tracing, door to door survey to trace asymptomatic persons, infrastructure facilities being arranged for the patients under Naadu-Nedu scheme in the hospitals,



Tableaus extolling the achievements of the state government in tackling Covid-19 pass through roads in Vijayawada on Saturday

home isolation, physical distance, 104 and 108 ambulances, etc., have attracted the audience.

The state government is conducting 60,000 to 70,000 Covid tests per day and so far completed 27 lakh tests.

Door-to-door survey by medical and health department, Asha workers, village and ward volunteers have also giving fruitful results. Steps being taken to check the spread of virus by declaring containment zones, clusters, red zone yielded good results.

Tableaus also highlighted the Telemedicine and creation of awareness on treatment facilities available in the hospitals.

On the other hand, the state government has decided to create awareness in Vijayawada, Guntur and Tenali on Covid-19 with the help of tableaux.

The tableaux were displayed to the people on the main roads of Vijayawada and Guntur cities and Tenali town. In Vijayawada, CM's principal secretary Praveen Prakash and commissioner of Information and Public relations department T Vijay Kumar Reddy flagged them off at the IGMCI stadium. The tableaux

passed via MG Road, Ramavaram padu ring, Eluru road and again reached Varadhi junction and left for Guntur city.

₹ 50L sought for kin of deceased govt staff

- Leaders Amaravati JAC submit a memorandum to Chief Minister
- They say 1,500 employees working in various govt departments were infected with coronavirus and 50 of them succumbed
- They also seek exsusive help desks in district to take care of infected employees

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh JAC, Amaravati, an umbrella organisation of employees, teachers, workers and retired employees, on Saturday requested Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy to sanction ex gratia of Rs 50 lakh to the kin of the state government employees who died due to Covid-19. The JAC leaders also urged the Chief Minister to allot a separate ward in government and private hospitals to treat the government employees infected with coronavirus.

JAC leaders Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, chairman of the JAC, state general secretary Y V Rao and treasurer VV Muralikrishna Naidu submitted a representation to the Chief Minister in this regard. The JAC leaders said that more than 1,500 employees working in various gov-

ernment departments in the state were infected with coronavirus and about 50 employees of revenue, police, panchayat raj, agriculture, education, ward and village secretariats, energy and other departments died succumbed to the virus while discharging duties.

The JAC leaders said the Chief Minister Jagan had sanctioned Rs 50 ex gratia to the family of a police constable, who died due to corona in May this year though police personnel were not covered under the Covid insurance schemes formulated by Government of India.

The leaders said the family would be badly affected with the sudden demise of an employee due to Covid and requested the Chief Minister to announce Rs 50 lakh ex gratia on humanitarian grounds in case of Covid death.

The JAC also urged the government to create a separate help desk in each district to guide and care all the employees right from testing to admission to an appropriate hospital in case of infection irrespective of the cadre.

They requested the Chief Minister that employees above 50 years of age may be exempted from Covid duties since they are more vulnerable and most of the casualties in the state are above 50 years of age only.

'Fruits of freedom should reach all'

Speaker calls upon people to face corona pandemic with courage



Speaker unrolling tricolour at Assembly on Saturday

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati: The fruits of freedom should reach the last man in the society, said Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram here after hoisting the National Flag on the premises of the Assembly on Saturday. Addressing the gathering, the Speaker said that it was the happiest moment to celebrate the 74th Independence Day. "Everyone should strive to protect the spirit of the nation and the Constitution," he said. He exhorted people to face the coronavirus pandemic with courage since it has become a threat to the mankind. Earlier, he received guard of honour from the security staff of the Assembly.

FLOODS IN GODAVARI

1st warning issued at Cotton Barrage

- 11 lakh cusecs water is being discharged into sea by lifting 175 gates to a height of two metre
- People in low lying areas have been alerted

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Rajamahendravaram: First warning was issued at Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage with flood level in Godavari at 11.75 feet and second warning would also be issued at 13.75 feet Saturday night. As much as 11 lakh cusecs of water is being discharged into the sea from the barrage and 175 gates of Dowlesaram, Ryali, Maddur and Vijeswaram arms have been lifted to a height of two metre. Due to heavy inflows from Sabari and Indravathi, tributaries of River Godavari, the officials alerted the people in low-lying areas.

Meanwhile, many lanka (island) areas in Konaseema are submerged in floodwater. Several tribal habitations in the agency area also marooned in flood water and the officials are shifting the tribals to safe places. The floodwater also entered into famous Gandhi Posamma temple. Floodwater is overflowing from spillway and spill channel of Polavaram project.

In Rajamahendravaram, all the bathing ghats were closed.



Officials blocking traffic on a bridge damaged by Godavari flood at Kunavaram in East Godavari district on Saturday. (Right) Swirling floodwater at Road-cum-Rail Bridge in Rajamahendravaram

According to an official of flood control room, flood situation is being monitored from time to time by senior officials. The water level is expected to rise further by Saturday night and the barrage gates will be lifted from the existing two metre based on the situation. Control rooms have also been arranged at all divisional offices in the district.



Health IDs for all

Continued from P1

The Mission is expected to bring efficiency and transparency in healthcare services in the country.

Modi said the country has prepared a roadmap to ensure that a COVID-19 vaccine reaches everyone in the shortest possible time. He said three vaccine candidates are in different stages of trials in the country.

The Prime Minister said whenever there is talk of Covid-19, the question that comes to everyone's mind is - when will a vaccine be ready. "I want to tell people, the talent of our scientists is like that of 'rishis' and they are working very hard in laboratories. Three vaccines are in various stages of testing. When scientists will give us the green signal, it will be produced on a mass scale and all preparations have been made for it," Modi said.

The Prime Minister reassured the nation that "we will win" against the coronavirus pandemic and a "strong will" will lead to victory. He said the focus on the health sector has increased during the coronavirus era and the biggest lesson that has been learnt is that of being self-reliant in the health sector. He said that the country is now producing PPE kits, N95 masks, ventilators, etc. which were not being manufactured domestically.

"We have to move forward to achieve that aim. Before coronavirus there was only one lab for testing (for Covid-19), today there is a network of 1,400 labs across the country. When the coronavirus crisis broke out only 300 tests could be carried out in a day, but in a short period we have shown our strength and we have come to a point where we carried out seven lakh tests in a day," he said.

The PM said new AIIMS and new medical colleges are being built and efforts are being made towards modernisation. "In five years in MBBS/MD, 45,000 more seats have been created for students," he said.

Of the over 1.5 lakh wellness centres envisaged in villages, more than one-third are already operational and have been of great help during the pandemic. "Wellness centres have played an important role in villages during the corona period," he said.

Modi paid tributes to Covid warriors on the frontline of the battle against the pandemic. "On behalf of the entire country, I wish to thank the efforts of all corona-warriors. All those healthcare workers, doctors and nurses, ambulance drivers and all those working in this fight against the pandemic, who have worked tirelessly to serve the nation," Modi said.

PM WARNS PAK, CHINA

Continued from P1

On foreign policy issues, Modi said: "A neighbour isn't just someone who shares our geography but those who share our hearts. Where the relationship is respected, it becomes warmer." Modi underscored his government's commitment to holding Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir after the ongoing delimitation exercise is over. Besides the announcement of the launch of the National Digital Health Mission, Modi said all the six lakh villages in the country will be connected with optical fibres in 1,000 days to improve digital connectivity for the rural masses. On digital connectivity for rural masses, Modi said only five dozen village panchayats were connected with optical fibre in 2014. This has increased to 1.5 lakh in the last five years. "In the coming 1,000 days (less than 3 years), all the 6 lakh vil-

lages in the country will be connected with optical fibre network." The PM said India's policies, processes and products should be the best in the world and only then the idea of "Shresth Bharat" (best India) will be realised. The Prime Minister asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic cannot halt country's march towards self-reliance and presented a broad outline for spurring India's growth in diverse sectors. Making a mention of the groundbreaking ceremony for the Ram temple in Ayodhya on August 5, Modi said the centuries-old issue has been resolved peacefully. The annual Independence Day event at the main venue Red Fort which traditionally witnessed a bustling crowd was scaled down this year in keeping with prescribed COVID-19 safety protocols that also included social distancing for the visitors including ministers and diplomats.

Venkaiah Naidu bats for mother tongue

Continued from P1

Only when language flourished, the culture and traditions of a community would sustain, and one could not separate language from its society. We must take all steps to make the mother tongue the language of administration not just the medium of instruction at the primary level. Any language can gain wide popularity only through widespread usage.

The Vice-President expressed deep anguish over the health condition of playback singer S P Balasubramanian who tested positive for Covid-19. "After Ghan-

tasala, the only other Telugu voice that continues to mesmerize me is the melodious and melodious voice of Balasubramanian. I spoke to his son who told me that his condition is critical."

Balasubramanian is currently undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at MGM Hospital in Chennai. He had been moved to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and is on life support. "I wish and pray for his early recovery so that he will continue to enthrall his millions of fans across the world," the Vice-President said rather in an anguished tone. Incidentally, both the Vice-President and the 74-year-old playback singer hail from Nellore. "I spoke to

him only a few days back. I asked him to lend his voice for a song on Nellore penned by lyricist Vennala Kanti. In the meanwhile, I had to hear this unfortunate news about his health condition," Venkaiah Naidu said.

As the country's corona caseload surpassed 24 lakh with 49,000 deaths, the Vice-President appealed to the media not to exaggerate and desist from stoking fear among people. "Media plays a crucial role in providing information regarding the pandemic. Media is like oxygen for democracy. Since little is known about the Covid-19, media should play a con-

structive role in infusing courage and not spreading misinformation that triggers fear among the people. People are gripped in fear and hence the constructive role of the media is more significant today than before," the Vice-President appealed.

The Vice-President also said the much-awaited monsoon session of Parliament will happen in September. "Under the Constitution, the duration between the end of one session and the start of the next cannot exceed six months. Therefore, we will have to hold the session in September."



INBOX

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Recent Supreme Court judgment on contempt is alarming

■ **Yet another self-inflicted wound on the Supreme Court**

■ **Creates bad precedent, hampering free speech and fair criticism of judiciary**

SUNKARA RAJENDRA PRASAD AND
NARRA SRINIVASA RAO

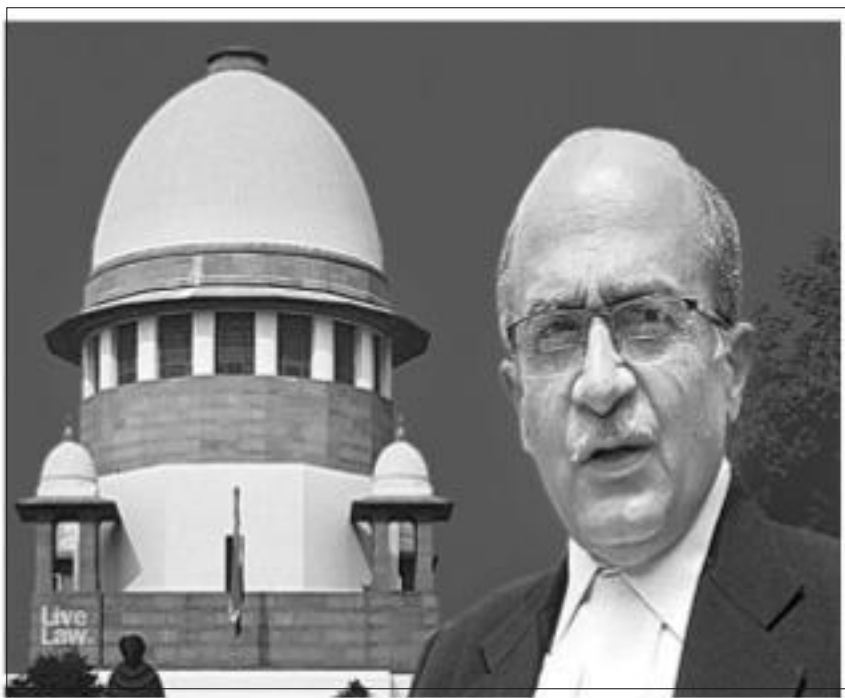
All India Lawyers Union (AILU) expresses its deep concern and anguish over the recent judgment of the Supreme Court in the matter of contempt. The judgment of the Supreme Court finding Prashant Bhushan guilty of contempt creates bad precedent hampering free speech and fair criticism of the Supreme Court and the judiciary; on the role of the Supreme Court in democracy in India.

Judgments of the Supreme Court of India in various milestone cases such as *A K Gopalan case, Bank nationalisation case, Keshavananda Bharati case, A D M Jabalpur case, Maneka Gandhi case, S R Bommai case, Fourth judges case, Privacy judgment, Aadhar case, Sabarimala case etc. have got immense impact on democracy in India. Whether the impact is positive or negative is only a matter of opinion. It is rather a political question than juridical.

Democracy is more than periodic election and legislative supremacy. It has got substantive contents as secularism, tolerance, freedom, reasonableness etc. Above all, democracy cannot exist without protection of civic rights and individual human rights-rights so essential- that they must be insulated from the power of the majority.

For the Supreme Court, to travel from A K Gopalan* to Maneka Gandhi* it took more than 25 years. Despite *Keshavananda Bharati* case judgment of 13 judges bench proclaiming basic structure doctrine and its inalienability, even by way of constitutional amendment, Supreme Court could not protect people's right to life and liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution of India during Emergency. It declared in ADM Jabalpur case by majority that during Emergency people's right to life under Article 21 cannot be agitated before the Supreme Court even under Article 32 of the Constitution and Supreme Court is incapable of protecting such rights. Justice H R Khanna dissented holding that no presidential order of Emergency can touch Article 21 and 32 of the Constitution and right to life under Article 21 can be agitated before the Supreme Court and protected under Article 32 of the Constitution. He paid the price. It is history.

Now, the Supreme Court in the Prashant Bhushan contempt judgment observes "it is common knowledge, the Emergency era has been considered as the blackest era in the history of Indian democracy". But in the ADM Jabalpur case Supreme Court never said so; Supreme Court by majority was protecting the executive in their gross violation of democracy, right to life and personal liberty in-



cluding free speech. *ADM Jabalpur case* was overruled only in the *Privacy judgment* of the Supreme Court, almost after 40 years, in the year 2015.

So, necessarily no student of Constitution, democracy and politics can escape from close scrutiny and examination of the role of the judiciary and the Supreme Court in democracy in India. Ultimately it will be a political opinion which could not be interdicted as role of the Supreme Court or its chief justices and judges are referred to.

Just like the observation of the Supreme Court that it is common knowledge, the Emergency era has been considered as the darkest era in the history of Indian democracy the tweet of Prashant Bhushan "When historians in future look back at the last six years to see how democracy has been destroyed in India even without a formal emergency, they will particularly mark the role of the Supreme Court in this destruction, and more particularly the role of the last for CJIs" is only an opinion.

In the contempt judgment Supreme Court says that "we are not concerned with the first part of the tweet since it is not concerned with this Court". The Court also held "We don't want to go into the truthfulness or otherwise of the first part of the tweet in as much as we don't want to convert this proceedings into a platform for political debate". So, ultimately whether there has been destruction of democracy in India during the last six years even without a formal emergency is a political question and political opinion protected by freedom of expression and free speech under Article 19(1) of the Constitution of India, by which bona-fide fair criticism of the Supreme Court, its judges and the judiciary is protected

As Krishna Iyer observed in *Re:S.Mulgaoker* "Court should be willing to ignore by a majestic liberalism, trifling and venial offences". Unfortunately the regret expressed by the Prashant Bhushan, the contemptner in the tweet no. 1, by way of clarification that he omitted to notice the fact that the bike was on its stand and not moving is not considered in its proper spirit by holding him guilty for the contempt on this tweet as well.

The best way to sustain the dignity and respect for the

office of judge is to deserve respect from the public at large by fearlessness and objectivity of the approach to the issues coming for decision, quality of the judgment, restraint, dignity and decorum of a judge observed in judicial conduct off and on the bench and rectitude. Court can uphold the dignity of courts and majesty of judges on broad shoulders and shrug off comments.

The trajectory of law of contempt of court reflected in plethora of precedences illustrates the scary subjectivity in exercising the contempt jurisdiction. It looms large particularly in these times when members of the judiciary make subjective statements and comments which are not good for judiciary's independence.

In statement of P Shiv Sankar's case, a former judge of High Court and Union Law Minister P Shiv Sankar that Supreme Court was composed of elements from elite class that because they had their unconcealed sympathy for the haves is held to be not a statement in contempt of court.

Even though the precise formulation of Prashant Bhushan in his tweets in question is not agreeable for all court should not have held him guilty of contempt as it would cause chilling effect on free speech and bona-fide and fair criticism of judiciary and the Supreme Court on its role in Indian democracy.

A strong independent and fearless bar is precondition for an independent strong judiciary. As Justice Krishna Iyer observes if judges have frailties, after all they are human-they need to be corrected by independent criticism. If the judicature has serious shortcomings which demand systematic correction through social oriented reform initiated through constructive criticism, the contempt power should not be an interdict. All this, far from undermining the confidence of the people in courts, enhances it and in the last analysis cannot be repressed by in indiscriminate resort to contempt law.

Even body like the Law Commission or the Law Institute and researchers, legal and sociological, run contempt risks because their professional work may sometimes involve unpleasant criticism of judges, judicial process and the system itself and they hover perilously around the periphery of the law if widely construed. Creative legal journalism and activist stamanship for judicial reform cannot be jeopardized by any undefined apprehension of contempt action.

All India Lawyers Union(AILU) being an organisation committed to democracy, freedom of expression, free speech, liberty, rule of law and independence of judiciary is very much concerned about the judgment and its negative and chilling impact on bona-fide and fair criticism of the judiciary and hope that this may on this Independence day, trigger an informed debate over abolition of the criminal contempt under contempt of court act and undefined unregulated contempt jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 129 of the Constitution of India. We hope that Supreme Court itself would recall the judgment by any curative process review or otherwise.

(The authors are National Vice President and National Secretary, AILU National Committee respectively)

PAST AND PRESENT

‘Testing times’ over the years!

K S S PILLAI

“Even if I had written the Essay and examined it myself, I would not have got more than sixty percent marks,” my professor had said years ago when I complained about getting marks lower than expected.

That was the situation prevalent in the past as objective-type questions were not heard of and all answers had to be descriptive. Students were expected to have a thorough knowledge of the subject concerned. In English, for instance, there were papers like ‘The Tragedies of Shakespeare’ at the post-graduate level and the paper-setter was free to ask any question on any tragedy written by the Bard of Avon. In the absence of ‘help books’ and the internet, there was no short-cut to score high marks except by slogging. And to top it all, there used to be two papers every day, each of three hours, during the annual examination. The maximum marks one could expect were sixty percent, labelled ‘first-class’.

By the time I became a college lecturer, things had started to change. Universities had decided that a certain percentage of questions should be of multiple-choice type (MCQs), where one could expect some of the answers to be correct even if the answers were ticked blindly. When the semester system was introduced later, the examination system underwent further changes. In the agriculture university, where I taught, half the marks were allotted to internal examinations comprising three quizzes of ten marks each, of which only the higher two scores were to be taken into account, and a test of thirty marks. The semester-end examination of fifty marks was to be conducted centrally for all agriculture colleges under the university.



Teachers then faced a strange problem in the case of quizzes. Sometimes the clever students, who had scored high marks in the first two quizzes, would come to the aid of their ‘poor’ friends. They would write the roll number of the latter on the answer-sheet and vice versa. Some teachers, puzzled by the vast difference in the marks of the first two quizzes and the third one, would compare the handwriting in the earlier examinations and nail the culprits, with unpleasant consequences.

One of the memorable incidents of my teaching career was detecting such a case of impersonation by six students – three clever ones rendering a helping hand to three of their friends. After verification, I had left the marks column of all the six blank in the mark-sheet displayed on the notice board. To my amusement, none of the six came to me asking for an explanation. The matter was reported to the principal, who, though acted tough outwardly, believed in giving another chance to the erring students. The guardians of all the six were summoned to the college and the culprits gave a written apology and undertaking of good behaviour in the future. As the news spread, I was spared such an experience for the remaining period of my service.

Today, when students scoring above ninety percent marks fail to get admission to the colleges of their choice, I remember the old ‘first-class’ students who were sought after by prominent colleges.



Kamala Harris: A female Obama?

It is interesting that Joe Biden's choice of Kamala Harris as his running mate has not evoked euphoria among India's self-styled desh bhakts despite her Indian roots. The only plausible explanation for their lukewarm response is that the principled stand she took on some of the decisions taken by the Modi government were not to their liking. Her "India connection" – she is the daughter of an Indian-born mother – independent of her political creed was not sufficient for India's ruling elites to welcome her candidacy for the US vice-presidency.

What Kamala Harris represents does not fit in with their narrative in domestic politics. Her world-view conflicts with theirs in profound ways. Kamala Harris has been vocal in her criticism of Modi government's handling of the Kashmir issue and resultant denial of basic human rights in the Valley.

As a prominent member of the Democratic Party known (and distinguishable from the Republican Party) for its inclusive politics and broader vision, she has voiced her opposition to the amendment to the citizenship law on the ground of being linked to religion. Perhaps it is hard to digest the fact that the treatment meted out to the blacks and other minorities in the US is not vastly different from that to Dalits, Muslims and other weak and vulnerable sections in India. That caste is akin to racism is a fact hard to accept for Hindutva zealots.

As for the chances of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris getting elected, the US is currently crying for leadership and the incumbent President is in a downward spiral of unpopularity. A progressive, sometimes called ‘female Obama’ and a daughter of immigrants, Kamala Harris represents the best in American politics and the confluence of cultures in the vast melting pot of American society. Her prominence in the rough and tumble of American politics is a testament to her talent and hard work.

Kamala Harris has always championed the cause of the rights of the socially and economically underprivileged, women and blacks. Her attribution of the heavy toll the coronavirus has taken on America to Donald Trump's delusional belief that he knows better than medical experts is spot on; it will resonate with the American electorate. Donald Trump has characterized Kamala Harris as ‘a socialist completely controlled by radical Left’ and ‘a dream opponent’ in a vain bid to belittle her illustrious public life. We hope that the Indian diaspora in the United States will vote overwhelmingly for Kamala Harris' installation as the next Vice-President of the world's oldest democracy.

G David Milton, Maruthancode, Kanyakumari

US polls promise to be sizzling

What interests India most apart from the usual strategic and political developments in the Presidential election in the US is that Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden made a maiden public appearance with his running mate Kamala Harris on Wednesday. Mr. Biden, a 77-year old white man, on Tuesday named 55-year-old Kamala as his vice-presidential running mate making history by selecting the first Black woman to compete on a major party's presidential ticket.

Taking the centre stage of American politics for the first time after becoming the presumptive vice-presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, Kamala is always proud of her deceased mother, Shyamala Gopalan, who was born in erstwhile Madras, an Indian-born Tamil American. Later, she earned a PhD in nutrition and endocrinology from the University of California.

Being a civil rights activist, she befriended with Donald Harris, a Jamaican professor of economics at Stanford, who also involved in the civil rights movement. Their friendship grew and culminated in the marriage. They had two daughters out of their wedlock- Kamala Harris and Maya Harris. Paradoxically, Shyamala died of colon cancer though she was a cancer researcher.

Kamala married fellow lawyer Douglas Emhoff in 2014 and is step mother to his two grown-up children, Cole and Ella. Making her first appearance along with Mr. Biden, Kamala said that her mother had a great role in her life. She even said, “My mother raised my sister Maya and me to believe that it was up to us, and every generation of Americans, to keep on marching. She'd tell us, don't sit around and complain about things, do something.” Named after a Hindu goddess, Kamala grew up attending both a temple and a Black Baptist church.

As a former presidential hopeful herself, Kamala entered the Democratic race on Martin Luther King Day carefully timed to highlight the historic nature of her candidacy. However, how much she is acceptable to the American society as a Black woman vice-president will have to be watched yet. Admittedly, on earlier occasions, Kamala dropped out of the contest for presidential nomination after she failed to attract big money donors. But Kamala shot to further fame when the President Donald Trump began trying out a few familiar attack lines-similar to those misogynistic ones he used against Hillary Clinton-describing Kamala as ‘nasty, mean, horrible, disrespectful and liar.’

Donald Trump seeking re-election for the second consecutive time is still a sure bet. He has established himself as the best suited man to the presidency again for the second term at this present era as psephologists have predicted in favour of him for the second term.

The most important feather in the cap of Donald Trump, the President of the USA, the people conferred and credited on him was when he declared his support to Israel that had declared Jerusalem as its capital. This declaration has historical as well as far-reaching consequences. American President's support to Israel has always attracted a lion's share of the traditional votes in favour of Trump.

Above all, the things which are going to happen in the immediate future need certain personalities like Trump in the hot seat of America and time will choose him again for the Presidency. Let us wait and watch the political drama being enacted in the land of America for the destiny of this world.

T K Nandan, Kochi

Recapturing lost glory

Last the beautiful heritage of Hyderabad, the famous Moazzam Jahi Market gets its past glory thanks to the Minister for Municipal Administration Kalvakuntla Taraka Rama Rao for taking interest in its restoration. It will be surely a tourist spot for heritage lovers, evening walkers and families.

Previously every one ignored this heritage site besides the tenants also made it uglier by painting its stone wall and putting sheds etc. which changed it uniqueness, not to speak about garbage and choked drainage system.

Hope the days are not far for the historical, beautiful and famous Clock towers, which has its own stories will gets it past glory back if K. T. Rama Rao took interest in its restoration. It will be an injustice if we didn't thank Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration and Urban Development for his excellent work after taking a challenge for its restoration.

Syeda Miratu Zohra, Hyderabad

Balance in inoperative bank accounts

Huge balance is lying in inoperative accounts in banks with even many account-holders having forgotten about their bank-accounts. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has intro-

duced Know-Your-Customer (KYC) forms which has been made mandatory also for closing such inoperative accounts. Such cumbersome practice not only is causing difficulty to account-holders wishing to close their inoperative accounts, but also creating a big loss of man-hours of bank-employees apart from unnecessary data-entries and record-keeping. Frauds are reported through some bank-employees misappropriating funds in such inoperative accounts where amount is large.

RBI should direct all banks to close all accounts not operated for say last three years, and send the remittance through pay-orders by Speed Post at last known addresses of account-holders at least for accounts having balance of say rupees ten thousand or less. In case of return of Speed-Post envelopes, formalities like of KYC form and succession-certificates etc may be required. For amounts bigger than rupees ten thousand, account-holders should be informed about their existing balance and to approach banks either to make accounts operative or close these in a time-bound period after which all such balances should be transferred to Depositor-Educative-Awareness-Fund (DEAF). With private sector dominating banking sector, public-money lying in inoperative accounts must not be allowed to be retained by banks.

Frequent change of account-numbers by banks should be prevented by making it mandatory for all banks to allot 15-digit account-numbers. Confusing and frequently changing account-numbers result in bouncing of electronic fund-transfers.

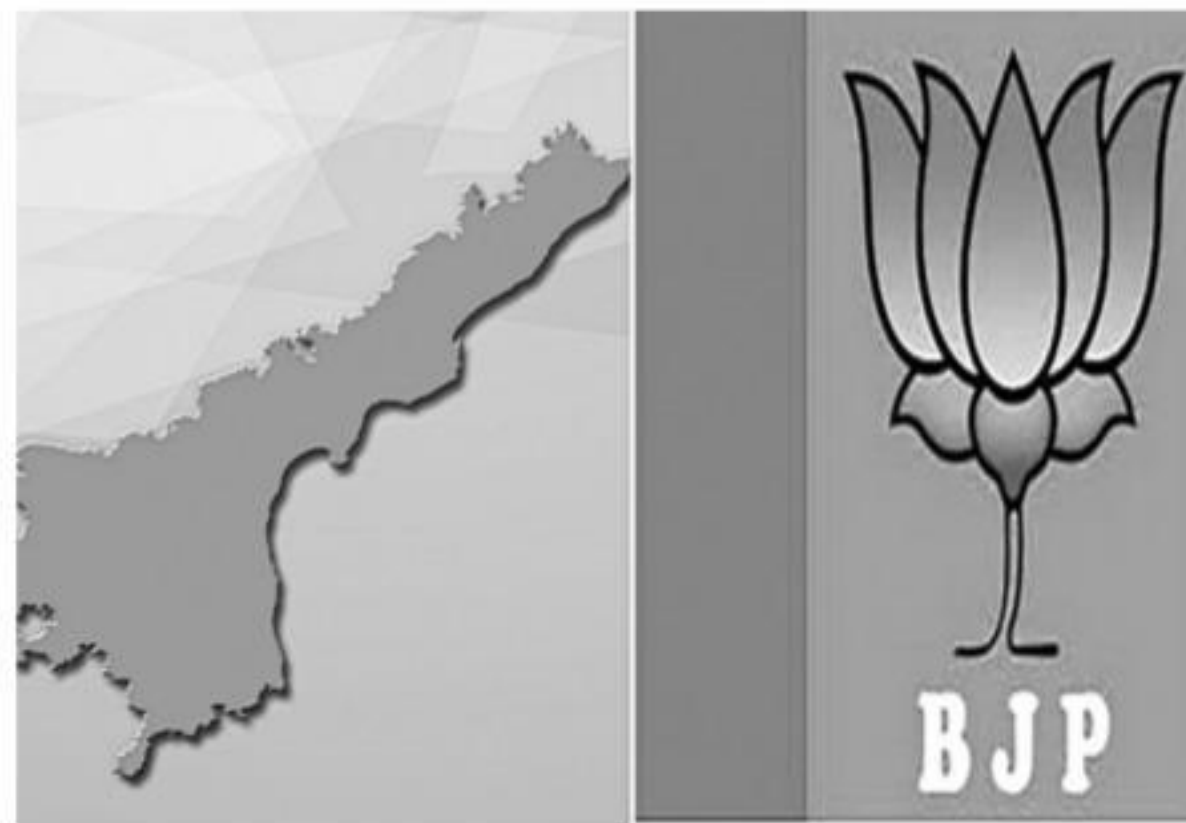
Madhu Agrawal, Delhi

BJP tying up itself in knots in AP

V Ramu Sarma laid bare the opportunistic political discourse being pursued by BJP that is detrimental to not only Amaravati farmers but also to all the people of AP. (Fickle-minded BJP muddies Amaravati waters - THI, 15 August). BJP is foolishly daydreaming to consolidate its position in AP with a crude strategy that has the potential to further alienate BJP from people of AP who are already furious with BJP for denying Special Category Status to the revenue deficit State. It seems BJP is playing the dangerous game of political brinkmanship where it is running with the hares while hunting with the hounds which may prove to be suicidal for it in AP.

It is an open secret that BJP needs the support of YSRCP in Rajya Sabha and as such doesn't want to antagonise it. Although BJP leaders in AP routinely criticise the policies of YSRCP government with an intention to occupy the space meant for the opposition and to become the main contender to claim power in AP in 2024 elections, there is a tacit understanding between YSRCP and BJP at national level to serve the interests of both the parties as was evident in Parliament where YSRCP extended its help to BJP in passing controversial bills such as CAA and NRC.

The BJP is more interested to further its political and electoral interests in AP rather than to serve the people's in-



terests. BJP is well aware of the fact that TDP would gain politically if BJP throws all its political heft behind Amaravati to help it to be retained as Capital of AP. So, it is shrewdly making political moves neither to let TDP garner political mileage out of Amaravati nor to let itself be seen sailing with YSRCP. The BJP's political game is solely guided by its electoral interests that aims to capture political power in AP at any cost in 2024.

It is high time for people of AP to be aware of the stark reality where the

State is being immensely harmed by political parties for making narrow political gains. People of AP should stop fighting among themselves on the lines of caste and region and need to realize that it is their hard earned money paid as taxes being wasted to the tune of billions of rupees in the game of vindictive politics being played to establish one-upmanship. Unless people of AP act with wisdom and maturity at this crucial juncture, the future looks bleak for AP.

Thumati Anuradha, Hyderabad

Honour the honest: Structural reforms of Income Tax

NELAPATLA ASHOK BABU

August 13 is a great milestone in the history of 160 years of Indian Income Tax (Income Tax was introduced by James Wilson who was the first Finance Minister of India during British Rule). This is the day on which the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi unveiled a gigantic tax reform with a single stroke. Hereafter all I-T Returns will be scrutinised (means thoroughly examined /verified) on electronic basis only. This is only known as e-Assessment.

Hitherto the Assessee/ Tax payer knew who was his Assessing Officer and vice-versa. Thence there is no chance of knowing each other as it was mentioned by the PM. Now the assessments are done away with geographical jurisdiction. For instance the Return of the assessee filed in Mumbai will go to an Officer placed at Tezpur or a Return of Income filed in Jammu will be scrutinised by an Officer in Madurai. Not only that they will never face each other physically during the entire assessment process, there are many layers in between . Hence it is known as faceless assessment also.

In fact, this faceless assessment had been started on Vijaya Dasami (Dasara/Dasserah) of 2019 on a sample base. Out of all Returns filed for the Assessment Year 2018-19, 58000 odd cases were selected, assigned and were being assessed by newly set up Regional e-Assessment Centres (ReACs) in eight cities throughout the country. These eight ReACs are located in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore , Chennai ,Hyderabad , Ahmedabad and Kolkata. To co-ordinate, control, supervise and monitor these Regional Cen-



tres an apex body was set up at Delhi known as National e-Assessment Centre (NeAC) .

Initially the Draft Assessment Order will be prepared by the Assessment Units of ReACs. In order to help the Assessing Officer (AO) and to keep the system foolproof many units were set up between the AO and the NeAC. They are Verification Unit, Risk Unit, Review Unit and Technical Unit.

The Verification Unit does verification of books of Accounts, cross verification examination of witnesses, verification , enquiry and recording statements. Technical Units provides technical assistance including Legal, accounting, forensic , valuation , information Technology,

Transfer Pricing , Data Analytics, management or any other technical matter.

The Risk Unit reviews the draft prepared by the AO from any high pitch assessment issue. Finally the Review Unit reviews the draft order whether all facts and law were inserted in the draft or not? Whether all evidences available brought onto the record or not ?! Again after all this exercise the Range has to approve it before the draft assessment order is sent to NeAC for final approval and sending the Order to the NeAC.

The Range Head, normally an Additional Commissioner or Joint Commissioner rank officer equipped with good seniority and well versed

with the I-T Act, will add any missing points to the Order after thorough review and discussion with the Officer concerned. The final Order to be passed by the NeAC will be after examining the Draft sent by the AO from all angles comprehensively .

In this way , now in faceless / e-Assessments there are many Officers involved to pass a single Assessment Order. This new procedure is completely contrary to the age old practice wherein all the authorities have been concentrated in the hands of one single Assessing Officer (AO). That was the reason behind the appreciation of the PM while saying even ' I congratulate ITOs for sacrificing their authorities for the sake of transparent Assessments'.

The entire scrutiny procedure has now has become very transparent and above any suspicion as many officers are involved at different levels placed at different places. As the PM says this random selection , e- assessments and reviews give rise to the seamless, faceless and painless assessments. The I-T department has already started DIN (Document Identification Number) while issuing any letter to any taxpayer or for any kind of interaction this was to facilitate traceability and identification.

Some other noteworthy reforms already started and being implemented by I-T were : Reduction of Corporate Tax from 30 per cent to 22 per cent, Reduction tax on newly set up manufacturing Units/ Plants to 15 per cent (to encourage Made in India) and abolition of Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT) (to encourage the investors to invest in Stock Markets)

In order to reduce perennia/incessant/ unending tax disputes the Union Govt under the

leadership of the PM increased the limits of litigation to Rs one crore and Rs two crore at High Courts and Supreme Courts respectively. Below these levels the department will not challenge the cases in the higher courts of law. The litigation levels of disputes increased even before the Commissioners of Appeal also. As a result thousands of decade-old cases were resolved throughout the Country.

All these reforms will lead to policy driven governance with clarity in policy, power-centric administration to people centric and public friendly administration. The faceless assessment is completely in electronic mode , with no human interface creating an environment of Transparency, efficiency, integrity, sensitivity and functional specialisation. It will also produce improvement in quality of assessment, standardisation & quality management and better monitoring by higher authorities.

The penultimate important point of significance is that it is moral based, holistic and linked reform. Such ease reforms will encourage more people to come forward voluntarily to file the returns and to pay the Taxes on their own . As emphasised by the PM the taxpayers are only 1.5 per cent , this is really negligible when compared to the modernity and living standards seeing around us particularly in the last one decade. There is a hope of increasing the percentage of taxpayers in the Country once the implementation of these Tax reforms start , automatically. It will create an Atma Nirbhar Bharat. The reformer Narendra Modi will find a place in the hearts of honest tax payers forever.

(The author is Joint Commissioner of Income Tax, Pune.)

Indian cricket guidelines - ‘age is just a number’

YAJURVINDRA SINGH

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has come out with guidelines as to how cricket will operate at this time of COVID-19 pandemic. This is essential as the safety of the players and the people involved in cricket needs to be before-most protected.

The world is reeling under the spread of this unexpected virus attack and the uncertainty of being able to deal has put a threat to all. "The show must go on" and therefore cricket as a sport has taken the plunge to get back on track.

England, by creating a bio-bubble and isolating teams from the outside world, so as to greatly minimise the risk of getting an infection, proved that it could be done successfully. This has been a huge positive where cricket is concerned as countries around the world now have a template to follow.

Indian cricket finally breathed a sigh of relief as the popular and financially lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) can be played finally. This they plan to do in the UAE as India is still not ready to hold a major tournament given the current circumstances.

The IPL is a very important tournament in world cricket, especially for India. The glamour and glitter that it brings along with the cricket uncertainties is a script that is unique as every match creates an excitement similar to what one feels when reading a murder mystery. This is what makes T20, the shortest official format of the game, so absorbing.

The BCCI will have a major challenge in ensuring that the 53-day tournament goes through without any blemish. The only way this will be possible is for all the participants to take the responsibility on themselves and follow the rules and regulations to the tee. A single error could burst the bubble and jeopardise the whole tournament.



With eight participating teams, the controls to ensure that nothing goes awry will be a humongous task for each franchise. The IPL has been one event which has always brought out the BCCI with flying colours. One hopes and prays that this edition showcases that India has the capabilities of hosting a major sporting event successfully even in such a difficult time.

BCCI has also in the meanwhile issued very elaborate guidelines for domestic cricket. Each Indian cricket association has been told to follow them. One is a bit skeptical as to how effectively it will be implemented. A bio-securable bubble to create around India is a huge challenge. This requires players, support staff as well as all the people involved, to be ensconced in a secured space for two months or more.

The BCCI has announced that they will be only playing two tournaments this season -- the Ranji Trophy and the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy. A domestic cricketer is paid on a match-fee basis and hence many of them will be affected financially. With the reduction in the number of matches, their annual income will be reduced quite drastically. One hopes that the BCCI and the state associations will take this into consideration and compensate them suitably. However, the U-19 and junior tournaments will be played as usual. This is rather unusual as creating a safe environment for them, especially as they do not stay in five-star comfort like their seniors, would be an enormous task.

The tournament, that one cannot understand as to why it is being omitted this season, is the prestigious Irani Trophy. This is a match between the winner of the Ranji Trophy and the Rest of India. The match is very important for players from the winning Ranji Trophy side, in this case Saurashtra, because a good performance in this encounter could catapult one into the Indian team. The Rest of India side also has players vying for a place in the Indian side. Depriving the Saurashtra players and the rest is definitely unfair.

The Irani Trophy should have been the first match of the season. Most of the players would already have been a part of the IPL whereas the players missing could have been put into a safe bubble at a stipulated venue. This would have been an ideal game for selecting players for the difficult tour that India will be embarking on Down Under against Australia at the end of the year.

The recent guidelines issued by the BCCI also has one more controversial regulation which needs to be enforced. It states that no coaching or support staff can be 60 years or over. Many of the teams have former cricketers as coaches, mentors and advisors who are above the age stipulated. Some of them have done extremely well for their respective state sides and for them to lose their job just because of the age factor is simply not acceptable.

The age barrier is one area that has been the bone of contention even in the Lodha committee proposed recommendations that were approved by the Supreme Court and inserted into the BCCI Constitution. The BCCI also has put their own age criteria as regards selectors, match referees, fitness coaches and even administrative staff. It is rather unfortunate to enforce the age barrier of 60 or 70 years on people who are fit and capable of bringing experience and knowledge and are a valuable asset.

The BCCI cricket administrators like J. Dalmia, N. Srinivasan and Sharad Pawar and many others have shown the way Indian cricket can flourish off the field even after they have passed their golden age. Arun Lal for Bengal and Karsan Ghavri for Saurashtra, both former cricketers and above the magic age limit, have shown what they can do with their bunch of cricketers on the field. All these stalwarts have proven that it is how one thinks, feels and behaves that is important and that age as one says "is only a number".

Potatoes growing at high altitude in Himachal to get global attention

VISHAL GULATI

Farmers in tiny hamlets dotted over Himalayan peaks of the landlocked Lahaul Valley of Himachal Pradesh are not in high spirits amid the pandemic with government plans to promote contract farming of the highly remunerative barley for making malt whiskey have gone awry, at least this year.

But the Polish company that recently signed a pact with the state is eyeing to compensate growers owing to coronavirus by procuring locally grown high variety, disease-free Kufri Chandramukhi and Kufri Jyoti varieties of potatoes -- rated the best in the world for high altitude growing -- for its vodka brands.

State agriculture officials said it is not feasible to go for planting barley at this point in time as the summer cultivation season in the valley is almost near completion. The state on November 6, 2019, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Polish spirits producer Neilson Europe to initially involve nearly 200 farmers of Lahaul-Spiti district and some pockets in Kinnaur and Chamba districts to go for contract farming of a high-yield barley variety imported from Scotland and Europe. "We were hopeful to go for contract farming of barley this season, but the coronavirus scare had delayed it, maybe for a year now. This season we again went for the cultivation of our traditional potato crop," Ishwar Bodh, a farmer in Darcha village, told IANS over phone.

The Lahaul Valley is known for growing prized seed potatoes, whose history goes back to 1854 when missionary A.W. Hide from Germany established a farm near Keylong, the district headquarters town some 350 km from state capital Shimla. The seed potatoes are in great demand in states like West Bengal, Bihar and Karnataka.

The other cash crops are peas, cauliflower and hops. As per the pact, the Polish spirits producer has proposed to invest Rs 110 crore under its project 'Grain to Glass' to produce the organic Himalayan single malt whiskey by involving farmers in contract farming and setting up a world-class distillery. According to the producer of the award winning spirits ZOUK and Extill, world's single estate rye vodkas, the geographic and climatic conditions of Himachal Pradesh is on a par with the Scotland's and many other European regions which will lead to deriving a unique and special terroir.

A total of 85 kg of barley seed of the Laureate variety per acre will be provided to each 200 farmers on a trial basis by the company. This variety is the most widely grown spring matting barley in Scotland.

Surveys by the agriculture department show the area under cash crop potato cultivation in the Lahaul Valley has declined in 10 years from 2,000 hectares to about 700 hectares.

Likewise, there has been a near decline in the cultivation of hops, a key ingredient in brewing beer, as a major cash crop in



the valley owing to dumping of cheaper varieties from China, the US and Germany.

Currently, the area under vegetable cultivation in the valley is around 2,200 hectares.

Gopal Chand Sharma, an exotic vegetable grower on the outskirts of Keylong, said contract farming is a good opportunity to strengthen the local economy. "With the help of industry by providing the latest technology, techniques and inputs, we will produce as per their requirements. This will ensure to get a decent guaranteed remuneration," he said, adding: "We are hopeful that the contract farming will start next year."

Last year, the Nematode virus was reported in the seed potatoes of Lahaul and farmers suffered massive losses. Another farmer Ramesh Bodh said the locals are cultivating traditional varieties of barley. The cultivation of the exotic variety of barley would be remunerative.

Barley is grown in abundance in the cold desert, but it is mostly used for local consumption. The valley is famous for brewing barley liquor 'arab' and beer 'chhang'.

Neilson Europe President Gaurav Rajput told IANS this year owing to the coronavirus pandemic there was delay in onset of contact farming. "We are now going for contract farming of barley in April next year. To compensate the farmers this year, we are going to procure the locally grown potatoes that are probably the world's highest altitude produce," he said.

The company is setting up a distillery-cum-bottling plant in the state.

State Industries Director Hans Raj Sharma told IANS the government has offered a piece of land to the company in Wanknaghat area of Solan district to set up the distillery.

"The pandemic has delayed the land selection process. Very soon, the company is going to finalise it," he added.

The Lahaul Valley, comprising over two dozen small, scattered villages, remains cut off from the rest of the world for over four months from December onwards owing to heavy snow accumulation in the Rohtang Pass (13,050 feet) -- the only road link with Manali in the Kullu district.

It re-opens once snow starts thawing after mid-April.

What should India do in response to the US-China rift?

FRANK F ISLAM

US President Donald Trump issued two executive orders on Thursday restricting Chinese social media networks TikTok and WeChat, on the grounds that they pose significant national security threats to the United States. These executive actions set a 45-day deadline to ByteDance, which owns TikTok, and Tencent, owner of WeChat, to sell the two platforms to American companies, or face a complete ban in the US.

ByteDance has already been in talks with Microsoft to sell the US operations of TikTok, an enormously popular video-sharing platform. Now by issuing the executive order, Trump has virtually ensured the certainty of that sale. WeChat, which is mainly used by the Chinese diaspora to communicate with their family members and friends in the mainland and make mobile payments, now faces a more uncertain future in the US.

Trump's crackdown on TikTok and WeChat, and by extension, Chinese technology and business interests, opens up another front in the President's on-going confrontation with China, which

started with a trade war involving farming, dairy products and other American goods. More recently, the Trump administration has taken actions to restrict Huawei access in the US and the use of government funds to purchase Huawei products and services.

Does this latest phase in the Sino-American confrontation, which began on June 21 with the US ordering the closure of the Chinese consulate general in Houston, and China, in retaliation, closing the US consulate in Chengdu, in the southwestern province of Sichuan, benefit or provide an opportunity for India?

Several analysts in both Washington and New Delhi have observed that it does. It is easy to see the logic behind that argument. In restricting TikTok and WeChat, the US has merely followed India's footsteps in banning these two and 57 Chinese apps in late June, in response to encroachments by People's Liberation Army soldiers into Indian territory.

From a geopolitical standpoint, there is no doubt that the current US-China conflict has come at an opportune time for India, which has been engaged in multiple



standoffs with China along the border in Ladakh since the beginning of this summer. It once again reinforces the convergence of security interests of India and the US on the China front.

There may be a temptation because of this to escalate the tension with China and in attempt to get concessions in Ladakh. Many armchair warriors have urged Prime Minister Modi to ally with the US and force China to the back foot, to use a cricketing term.

Even though New Delhi and Washington have become closer strategic partners, especially in the past two decades, India has never openly aligned with the US on China, despite US pressure to do so.

The historic US-India civil nuclear deal, signed in 2008, was widely seen in Washington as a move to empower India as a bulwark against China. But, much to the frustration of the anti-China hawks in Washington, India has

never been comfortable playing that role. This hesitancy continues till today. Notwithstanding calls by many in India and the US to do so, New Delhi has not rushed into Washington's arms in the wake of the Galwan attack. This appears to be a quite prudent decision.

In any scenario, it is highly unlikely that the US will engage in a full-scale cold war similar to the one it waged with the erstwhile Soviet Union for much of the last half of the 20th century. China doesn't pose any physical threat to the US, or its European allies, unlike the Soviet Union back then. Economically, the US and China are more integrated than perhaps any two large sovereign nations ever have. Besides being the source of many American goods, China also holds more than \$1 trillion worth of US securities.

There is every possibility for a reset in Sino-US relations if Trump loses to Democrat Joe Biden in November. Even if Trump is re-elected, it is unlikely that he will pursue an all-out economic war with China during his second term. Knowledgeable observers suggest that the immedi-

ate provocation for Trump's TikTok and WeChat restrictions are not geopolitical, but domestic politics. With Covid-19 continuing to ravage the American heartland and the much anticipated US economic recovery not materializing, the President's re-election prospects have dimmed considerably.

Having spent considerable efforts on boosting the stock market throughout his term, the economy was the primary issue Trump was planning to run on in his re-election bid. But, the impact of Covid-19 has cratered the American economy.

Indeed, the latest job report, released on Friday, revealed that more than 15 million Americans are still unemployed. And, over 30 million are receiving some type of unemployment assistance. These conditions dash any hopes for a meaningful and major economic turnaround before the November election.

In addition, Trump's failure to develop a national plan and process to contain the spread of Coronavirus has raised serious questions among many voters about his competency. According to the RealClearPolitics average

of polls, nearly three-fifths of Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of the pandemic, and less than two-fifths approve.

Trump can never take the blame or assume responsibility for his own poor performance. In his mind, if he loses the presidency it will be solely because of China and its failure to contain the virus from spreading outside its borders. He began calling Covid-19 the "China virus" in an attempt to deflect attention from himself regarding his failed leadership in managing the response to the pandemic. This deflect and diversion tactic is classic Trump. It explains why the President has chosen the path of escalation with Beijing. It is not a deep-seated ideological or policy-based aversion to the Chinese. It is primarily a personal and politically motivated action taken as part of a re-election gambit.

Given this, India should engage in watchful waiting to see what the next move from Washington and Beijing will be and who will be elected President in the US in November. It should then determine how to proceed. And, do so with caution.

Indian steel market to see V-shaped recovery



Domestic steel prices have increased by Rs 3,000 per tonne or 8 per cent from June 2020-end in line with regional prices while the export dependence of steel producers is gradually reducing with recovery in domestic demand

The Indian steel sector is in a sweet spot with a V-shaped margin recovery ahead, Kotak Institutional Equities has said in a report.

According to the brokerage, domestic steel prices have increased by Rs 3,000 per tonne or 8 per cent from June 2020-end in line with regional prices while the export dependence of steel producers is gradually reducing with recovery in domestic demand.

"Higher prices and favourable geographic shift would aid blended realisations," it said in its report on metal and mining sectors. Domestic iron prices have remained subdued relative to regional prices whereas coking coal price reduction would accrue in 2QFY21E.

"We see a sharp margin recovery in 2QFY21E, ahead of the seasonal (second half) demand tailwinds," KIE said.

Domestic steel demand declined 57 per cent yoy in 1QFY21 due to Covid-19 but is recovering gradually, with July 2020 demand down 29 per cent yoy. Primary steel producers have promptly raised exports with annual run-rate of 15.4 million tonne in June 2020 and now declining gradually with July 2020 run-rate at 13 million tonne.

This trend is expected to continue as steel producers have further reduced the future export allocation on expected recovery in domestic demand. Export prices are 10-12 per cent lower than domestic realisation and increase in domestic sales will raise blended realisations. Regional steel prices have also increased by 10-12 per cent in the past one-two months, led by improving demand and iron

ore-led cost push. Japan export HRC prices have increased by 8 per cent in the past one month, whereas China export prices have increased by 6 per cent MoM notwithstanding marginal increase in steel inventory. Domestic prices are up Rs 3,000/tonne (+8 per cent) in the last 40 days with a hike of Rs 500/1,000/1,500/tonne in early July/late July/early August 2020.

Declining domestic inventory and rising demand have tightened the market and allowed domestic steel companies to increase prices to import parity level, two months ahead of strong seasonality in the second half of fiscal year.

A combination of a strong international iron ore and weak coking coal prices is ideal for Indian steel producers as they benefit from discounted domestic iron ore prices, the report said.

Seaborne iron ore prices at \$120/tonne (CFR China 62 per cent Fe) remain strong led by supply-side issues in Brazil and strong China demand. Domestic iron ore prices have increased by 20 per cent in the past two months but continue to be at record discount (45 per cent) to import parity given domestic oversupply. Coking coal prices corrected by 21 per cent qoq in 1QFY21 and should reflect in 2QFY21.

"We see a sharp V-shaped margin recovery (Rs 3,000-Rs 3,500/tonne qoq) in 2QFY21 led by higher prices, US \$25-30/tonne higher domestic and export realisation, lower exports and higher domestic sales and cost tailwinds from coking coal (Rs 1,500/tonne) and operating leverage," the brokerage report said.

Will AP's long yearning for capital city end now?

P MADHUSUDHAN REDDY

What happens if Lady Luck smiles on someone? One gets what one wants and more. For instance, people of Andhra and Rayalaseema regions have been yearning for a capital city of their own for the past several decades. They lost Chennai when Andhra State carved out of Madras State in October 1953.

They experimented with Kurnool as capital city, but left it in favour of Hyderabad when the Telangana region was merged with Andhra State to form Andhra Pradesh three years later. And they lost Hyderabad when Telangana was divided from Andhra Pradesh in June 2014.

Subsequently, TDP president Nara Chandrababu Naidu, who came to power in Andhra Pradesh in 2014, planned a massive Greenfield capital city, Amaravati, near Vijayawada. Farmers in that area contributed more than 34,000 acres of land for the proposed capital city with a hope that a world-class city would come up in their midst. But YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who came to power with a massive mandate in 2019, discarded Amaravati capital plans, saying the Greenfield capital would require massive amounts of investments which Andhra Pradesh, being haunted by fiscal deficit, could not afford at this juncture.

But YS Jagan, the young Chief Minister, surprised everyone by announcing three capital cities. That means people of Andhra and Rayalaseema regions, who struggled to have a single capital city of their own for a long time, are going to have three capital cities instead, with the administrative decentralisation at its core! So, the Lady Luck has finally smiled on them.

Going by the prevailing circumstances and the way things are moving now, Andhra Pradesh is likely to find a permanent solution to its long-pending capital issue soon if there are no more surprises. With legislative hurdles for the proposed three capitals cleared now, the Andhra Pradesh government will have to get the judicial stamp on it. However, it's very unlikely that the judiciary will create any hurdles as the power of setting up a new capital city rests with the State government. Judiciary's sole focus will be on the interests of farmers, who sacrificed their fertile lands for Amaravati. If the State government con-



BIZY LIFE

vinces the judiciary with its plans on how it will take care of the interests of farmers, the judiciary will also give a go-head for the three capital cities, if not today, a few weeks later.

Therefore, it will not be long before Chief Minister YS Jagan will go ahead with his ambitious plan of developing the coastal city of Visakhapatnam as Executive Capital of Andhra Pradesh, Amaravati as Legislative Capital and Kurnool as Judicial Capital.

But the key question here is which of three capital cities will develop faster? The answer is obvious. The coastal city of Visakhapatnam will develop faster. Being the Executive Capital of AP, the coastal city will be the de facto capital city for the State as day-to-day administration operates from there.

Frankly speaking, Visakhapatnam is an ideal city as capital. It has all the ingredients to become one. It's the biggest city in Andhra Pradesh and fourth largest one after Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad in South India. Further, developing capital infrastructure in Vizag doesn't require tonnes of money. So, the coastal city should have gotten the first priority when the Andhra Pradesh government decided on the location of its capital in 2014. But the coastal city missed the honour then.

Ideally, Andhra Pradesh should have a single capital city as the lack of a big metropolis is a big drawback for it. If it has a single capital city, development in that city will take place at a faster pace. Further, all organs of the government will be located at a single

location, thus reducing delays in the administrative process. It can still decentralise the development by taking up industrial projects in other promising cities and areas. But that is not going to happen now thanks to three capitals' plan.

However, future will decide whether YS Jagan's decision to go for multiple capitals is right or wrong as the evolution of a capital city or capital cities is a longer process as it takes decades to build a big city.

More so in the case of a capital city or capital cities as such cities, being seats of power or administrative processes, embody several distinct features.

However, YS Jagan's plan for three capitals also has several advantages. With three capitals located in three different regions of the State, Andhra Pradesh will be able to immunise itself from future demands for separate States. But creating three capitals will not be enough. The government should also take steps to develop all the three cities. A balanced development across all three capitals is essential. For instance, the AP government can use the massive 34,000-acre land bank in Amaravati, now at its disposal, to develop the area as an educational and industrial hub. Vijayawada-Amaravati-Guntur belt could become a commercial hub as well. Further, the presence of judiciary will not be enough for Kurnool. Industries should also be developed there.

But if Jagan succeeds in implementing his plan for three capitals, and showcases positive benefits of it on the ground, the multiple

capitals cities model will have political ramifications in many big States of India. It is said that Tamil Nadu may take cue from Andhra Pradesh and go for a second capital city to reduce pressure on Chennai and decongest it. Late MG Ramachandran, founder of AIADMK and the three-time Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, first mooted the idea of a second capital and rooted for Tiruchirappalli or Trichy in 1983. This idea is likely to come back into focus in the upcoming Assembly elections slated to take place in 2021.

If we delve deep, YS Jagan's decision to discard Amaravati Greenfield capital seems to be a blessing in disguise now. The Covid-19 pandemic has been taking a heavy toll on the country's economy and the GDP growth is likely to slip into the negative territory for the first time in four decades. It will take a couple of years or more for the country to come out of this economic mess. Andhra Pradesh is no different.

Further, the real estate sector in India is in dire straits. Hyderabad's real estate sector, which bucked the national trend and logged phenomenal growth in the last three years, also slipped into a temporary coma triggered by the Chinese-born novel coronavirus. In this backdrop, developing Amaravati Greenfield capital is impractical now as it's inextricably linked to the real estate investments. That way, the YS Jagan government can have a sigh of relief for opting for Visakhapatnam as Executive Capital as it can create capital infrastructure there with minimum funds.

Key banks shoring up capital via QIPs

FPIs remain positive on QIP of banks at current valuations; Nifty Bank Index rebounded sharply by 35%

India's key lenders have been shoring up capital from foreign funds to take on the slowdown and the expected write-offs on the back of Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, some of the biggest lenders have taken advantage of higher inflows to raise substantial funds via the Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) route.

Several other banks have either raised capital in the past few months or plan to do so in order to create a buffer amid the pandemic. "FPIs (Foreign Portfolio Investments) remain positive on the QIP of banks at the current valuations and have lapped up the chance of getting large chunks in the issue," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

As per the NSDL, equity flows surged in June 2020 to Rs 21,832 crore, while it tapered down to Rs 7,563 crore in July. It has again shown a spike of Rs 22,192 crore during the initial part of August. "Clearly, the large lenders in both the banking and the non-banking sector have started to raise equity to strengthen their capital position in the context of increased asset quality risks in the post-Covid era. They have been supported by a revival in both FII and DII inter-



Axis Bank said it has raised ₹10,000 crore through QIP at a price of ₹420.10 per share

est in large and well-governed domestic financial institutions, with retail investors also adding to the demand," said Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer at Acuite Ratings and Research.

"In our opinion, the monetary stimulus provided by the RBI to address the likely stress from the Covid lockdown along with fresh clarity on loan restructuring has improved the near-term outlook for the leading private

sector banks and NBFCs."

Notably, even the Nifty Bank Index has rebounded sharply by 35 per cent from the low seen in the last week of March, which reflects the heightened activity in the secondary market.

"Financial institutions, both banks and NBFCs, have raised or are in the process of raising a large amount of equity. The objective seems to be to further strengthen the equity buffers in this uncertain environment in the

event of large losses and liquidity stress. Even the regulator has asked them to stress-test their balance sheets and address the requirements," said Prakash Agarwal, Director and Head-Financial Institutions, India Ratings and Research. "However, some of this is also driven by the sense of preparation for opportunities that may emerge post the Covid period in the face of inevitable consolidation in the sector."

Earlier this week, Axis Bank said it has raised Rs 10,000 crore through QIP at a price of Rs 420.10 per share.

Similarly, ICICI Bank has set a floor price of Rs 351.36 per share as part of its plan to raise up to Rs 15,000 crore through several modes, including QIPs. In July, UCO Bank's Board approved to raise Rs 3,000 crore through various modes, including Follow On Public Offer (FPO) and QIP, in the financial year 2020-21. According to VK Vijaya Kumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services: "Banks, particularly the leading banks, and mortgage lender HDFC have succeeded in effortlessly raising capital at prices around the market prices." "Most investors in these issues are FPIs, particularly long-only funds. This is a reflection of the confidence of these institutions in these banks." (IANS)

Mahindra takes wraps off new Thar SUV

Home-grown auto major Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) unveiled the all new version of its iconic SUV Thar, which it plans to launch later this year. The model, which comes with all new exteriors and interiors, will debut in the country on October 2. The SUV would feature BSVI compliant petrol and diesel powertrains mated to six speed manual and automatic transmissions.

The diesel variants would be powered by 2.2 litre engine while the petrol trims would come with all new 2 litre powertrain. While the diesel motor will generate 120 HP of power, the petrol Thar will see an output of 150 HP of hauling strength.

"Today, with the unveiling of the all-new Thar, we rewrite history once again. The model is firmly rooted in our rich automotive heritage and upholds the Mahindra DNA in its purest form," M&M Managing Director Pawan Goenka said. The model has been designed and engineered in India and even most of the components used in the vehicle have been sourced locally, he noted. The model, which will be rolled out



from the company's Nashik plant, will not only attract die-hard Thar enthusiasts, but will also appeal to all those people who have always dreamt of owning an iconic vehicle, with all the bells and whistles of a contemporary SUV, M&M said. The new Thar comes with a hard top, a first-in-class convertible top and an optional soft top. It also features new seating options -- 4 front-facing seats and 2 plus 4 side-facing seats. Other features include, 4x4 capability, drizzle resistant 17.8 cm touchscreen infotainment

system, cruise control, roof-mounted speakers and safety features like dual airbags and hill-hold and hill descent control, among others.

"With the all-new Thar, we aim to protect this legacy with superior performance both on and off the tarmac, advanced technology features, excellent safety and everyday ride comfort, all adding to the unadulterated driving pleasure of a true-blue modern SUV," M&M Automotive Division CEO Veejay Nakra said.

QUIZ NO.
136

HANS BIZ QUIZ

Theme: '25 years of Commercial Internet'

1. While the origins of the country's Internet date back to the 1980s, it was on August 15, 1995, the then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao formally launched the Internet services for the Indian public. When did the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) access was introduced in India?
a) 2000 b) 1997 c) 1993 d) 1988

2. In 1986, India first went online only when the Educational Research Network (ERNET) was launched for the use of educational and research communities. Which of the below launched and maintained the ERNET?
a) Ministry of Education
b) Ministry of HRD and Telecommunications Ministry
c) Jointly by Department of Electronics and the United Nations Development Program
d) Jointly by Ministry of HRD and UNICEF

3. National Informatics Centre operated the NIC.Net for communication between government institutions and to provide informatics services to State and Central Governments departments and its various organisations. When did nic.net begin services in India?
a) 1997 b) 1996 c) 1987 d) 1984

4. Identify the legendary film star who helped make the Internet become a reality in India and spearheaded the internet revolution in India?
a) Amitabh Bacchan
b) Shammi Kapoor
c) Meenakshi Sheshadri
d) John Abraham

5. On 15 August 1995, VSNL launched the internet service known as the Gateway Internet Access Service, with an initial speed of 9.6 kbps. In which year the Internet subscriber base crossed one lakh user base milestone in India?
a) 2002 b) 2000
c) 1998 d) 1996

6. In 1991, the Supreme Court of India and the High Courts in each State were linked by the network, facilitating the querying of case status and retrieval of judicial precedents. Identify the first Indian

Internet Service Provider that was launched in 1998?

- a) Sify
b) Tata Communications
c) Airtel
d) ACT



7. Prannoy Roy was the first to present the election analysis with real-time data retrieved from NICNET. Identify the election that changed the face of election analysis, forever?

- a) 1996 11th Lok Sabha general elections
b) 1991 10th Lok Sabha general elections
c) 1993 Delhi Legislative Assembly election
d) 1996 Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly election

8. The initial launch of Internet services took place in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras. How much was the Internet services in India priced for a 250-hour TCP/IP commercial connection, when commercially launched in August 1995?
a) Rs 25,000 b) Rs 75,000
c) Rs 125,000 d) Rs 250,000

9. How much did the central Government spend to establish NICNET in the 1980s?
a) Rs 1400 crore b) Rs 840 crore
c) Rs 440 crore d) Rs 240 crore

10. The Indian Government formulated the broadband policy in 2004, which defined broadband as 'always-on' data connection that is able to support Internet access and has the capability of the minimum download speed to an individual subscriber from the service provider. What was the prescribed minimum download speed?

- a) 64 kilobits per second
b) 128 kilobits per second
c) 256-kilobits per second
d) 512-kilobits per second

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

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

Spanish press slam Barca’s ‘historic humiliation’

Bayern thrash Catalans 8-2 to reach Champions League semis



Lisbon (IANS): Bayern Munich hammered Barcelona 8-2 to roar into the UEFA Champions League semi-finals and made the history of scoring most in a knockout stage of the European clubs’ top tournament.

Barcelona’s “historic humiliation” has been plastered across the sports papers in Spain. Barcelona-based Sport and Madrid-based AS are in agreement - for once.

Both of the papers went for the headline “Historic Humiliation” on Saturday morning.

Marca opted to have the word “embarrassment” splashed across their front page.

The source claimed the defeat to the German giants marked the “end of an era” for the Catalan club. L’Esportiu added “It’s finished” to their front

page to pile the pressure on Barcelona.

Barcelona had not lost a game by six goals since their 6-0 defeat to Espanyol in 1951.

Barcelona conceded eight goals for the first time since the 1946 defeat from FC Sevilla (8-0). It is also the first time since 2008 the Spain giants finished a season without a significant title, reports Xinhua news agency.

Coach Quique Setien brought a different Barcelona to the field on Friday. Antoine Griezmann was on the bench and gave way to Alex Vidal to start the game. On the German side, Hans-Dieter Flick came in with the best, even with Kimmich acting in his original position, the right wing.

The game start was quite disputed and the first

goal chance was from the Catalan team, just after two minutes, when Sergi Roberto made a play on the right and sought Luis Suarez in the area, but Bayern’s defense kept it away.

In the fourth minute, the first goal of the match came out for Bayern. Striker Robert Lewandowski dominated a high ball in the area, made the pivot and delivered to Thomas Muller to score. Barcelona’s response came from the sequence, more precisely after six minutes of play: Left-back Jordi Alba played from the edge, crossed for Suarez on the penalty spot, but before him, defender Alaba tried to cut, covered the goalkeeper and made an own goal.

The turn seemed to be on the way. Barcelona produced two more goal plays, with Neuer de-

fending a ball from Suarez and Lionel Messi kicking a ball on the post, leaving the game competitive until 20 minutes.

However, in the 21st minute after a stolen ball from Gnabri on the left, Croatian Peresic received inside the area and scored the second German goal.

Six minutes later came Bayern’s third goal, also with Gnabri, who this time received a great pass from Goretzka and beat the goalkeeper. On 31 minutes, after a cross by Kimmich’s right, Muller received the ball in the small area and marked his second in the game and the fourth of Bayern.

After the interval, the Barca coach promised changes, drawing out Sergi Roberto and finally fielding in Griezmann.

MS Dhoni retires from int’l cricket, Raina follows suit

New Delhi (Agencies): Taking a cue from his teammate M.S. Dhoni, Suresh Raina on Saturday announced retirement from international cricket.

His message on Instagram stated: “I choose to join you in this journey. Thank you India.” Raina’s post comes minutes after Dhoni announced over Instagram that he’ll not be donning the blue anymore.

Both Dhoni and his Chennai Super Kings teammate Raina arrived in Chennai on Friday for a short training camp ahead of the IPL in UAE.

The swashbuckling southpaw has been out of international cricket action for quite a while.

Dhoni posted a video montage with pictures at different points of his career on his Instagram account.

“Thanks. Thanks a lot for ur love and support throughout. from 1929 hrs consider me as Retired (sic).” Dhoni wrote

in the caption.

The 2011 World Cup-winning captain is yet to give details of the development as to whether he is retiring from the game entirely or if he is only bowing out from international cricket.

Dhoni is currently part of the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) training camp at the MA Chidambaram stadium in Chennai and is expected to lead the team in the 2020 season of the Indian Premier League which is set to start on September 19 in the UAE.

His future with the Indian team has been a subject of intense speculation. His last appearance in the Blue jersey came in their semi-final defeat to New Zealand at the 2019 World Cup in July 2019 after which he took a break from professional cricket. In this time, Rishabh Pant and later KL Rahul took his place as wicketkeeper of the Indian limited-overs side.



STUNNING FEATS OF MSD

- Dhoni is the one most successful Indian captains, leading the team to most number of victories in all three formats - 27 in testes, 110 in ODI and 41 in T20I. Under his captaincy, Dhoni had led India in a total of 199 matches in the 50-over format.
- Dhoni was the first captain to lead India to the top of the ICC test Rankings back in 2009. He also became the first Indian to lift the ICC Test Championship Mace.

- Dhoni signs off as an ODI legend with 10,773 runs, averaging more than 50 despite batting between No.5 and 7 for a major chunk of his career. In the Test format, Dhoni accumulated 4876 runs at an average of 38.09 and led India to more wins (27) than anyone else before him.
- Dhoni is the first Indian wicket-keeper to amass more than 4000 Test runs. He made 4876 runs in 90 Tests with 6 hundreds and 33 fifties at an average of over 38.
- Dhoni eclipsed Sourav Ganguly’s record

of most Test wins as captain with 27 to become India’s most successful captain in the format.

- Dhoni’s 148 off 123 balls against Pakistan in 2004 remains the fastest century scored by an Indian wicket-keeper, and fourth overall.
- In ODIs, Dhoni has been the fourth-most successful keeper with 407 dismissals. Also, he leads the list of most number of stumpings with 107. In T20 internationals, Dhoni leads with 87 dismissals with once again the most stumpings at 33.

- The 183 not out that Dhoni smashed against Sri Lanka in 2005 is still the highest individual score by a wicket-keeper in ODI cricket.
- Dhoni has captained India in 332 international matches - 200 ODIs, 60 Tests and 72 T20Is - which is a world record. Australia’s Ricky Ponting has captained in 324 international matches.
- MS Dhoni has remained unbeaten in 84 ODIs, which is again a world record. The second best is by former South Africa all-rounder Shaun Pollock, who has 72 not outs to his name.

Sri Lanka Cricket willing to host India-England Tests next year

Colombo (IANS): Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has reportedly indicated to Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) their willingness to host India’s Test series against England scheduled to be played early next year if need arises amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a report in ‘The Island’, England’s five-match Test series in India could be in doubts with the host nation struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic and SLC is willing to host the contest between the two cricketing nations.

The report further said that England are scheduled to tour Sri Lanka in early January next year to conclude their series which was postponed in March this year. And thus there is a possibility of the Three Lions to stay back after their two Tests in Sri Lanka to play the series against India.

“The possibility of England staying back after their two Tests in Sri Lanka to complete the series against India has been given some thought after SLC came up with the suggestion,” said the report. Last week, the BCCI and the England and Wales Cricket Board confirmed that England’s white ball tour of India, originally scheduled for late September to early October this year, has been postponed until early 2021. England were scheduled to tour India in September as part of the FTP to play three T20Is and as many ODIs and then return again in January 2021 to play five Test matches.

Over 25 lakh coronavirus cases have been reported in India so far while more than 49,000 people have lost their lives due to COVID-19.

Halep, Mertens roar into Prague Open semis

Prague (IANS): Top seed Simona Halep and No.3 seed Elise Mertens made it to the semi-finals of the ongoing Prague Open after clinching thumping victories in their respective quarter-final matches.



Halep needed just under an hour on Friday to see off Polish lucky loser Magdalena Frech, 6-2, 6-0. “The whole game... was better today,”

Halep said after the victory as per the WTA website. “I’m happy that I can play better and better day by day. It was a good one and I’ll take it.” Halep will seek her second final of this year against either compatriot Irina-Camelia Begu or Spain’s Sara Sorribes Tormo.

Meanwhile, Mertens entered her first semi-final of 2020 after overcoming wildcard Eugenie Bouchard 6-4, 1-6, 6-4 victory in her quarterfinal clash. “She hit the ball pretty well today, she made me run a lot. Her serve is tough to return. All credit to her for making me have a tough match. In the end, it was a mental game,” Mertens said of her opponent, who hit 33 winners to 30 unforced errors throughout. “I think the difference was physical, mental, maybe more mentally at the end. The games were pretty close. The first set was pretty close, in the second set she played really well, made fewer mistakes, became more aggressive, but I think at the end, it was just that one break. Just one service game made the difference,” she added. The Belgian will now face Kristyna Pliskova of Czech Republic for a place in the finals.

Wrestling national camp to be held from Sept 1 to 30

New Delhi (IANS): The national camp for wrestlers will be held in September, the Sports Authority of India announced on Saturday. The camp is scheduled to be held from September 1 to 30 with the men training at the SAI centre in Sonapat and the women in Lucknow. “A total of 26 wrestlers in eight weight categories - 5 in freestyle (57, 65, 74, 86, 125kgs) and 3 in Greco-Roman (60, 77, 87kgs), as well as six support staff will participate in the men’s wrestling camp at Sonapat, while a total of 15 wrestlers in five categories (50, 53, 57, 62, 68kgs) and four support staff will participate in the women’s wrestling camp at Lucknow,” said SAI.

“Wrestlers who will be part of camps include Ravi Kumar, Bajrang Punia, Narsingh Yadav, Deepak Punia, Sumit, Gyanender, Sajjan, Sunil Kumar, Nirmala Devi, Vinesh Phogat, Pooja Dhandra, Sakshi Malik and Divyanka Kakran.”

Among the wrestlers named by SAI, many have been training in their own capacities. Deepak Punia, Ravi Kumar and Sumit have been training at Chhatrasal stadium in the national capital while Bajrang Punia has been training at the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) in Bellary under his coach Shako Bentineidis. “The athletes, coaches and support staff joining SAI Sonapat and SAI Lucknow will be given SAI’s mandatory COVID-19 test upon arrival at the camp and resume training after a 14-day quarantine. The COVID-19 guidelines of the government of India, state government and the SAI SOP will be adhered to strictly,” SAI further said. Deepak, Ravi and Bajrang are the male wrestlers who have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics while Vinesh is the only female wrestler to have sealed qualification.

ENG vs PAK

Kettleborough spoken to by ACU officials over smartwatch

Southampton (IANS): The Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) officials of the International Cricket Council (ICC) have spoken to Richard Kettleborough, who is one of the two on-field umpires currently officiating in the ongoing second Test between England and Pakistan, after he came out to the field wearing a smartwatch.

According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, Kettleborough on Friday was seen wearing the watch during the first session on Day Two of the Test match being played at the Ageas Bowl. After realising his mistake, the umpire though immediately took off his watch and reported the incident to the ACU, which considered the incident a minor violation of the regulations, the report further said.

The ACU officials then spoke to Kettleborough and reminded him of his obligations under the Player and Match Officials Area Regulations (PMOA).

This is not the first time that such an incident has happened



in a cricket match. Earlier in 2018, Pakistan’s players were spoken to by officials after taking the field wearing smartwatches during the Lord’s Test. Players and officials are obliged to hand over their phones (and any other transmitting devices) to anti-corruption officials ahead of the start of play.

RIZWAN AN 'ALL-WEATHER' BATSMAN, SAYS MANJREKAR

New Delhi (IANS): Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar on Saturday praised Mohammad Rizwan, saying the Pakistan wicket-keeper is an “all-weather” batsman. Rizwan on Friday came to the rescue of the Pakistan side and helped them inch towards a respectable first-innings score in the ongoing second Test being played at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton. At Stumps on Day 2, Pakistan were 223/9 with Rizwan batting at 60* alongside Naseem Khan who was unbeaten at 1. “This Mohd Rizwan can bat! He can drive well off the front foot & at the same time play the pull & the cut superbly. This makes him an ‘all-weather’ batsman. No wonder his top 3 scores in Tests so far have come in Australia and England,” Manjrekar said in a tweet.



World No. 116 Rogers stuns Williams to enter Top Seed Open semifinals

Lexington (IANS): World No. 116 Shelby Rogers earned an thunderous upset at the Top Seed Open as she stunned top seed Serena Williams in a thrilling clash to claim a spot in the semi-finals of the ongoing Top Seed Open.

In her first-ever meeting with Williams, Rogers fought back from a set down to register a 1-6, 6-4, 7-6(5) win in a match that lasted two hours and seven minutes on Friday. This was her third career victory over a Top 10 player.

“It was important for me going onto the

court thinking I could win that match, and knowing I could take care of my service games,” Rogers said, during her post-match press conference as per the WTA website. “Because (Williams) has probably the best serve of all time, and when she wants to, she can win a point on her serve.”

“I just tried to control what I could control, and that’s mostly my service games, and then if I had an opportunity, I tried to capitalise,” Rogers added. “I think the few that I did have today, I was able to do that.”

Rogers will now face Switzerland’s JilTeichmann -- who defeated Catherine Bellis 6-2, 6-4 -- for a place in the final.

Meanwhile, American teenager Coco Gauff also rallied for a thrilling victory over Ons Jabeur to make it to the final four of the tournament. Trailing 6-4, 4-2 against the No.8 seed and facing a break point for 5-2, Gauff pulled off a thrilling comeback to win the match 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 in almost two hours. She will now face America’s Jennifer Brady in her last-four clash.

