

IN BRIEF

1,360 TONNES OF UREA SET TO ARRIVE IN KADAPA DISTRICT

From page 1

RBKs are offering urea from Nagarjuna and Coromandel companies at ₹266.50 whereas private dealers said that diesel prices and labour charges had gone up because of which they were selling a bag of urea for ₹300.

Juttiga Muralikrishna, joint director, district agriculture department, said farmers should not be worried as enough urea was available.

On Tuesday, the district received 423 tonnes of urea, 568 tonnes of DAP and 316 tonnes of 20-20-0-13 type fertilizer. Later that night, another 1,203 tonnes of urea and 128 tonnes of ammonium sulphate reached Kadapa railway station.

He explained that an additional 1,360 tonnes of urea was also scheduled to arrive. Farmers in Mydukuru area are mostly cultivating paddy and fertilizers will be available to all, he said and assured that they would be distributed through RBKs and DCMS.

POLICE ARRESTS SENIOR MAOIST LEADER, 2 OTHERSDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 3

The agency police on Wednesday evening arrested a militia commander of the banned CPI Maoist party, who was allegedly involved in a number of offences in Visakhapatnam district.

The police said Bonangi Nageswara Rao alias Nagesh (34), a resident of Balapam panchayat, worked as a Korukonda area militia commander and Dalam member.

Nageswara Rao joined the militia in 2005 and was allegedly involved in the murder of Gemmeli Bhaskara Rao and Pangani Sathi Babu of Veeravaram village.

He was also involved in the recent landmine blast at Chinthalaveedhi of Jamiguda panchayat which killed two innocent tribals.

In another case, a militia committee member and an armed militia member were arrested by the Paderu police under Pedabayalu police station.

The arrested were identified as Gaduthur Ramachandrapadali alias Chandra (35) of Ginnelakota village, Pedabayalu mandal, a militia committee member of Ginnelakota pocket of Pedabayalu dalam and Sindri Apparao alias Mugiri (31) of Injiri panchayat, Pedabayalu mandal, an armed Militia of Pedabayalu area.

Paderu circle inspector P. Pydapu Naidu said that both were involved in several murders including Pangani Shivayya (35) of Busiputtu in Munchingputtu mandal. They were also involved in arsons.

MAOISTS: REPORTS ON SURRENDER OF GANAPATHI NOT TRUEK.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 3

Maoists have dismissed the reports in the media about top party leader Ganapathi's plan to surrender as a fiction floated by the police.

In a press release on Thursday, they said it was a central government conspiracy hatched by the Modi government.

The letter signed by one Abhay, who claimed to be the official spokesperson of the party, said the conspiracy was hatched by Modi-Amit Shah combine with the help of intelligence wings of Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

He said the Indian economy was in recession under the leadership of Narendra Modi and the situation further aggravated with the outbreak of Covid-19. People were resorting to protests and the Modi government jailed several social activists on false charge without trial, the release said.

"Ganapathy alias Muppalla Laxman Rao who is in his 70s, voluntarily quit as general secretary two years ago due to age and common ailments. It has no relation to this brutal lie," Abhay said adding that the party would continue its fight against the ruling class.

During the last two days, rumours were afloat that Ganapathy would surrender along with 15 top leaders at Adilabad before the Telangana government.

Intelligence sources said the surrender would be followed by a proposal for negotiation between the central committee members and the Union government.



From left: Ministers Adimulapu Suresh, Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas, Mekapati Goutham Reddy interact with each other while coming out from the Cabinet meeting at Secretariat on Thursday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

All-round cheers over ban on PUBG, rummy

Govt should implement the ban with an iron hand, says Kishore

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 3

Youth may not have digested the ban on Chinese gaming app PUBG by the Union government and state Cabinet decision to block online games like rummy and poker, but there is a sense of relief and elation among the majority of the people.

In view of growing tension with China over the border issue, the Indian government banned several dragon-made mobile games including the most popular and addictive PUBG. The state government followed suit soon and banned rummy and poker.

Several parents, educationists and senior citizens heaved a sigh of relief and expressed gratitude over the decisions of both the governments. However, there is a mixed response from online games-obsessed youth, who wanted to know why Team India was allowed to play cricket with Pakistan on neutral venues.

"Ban on games is not a good sign of patriotism. We are not supporting China or Pakistan. We should teach them a lesson at the border through our military might," reasoned a B.Tech graduate V. Satya Sai.

However, his father and mother, V. Krishna Kishore and Sarada Devi, both state government employees, disagreed with their son's stand and welcomed the ban. "Like my

State spending ₹1,700cr to strengthen power feeders

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The government is spending ₹1,700 crore for strengthening electricity feeders and ₹8,300 crore per annum towards this scheme.

While it was the YSR government that introduced free power to farmers' schemes, TD watered it down and only 40 per cent of feeders were working. Now it has been brought to 89 per cent and the remaining gap will be filled by Rabi. All the existing 18 lakh power connections will be regularised, he said.

The Cabinet also gave in-principle approval for construction of two barrages downstream to Prakasam barrage, each with a holding capacity of three TMC. The first one will be constructed between

son, thousands of youths and children as young as 10 years old, have become addicted to PUBG and other online games. Wearing earphones and bluetooth all the time the children are living in their own world. The government should implement the ban with an iron hand," Kishore and Sarada opined. Professor D.V.G. Rama

STATE CREATES BODY TO FUND WELFARE SOPS

From page 1

Further, the Cabinet approved G. O. MS No. 80 for establishment of AP State Development Corporation for planning and funding of state government's welfare schemes like Nadu-Nedu, Cheyutha, Aasara and Rythu Bharosa.

Penamaluru and Mangalagiri with an estimated budget of ₹1,215 crore and the second between Mopidevi and Repalle at a cost of ₹1,273 crore.

Also approved were irrigation projects like Babu Jagjivan Ram Uttharandhra Sujala Sravanthi for irrigating eight lakh acres in North Andhra region, with a budget of ₹15,389.80 crore, the minister said.

The cabinet gave its nod for constructing Varikapudisila lift irrigation project in Palanadu region with a budget of ₹1,273 crore. As part of Rayalaseema Drought Mitigation Project, the cabinet approved works of 14 reservoirs and lift irrigation projects. In order to boost aquaculture, the State will start Fisheries University in West Godavari district at a cost of ₹300 crore in the next five years. Land has been allocated for setting up medical colleges in Bapatla (51.07 acres) and Markapuram (41.97 acres), he said.

"I have observed that the PUBG is very injurious to the health of children if they play regularly. Its addiction is leading to many mental problems among youth. Online rummy is no less harmful. Even middle-aged persons are getting addicted to the game and losing their hard-earned money," Dr K.S.Rama Rao, a psychiatrist said.

Popular liquor varieties made cheaper, top brands to cost more

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 3

To curb smuggling of popular brands of liquor and beer from other states like Telangana due to the vast price difference, the state government has reduced their price and hiked prices of top brands to compensate for the loss of revenue.

The government issued GO MS No. 256 on Thursday fixing rates on IMFL, foreign liquor, beer, wine and ready-to-drink varieties supplied by wholesale IMFL depots to retail licensees. The revised rates will come into effect on Friday.

In comparison to the existing prices that were

fixed on May 3, beer measuring 355/350 ml and 500/650 ml and ready-to-drink varieties of 250/275/330 ml will now be ₹30 cheaper.

Among popular IMFL and FL brands, 50/60/90 ml will be less by ₹10, while 180/200 ml will be cheaper by ₹39 and that of 350/360/375 ml by ₹60 and there will be ₹120 slash of 700/750 ml brands.

However, there will be no change in prices of IMFL and FL varieties priced between ₹150 and ₹190. Those priced in the ₹190-210 range will now cost more by ₹40 for 50/60/90 ml and by ₹300 for 1,000 ml. There will be an increase of ₹40 for those sold in the ₹210-290 range for 50/60/90 ml and

₹340 for 1,000 ml.

Those in the ₹290-360 category will now be dearer by ₹60 for 50/60/90 ml and by ₹470 for 1,000 ml. For varieties priced above ₹360 up to ₹530, the cost will be up by ₹80 for 50/60/90 ml and ₹740 for 1,000 ml.

For products priced in the ₹530-600 range there is a cost escalation of ₹120 for 50/60/90 ml and ₹1,110 for 1,000 ml. Brands priced above ₹600 to cost more by ₹140 for 50/60/90 ml and by ₹1,320 for 1,000 ml.

Meanwhile, former liquor traders say that the upward revision of top brands may result in more smuggling because of the cost factor. This could adversely impact revenue from liquor trade.

REVENUE GENERATION

Brand Name	Old Price	New Price
Black Dog	₹2,680	₹3,320
Johnny Walker	₹9,380	₹10,460
Kyron	₹1,690	₹2,010
Morpheus Blue	₹2,075	₹2,510
Seagrams 100 Pipers	₹2,600	₹3,240
Absolut Vodka	₹2,380	₹3,020
Ballantine's 12 years	₹4,930	₹6,010
Chivas Regal 18 years	₹8,620	₹9,700



Three AP varsities find place in THE world rankings

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 3

Times Higher Education (THE) World University rankings has placed Sri Venkateswara University in the 801 - 1000 rank zone for 2021, two spots below Osmania University, Hyderabad.

SVU has secured 201-250th position in THE Asia rankings, which were released on Wednesday. The university maintained its lead as one of the country's top institutions in THE World University rankings 2021.

The university maintained its lead as one of the country's top institutions in THE World University rankings 2021. This year, about 63 institutions made it to the list, while 14 more registered their presence in rankings. Joining Osmania University in the 801-1000th rank are Acharya Nagarjuna University from Guntur and SVU from Tirupati and Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.

Among the ones making their debut from the state, Acharya Nagarjuna University, ranked highest in the 801-1000th rank zone globally, 401-600th rank in impact rankings 2020 and 251-300th rank in young university rankings. Andhra University has been placed in the 1001+ rank band.

The varsity was placed in the 601+ rank band in

● **SVU HAS secured 201-250th position in THE Asia rankings, which were released on Wednesday. The university maintained its lead as one of the country's top institutions in THE World University rankings 2021.**

impact rankings 2020 and 351-400th rank band in Asia university rankings.

The rankings are based on 13 separate performance metrics covering the full range of core activities for varsities: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, industry income and international outlook. This year's ranking analysed over 86 million citations across more than 13.6 million research publications and survey responses from 22,000 scholars globally.

According to THE World University rankings website, the scores secured by SV University were as follows: overall score 22.2-28.2, teaching 37.3, research 10.0, citation 32.6, industry income 35.0 and international outlook 20.4. The total number of students in the varsity 7,832, number of students per staff 15.5, female to male ratio 41:59 and international students nil.

Govt sanctions ₹2,144 crore for 3 balancing reservoirs in Chittoor

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 3

The state water resources department has issued administrative sanction for the construction of three balancing reservoirs in Chittoor district at a cost of ₹2,144.5 crore.

According to an order (RT 461) issued by special chief secretary Adityanath Das, the three reservoirs will be constructed at Mudivedu in Kurabalakota mandal,

Nethiguntapalle in Punganur mandal and Avulapalli in Somala mandal.

Though the chief engineer of NTR Telugu Ganga Project, Tirupati, has requested the government to accord administrative sanction for ₹7,72.01 crore, ₹781.175 crore, and ₹707.22 crore for the three balancing reservoirs respectively, the government has sanctioned ₹759.5 crore, ₹717.8 crore and ₹667.2 crore.

TELOGU MEDIUM NOT ABANDONED: AP TELLS COURT

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Describing the state government's decision to switch over to the English medium as a progressive measure, Viswanathan said that the RTE Act does not say that instructions in English cannot be given.

"There's no bar on private schools, none on minority schools. I come from a small town, which is 40 km from Coimbatore. If there was no English medium, I would not be able to address this court at all," Viswanathan told the court.

Any reversal of the decision to introduce the English medium, Viswanathan said, will cause irreversible damage. "Generations will stutter in English".

Appearing for a caveator respondent, senior counsel Gopal Sankaranarayanan said the issue is the choice of parents. The state has issued two Government Orders after the High Court orders.

He said the state government has taken away the choice of Telugu-speaking parents to send the child to a Telugu school. He described as "absurd" the situation where minority schools and private schools can teach in both the languages, but government schools will be teaching in English only.

Asking the parents organisations to file an affidavit, the court said that the application for the vacation of stay issued by the High Court will be considered after the caveators have a chance to file the affidavit within two weeks.

PARTIES TO OPPOSE SMART METERS PROPOSAL

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, SEPT. 3

The all-party meeting on Thursday threatened to launch an agitation if the state government did not withdraw GO 22 through which it sought to stop free power supply to farmers. The government has decided to transfer cash to the accounts of farmers towards power bill.

AP Farmers' Association Kadapa district secretary Gali Chandra chaired the all-party meeting at CPI office, Kadapa on Thursday. They decided to stage a protest on September 7 at YS Rajasekhara Reddy statue.

Situation tense at Tallaproduddur

NAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDA I DC
KADAPA, SEPT. 3

A tense situation prevailed at Talla Proddatur, one of the several villages prone to flooding with backwaters of Gandikota reservoir, as the residents refused to vacate their homes on Thursday unless they were paid compensation.

The state government has promised a compensation of five cents of house site and ₹7 lakh cash or ₹10 lakh to each family. The district collector convened a meeting with the residents on August 7 to explain them the flood threat to their village once the reservoir filled to its capacity and gave them time till October 15 to vacate.

As the deadline is drawing closer, a team of revenue and police officials



Villagers surround the police vehicle at Tallaproduddur on Thursday.

went to Talla Proddatur on Thursday to persuade the residents to move out. However, the villagers surrounded the officials and demanded payment of compensation before evacuating them. Facing

resistance from the villagers, officials stalled the move for the day.

They have orders from the government to evacuate the village to facilitate storage of 23 TMC feet of water in the reservoir.

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam district president Reddappa Srinivasareddy said it was unfair to force the residents to leave their village without paying compensation.

TTD urges govt to entrust temple accounts audit to CAG

AVINASH
P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 3

In an extraordinary move, the trust board of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has decided to request the state government to entrust the audit of its accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (C&AG) from 2020-21 onwards.

This was disclosed by BJP Rajya Sabha member

Subramanian Swamy in a tweet on Wednesday. He posted the resolution copy along with his tweet.

The trust board, which had met on August 28 under the chairmanship of Y.V. Subba Reddy, passed a resolution to this effect. Since the audit report from 2014-15 to 2019-20 has already been completed by the state audit department, the board also asked the government to request CAG to take up a special

audit of the same period and furnish its report within six months.

The move comes at a time when a petition filed by Mr Subramanian Swamy, seeking liberation of Tirumala, Tiruchanoor and 11 other temples from government control, is pending in the AP High Court.

The PIL also seeks a direction to the state government to place the audit report of the TTD accounts

for the past five years before CAG.

The TTD in its resolution also stated that the board had reviewed the accounting and audit systems keeping in view the criticism being made in social and mainstream media, regarding various types of expenditure incurred and the need to instill the confidence among pilgrims and donors in the system adopted by the board.

In his tweet, Mr Swamy

said, "My associate Satyapal Sabharwal and I had filed a PIL in Andhra HC seeking a CAG audit of Tirupati Temple funds for the last 5 years & hereafter. The CM Jagan gracefully consented. TTD Chm. Subba Reddy & Member & VHS AP leader Govind Hari piloted it thru TTD Board. Task complete!"

The temple body is divided into 97 accounting units which are in turn subdivided into nearly 300

sub-units, for the purpose of accounting. The audit of the temple body consists of two types, namely statutory and internal.

While the statutory audit of the TTD accounts is carried out by an external auditor appointed by the state government, the internal audit, consisting of pre-audit and internal audit, is conducted by the state audit department officials and a chartered accountant, respectively.

IN BRIEF

10 revenue officials suspended

Kurnool: District collector G. Veerapandian has suspended 10 revenue officials at Gadivemula mandal, including tahsildar, VROs and other staff. It was alleged that these officers involved in fudging the land revenue records and assigning lands to ineligible applicants. Among the suspended were Gadivemula tahsildar Ch. Indrani, Ghani VRO Ishwar reddy, Koratamaddi Divya, BRO Balachandrudu and computer operator Parvathi.

Vizag rly station gets platinum rating

Visakhapatnam: Visakhapatnam railway station was adjudged with the Platinum rating by Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) for adopting green concepts there by reducing the adverse environmental impacts. Visakhapatnam is the third Railway station after Secunderabad and Jaipur railway stations achieved the milestone. The Environment Directorate of Indian Railways with the support of the Indian Green Building Council has developed the Green Railway Stations rating system. The rating system addresses national priorities such as water conservation, handling of waste, energy efficiency, reduced use of fossil fuels, lesser dependence on usage of virgin materials, health, and wellbeing of occupants. Visakhapatnam railway station is adopting smart and green initiatives with innovative developmental activities.

COVID MOTHERS CAN FEED MILK TO CHILDREN

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, SEPT. 3

S.V.R. Ruia government hospital Superintendent Dr Bharati said on Thursday that mothers tested positive for Covid-19 after delivery, could still feed the newborn. Addressing an online Corona awareness campaign program organised by the TTD's S.V. employees training academy, Dr Bharati said mother's milk was a major source of strength to infants.

She urged the women employees to take all precautions in the Covid-19 environment and that any symptoms viz. mild cold cough, sore throat, breathlessness should not be ignored and immediately consult doctors and treatments.

"Even if women are affected by Coronavirus at 8-9 months pregnancy, the newborn babies would not be affected but better get corona tests done for the babies as well. The lactating mothers should wash their hands with soaps and sanitizers and clean their breasts before breast-feeding the babies. They should avoid lime juices, but drink hot water and also take Kashayam with garlic, jaggery and pepper boiled in water once in a day at 50 ml per dose", she explained.

The pregnant women should also consume Vitamin C, B complex and Zinc tablets daily as per doctors' suggestion and working women should wear masks when they go out, wash their hands and feet before mixing with family members, she added. SVETA Director Ramanujula Reddy, Dr Janardan Rao and AEO Jagadeswari participated in the training cum awareness programme.

Not a trivial issue



A parent of a JEE aspirant removes the earrings of his daughter before entering the examination centre at KITS Engineering College in Vijanampadu village in Guntur district on Wednesday. — E. TEJO ROY

State crosses 10K mark again, records 75 deaths

Over 9,499 Covid patients were discharged in last 24 hrs

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 3

In the last 24 hours, Andhra Pradesh has recorded 10,199 new Covid-19 cases taking its tally to 4,65,739. 75 deaths took the death toll to 4,200.

The state health authorities in their Covid-19 bulletin on Thursday reported that out of 62,225 samples tested, 10,199 individuals have been tested Covid-19 positive. Out of total number of 39,05,775 samples tested so far, 3,57,829 patients have been discharged after recovery while 1,03,701 patients are still active with the virus and are undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the state.

Among new confirmed coronavirus infections, East Godavari tops the state with 1,090, followed by 982 in Nellore, 926 in Prakasam, 898 in Kadapa, 885 in Chittoor, 854 in Anantapur, 836 in West Godavari, 805 in Guntur, 717 in Srikakulam, 695 in Visakhapatnam, 616 in Kurnool, 577 in Vizianagaram and 318 in Krishna.

In terms of cumulative Covid-19 positive cases, East Godavari has been the worst hit with 62,900, followed by 46,871 in Kurnool, 43,248 in Anantapur, 39,775 in West Godavari, 39,726 in Chittoor, 38,889 in Visakhapatnam, 38,083 in Guntur, 33,663 in Nellore, 28,811 in Kadapa, 26,027 in Srikakulam, 25,444 in

Prakasam, 22,088 in Vizianagaram, 17,310 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery from infection has been good in East Godavari at 43,612, followed by 39,571 in Kurnool, 36,726 in Chittoor, 36,156 in West Godavari, 31,501 in Visakhapatnam, 29,983 in Chittoor, 29,900 in Guntur, 26,624 in Nellore, 20,754 in Kadapa, 18,726 in Srikakulam, 14,465 in Krishna, 13,564 in Vizianagaram, 13,352 in Prakasam, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

East Godavari saw 10 Covid-19 infected patients die, followed by nine each in Chittoor and Guntur, seven each in Anantapur,

Krishnan and West Godavari, six in Nellore, five in Kadapa, four each in Kurnool and Srikakulam, three in Prakasam and two each in Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram.

In terms of cumulative deaths, Chittoor has been the worst hit with 448, followed by 415 in East Godavari, 396 in Guntur, 387 in Kurnool, 348 in Anantapur, 334 in West Godavari, 317 in Nellore, 304 in Visakhapatnam, 298 in Prakasam, 295 in Krishna, 255 in Srikakulam, 232 in Kadapa and 171 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities have discharged 9,499 Covid-19-infected patients after recovery in the last 24 hours.

8.60 CUSECS FLOODWATER DISCHARGED

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, SEPT. 3

The irrigation officials discharged 8.60,567 cusecs of surplus water into the sea on Thursday and 12,600 cusecs of water released to canals. However, the water levels are receding gradually at Bhadrachalam. When the Bhadrachalam recorded 41.40 feet by 6 pm on Today, the levels receded at 41.10 feet by 8 pm. The water levels recorded 26.610 feet at Coffier dam, 12.380 meters at Polavaram, 15.84 feet at Rajahmundry Old Bridge.

The fields at Devipatnam were inundated, but the waters have not reached the Polavaram project affected villages. However, the officials said that the flow trend is slowly receding from Thursday Night.

ID LIQUOR UNIT SEIZED AT CORINGA

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, SEPT. 3

The Special Enforcement Bureau team, led by ASP Sumith Garud, conducted raids and found ID liquor distillation den at Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary. The officials said that it is the single biggest raid on ID liquor distillation in AP.

According to the officials, the ID liquor is being manufactured inside the mangrove forests of Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, 3 km from land border and the place is full of mud platforms. The team found 22 liquor distilling fire places in three places in the mudflats and 14,000 litres of ID Liquor was found and 46,000 litres of jaggery wash was destroyed.

The team found 200 barrels with a capacity of 200 litres each. The police officials said that the mode of transport is, the liquor is transported through mechanised boats for first 2 km and on manual boats for last one kilometre.

Over 16 team members, including excise inspector Swami, Coringa PS SI Sathish and others participated in the raid.

CM Jagan Mohan Reddy speaks of prohibition but such units continue to exist at various places in the state.

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 3

The Gajuwaka police on Thursday arrested 55-year-old document writer M Krishna Rao for abusing and threatening a 27-year-old-tribal woman G Vijaya, working as a junior assistant at sub-registrar office at Gajuwaka area in Vizag city by using her community name.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, V Suresh Babu said that the victim lodged a complaint against Krishna Rao, who used

KGH to add 500 beds with oxygen

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 3

The CSR block in King George Hospital with 500 beds fitted with oxygen facility would be opened for the Covid patients in a day or two, said collector V Vinay Chand who visited the hospital on Thursday.

Of the 500 beds, 150 would be in ICU and in addition the CSR block has three operation theatres and one high end laboratory. He said an information centre would be opened so that the attendants could get information on the health status of their patients. He said all the

rooms would be fitted with CC cameras and they would be monitored from a separate room manned round the clock.

With this CSR block coming into operation, the historical King George Hospital would become one of the best in state, the collector said and added that more than the facilities, service was most important.

King George Hospital superintendent and principal of Andhra Medical College Dr PV Sudhakar and executive engineer of APMIDC Umesh Kumar were also present along with the collector.

2 killed in explosion at plywood firm

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 3

Two men, a man and his son, died in a blast at plywood firm located at an industrial estate of Surampalli, Ganna-varam mandal, Krishna district on Thursday.

According to police, father A. Koteswara Rao, 55, and his son Chinna

Rao, 33, used to collect plastic scrap and sell it to eke out their livelihood.

As usual, the duo arrived to collect used plastic tins which were used earlier for storage of chemicals from the firm. After collecting some used tins and loading them in a truck auto rickshaw, suddenly, there was an explosion resulting in their death.

the woman approached the police seeking protection from him.

Based on the complaint from the woman, the Assistant Commissioner of Police (SC/ST Cell) investigated the case, visited the sub-registrar office and examined the witnesses besides recording their statements.

The police arrested Krishna Rao under Sections 353,506,509 of IPC and relevant sections under Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act-2015.

Erratic ambulance services affect Covid-19 patients

VADREU SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, SEPT. 3

Covid-19 patients are finding it difficult to reach hospital on time due to shortage of 108 ambulances in East Godavari district. Non-Covid patients also face the same problem. In many cases Covid patients have to wait for a minimum of 24 hours for an ambulance, which means loss of precious time for treatment.

Faced with this problem, the patients are forced to hire private ambulances, which are prohibitively expensive. According to sources, there are 58 108 ambulances in the district out of which 33 are allocated to carry Covid-19 patients, two for neonatal services and the remaining for non-Covid patients. In addition to these, 11 ambulances have been allocated to

Rampachodavaram and Chinturu divisions.

"My brother-in-law had Covid-19 symptoms and needed urgent treatment. But, there were no beds available in KIMS at Amalapuram. We approached 108 ambulance, but there was an abnormal delay. We hired a private ambulance and admitted him in hospital in Kakinada," said K.Ramachandra Rao of Amalapuram. He said that there were no proper facilities like oxygen cylinders or other life-saving equipment in private ambulances, but they were charging ₹17,000 to ₹23,000 per trip to Kakinada or Rajahmundry and the middle class people were not able to pay such huge amounts. Adding insult to injury, greedy hospital are not admitting patients unless they are assured of their

good financial background.

However, officials said that patients were being shifted as per the seriousness of their condition. "We are giving first priority to Covid-19 patients who are in need of oxygen or ventilator," said an official of the medical and health department. He said that as per the procedure, ASHA workers or ANMs of villages or wards concerned should inform the nearby primary health centre or hospitals concerned and the medical officials would assess the situation of the patient and alert Covid-19 call centre to send an ambulance. Each ambulance carries 4-6 patients as per availability of oxygen and other facilities from villages to hospitals.

According to them, nearly 200 to 250 patients are being shifted to hospitals per day.

LAND SURVEY WITH CORS NETWORK

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 3

Joint director of Andhra Pradesh Survey Training Academy Ch.V.S.N. Kumar said that the government is using advanced technology and Continuous Operating Referring Station (CORS) network for the coming re-survey of the lands across the state to be started from January 1, 2021. According to the state government's decision thousands of surveyors are undergoing training to kick-start all re-survey of category lands in the state, he added.

While visiting the training programme of surveyors in Srikakulam district, Kumar said that the resurvey would also be conducted to the individual lands also. The survey would be conducted in three stages and all the surveyors are now undergoing training for the coming massive scale of survey.

With the introduction of the CORS network programme, the survey results would be high accuracy and transparency. There are 9,424 surveyors working in the state and already training classes completed to 7,000 surveyors, Kumar detailed.

DIGITAL PAYMENT MACHINES OPENED AT RYTHU BHAROSA KENDRAS

DC CORRESPONDENT RAJAHMUNDY, SEPT. 3

East Godavari district collector D.Muralidhar Reddy said that Digital Payment Machines are being set up in Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBK) in the district and the farmers should make use of it.

Inaugurating the Digital Payment Machine at Thorredu village near Rajahmundry, the farmers can book pesticides or fertilizers or seeds and others online and they can make cashless transactions through the payment machines. He said that the RBKs would provide seeds, fer-

tilizers, pesticides and also suggestions to the farmers in an appropriate time and it will make use to the farmers well.

He also said that the crop which is cultivated by the farmer would be purchased on the fields by RBKs and the farmers need not suffer to carry the crop to the RBKs or other centres to sell it. He expected more yielding in this Kharif season and he advised the agriculture officials to register the e-crop process swiftly as it will help the farmers for selling the crop and if he incur the loss of the crop due to the disasters, the government may immediately credit the input subsidy to their accounts.

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NOTICE FOR ENGAGEMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR ITS CORPORATION OWNED AND CORPORATION OPERATED RETAIL OUTLETS (COCOS)

Indian Oil Corporation Limited proposes to engage Service Providers for providing manpower and various services at its Corporation owned Corporation Operated Retail Outlets at various locations in the States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The detailed advertisement, guidelines / brochure and application form are available in our website, "www.iocl.com" and the same can also be downloaded. Completed application forms should reach the office as indicated in the detailed advertisement latest by **05.10.2020, 17:00 hrs.**

Government of India
Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)
Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)
4th Floor, Bangla Sahib Road, Behind Kail Mandir, Gole Market, New Delhi-110001

Vacancy circular for filling up various posts on deputation (Foreign Service term) basis at UIDAI Regional Office, Hyderabad.

UIDAI invites applications for filling up the posts of (i) Deputy Director (Pay Matrix Level-11), (ii) Section Officer (Pay Matrix Level-08), (iii) Assistant Section Officer (Pay Matrix Level-06) and (iv) Assistant Accounts Officer (Pay Matrix Level-06) on deputation basis (Foreign Service terms) in UIDAI at Regional Office, Hyderabad.

The application may be furnished in the prescribed proforma and forwarded to ADG (HR), Unique Identification Authority of India, Regional Office, 6th Floor, East Block, Swarna Jayanti Complex, Beside Matrivanam, Ameerpet Hyderabad-500038, Telangana State. The last date for receipt of application complete in all respects is **15.09.2020**. Since these vacancies are to be filled up on deputation basis, private candidates are not eligible.

Application received after the last date or otherwise found incomplete shall not be considered. Further details may be obtained from the website www.uidai.gov.in.

Assistant Director General (HR)

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KARNATAKA STATE NURSING COUNCIL

BENGALURU, KARNATAKA, INDIA
(Constituted under the Karnataka Nurses, Midwives & Health Visitors Act, 1961)
No. 71, Nightingale Towers, A-Street, 6th Cross, A.R. Extn.,
Gandhinagar, Bengaluru - 560 009. Phone: 080-22383230 Fax: 080-41514486
E-mail: karnatakastatenursingcouncil@gmail.com Website: www.ksnsc.karnataka.gov.in

No: KSNC/230/2020-21
Dated: 01-09-2020

PUBLIC NOTICE

Sub: Recognition of Nursing Schools / Colleges affiliated to KSNC
Ref: (1) Writ Petition Nos. 25355-25357/2017 (EDN-RES) in The High Court of Karnataka. (The Karnataka State Association of the Management of Nursing and Allied Health Science Institutions & others Vs. The Indian Nursing Council)
(2) Civil Appeal Nos. 12759-12761 of 2017 in the Supreme Court of India.
(3) Civil Appeal No: 658 OF 2019 S.L.P.(C) No.32603 OF 2017 (The Karnataka State Association of the Management of Nursing and Allied Health Science Institutions & others Vs. The Indian Nursing Council)
(4) GOK Order No: HFW 212 RGU 2016 Dtd: 15-12-2016 & 17-05-2017

The List of Nursing Schools / Colleges affiliated to Karnataka State Nursing Council for the academic year 2019-20 is hosted on KSNC Website: www.ksnc.karnataka.gov.in. The continuation of affiliation for the academic year 2020-21 is under process. As per the Court orders issued (ref: 1, 2 & 3) and clarification issued by Government of Karnataka vide letter Dated: 14-12-2016 & 17-05-2017 (Ref: 3) "Recognition of Nursing Schools / Colleges by Government of Karnataka, Karnataka State Nursing Council and Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences are only mandatory requirements for running of Nursing Schools / Colleges in the State of Karnataka" This is for information to all aspiring Students willing to obtain admissions in the Schools / Colleges affiliated to KSNC / RGUHS for GNM, BSc(N) PBSc(N), M.Sc Nursing Courses & etc., in the State of Karnataka. For more information log on to www.ksnc.karnataka.gov.in. The Reciprocal registration of the nursing candidates will be undertaken by Karnataka State Nursing Council. The nurses are entitled to practice anywhere in India as supreme court order No: Civil Appeal No: 958 OF 2019 S.L.P.(C) No. 32603 OF 2017.

Sd/- REGISTRAR
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SHORT TAKES

LION CUB SEPARATED FROM ITS PRIDE DIES

Ahmedabad, Sept. 3: A lion cub separated from its pride died shortly after being rescued by forest personnel near Gir forest in Gujarat's Amreli district, a senior official said on Thursday.

The male cub, around two to three months old, was found by Shetrunjee forest division staff at Vandh village in Jafraabad taluka on Wednesday evening, Chief Conservator of Forest, Junagadh wildlife circle, D.T. Vasavada said.

"The cub was very weak when it was found by our staff. Primary investigation revealed the cub got separated from its pride. Thus, the animal was rescued and kept at a rescue centre under a doctor's observation," Vasavada said.

Despite best efforts to save the feline, it died early Thursday morning, the official said.

As per latest estimates, there are over 600 lions in the state's Gir forest and its surrounding areas. The Gir Forest National Park is the only abode of Asiatic lions.

INTERNET SNAPPED IN IIT HOSTELS

Kolkata, Sept. 3: Amid charges that IIT Kharagpur authorities snapped internet connection in hostels of students and research scholars so that they are forced to vacate rooms, the management on Thursday said that they were repeatedly asked to leave since the end of June.

While over 10,000 students had left the campus since the Covid-19 pandemic struck, about 100 are not vacating their rooms, Registrar Prof. B. N. Singh said.

An institute source said that net connection in five hostels lodging 65 research scholars and several BTech, MTech students was discontinued on September 1 after the inmates informed the authorities they cannot leave the campus till the situation normalises.

One of these students said that the move of the institute was aimed at forcing them to vacate hostels, but they cannot leave the campus due to lack of adequate transport facility.

"Initially they had sought a little more time citing lack of travel options and to make necessary arrangements. But two months have passed since June. There is no possibility of campus activities starting this month, Singh said.

The institute has started online classes as the new semester began in September.

"We had considered their request earlier as they are our children. But this cannot go on indefinitely. The director himself had also requested them to leave. They must be aware of the pandemic situation," Singh said.

He said that 12-13 people including five students staying in the campus have been tested positive for Covid-19 in less than two weeks. "We cannot risk the health of our students, the registrar said.

IIT Kharagpur had asked all students, who got stranded because of lockdown, to leave the campus by June 30, but a few of them remained there.

MAN IN MP BEHEADS WIFE TO APPEASE DEITY

Singrauli, Sept. 3: In a suspected case of human sacrifice, a 50-year-old man allegedly beheaded his wife to please a deity and buried the body in his house in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli district, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday in Basauda village, located about 25 km from the district headquarters.

The accused was arrested on Thursday after his two sons alerted the police, district Additional Superintendent of Police Pradeep Shende said.

The man allegedly beheaded his 45-year-old wife in the early hours of Wednesday. He then buried the head and torso separately in the puja room of their house and later fled, the official said. According to his children, the accused killed his wife to please some deity. He also killed a goat some days ago and buried the carcass in the puja room to appease the deity, the official said.

After being alerted, the police formed teams and nabbed the accused on Thursday, he said. "I am myself interrogating the accused to get to the bottom of the case. According to the statements of his two sons, it appears the man killed his wife out of superstition," Shende added.

Tibetans upset, say didn't get due credit from India

Indian Army's handling of the death of a Tibetan soldier angers Tibetans

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Tibetans are upset with the Centre and Indian Army's handling of the death of Tibetan soldier, Tenzin Nyima, of the special frontier force SFF, who died while fighting the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, during the ongoing stand-off in Ladakh.

Over the last 24 hours, Tibetans have been expressing anger. Nyima, 53, died in a mine blast while he and his team were capturing Chinese posts along the Line of Actual Control.

"When a soldier of Indian Army attains martyrdom in the line of duty, the body is sent home with full honours and the entire country talks about it. Why this discrimination against Tibetans who also fight for India?" asked Tibetan poet and activist, Tenzin Tsundue, as the body was quietly sent home with no state recognition.

Another Tibetan, in his early 30s, says ever since many of them landed in India after fleeing Tibet, they joined the SFF and even the Indian Army. "One of my relatives who served in the Indian Army did not even get pension after retirement despite multiple representations. Those in SFF get married in older age so that they can dedicate their youth to India. The treatment meted out to Nyima after his death while fighting for the nation is highly unfair. The country wants to use Tibetans as soldiers but do not want to give them due credit," he said.

In fact, many Tibetans this newspaper spoke to expressed their anger but did not wish to go on record. "We could not fight for our country (Tibet) but we continue to fight for the country that gave us shelter (India). We bravely fought against Pakistan and China since 1962 which benefited India. But yet, we do not get the respect for making supreme sacrifices. I have grown listening to tales of bravery of our people, whether the 1971 war, Kargil or Bangladesh. But still no one knows about our contribution," said another youngster.

Several points on the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso, like the ridgeline in Spanggur Tso, Kalatop, Helmet, Camelback among other areas — many of which were earlier manned by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) — are now in complete control of the Indian troops, who have moved lock, stock and barrel to these points.

New posts with two or three bunkers have also come up at the vantage points, giving the Indian Army a strategic advantage over the PLA.

"From Rechin La and Rezang La, the Army has a clear view of the Chinese territory up to several kilometres. Before we took over the strategic heights, the PLA had a view of about 30 km



Indian Air Force (IAF) Chinook helicopter flies amid the prolonged India-China stand off in the Ladakh region in Leh on Thursday.

India has edge over China in surveillance

From Page 1

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"From Rechin La and Rezang La, the Army has a clear view of the Chinese territory up to several kilometres. Before we took over the strategic heights, the PLA had a view of about 30 km

inside our territory which is no more the case now. The Advanced Landing Ground at Nyoma too is out of sight for the Chinese. Observation of our movement by the Chinese has come down drastically which is a major advantage for us," sources said, adding that the tables have been turned against China and the neighbouring country is no position to be on the offensive.

It is, however, learnt that the Chinese troops are still holding on to a few ridges in Finger 4 area.

Not willing to go into much details about the specific roles played by the SFF soldiers, which consists of Tibetans, sources said that since Tibetans are good mountain climbers and highly-trained in overt and covert operations, they

played an important role in capturing the heights.

"Unfortunately, one of them died in a mine blast while capturing a Chinese post. Earlier, mines were not laid across posts on either sides but now, with the LAC hotting up, areas around the posts are heavily mined. For the Indian Army, this is not new as mines have been laid all along the Line of Control with Pakistan since decades," they said, adding that there was no question of fresh incursions from the Chinese.

"This has led to frustration among the People's Liberation Army troops and skirmishes can be expected in the days to come. Massive deployments are still going on both sides," they added.

which has seen thousands of troops deployed on both sides there in full battle-readiness.

Retterating, meanwhile, that the "solution (to the current situation in the Ladakh sector) has to be found in the domain of diplomacy", Jaishankar also made it clear that "what happens at the border will impact the (Sino-Indian) relationship".

Asserting that it was "not the easiest of times" in the Sino-Indian relationship, Jaishankar said it was "vital" for both countries to accommodate each other.

The EAM made the comments in a discussion to mark the launch of his book— *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*.

ARMY CHIEF REVIEWS OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 3

As tensions with China flared up, Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane on Thursday landed in Leh to review the operational preparedness of the forces deployed in Ladakh.

Earlier, the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, on Wednesday visited front-line airbases in the eastern sector to take stock. The IAF is on high alert in Ladakh.

Gen. Naravane, on a two-day visit to Ladakh, will visit forward areas to assess the emerging situation with China on the ground. Gen. Naravane's Leh visit at this juncture is crucial as the Chinese have not taken well to India's moves to pre-empt them and occupy over two dozen strategic peaks on the southern banks of Pangong Tso. Some of these were taken by the Indian Army for the first time after the 1962 war and allows Indian forces to overlook Chinese garrisons.

Another round of brigadier-level India-China talks on Thursday again failed to reach any breakthrough. This was the fourth meeting in the last four days on de-escalation in southern Pangong Tso.

India is now well prepared to face the Chinese threat after it has built up forces that are well acclimatised, brought in tanks, artillery and stocked up supplies in the past few months after being initially surprised by the Chinese intrusions in May.

Gen. Naravane will meet top commanders in Leh to strategise on how to counter any aggressive move by the PLA.

'Prolonged impasse can lead to high economic costs'

New Delhi, Sept. 3: There is a considerable deployment of Indian and Chinese troops on both sides of the border and a continuing standoff during the winter season may lead to high economic costs and a "fairly prolonged impasse", former foreign secretary Shyam Saran said on Thursday.

The comments came amid the Ministry of External Affairs saying on Thursday that the situation witnessed in the border areas in eastern Ladakh over the past four months is a "direct result" of actions taken by China aimed at effecting unilateral change in the status quo of the region.

In an interview with Karan Thapar for news website *The Wire*, Saran said, "The Chinese have suggested that the process of disengagement is complete — as if nothing more needs to be done. There does not seem to be any intention, for example, to vacate some of the additional areas which they have occupied in the Pangong lake area..."

Saran also said, "My sense is, if this, for example, continues during the winter — which would be very difficult because this area is very inhospitable during winter it would require a considerable investment in setting up heated dwelling units, making certain you have enough equipment for use during very very severe winters."

"If that is going to happen then I imagine that there will be a fairly prolonged impasse between them," he added.

Saran also said he believes India imposing serious economic costs on China may not work.

Noting that India is the fastest-growing market for several Chinese companies, he said the question to ask is whether the fortunes of these Chinese companies are important enough to the government to moderate their position with regard to the territorial issue.

India and China have held several rounds of

BHADAURIA VISITS EASTERN COMMAND

New Delhi, Sept. 3: Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria reviewed the IAF's operational preparedness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim in view of the escalating border tensions with China, officials said on Thursday.

"Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria visited front-line air bases in Eastern Air Command (EAC) on Wednesday," an IAF spokesperson said without mentioning the names of the air bases.

The Eastern Air Command, headquartered in Shillong, looks after the aerial defence of sensitive areas along the LAC in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh as well as various other parts of the region.

The Army and the Indian Air Force have increased their alert levels in all key bases along the nearly 3,400 km-long LAC following China's fresh attempts to change the status quo in the Southern Bank of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh.

The IAF spokesperson said the Chief of Air Staff was apprised about the "state of readiness" and operational preparedness of the combat units under the command.

"Bhadauria also met and interacted with war warriors serving in these units during the course of his visit. He lauded the focussed efforts by the station personnel towards maintaining proficiency in all roles envisaged and urged them to continue performing their duty with due diligence," the official said.

military and diplomatic talks in the last two-and-half months amid a border standoff in the eastern Ladakh area.

India must keep a close watch: Pawar

Mumbai, Sept. 3: NCP president Sharad Pawar on Thursday said the Chinese are "surreptitiously" encircling the Indian sub-continent, and India must keep a close watch on developments in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

He had invited former foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale and Air Marshal Bhushan Gokhale (Retd) for interaction with NCP MPs Supriya Sule, Praful Patel, Amol Kolhe and Vandana Chavan against the background of the stand-off in eastern Ladakh, Pawar tweeted.

The former defence minister said that during the meeting he expressed his concerns over a larger strategic and political thinking in China that aims to halt India's economic growth.

"I highlighted the fact that the Chinese are surreptitiously encircling the Indian Sub-Continent

from all directions and also expressed my concern over their presence in the South China Sea," Pawar said in another tweet.

"I hinted at the need to keep a close watch on affairs of Sri Lanka and Nepal and also the Chinese interventions in general," he added.

Vijay Gokhale spoke about the history of Indo-China relationship, especially the border disputes. The former foreign secretary shared his views on the current situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Pawar said.

Air Marshal Gokhale emphasized that India must take into consideration the new era of parallel warfare that includes cyber war, information war, perception creation and war on economic fronts, the NCP president added.

FIGURE | THIS Question Hour was dispensed with in 2004, 2009, also in 1991 as well as in 1962, 1975 and 1976

Only 40% of Question Hour time used in last 5 years

New Delhi, Sept. 3: The government on Thursday said it will answer every question asked in Parliament and 160 "unstarred" questions will be answered every day during the upcoming Monsoon session starting September 14, sources said.

Countering the Opposition charge of curtailing the Question Hour, the sources in the government said this is not the first time that the Question Hour will not be taken up during a session as it was dispensed with in 2004 and 2009, besides also in 1991

as well as in 1962, 1975 and 1976 for various reasons.

A research conducted by the Rajya Sabha also revealed that 60 per cent of Question Hour time was not availed during the last five years with only 40 per cent utilisation.

The Question Hour was first done away with during the Emergency in 1975 and 1976, when everything was functioning normally except opposition leaders, who were put behind bars, and the media, which was censored.

Unlike then, the government has argued that it is

a real health emergency in the country due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the session is being held under extraordinary circumstances even as there is a paucity of time.

The presiding officers of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha have received a letter from the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, informing them that the government has consulted different political parties and that there is a broad consensus, barring one political party, on doing away with the Question Hour.

It is based on this consensus among the opposition parties that the government has requested the presiding officers to do away with the Question Hour and Private Members' Business for this session, the sources said.

Congress' Randeep Surjewala alleged that Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi had not consulted all the opposition leaders.

He said doing away with the Question Hour, not holding the government accountable to the questions of public interest

raised in Parliament in the "starred" category "is an assault on India's democracy and a sinister design to undermine the Parliament of the country and Parliamentary practices."

He said in the "starred" question category; the minister concerned has to answer supplementary questions. The idea is to hold the government accountable to ensure that public welfare steps are taken and fix accountability of the government to Parliament and through it, to the 130 crore people of India, Surjewala said.

SENA SUPPORTS GOVT'S MOVE

Mumbai, Sept. 3: The Shiv Sena on Thursday came out in support of the Centre's move to drop Question Hour from the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament, and said the decision was taken due to an "emergency situation" caused by the pandemic, which everyone needs to understand.

Talking to reporters, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said that other platforms to question the gov-

ernment are always available. "Even though the monsoon session of Parliament will not have a Question Hour, it is important to understand why it is so," Raut said.

"This is an emergency situation. We need to understand and not criticise," he said, adding that even in Maharashtra the monsoon session of the state assembly will be held for two days only.

IN BRIEF

Eight gunned down in Mexico

Cuernavaca, Mexico: Gunmen killed eight people, including two minors, and wounded more than a dozen others in an attack on a wake in central Mexico, prosecutors said. The assailants opened fire at a house in the city of Cuernavaca using military-type rifles, the state prosecutor's office reported. Initial indications suggested the attack was the result of a fight between criminal gangs in Cuernavaca, a picturesque colonial city popular with tourists just south of the capital, the authorities said. Four bodies were found outside the wake, which was held for a young man killed in a motorcycle accident, while the remaining victims died after being taken to hospital. Another 14 people were wounded, according to prosecutors, who noted that high-calibre firearms had been used in recent gang-related crimes.

Jihadists kill 9 Nigerian troops

Kano, Nigeria: At least nine Nigerian troops were killed in an offensive by jihadists in northeast Borno state, two security sources said. Fighters from the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in 10 trucks fitted with machine guns overran a military position in the town of Magumeri late on Tuesday, killing nine troops, they said. "The terrorists took over the (military) post around 4:00 pm (1500 GMT) and dispersed the troops, killing nine," the first source said. The militants burnt three vehicles at the base, including an armoured tank and an excavator used in digging fortifications to stave off jihadist incursions, said the second source who gave the same toll. A military reinforcement from the regional capital Maiduguri engaged the retreating attackers in a fight and killed 20 insurgents.

Pacific War: China marks 75th anniv

Beijing: China on Thursday commemorated the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in the Pacific, during which it endured a brutal invasion and occupation of much of its territory by Japan. Communist Party leader and head of state Xi Jinping led government officials in a minute of silence and presentation of floral wreaths at a memorial hall dedicated to soldiers and civilians who participated in the struggle. Japan launched a full-on invasion of China in 1937, marked by urban warfare and atrocities such as the notorious Rape of Nanking. While armies under Nationalist Party leader Chiang Kai-shek fought most of the major battles, Communist Party guerrillas under Mao Zedong forced Japan to divert soldiers and resources from battlefields elsewhere with low-level engagements.

PAK: CONSULAR ACCESS TO JADHAV VALID

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 3

Pakistan Thursday said that the offer of third consular access to Indian prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav was still valid. "India should move forward and cooperate with the courts of Pakistan," Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri during his weekly media briefing.

Speaking on the issue of Indian prisoner, the Foreign Office spokesperson said that Pakistan was committed to implementing the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). India should move forward and cooperate with the courts of Pakistan.

During the second consular visit, Indian diplomats left the meeting. However, Pakistan's offer of a third consular access was still valid. He said that Pakistan was aware of its responsibilities, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) issue should be resolved on technical rather than political grounds.

Foreign Office spokesman regrets that some members of the Security Council Sections Committee blocked the ban on two Indian nationals. "Pakistan has always insisted on depoliticizing the issue of UN sections. Angela Appaji and Gobind Patnaik are wanted by Pakistan for terrorism," he added.

He said that Pakistan has provided documentary evidence to the UN sections committee and will continue to expose Indian-sponsored terrorism.

Another PoC shot dead by cops in US

18-year-old was shot as officers were following up on a tip about guns allegedly stashed in a vehicle

IN KENOSHA, BIDEN TO TEST HIS VOW TO UNIFY THE NATION

Wilmington, Sept. 3: Campaigning for more than a year as a calming, unifying figure, Joe Biden and his core pitch for the presidency face the most intense test yet when he travels to Kenosha, Wisconsin, a city wracked by police and protest violence that makes it a microcosm of the nation's election-year reckoning with systemic racism.

The 77-year-old former vice president, travelling two days after President Donald Trump visited the same city, plans to meet Thursday with family of Jacob Blake, who remains hospitalised after being shot seven times in the back by a white police officer as authorities attempted to arrest him. Biden also plans a community discussion.

— AP

VIDEO IN NEW YORK MAN'S SUFFOCATION SHOWS GROUP OF POLICE OFFICERS PUT HOOD ON HIM

Rochester, Sept. 3: A man who had run naked through the streets of a western New York city died of asphyxiation after a group of police officers put a hood over his head, then pressed his face into the pavement for two minutes, according to video and records released Wednesday by the man's family.

Daniel Prude died March 30 after he was taken off life support, seven days after the encounter with police in Rochester. His death received no public attention until Wednesday, when his family held a news conference and released police body camera video.

— AP



Video grab of cops putting hood on the man who died of asphyxiation. — Agencies

FOOTAGE SHOWS EXCESSIVE FORCE, HENCE DEPUTY FIRED

Columbia, Sept. 3: A deputy in South Carolina has been fired and charged with assault after body camera footage showed he yanked a woman to the ground by her hair, a sheriff said. Kyle Oliver (29), reported using force on January 7, but what he wrote in his report did not match the footage from another officer's body camera, Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott said at a news conference. Lott said he reviewed the camera footage on Monday after receiving a tip. He said the woman never reported the excessive force. Lott decided to fire Oliver and after prosecutors reviewed the footage, they charged him with misdemeanor third-degree assault. "His actions are unacceptable, and I will not have it from any of my deputies," Sheriff Lott said.

— AP

Prez wants voters to cast two ballots in Nov. election

Don trumpets US strength, scoffs at Biden

Wilmington, Sept. 3: As thunderstorms threatened, President Donald Trump sped through a V-J Day speech on Wednesday, trumpeting American strength and managing to squeeze in a swipe at Democratic rival Joe Biden. Trump stood before an iconic World War II-era battleship to declare the port city of Wilmington, North Carolina, a World War II "Heritage City". He pointed to a bolt of lightning and said it was God saluting the event. He honoured war veterans, including 97-year-old Hershel "Woody" Williams, the sole surviving Marine from the war to receive the Medal of Honour. The West Virginia native fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima in the Pacific. "He's 100 percent sharp," Trump said of Williams, who travelled to the key battleground state with the president aboard Air Force One.

"I know a 78-year-old who's not so sharp," Trump added, a clear allusion to Biden. White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany had insisted earlier this week that there was no "political purpose" to Trump's visit to North Carolina. But when the president landed in Wilmington, Trump lost no time in criticising Biden.

"This is the most important election in the history of our country. I really believe that, because we're running against people that have got some big issues," he told supporters on the airport tarmac. "They have got some big, big problems. They're stone cold crazy." Trump also encouraged those who cast votes by mail to cast two ballots in November's election, one by mail and another in person as a check to see if the mailed vote was counted.

"They'll go out and they'll vote and they're going to have to go and

protests against police brutality across the country, and just two days after officers in Los Angeles shot dead an African-

American man who was riding his bike when police tried to stop him.

A local council member Trayon White told news

channel WUSA9 that he had spoken with the mother of the man killed in Washington. "We've seen this narrative too many

times in America, and now it's hitting home," he said. "I talked to his mom about 15 minutes ago and we want to figure out what's

on the body camera footage, to figure out if he was running away why was he shot." "Some people say he was shot in the front, some

people say he was shot in the back," White, who identified the man as African American, told the news site DCist.

— AFP

Protest in Bulgaria



Protesters clash with police during an anti-government demonstration in Sofia. Bulgarians gathered in downtown Sofia for another anti-government protest Thursday after a demonstration the night before led to violence, injuries and arrests. Several thousands faced off against riot police in front of the parliament building while demanding the resignations of Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and chief prosecutor Ivan Stoimenov Geshev late Wednesday. A small group began hurling explosives and firecrackers at officers. Police put a water cannon between parliament, and the offices of the government and the president and cordoned off the area. Violent clashes erupted.

— AFP

SECURITY CHIEFS REPLACED IN BELARUS AS RUSSIA PM VISITS

Minsk, Sept. 3: Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko on Thursday replaced his security chiefs and said progress was being made on plans to bring Moscow and Minsk closer.

Lukashenko, who is under huge pressure from protesters to step down after last month's disputed election, replaced the heads of the KGB security service, the security council and the state control committee. The reshuffle was announced during the visit of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, who became the most senior Moscow official to make a public visit to Belarus since the political crisis broke out over disputed polls on August 9.

Tens of thousands have taken to the streets for weeks in unprecedented protests against Lukashenko's 26-year rule. The moustachioed leader has refused to quit and has instead sought support from the Kremlin.

In recent years the Kremlin has pushed for closer economic and political integration between the two ex-Soviet countries but Lukashenko has so far resisted outright unification.

On Thursday, he indicated he might be open to bringing the nations closer. "We agreed" on issues on which Russia and Belarus "could not agree earlier," Lukashenko told Mishustin, adding that opposition protests were a "lesson" for the two countries.

"This lesson prompted us to make relevant conclusions," he said. Lukashenko added he planned to "dot all the i's on issues."

— AFP

Covid-19 vaccine shows promise

Washington, Sept. 3: An experimental vaccine that boosts the production of specific proteins could be effective against the Coronavirus that causes Covid-19, according to a study conducted in mice. Scientists at The Ohio State University in the US manipulated a natural cellular process to ramp up levels of two proteins used by the virus to infect other cells, packaged the protein-boosting instructions in nanoparticles and injected them into mice.

Within a month, the mice had developed antibodies against the SARS-

CoV-2 virus, according to the study published on Wednesday in the journal *Advanced Materials*. The technique involves altering specific sequences of messenger RNA, molecules that translate genetic information into functional proteins, the researchers said.

While these sequences are not translated to proteins, the researchers changed their structures to promote higher-than-usual levels of proteins. The sequences are known as untranslated regions, or UTRs.

— PTI

UK working on a test that gives results in 20 minutes

London, Sept. 3: The British government says it is investing in a coronavirus test that gives results in as little as 20 minutes, as critics say tests for the virus are being rationed because the system can't cope with demand. Health Secretary Matt Hancock says the government is expanding trials of two new tests — a no-swab saliva test and another that gives results in minutes.

It's also running a trial on the benefits of repeat testing of people without symptoms. Britain has hugely expanded its testing capacity since the start of the pandemic. Anyone with symptoms is eligible for a test, but the BBC reported that people who enter their postcode into the government's website are sometimes being directed to drive-through centres hundreds of miles away.

— AP

NBW issued against ex-Pak PM Nawaz

Lahore, Sept. 3: A Pakistani court on Thursday directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to execute a non-bailable arrest warrant against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a 34-year land allotment case, according to media reports. During the plot

allotment hearing, Model Town Police Inspector Bashir Ahmed told Lahore Accountability Court's Judge Asad Ali that Sharif was not at his residence.

Last month, the accountability court had issued a bailable arrest warrant and served summons at all

known addresses of the three-time prime minister, who is currency in London for medical treatment. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMN-N) leader Ata Tarar confirmed to the court on Thursday that the 70-year-old party chief Sharif had

been abroad for six months, the *Express Tribune* newspaper reported.

Responding to this, Special Prosecutor Harris Qureshi, appearing on behalf of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), asked the court to issue a non-bailable arrest

(NBA) warrant against Sharif. The court issued the NBA warrant and directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to execute the arrest through the Pakistan High Commission in London, the report added.

— PTI

NEW | DATA 87 per cent of the world's extreme poor live in Central and Southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa

Female poverty rate in S. Asia to rise due to Covid: UN

United Nations, Sept. 3: The female poverty rate in South Asia will increase in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and more women than men in the 25-34 age group will be poorer in the next decade, according to new data released by the UN. The UN Women and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said that the Covid-19 pandemic will disproportionately affect women and push 47 million more women and girls into extreme poverty by 2021, reversing decades of progress to lift this demographic above the poverty line. The report, "From

Insights to Action: Gender Equality in the wake of Covid-19", said that the gender poverty gap will worsen further still in South Asia.

Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, home to 87 per cent of the world's extreme poor, will see the largest increases in extreme poverty, with an additional 54 million and 24 million people, respectively, living below the international poverty line as a result of the pandemic. "The expected rise of poverty in South Asia as a result of the economic fallout of the pandemic

showcases the vulnerability of women and girls living in households that have only recently been able to escape poverty, the report released on Wednesday said.

The pre-pandemic female poverty rate in South Asia was projected to be 10 per cent in 2021 but is now expected to reach 13 per cent. "Moreover, before the pandemic, projections for the region suggested that by 2030 only 15.8 per cent of the world's poor women and girls would be living in South Asia. The revised projections now put that figure at 18.6 per cent," the

report said.

The report pointed out that the resurgence of poverty due to the pandemic threatens to deepen gender poverty gaps, especially for people aged 25 to 34, which is a key productive and family formation period for both women and men. In 2021, it is expected there will be 118 women in poverty for every 100 poor men globally, and this ratio could rise to 121 poor women for every 100 poor men by 2030.

While sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia will be the most impacted, "significantly more women than

men in South Asia will be affected. In the 25-34 age group, there will be 118 poor women for every 100 poor men in South Asia, and that ratio will increase to 129 women for every 100 men by 2030. Globally, the poverty rate for women was expected to decrease by 2.7 per cent between 2019 and 2021, but projections now point to an increase of 9.1 per cent due to the pandemic and its fallout. The "pandemic will push 96 million people into extreme poverty by 2021, 47 million of whom are women and girls. This will increase the total

number of women and girls living in extreme poverty to 435 million, with projections showing that this number will not revert to pre-pandemic levels until 2030," the UN agencies said.

"The increases in women's extreme poverty are a stark indictment of deep flaws in the ways we have constructed our societies and economies," UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said. "We know that women take most of the responsibility for caring for the family; they earn less, save less and hold much

less secure jobs — in fact, overall, women's employment is 19 per cent more at risk than men's."

Mlambo-Ngcuka said that the evidence of multiple inequalities is critical to drive swift, restorative policy action that puts women at the heart of pandemic recovery. While the pandemic has posed a serious threat to the prospects of eradicating extreme poverty by the end of this decade, the reality is even grimmer as these projections of increased poverty rates for women and girls only account for the downward revision of GDP.

— PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

4 SEPTEMBER 2020

Axing Question Hour lets govt avoid accountability

The Narendra Modi government's move to use the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic as an excuse to scrap Question Hour in Parliament's coming Monsoon Session, starting September 14, should cause little surprise: in the past six years it has always tried to avoid being held accountable for its actions before the House, despite overwhelming numbers in the Lok Sabha. It seems Shashi Tharoor's prediction four months ago that "strongmen leaders will use the pandemic excuse to stifle democracy and dissent" was not far off the mark. In our parliamentary system, where the executive is responsible to the legislature, the device MPs can most effectively employ is to put questions to ministers, and if not satisfied with the minister's reply, by asking follow-up questions on the floor of the House. If a minister fails to answer these properly, the government's prevarication will be visible to all in the House, and since the telecast of parliamentary proceedings from the 1990s, to the country. This is what the government was so desperate to avert, as there are many questions out there — on its tackling of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, its economic mismanagement, the Chinese aggression in Ladakh and its occupation of Indian territory — which it is reluctant to answer.

What, really, is Parliament's main function? For the government, the answer is to pass the legislation the Cabinet recommends, rubber stamp ordinances promulgated in between sessions, and not stop the executive doing whatever it wants. But for most people, or constitutional experts, it is to hold the government accountable to those who put it in power. Cancelling Question Hour deprives MPs of the lone device they have to exercise some control over the executive.

The government says as Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha sessions will be in shifts, to allow "distancing" in MPs' seating, there is no time for Question Hour. The fact is while a "normal" session sits 30 hours a week, six hours daily, the coming session will have 28 hours: four hours a day, but sitting all days of the week, including Saturdays and Sundays. Of this, half an hour will be saved daily as Zero Hour is cut to 30 minutes, and there will be no private members' business on Fridays. Trinamul Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien calculated that due to the cuts, the coming session has an extra 30 minutes, more than enough time for Question Hour. Then the Centre argued officials would have to visit Parliament to assist ministers, increasing visitors in pandemic times, but the solution is simple: to allow ministers and officials to communicate via phone or video conferencing.

While the government claims some Opposition leaders were consulted, MPs asked why an all-party meeting wasn't called, as this will be the first time in India's history that a regular parliamentary session will be held without Question Hour. Several MPs said this would make Parliament a "notice board", saying questioning the government was the "oxygen of parliamentary democracy". Others likened it to the general climate of intolerance, with Trinamul MP Mahua Moitra tweeting: "Asking questions in court is contempt. Asking questions outside Parliament is sedition. And now asking questions inside Parliament is forbidden."

The government says Zero Hour, where MPs raise vital issues, will continue, though curtailed. But there's a critical difference. Ministers, even if present in the House, need not respond there, unlike in Question Hour, when they must.

Banning apps will achieve little

India has fired the second round of its soft ammunition on China by banning 118 mobile apps, including the very popular gaming app PUBG even as India-China border skirmishes take a hard turn and India preemptively occupies strategic peaks and ridges on the southern side of Pangong Tso. India had banned a batch of 59 mobile apps, including TikTok, as the border tension showed signs of escalation in June this year.

The government has stated that these apps were "prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order", mostly the grounds for putting reasonable restrictions on the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 (2) of the Constitution.

The governmental move could offer people the satisfaction that India is getting even with China it but the hard fact is that it is not. China casts its net wider and deeper. Latest reports say Chinese exports have ballooned during the pandemic and matched those in the pre-Christmas season which saw the highest numbers; the US's tough talks and tax barriers could little dent its business. China is the only major economy in the world that has recorded a GDP growth in the last quarter when every other economy, including the United States and India, contracted to historic levels. The latest on the defence front is a report of the US department of defence that says the Chinese Navy with 350 vessels is the largest in the world, dwarfing even the US Navy that has 293 of them. The way India's eastern neighbour occupies key infrastructure projects in our neighbourhood and how it invests in strategic assets, including in lithium mines around the world, are an indicator of its future plans. Mobile apps are hardly the tools to contain it, should we aim at that?

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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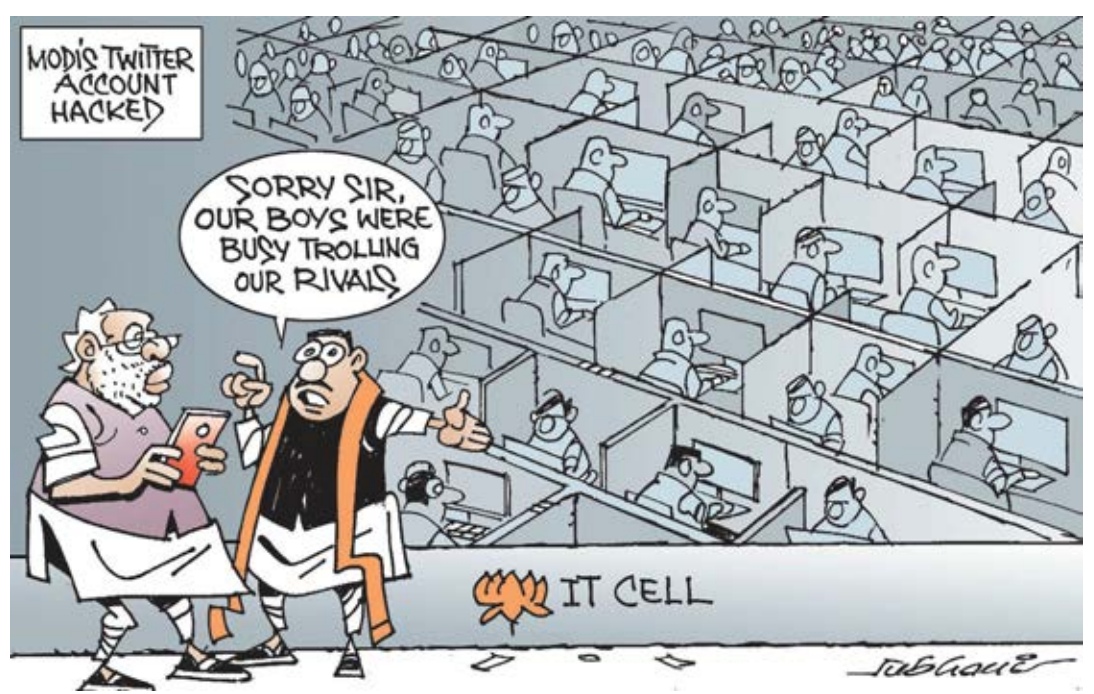
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Subhani



In any crisis, take care of the most vulnerable



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Is geography destiny? Those who inhabit placeless utopias like global citizens with much sought-after skills tend to argue that digital technologies and virtual communications have now erased the inconvenient boundaries of the physical world.

But the Covid-19 pandemic has sledgehammered the brutal lesson that geography's death has been hugely exaggerated. Surroundings matter. Where we are affects what happens to us. Mostly.

One area where this has been most visible is education.

Covid-19 has not only revealed vulnerabilities and inequalities in the education systems across the world, it has also made the situation worse.

Students living in areas reeling from floodwaters or where the roads got washed away or where there is no public transport and private transport is beyond what their family could afford trying to reach examination centres far away were not in the same place, literally and figuratively, as those in the big cities. The South Delhi or South Mumbai student who reached the test centre in a private vehicle was not in the same situation as someone else who had to use multiple modes of transport, negotiating difficult terrain, and great uncertainty, even if both were equally well-prepared or at par academically.

Competitive exams like the JEE (Joint Entrance Exam) for top-tier engineering courses and NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) for undergraduate medical and dental courses in India are framed as markers of merit.

But every aspirant does not have the same backstory. In several districts of West Bengal, for instance, many JEE aspirants left home as early as

3.30 am to reach the examination hall, battling lack of transport, persistent rain and floods. This is despite the efforts by state governments and civil society outfits to arrange transport for students in difficult situations. Students are also not equally placed when it comes to accessing healthcare. That is why there were students who campaigned to postpone the exam. Students from low-income families in flood-hit areas are handicapped. We don't yet know what awaits them, whether they will get a second chance on a different date without losing a year.

In a country where standardised testing is the attempt to gauge a young person's worth, overlooking a lifetime's experience of inequities of various kinds, and the heart-breaking inadequacy of the state-run schooling system in many instances, millions still see competitive exams as the only way out of the ghetto, and a passport to a stable and secure job and a brighter future.

What happens to those who don't "make it" to the exam hall, for no fault of theirs?

And it is not just about the JEE and NEET. There are many other competitive tests like National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) — which millions of young Indians aspire to crack because they see it as the only way out of their social and geographical limitations.

"The education crisis during Covid-19 was fuelled by deep pre-existing inequalities," says a recent report by Unesco.

"Education systems responded with distance learning solutions, all of which offered less or more imperfect substitutes for classroom instruction," said the report, noting that while many poorer countries opted for radio and televi-

sion lessons, 55 per cent of low-income, 73 per cent of lower-middle-income and 93 per cent of upper-middle-income countries adopted for online learning platforms for primary and secondary education.

The Covid-19 lockdown has exposed the all-too obvious fact that Digital India does not quite mean the same thing for every Indian.

The number of wireless Internet users in the country have been rising but there is still a glaring divide between urban and rural India. Just a little over four per cent of rural households have a computer, against 23.4 per cent of households in urban areas; 14.9 per cent of rural households have access to the Internet against 42 per cent households in urban areas, according to the 75th round of the National Sample Survey conducted between July 2017 and June 2018.

Within cities too, where you live matters.

Sonal Kapoor, founder and chief executive officer of Protsahan India Foundation, a non-profit organisation working with adolescent girls in slum communities of Uttam Nagar in West Delhi, likes to talk about the "slum digital lab" project that her NGO is running. It was shut during the lockdown months of April and May. It reopened early June. "None of the girls we work with have computers at home. Most families have one mobile phone of a most basic type; it is typically with the father or the brother. So, girls come here, follow up on their school homework, do their projects, prepare for competitive exams, learn coding, apply for government schemes online to avail other benefits for their families."

Many state governments are making efforts to circumvent the prob-

The Covid-19 lockdown has exposed the all-too obvious fact that Digital India does not quite mean the same thing for every Indian

lems on the ground. Even though school education has gone online, states are using parallel methods to try and ensure that geographically or financially disadvantaged students don't completely miss out on learning. They have been using a variety of different approaches simultaneously, alongside online classes. In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, for example, the department of education has also taken steps to telecast the pre-recorded digital classes through the local cable TV networks for the students of Class 8 to Class 12. These telecasts started on local cable TV channels from April. An alternative learning method was also started for primary and upper primary classes through audio classes on All India Radio, Port Blair.

In Bihar, during the lockdown, classes for students of Class 1 to Class 12 are being run on Doordarshan. Classes on television are run in the same way as in the normal classroom.

These may seem minor details in the broader narrative of the pandemic, but they impact millions of lives. They also show there are local resourceful adaptations to deal with the education crisis, worsened by Covid-19. This is especially true of school education.

These are not perfect solutions, but they grapple with exclusion, which remains a stark reality even in developed and socially progressive states. A Class 9 student set herself ablaze in Kerala's Malappuram district because she missed online classes. The family had no television or smartphone at home.

The key lesson — policy-makers have to factor in the needs of the most vulnerable. Those on top of the food chain will, and do manage better, even during a crisis. It is those at the bottom who need to be at the top of our policy priorities.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

QUESTION HOUR

The reason to drop Question Hour during the Monsoon Session of Parliament was not convincing. In extraordinary situations, people deserve to question and get clarifications from the government through their legislators. To curtail Question Hour means to restrict the legislature from using its right to seek answers from the executive.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

Questioning is an important part of any Parliament. It helps understand the policies and insights of the government and empowers the Opposition to pinpoint the ruling party's misconceptions and gives them an opportunity to set it right. Question Hour should not be dropped under any circumstance.

K.L. Rao
Visakhapatnam

The session will be akin to a black and white silent movie with no dialogues and songs and will be a drab monologue.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

ACB INSPECTION

The extent of corruption in the AP revenue department is exposed once again (*ACB sleuths inspect offices, find anomalies, DC, Sept. 3*). The ESI scam involving recovery of ₹ 4 crore from two women functionaries is mind-boggling. AP CM has proclaimed jihad to root out corruption. Let's hope he succeeds when the PM is still struggling.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

250 MPs back new move on Telangana

NEW DELHI, Sept. 3 Two hundred and fifty members of Parliament have subscribed to a new proposal for an executive set-up designed to meet the aspirations of the people of Telangana region without breaking up the Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh.

A memorandum incorporating the proposal was submitted to

the Prime Minister **50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle** **I n d i r a G a n d h i ,** this after-

noon. The proposal is for statutorily making a committee of Andhra Pradesh Cabinet (comprising of all its Telangana Ministers) responsible to the Telangana Regional Committee for the implementation of the committee's decisions on matters affecting economic development, planning and education in the Telangana. — PTI & UNI.

Nilofar Suhrawardy



Bank on Gandhis, test non-Gandhis, start early for '24

The storm created over a letter demanding change in the Congress Party's leadership has certainly dominated newspaper headlines for a while now. Given that no basic change is expected in the party's leadership, what can be inferred from this political drama? One can call it nothing but, considering the nature of the letter, the political stature of its writers and subsequent developments ending in Sonia Gandhi continuing as interim president. Ms Gandhi has held this post since Rahul Gandhi's resignation as president following the dismal performance of the Congress in the 2019 parliamentary polls.

Now let us consider this issue from another angle. The letter writers certainly don't seem to have any inclination either to quit the party or be considered for heading it. Also, neither of their names are as strongly associated with the Congress nationwide as are those of the members of the Gandhi family. Their political reach is limited to their regional domain, while others are known more for their professional and intellectual

accomplishments than anything else. Without taking any names, in all probability, the average Indian from outside their states is hardly aware of their political importance. And perhaps even their association with the Congress Party.

This is not surprising. How many people outside West Bengal know the names of anybody other than Mamata Banerjee with the Trinamul Congress? The same can be said about Mayawati and her Uttar Pradesh-based BSP, Mulayam Singh Yadav/Akhilesh Yadav and the SP as well as Lalu Prasad's RJD in Bihar.

Of course, the Congress is not a regional party and it is expected to give greater importance to a democratic process for electing its leaders. The Left parties, too, attach importance to following party rules and protocol. Strict adherence to these rules has prevented their senior leaders from rising in political stature. This was why Jyoti Basu of the CPI(M) could not become the country's Prime Minister in 1996. In 2008, Somnath Chatterjee chose to stick to his guns; as Speaker of Lok Sabha, he did not

vote along the party line. He was expelled from the party for this decision. These two examples show that at times strict adherence to party rules can prove extremely costly. Deviation by the CPI(M) in these two cases may have spelled its rise instead of decline. India's political map may not have been the same as what it is today.

Now surely, the democratic culture of any political party cannot solely be decided by its top-ranked members, mostly hailing from the elite and privileged classes? How can that be? Also, it might just be difficult for the average Indian to understand whatever may be communicated to them by elites.

Undeniably, Sonia, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Vadra belong to the privileged classes. Nevertheless, party propaganda coupled with media coverage has definitely led to their moves being taken greater notice of by people compared to those by other Congress leaders. Additionally, the effect of their huge presence in nationwide electoral campaigns cannot be ignored. Besides,

their party is not the only one that performed miserably in the 2019 general election.

Hence, at present, the selection of a non-Gandhi to head the party demands building their image from the grassroots on an extensive scale. Can the party afford to do this? Every Congress leader does not hold the same appeal to the people as the three Gandhis do. Crowds drawn by these leaders certainly help them gain media coverage and also spell a headache for rival parties. Can the same be said about other Congress members? It will probably take a decade for the party's political culture to reach a stage where that is the fact. The party needs to start according importance to image-building exercises for other members, too, from now on. It has nothing to lose by testing and judging the electoral potential of non-Gandhi members in the national domain. The big question is, whether other members are willing to take the risk. Electoral campaigning is not a cakewalk. Gaining media coverage is also not easy for all. It may perhaps be more appropriate for

Congress members to deliberate at present on teamwork and possible alliances advantageous to them in the coming Assembly elections. Besides, they need to start planning for the 2024 parliamentary polls from right now and not leave crucial decisions till the last minute. This refers to the formal induction of Priyanka in the party as general secretary of Uttar Pradesh's east wing when just a few months were left for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The political drama that followed the letter has certainly helped the letter writers garner attention. Their simple message apparently is that their roles in party politics must not be sidelined. They have made a point, democratically speaking. The party needs to give greater importance to functioning as a team. A united Congress has a chance to strengthen its ranking; divided, the futures of all party members are at stake!

The writer is a journalist with specialisation in communication studies and nuclear diplomacy. She is also the author of several books.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,990.94	-0.24
Nifty 50	11,527.45	-0.07
S&P 500*	3,475.64	-2.94
Dollar (₹)	73.48	0.60
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.68	0.21
Euro (₹)	86.86	0.25
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,755.774	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.93	-0.50
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.896	-0.024
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.636	-0.015

* As of 9:30 PM IST

FASTag must for pre-Dec 2017 vehicles from Jan.

The central government has proposed to make FASTag mandatory for vehicles sold before December 1, 2017, the road transport ministry said. It said a notification has been issued in this regard and post amendment to rules, FASTag will be mandatory for old vehicles from January 1, 2021. It is also "proposed to make having a valid FASTag mandatory while getting a new third party insurance."

Ramakrishnan to be MD & CEO of South Indian Bank



South Indian Bank said the Reserve Bank of India has approved appointment of Murali Ramakrishnan as its MD and CEO with effect from October 1. Ramakrishnan had retired from ICICI Bank as senior general manager at strategic project group on May 30, 2020, and joined the South Indian Bank as an advisor on July 1. Ramakrishnan was heading a business transformation project of SME business at ICICI Bank.

UP's August revenue higher by ₹600 cr YoY

The Uttar Pradesh government it has collected Rs 600 crore more revenue in August as compared to the year-ago period. "Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, there was a significant decline in the state's revenue in April, May and June. But economic activities gained momentum from July. In August, the state collected about Rs 600 crore more revenue than the same month (August) last year," state finance minister Suresh Khanna said.

April-August NH construction surpasses target

The government said it constructed 3,181 km of national highways in April-August, surpassing the construction target of 2,771 km. The length of national highway works awarded during this fiscal also more than doubled compared to last fiscal. The figure includes 2,104 km constructed by state PWDs, 879 km by the NHAI and 198 km by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd.



Lenders asked to roll out scheme by 15th FM sets deadline for debt recast scheme

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 3

In order to help borrowers hurt by the pandemic, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday asked banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) to roll out loan restructuring schemes for Covid-19-related stress by September 15. She also asked lenders to identify eligible borrowers, reach out to them and quickly implement resolution plans for the revival of every viable business.

While urging lenders to support distressed borrowers, Sitharaman also reminded them that loan restructuring should not impact the lenders' assessment of their creditworthiness.

The government move comes three days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted a moratorium on loan repayments on August 31. The central bank offered the moratorium as the coronavirus lockdown, effective March 25, shuttered businesses and left millions jobless, pushing India's economy toward a full-year contraction in more than four decades.

In a video conference with heads of scheduled commercial banks and NBFCs, the finance minister urged lenders to immediately put in place a board-approved policy for resolution. "There should be a quick implementation of a sustained resolution plan by lenders for the



KEEPING BANKERS ON THEIR TOES

► Sitharaman also asked lenders to identify eligible borrowers, reach out to them and quickly implement resolution plans for the revival of every viable business

revival of every viable business," she said.

Banks are in the process of getting a restructuring framework in line with the RBI's framework and eligibility defined by the central bank in its notification on August 6. In the meeting, bankers assured the finance minister that they are ready with their resolution policies and have started the process of identifying and reaching out to borrowers and that they will comply with the timelines stipulated by the RBI.

An official statement said Sitharaman advised lenders to ensure that regularly updated FAQs on the resolution framework are uploaded on their websites in Hindi, English and regional languages, and also circulated to their

offices and branches. Besides, the minister also reviewed the schemes announced under Aatmanirbhar Bharat—the Rs 20-lakh crore post-pandemic financial rescue package.

The RBI last month permitted one-time restructuring of both corporate and retail loans without them getting classified as a non-performing asset (NPA). Restructuring benefit is available for accounts that are standard on March 1, with default of less than 30 days. Besides, K.V. Kamath committee is working on recommendations on financial parameters like debt service coverage ratio, debt-equity ratio post-resolution and interest coverage ratio for recasting corporate loans.

Dubai seeks to attract wealthy retirees

ABBAS AL LAWATI
SEPT. 3

Dubai started a programme to attract wealthy retirees as the Middle East business hub faces a flight of expatriates amidst an economic downturn.

Foreigners over the age of 55 will be eligible for a five-year renewable visa if they meet certain criteria, according to the Dubai Media Office. In its initial phase, the programme will focus on UAE residents working in Dubai.

Candidates should meet one of the following requirements: Monthly income of 20,000 dirhams (\$5,445); savings of 1 mn dirhams; or own property in Dubai worth 2 mn dirhams.

The United Arab Emirates passed a law in 2018 allowing expatriates to stay beyond retirement age. Foreigners form about 90 per cent of Dubai's population, but their residency is tied to employment, discouraging many from setting roots in the city.

The programme "will contribute toward our tourism economy by facilitating frequent visits from families and friends of the retirees and increasing visitation from markets with a high retiree population," said Mohammed Ahmed Al Marri, D-G of the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs.—Bloomberg

Services pick up, but still in contraction zone

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, SEPT. 3

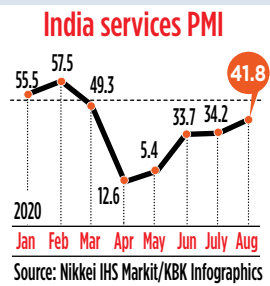
Despite showing a rise over July, services Purchasing Managers' Index continued in the contraction zone in August. Pandemic restrictions and job losses have been weighing heavily on services PMI.

The Services Business Activity Index of IHS Markit rose sharply from 34.2 in July to 41.8 in August, the highest since March. Nevertheless, the latest reading, by coming in below the 50 neutral value, indicated continued decline in business activity.

The ongoing pandemic restrictions continued to adversely impact client demand and business operations. New business and output continued to contract at marked rates, albeit slower than the records seen in April and May. Restrictions also contributed to a record increase in outstanding business.

Reduced business activity saw the Indian service sector operating below capacity. Ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and temporary business closures meant that firms were unable to process previously placed orders, which led to incomplete work increasing for a third month running.

Meanwhile, sustained revenue losses through the second quarter and increasing cost burdens led companies to raise charges for the first time since March. The rate of input price inflation was slightly faster than seen



in July, but marginal overall. Higher fuel costs were cited as the key reason behind higher input prices. In line with rising cost burdens, output charges grew at a margin-

al pace. Firms mentioned the passing on of higher costs to customers.

"August highlights another month of challenging operating conditions in the Indian services sector...Output and new work continue to fall at solid rates, while restrictions meant that firms were often unable to complete projects. Backlogs of work accumulated to the greatest extent in almost 15 years of data collection. That said, the survey showed signs of a potential recovery," said Shreya Patel, economist at IHS Markit.

RURAL JOBS DROP, URBAN RISE IN AUG.

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, SEPT. 3

Rising unemployment in rural India brought down overall employment in the country by 0.2 million in August from July levels. What hurt rural unemployment was lower farm and MGNREGA jobs.

The unemployment rate, which has been falling after April, increased from 7.4 per cent in July to 8.4 per cent in August. As a result, the employment rate fell from 37.6 per cent to 37.5 per cent in the same period, finds think-tank CMIE.

This deterioration in labour market conditions in August was essentially located in rural India. While in urban India 3.4 million got jobs, employment

declined by 3.6 million in rural India, thus, accounting for the 0.2 million overall decline.

Rural India, that led the recovery story till July has pulled back hard. Rural India faced a double whammy in August. It saw a fall in MGNREGA employment, which is non-farming related employment, and kharif sowing-related employment.

As per the initial data available, compared to July, person-days generated in August were down by 55 per cent. August person-days were also 72 per cent lower than that in June. The fall in MGNREGA employment coincided with a fall in farming activities in August. By July-end, 83 per cent of the kharif sowing was complete.

EV start-up launches e-bike Atum at ₹50,000



MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, SEPT. 3

Atumobile, a Hyderabad-based electric vehicles start-up, has launched Atum 1.0, a new generation electric bike priced at Rs. 50,000 at Hyderabad showroom.

The cost-effective café-racer styled electric bike with a top speed of 25 km will be made available across India through Atumobile's online portal within a week.

Vamsi Gaddam, founder director at Atumobile told *Financial Chronicle* that the company was also testing two more e-bike models with a top speed of 80 km and 100 km which would be launched over the next 12 months.

Powered by a portable lithium-ion battery pack, that charges in 4 hours, Atum 1.0 offers a range of 100 kmph in a single charge.

The electric bike comes with a two-year battery warranty and is claimed to be developed using indigenous parts.

"After three years of hard work and a vision to introduce a sustainable way to commute, we have launched Atum 1.0," Gaddam said, adding that the factory at Telangana has an annual capacity to produce 15,000 bikes, and scale it up to 1,00,000 electric bikes depending on market demand.

He claimed that the cost effective Atum 1.0 bike consumes around 1 unit per charge, which translates to Rs 7-10 per day (for 100 km) as compared to the traditional ICE bikes, which cost almost Rs 80-100 a day for 100km.

Vodafone Idea plans \$1.5 bn fundraising

BAIJU KALESH, ANTO
ANTONY & P. R. SANJAI
SEPT. 3

Vodafone Group Plc's India unit is planning to raise about \$1.5 billion as it seeks to turn around its fortunes in the country's fiercely competitive wireless market, people familiar with the matter said.

Vodafone Idea Ltd is discussing a funding plan that could include a share sale, according to the people, who asked not to be identified because the information is private. It is working with advisers, including New York-based investment bank PJT Partners Inc, as it seeks potential strategic partners to buy stakes, the people said.

The telecom operator is working to identify potential investors in the US, the people said. It could also raise part of the funds through other methods such as an offering of equity-linked securities, one of the people said.

Vodafone Idea plans to discuss the options at a board meeting on Friday. Details of the plan are still

being finalised, and the size and structure of the fundraising could change, according to the people.

Vodafone Idea extended gains in Mumbai trading, rising as much as 30 per cent. The stock closed at Rs 12.56 on the BSE, up 26.74 per cent. Shares of Vodafone Idea have fallen about 85 per cent since 2016 the launch of Reliance Jio Infocomm.

Vodafone Idea's fundraising plan comes after the firm won some legal relief earlier this week in a near two-decade payment dispute with the government.

The venture between Vodafone and billionaire Kumar Mangalam Birla's conglomerate has been weighed down by a \$7.8 billion bill from the government, eight straight quarterly losses and over \$14 billion of debt.

The fine print of a Supreme Court judgment published late on Tuesday showed Vodafone Idea doesn't need to make any immediate payments as a three-judge panel allowed phone operators 10 years to pay a combined \$19 bn in back fees. —Bloomberg

Sebi's new margin system derails stock exchanges' settlement cycle

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, SEPT. 3

Sebi's new margin system has impacted the settlement cycle of stock exchanges and clearing corporations and for the first time in NSE's 25 years of operations, settlement could not be completed on due date, according to the Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI), a brokers' body.

ANMI on Thursday made a submission to the Department of Economics Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Securities and Exchange of Board of India, stock exchanges and clearing corporations requesting for waiver of penalty for short margining in all the segments till September 15, due to severe challenges in streamlining processes. "Forced implementation of a new margin system has derailed the entire settlement cycle of stock exchanges and clearing corporations. Investors are badly affected too, as regular pay-in and pay-out of funds and shares isn't happening



since the last two days, resulting in members involuntarily contravening the provisions of applicable regulatory directions. First time in the history of NSE of 25 years and more, settlement could not be completed on due date (i.e. 2nd Sep. 2020 between 1.30 to 2.30 PM) and clearing corporations released the payout only after 3.00 am in the morning of the next day i.e. 3rd Sep. 2020," ANMI said.

NSE issued a circular saying exchange wouldn't levy penalty on short margin till September 15 as requested by broker's body ANMI.

There are multiple technical glitches with regards to release of securities, OTFs, pledge and re-pledge issues, delay in pay-in and pay-out process

and thereby resulting into disruptions in margin collections and reporting though the margins were sufficiently complied before the onset of the new system, Anmi said.

Deven Choksey, managing director, K.R. Choksey Shares & Securities, said, "New margin system introduced since Sept. 1, 2020 has derailed the entire settlement cycle of stock exchanges and clearing corporations. Investors are badly affected too, as regular pay-in and pay-out of funds and shares isn't happening since the last two days."

"Finger pointing is happening now, blaming forced implementation of a new system. The flaw is in the ecosystem which isn't ready! This isn't the first time that new systems are introduced without readiness! Past experiences reveal that under preparedness and knee-jerk implementations has been a regular method whenever new systems are introduced. And it has always caused so much stress on the entire market," Choksey said.

‘Scrap old & new coal plants to save ₹1.45 L cr’

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, SEPT. 3

Shuttering old coal plants and freezing under-construction plants can save over Rs 1,45,000 crore for the country, finds a report. This will also improve the financial health of the power distribution companies, or discoms.

After looking at 11 major coal power states which account for over 50 per cent of discom overdues, Bengaluru-based Climate Risk Horizons has identified possible areas for savings and cost rationalisation, starting with the retirement of coal plants that are over 20 years old and are less efficient than newer plants.

Shutting down 36.5 GW of old coal plants will avoid 18,000 crore worth of capital expenditure that needs to be incurred on retrofits to bring the plants in compliance with the 2015 emission norms. Replacing scheduled generation from these old plants with cheaper electricity, either from new renewables or from the



market, would save another Rs 7,000 crore annually and Rs 35,000 crore over a five-year tariff period, as electricity from most of these plants is relatively more expensive.

"Our analysis shows that it is far more efficient and cost-effective to shut down these old plants by 2022, rather than spend thousands of crores to retrofit them... Given state governments' precarious finances and the level of

stressed assets in the banking sector, incurring debt for additional capex is difficult. These costs would also have to eventually be recovered from discoms and consumers via higher tariffs", said Ashish Fernandes, CEO and lead analyst of Climate Risk Horizons, in the report.

The report also identifies 14 GW of state-owned plants in the early stages of construction in Bihar, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh. Freezing expenditure on these projects would save over Rs 92,000 crore.

Given the country's power surplus situation and the cost advantages now enjoyed by renewable energy, there is no requirement for these new plants, and they could in fact end up worsening state finances if construction were to proceed.

According to Praveer Sinha, CEO and MD of Tata Power, around 60,000 MW of old coal-based power plants can be closed down quickly.

An internal study by Tata Power had found that there were about 280 coal-fired plants of a total capacity of 35,000 MW, which were over 25 years old. Further, there are another 200 of a capacity of about 25,000 MW. The debt raised for these had already been fully paid back. That makes a total of 60,000 MW that can quickly go out of the system", Sinha said while attending the webinar by Climate Risk Horizons.

Subdued power demand due to Covid-19 and difficulties in revenue collection, the overdues of discoms to generators have increased to Rs 114,733 crore. Replacing electricity from older coal plants with cheaper renewable sources will reduce the gap between cost of supply and revenue generation for discoms.

The Centre is in the process of disbursing Rs 1,00,000 crore by way of relief to discoms to enable them to pay their dues to generators. This is expected to be a temporary fix, says the report.

“On a month-on-month basis, by September we hope to return to last year's level of exports,” he added.

Apart from medical textiles, AEPC also hopes to see growth in man-made fibre products. The government had recently lifted the anti-dumping duty on polyester staple fibre and this is expected to boost production of MMF products.

“The council has already requested the government for a Free Trade Agreement with the US,” said Shaktivel.

Besides, the AEPC has sought a review of the trade pacts with the EU, UK, US, Australia and Canada to remove the disadvantages.

SHORT TAKES

Punia, two more wrestlers +ve

New Delhi: Three senior male wrestlers, including world championship silver-medallist Deepak Punia, have tested positive for Covid-19, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Thursday.

Besides the Olympic-bound Punia (86kg), the other two wrestlers who have tested positive for the virus are Navin (65kg) and Krishan (125kg). All three are part of a national camp at the SAI Centre in Sonapat ahead of which the wrestlers are in quarantine. "Three senior men's wrestlers, who had reported to the National Wrestling Camp at SAI Centre in Sonapat, have tested positive for Covid-19 virus," the nodal sports body said in a statement.

With his silver at the worlds, Punia had secured a place for himself at the Tokyo Olympics. They have been moved to a SAI empanelled hospital as a precautionary measure for further monitoring.

All wrestlers were tested, upon arrival, as per the SAI SOP for resumption of sports activities. — PTI

Justice Verma is HCA Ombudsman

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

The Hyderabad Cricket Association has appointed Justice Deepak Verma, former judge of the Supreme Court, as its Ombudsman and Ethics Officer for a period of one year. A letter to Justice Verma dated September 2, 2020 and signed by president Mohammad Azharuddin says the decision was taken in the sixth Apex Council meeting held on June 6 this year. Justice Verma will be paid an honorarium of ₹2 lakh per month and TA & DA will be paid extra for each of the two expected visits and a possible third every month, the letter states.

HCA members are miffed though, and say as per the registered constitution as approved by Supreme Court, this power of appointment is delegated to the General Body.

Waqar for one ball brand for Tests

Karachi: Pakistan pace great Waqar Younis on Thursday said the ICC should consider using only one brand of ball in Test cricket as fast bowlers find it difficult to adjust while playing in different conditions across the world.

Pakistan played with the Dukes ball during their recent tour of England, where the visitors lost 0-2 a three-Test series. "I have been a big advocate of the Dukes ball for many years but I feel that only one brand of ball should be used around the world for Test cricket," Younis wrote in a column for the Pakistan Cricket Board. "It doesn't matter which brand but the ICC should make that decision. It's hard for bowlers to adjust," he added. — PTI

English take on Aussies in T20s

London: One of England's most extraordinary seasons will end with them facing arch-rivals Australia as both sides try to strike a balance between playing their strongest limited-overs teams and keeping an eye on the future.

The Coronavirus pandemic threatened to wipe out England's entire home season yet they are now set to complete all 18 scheduled men's internationals, albeit the fixtures have been played behind closed doors.

They face Australia in three Twenty20s in Southampton starting on Friday before taking them on in a further three One-Dayers in Manchester later this month. — AFP

Live on TV

FORMULA ONE

Italian Grand Prix First Practice One from 2.25 pm; Second Practice from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

CRICKET

England vs Australia 1st T20 From 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

US OPEN

Matches from 8.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2 HD

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Lithuania vs Kazakhstan from 9.30 pm; Italy vs Bosnia-Herzegovina from 12.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; The Netherlands vs Poland from 12.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD



Caroline Garcia of France celebrates her 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) win over Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic in their women's singles second round match at the US Open tennis championships in New York on Wednesday. — AP

OH! KAROLINA

Garcia shocks top seed Pliskova at US Open

New York, Sept. 3: France's Caroline Garcia produced the biggest upset of the US Open on Wednesday, sending top seed Karolina Pliskova tumbling out of the tournament.

Garcia, the world number 50, scored one of the biggest wins of her career with a 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) second-round victory at Louis Armstrong Stadium.

The 26-year-old's 1hr 33min victory sends her into a third round meeting on Friday with American 28th seed Jennifer Brady.

If she can reproduce Wednesday's polished performance, Garcia will fancy her chances of extending her run at Flushing Meadows.

Garcia — whose talent propelled her to fourth in the world rankings in September 2018 before a protracted slump sent her sliding down the standings in 2019 — attacked Pliskova from the outset.

Garcia raced into a 5-0 lead after scoring two early service breaks before taking the first set.

SELECTED RESULTS	
Men's singles second round (number in brackets denotes seeding): Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Kyle Edmund (GBR) 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-4, 6-2; Jan-Lennard Struff (GER x28) bt Michael Mmoh (USA) 6-2, 6-2, 7-5; Pablo Carreno-Busta (ESP x20) bt Mitchell Krueger (USA) 6-1, 6-2, 6-2; Ricardas Berankis (LTU) bt Steve Johnson (USA) 7-5, 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (7/1); Denis Shapovalov (CAN x12) bt Kwon Soon-woo (KOR) 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-4, 6-2; Taylor Fritz (USA x19) bt Gilles Simon (FRA) 7-5, 6-3, 6-2; Filip Krajinovic (SRB x26) bt Marcos Giron (USA) 6-4, 6-1, 6-3; David Goffin (BEL x7) bt Lloyd Harris (RSA) 7-6 (8/6), 4-6, 6-1, 6-4; Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x4) bt Maxime Cressy (USA) 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, 6-4; Borna Coric (CRO x27) bt Juan Ignacio Londero (ARG) 7-5, 4-6, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-3; Alexander Zverev (GER x5) bt Brandon Nakashima (USA) 7-5, 6-7 (8/10), 6-3, 6-1.	Women's singles second round (number in brackets denotes seeding): Caroline Garcia (FRA) bt Karolina Pliskova (CZE x1) 6-1, 7-6 (7/2); Jennifer Brady (USA x28) bt Catherine Bellis (USA) 6-1, 6-2; Angelique Kerber (GER x17) bt Anna-Lena Friedsam (GER) 6-3, 7-6 (8/6); Ann Li (USA) bt Alison Riske (USA x13) 6-0, 6-3; Aliaksandra Sasnovich (BLR) bt Marketa Vondrousova (CZE x12) 6-1, 6-2; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ x23) bt Vera Lapko (BLR) 6-3, 6-3; Varvara Gracheva (RUS) bt Kristina Mladenovic (FRA x30) 1-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-0; Petra Martic (CRO x8) bt Kateryna Bondarenko (UKR) 6-3, 6-4; Naomi Osaka (JPN x4) bt Camila Giorgi (ITA) 6-1, 6-2; Marta Kostyuk (UKR) bt Anastasiya Sevastova (LAT x31) 6-3, 7-6 (7/5); Anett Kontaveit (EST x14) bt Kaja Juvan (SLO) 6-4, 6-1; Shelby Rogers (USA) bt Elena Rybakina (KAZ x11) 7-5, 6-1; Petra Kvitova (CZE x6) bt Kateryna Kozlova (UKR) 7-6 (7/3), 6-2.

Although Pliskova improved in the second, she was unable to find the crucial service break when it mattered, and was unable to convert a set point in the second to level the match.

In the tie break, Garcia raced into a 6-2 lead and then completed victory when Pliskova hit a return into the net.

It was a disappointing exit for Pliskova, who had been elevated to No.1 seed after a slew of high-ranking player withdrawals due to the coronavirus.

While Pliskova fell by the wayside, there were no such problems for fourth seed Naomi Osaka of Japan, the 2018 champion.

The 22-year-old dominated hard-hitting Italian opponent Camila Giorgi in a 6-1, 6-2 victory.

Elsewhere on Wednesday, Petra Kvitova advanced to the third round with a straight sets defeat of Kateryna Kozlova of Ukraine, winning 7-6 (7/3), 6-2.

Kvitova, chasing a third Grand Slam crown after wins at Wimbledon in 2011

and 2014, needed 1hr 40min to claim her place in the last 32.

Gracheva, ranked 102nd in the world, upset France's 30th-seeded Kristina Mladenovic 1-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-0.

Mladenovic suffered a meltdown for the ages as she slid to defeat, collapsing from a 6-1, 5-1 lead and blowing four match points along the way.

Another seed to tumble was the Czech Republic's Marketa Vondrousova. The out-of-sorts 12th seed was beaten 6-1, 6-2 in little

more than an hour by Belarus' Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

Germany's Angelique Kerber, the 2016 US Open champion, booked her place in the third round with a straight sets win over compatriot Anna-Lena Friedsam.

The 17th seed progressed with a 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) victory in 1hr 40min, and will now face Ann Li, who knocked out 13th seed Alison Riske 6-0, 6-3.

SHARAN-CACIC BOW OUT IN OPENING ROUND

India's Divij Sharan and his Serbian partner Nikola Cacic fought hard before going down in three sets to eighth seeds Nikola Mektic and Wesley Koolhof in the first round of the US Open men's doubles event here.

Sharan and Cacic lost 4-6 6-3 3-6 against Croatia's Mektic and Koolhof in a tough contest that lasted one hour and 46 minutes on Wednesday. The winners will next play Simone Bolelli and Maximo Gonzalez. — Agencies

Messi vs Barca

still a stalemate

Barcelona, Sept. 3: Lionel Messi's future at Barcelona looked no closer to being resolved after the first meeting between the player's father and club officials ended without an agreement, a person with knowledge of the situation confirmed, on the condition of anonymity.

The person said club president Josep Bartomeu on Wednesday met for more than 90 minutes with Jorge Messi to discuss the Argentina star's request to leave the club, but that neither part made any concessions.

Lionel last week told the club that he wanted to leave the club and invoked a contract clause that allowed him to leave for free at the end of the season.

But Barcelona claimed the clause expired in June and said he must see out his contract until June 2021, unless the buyout clause of 700 million euros (USD 837 million) is paid.

Also in the meeting were Barcelona official Javier Bordas and Messi's brother, Rodrigo.

A lawyer for the Messi family was also present. In what was described as a cordial meeting, all parts made their positions clear

● **Despite 90 minutes of meeting between Barcelona president Josep Bartomeu and Jorge Messi, Lionel's father-cum-agent, there was no clear picture on whether the Argentine would leave the Catalans this season or not.**

Jorge Messi said the player wants to leave and Barcelona said it will not accept his transfer request.

No other meeting was immediately scheduled, and the next steps were unclear: Barcelona has said it still hopes Lionel could change his mind.

In addition to meeting with Messi's father, Barcelona said it also wanted to meet personally with the player to try to change his mind about leaving. The club said it has been doing everything to try to convince Messi to finish his career at the club where he started nearly 20 years ago. Lionel Messi hasn't met with club officials since announcing his decision to leave. — AP

CITY FIND JAMES HARD TO GET PAST IN PLAY-OFFS

Miami, Sept. 3: James Harden's shooting touch deserted him, but the Houston star came up big on the defensive end in the Rockets' 104-102 series-clinching win over Oklahoma City in the NBA playoffs on Wednesday.

Harden leapt to block a potential game-winning three-point attempt by Thunder rookie Luguentz Dort with 4.8 seconds remaining as the Rockets held on through a frantic finish to win the best-of-seven Western Conference series four games to three and book a second-round showdown with LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers.

In a closely contested game, Houston took the lead for good, 103-102, on PJ Tucker's driving basket with 1:25 remaining.

The ball changed hands several times before the Thunder got it into the hands of Dort, whose dream night was ended by Harden's big block.

Houston's Robert Covington drained a free throw with 1.4 seconds left to make it 104-102.

Then Harden was called for a foul on Danilo Gallinari before the ball was inbounded, giving the Thunder a free throw and the ball. Gallinari missed from the foul line and the Thunder turned the ball over on the final inbound pass. — AFP

Harbhajan pulls out of IPL

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR |
DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 3

Even as the buzz and speculation around the surprise exit of Suresh Raina refuse to die down, the Indian Premier League has witnessed another high-profile pull-out. Veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh has decided to not join the Chennai Super Kings camp in Dubai, a team source confirmed on Thursday.

Harbhajan, who had earlier skipped the team's pre-departure camp in Chennai, is reportedly worried about his mother, who is not keeping well. Harbhajan was expected to reach the UAE this weekend.

"He made it clear that he is not in the right frame of mind and won't be able to give his best even if he drags himself to the UAE to play. He has always given his best, so there is no question about his commitment. We have to respect his decision," said a team source.

A crucial meeting will be take place on Friday with the team management will decide if the team needs a replacement for Raina and Harbhajan. "Captain M.S. Dhoni and coaches Stephen Fleming and Michael Hussey will take the call," the source said.

RAINA RETURN HIGHLY UNLIKELY

Going by his recent interviews, Raina has shown interest in going back to the IPL bubble. But it is "highly unlikely" that Raina will be allowed to return. "The team has moved on," the source said.



Harbhajan Singh of the Chennai Super Kings in this file photo.

CSK TO TRAIN FROM TODAY

The Super Kings squad, except the 13 Coronavirus-infected members, underwent another round of tests on Thursday. The results will be out on Friday morning and if they return negative, the players will begin training.

BCCI MEDICAL TEAM MEMBER TESTS POSITIVE

Meanwhile, a member of the BCCI medical team tested positive in the UAE.

"It is true, but there is no issue as he (senior medical officer) is asymptomatic and has been kept in isolation. He has not been in contact with anyone and possibly contracted it during his travel to the UAE. He is being monitored and should hopefully be fine in the next round of testing. We also have two people at the NCA who have tested positive and have been kept in isolation," a new agency has quoted a source.

Bubble only for key men: Wadia

New Delhi, Sept. 3: Kings XI Punjab co-owner Ness Wadia on Thursday said the Covid-19 positive cases in the Chennai Super Kings contingent could have hit any of the eight franchises and wants only those people in the IPL bio-bubble who are "really required" to be with the players.

"The CSK incident has taught us that it can happen to anyone even when the best of precautions are taken and therefore we must be more compliant and rigid on the bio-bubble protocols. We need to ensure only those who are really required to be with the players are part of the bubble," Wadia said.

The franchisees' non-player and non-coaching staff includes team operations manager, and social media specialists. The cricketers are also required to spend time with the marketing staff during photo shoots throughout the league.

"The number of staff outside of the teams and their support staff and the match officials should be limited to the absolute minimum," this is what is stated in the BCCI SOP.

When asked if he would be travelling for the tournament, Wadia said: "I have not finalised my plans but I normally don't interact a lot with the players. I have spoken to Anil Kumble (head coach) twice so far just to check what is going on. — PTI

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☞ **Dr. Ortho Spray** ☞ **Dr. Ortho Ointment**

JOINTS PAIN

Blend of 8 beneficial Ayurvedic oils, which helps to reduce joints pain. Gently massage with 8-10 ml of Dr. Ortho oil for 1-2 times a day on affected area.

24x7 Helpline : 0171-3055100 | www.drorthooil.com | Available at all medical & general stores