

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMANAGAR | FRIDAY | 4 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 32.7°C
Min: 24.3°C
RH: 56%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky.
 Rain likely. Max/Min temp. 33/24 9C

COVID-19 C O U N T

CASES	DEATHS
(+79,255)	(+1,083)
39,26,791	68,559

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,817)	(+10)
TS: 1,33,406	856
(+10,199)	(+75)
AP: 4,65,730	4,200

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,63,46,736
DEATHS
8,70,150
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213

worldometers.info/
coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Bhadrapada Bahula Dwitiya till 2.25 pm
Star: Uttarabhadra till 11.28 pm
Varjyam: 7.30 am to 9.17 am
Durmuhurtam: 8.34 am to 9.23 am; 12.40 pm to 1.29 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HURI CALENDAR

Muharram 15, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.01 am
Zohar: 12.25 pm
Asar: 4.36 pm
Maghrib: 6.33 pm
Isha: 7.42 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.27 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.02 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 8.02 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 7.05 AM

COUNTER POINT



You can't even question the cancellation of Question Hour!

IN BRIEF

Twitter a/c linked to PM site hacked

New Delhi: Twitter on Thursday said the account linked to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal website was hacked, and it has now been restored. "We're aware of this activity and have taken steps to secure the compromised account," a Twitter spokesperson said. The cybercriminal reportedly sent out posts seeking donations for the PM National Relief Fund for Covid-19 using crypto currency. "Yes, this account is hacked by John Wick (hckindia@utanota.com). We have not hacked Paytm Mall," another message had said.

India, Russia seal deal for AK-47s

Moscow: India and Russia have finalised a major deal for manufacturing AK-47 203 rifles in India during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's ongoing visit here, the official Russian media reported on Thursday. The AK-47 203 is the latest and most advanced version of the AK-47 rifle, which will replace the Indian Small Arms System (INSAS) 5.56x45 mm assault rifle. The Indian Army has a requirement for around 770,000 AK-47 203 rifles, of which 100,000 will be imported and the rest will be manufactured in India, Russia's state-run Sputnik news agency said. — PTI



WORLD | 5

Don trumpets US strength, scoffs at Biden



BUSINESS | 7

Banks, NBFCs told to restructure loans

SPORTS | 8

CSK's Harbhajan pulls out of IPL



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Fire on the high seas



A fully loaded oil tanker *New Diamond*, a very large crude carrier (VLCC) chartered by Indian Oil Corp (IOC), catches fire off the east coast of Sri Lanka while on its way to port of Paradip. The carrier was carrying crude oil from Kuwait to India. According to Sri Lankan media reports, the fire started in the engine room of the oil tanker and then spread further. The Indian Coast Guard pressed into action three of its ships and a Dornier aircraft after the Sri Lankan Navy sought assistance to control the fire onboard. ■ **Report on Page 5**

— PTI

State's Covid strategy failed

Government and people to be blamed for rise in Covid cases

BALU PULIPAKA | DC

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Though just six months ago, March 2, the date on which the first Covid-19 case was discovered in Telangana state, appears to have slipped into the recesses of memory. It was on that day that a young man from Mahendra Hills area of the city was diagnosed coronavirus-positive.

Exactly six months later, on September 2, Telangana reported that 1.33 lakh people were infected with Covid-19 in the state in this period. In these six months, the state also watched 856 people die of Covid-19. In these six months, the state has witnessed, and the people have watched, as the disease spread rapidly across the state, with Hyderabad emerging as the biggest spot for infections.

While the state government says it had done everything it could to contain the disease and save lives, the fact remains that it did not. The High Court, responding to several petitions from citizens, repeatedly had to intervene to

1 in every 6 cases in TS is from GHMC

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

There is no let-up in the spread of Covid-19 disease in Telangana with the state health department reporting 2,817 more infections and 19 more deaths in the state. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal

keep the government on track on Covid-19 management.

The state repeatedly messed up its data, deliberately or otherwise, in its daily Covid-19 bulletins, strengthening the public perception that the truth about the disease was being hidden. It continues to under-test at its own peril. Along the way, the state authorities also came under scrutiny of Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, who repeatedly pointed out lacunae in disease management in the state and urged the gov-

ernment to do much more.

These six months also saw several predictions and promises made by the government the end of Covid-19 is near fall by the wayside, beginning with the first one that the disease might well disappear in Telangana after April 7. The latest hope held out that disease will begin disappearing from Hyderabad by the end of August.

Also seen coming to naught were confident pronouncements that summer heat will put paid to the spread of the disease. The worst for the state, by

HEALTH WORKERS ARE AT GREATER RISK IN TS: CENTRE

New Delhi: The Covid positivity rate among healthcare workers is on the higher side in Telangana, Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Puducherry and Punjab, said Union health ministry Secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Wednesday at a press briefing. — PTI

far, was it quietly walking back on its claims that up to 90 per cent of infected people will not even know they contracted the disease. The admission a couple of days ago that only 69 per cent of infected people were asymptomatic did little to help the beleaguered state and its health administration apparatus.

The lessons, which Covid is teaching Telangana as has been the case with the rest of India and the world, are harsh, to say the least.

■ **Page 2: Govt. focused on image management**

TRS to target Centre in Assembly

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Monsoon session of the State Legislative Assembly, scheduled to begin from Monday, September 7, will mainly discuss measures taken by the state government to contain Covid-19 pandemic, treatment being provided to Coronavirus positive patients and the fire mishap at Srisailem Left Bank Power House.

Chief Minister K. Chand-

● The Legislature will discuss issues related to Covid-19 pandemic, expansion of medical services, crop loss due to heavy rains, New Revenue Act, regulated farming, and P.V. Narasimha Rao Centenary Celebrations.

rasekhar Rao held a meeting with ministers and whips at Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday to discuss the strategy of the ruling party in the ensuing session.

He asked legislative affairs minister V. Prashanth Reddy to place before the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), issues related to Covid-19 pandemic, expansion of medical services in the state, crop loss due to heavy rains, New Revenue Act, regulated farming, and the P.V. Narasimha Rao Centenary Celebrations.

The CM asked ministers to ensure that the illegal construction of Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme

by AP government and issues related to other irrigation matters are placed before the House during the session.

He stressed on the need for discussing in the House the injustice being meted out to Telangana while implementing GST and the economic loss being caused to the state due to financial policies of the Central government.

■ **Page 2: Govt. ready to discuss any issue: CM**

ONLINE | ABUSE

Lenders misuse their access to customer's phone data to blackmail them

Mobile lenders name and shame defaulters

ATHER MOIN | DC

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Lured by promises of easy and instant online loans, starting from just ₹2,000 up to ₹1 lakh, many who have availed such loans now rue the day they chose to borrow money from online lenders.

Little do these borrowers realise that these loans come with hefty interest rates and service charges that could amount to 35 per

cent of the borrowed amount for periods even as short as a week. These app based money lending services come with various conditions which borrowers don't go through when they download the app.

Almost every person *Deccan Chronicle* spoke with had not gone through the privacy policies of the lenders which resulted in allowing the mobile applications to gain access to their personal details like

phonebook, microphone, camera, photo gallery, SMS list and other wallets.

In addition, the debtors had also had to furnish details of their Aadhaar and Pan cards and bank account details. That is when trouble begins.

One debtor who realised the trap that he fell into, said the lender had charged high amounts as processing fee and interest for a loan of ₹6,000. They are charging ₹420 as inter-

est, ₹1,500 as processing fee and ₹270 as GST. They deduct these charges in advance and the disbursement amount is only ₹4,230 for a week, so they are earning 36.5 per cent on their investment.

Another complained that his loan amount was ₹2,000 and he received an amount ₹ 1,470 and had to repay ₹2,140 within a week. In other words, he paid ₹670 additionally for a loan of ₹1,470 which is almost 45

per cent for a period of a week. He said if you do not pay within seven days, you have to pay additional ₹730 for a week moratorium.

A woman who availed such a loan said she could not repay the amount on the due date and received phone calls from the company's executive and messages on Whatsapp.

The executive asked her to pay the due amount within 45 minutes and threatened that he would

call all her contacts.

He sent a few screenshots of her phonebook to make her realise that he could do so. She borrowed the amount from her relatives, got rid of debt and deleted the application immediately.

Most youngsters get loans from these apps to go on a date or to give a gift to their lover, thinking that in 10 days they will somehow raise money to repay it and are trapped.

Talk on LAC now, India tells China

Blames China's actions for current impasse

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 3

Blaming China for the situation over the last four months in the Ladakh sector that was a "direct result" of China trying to unilaterally change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India on Thursday clearly said the "way ahead" was "negotiations" through both military and diplomatic channels.

New Delhi added it was "firmly committed" to a "peaceful dialogue" and urged China to "sincerely engage" India to restore peace and tranquillity at the LAC. New Delhi also made it clear that Beijing "should not take any provocative action or escalate matters", which comes after the latest round of Chinese military actions at Pangong Tso lake in Ladakh both on the night of August 29 and on August 31.

In an escalation of the war of words, the Chinese embassy in New Delhi said in a statement that it was "seriously concerned" over and "firmly opposed" the Indian government's decision to block 118 mobile apps (on the grounds of being prejudicial to India's security), saying these "national security" grounds were an "excuse" and it "urges the Indian government to rectify the discriminatory practices violating World Trade Organisation rules".

Beijing said "suppression, self-seclusion and restrictions cannot benefit one country's development".

India, however, remained firm on its decision, and the external affairs ministry said on Thursday that companies needed to follow Indian laws.

In yet another signal to

PLA bases under Indian sight now

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

From dominating the full ridgeline at Spanggur Tso — where the enemy troops have dug in — to the critical heights in Rechin La and Rezang La along with the hilltops at Kalatop. Helmet and Camelback — every movement of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China is under constant watch. The strategic Advance Landing Ground at Nyoma in Eastern Ladakh, which used to be clearly visible to the enemy earlier, is no more in sight.

Frustrating as it is for the PLA, the Indian Army, assisted by the Special Frontiers Force (SFF), has literally caged the PLA from all sides. The heightened tensions between the two armies have led both armies to lay mines around their posts to safeguard them — similar to what Indian and Pakistan armies have been resorting to at the Line of Control for decades.

Giving a first-hand acco-

unt of the situation prevailing in Pangong Tso area, highly-placed sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that the PLA troops are in no position to take a step forward as the Indian Army has now got hold of all the vantage points including some Chinese posts, presenting a clear view of all activity in the PLA camp.

"The entire garrison in Moldo gap which is in the Chinese occupation is visible to the Indian troops. This is where Indian and PLA tanks are standing one to one, though the enemy is in no position to move any further. If there is any misadventure from the other side, we can just roll down and cause massive damages in the enemy camp," they said.

It is this "loss" for the PLA in Pangong Tso which, sources said, is making them desperate to open new fronts along the borders, particularly in Uttarakhand and Sikkim.

■ **Page 4: India has edge over China in surveillance**

Beijing, the MEA also said India looked forward to hosting a meeting of the four-nation block — comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia — that focuses on the maintenance of a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

It was New Delhi's firm message on Thursday on developments in Ladakh that are being seen as an indication of the Indian government's resolve to continue to hold firm. In a

statement at his briefing on Thursday, MEA spokesman Anurag Srivastava said: "I can say that the commanders are still holding discussions to resolve the situation. We reiterate the consensus reached between the two foreign ministers and special representatives that the situation at the border should be handled in a responsible manner and either side should not take any provocative action or escalate matters."

PG 4 | ARMY CHIEF IN LEH TO VISIT FORWARD LOCATIONS ALONG LAC

No fresh NPA label for anyone, says SC

PARMOD KUMAR | DC

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 3

In a relief to borrowers facing financial headwinds in the wake of the Covid pandemic, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said accounts, which have not turned bad till August 31, 2020, should not be categorised as a non-performing asset till further order.

The top court passed the interim order while adjourning to September 10 a batch of petitions challenging the charging of interest on unpaid interest during the six-month long moratorium period.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta appearing for RBI told the court that the idea of moratorium was to defer payments in wake of burden by Covid-lockdown, so businesses can manage working capital better.

PARMOD KUMAR | DC

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 3

The Supreme Court on Thursday issued a notice on the Andhra Pradesh government's petition challenging a High Court order restraining it from introducing English as a medium of instruction for class one to sixth in government schools.

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, heading a three-judge bench comprising Justice Indu Malhotra and Justice K.M. Joseph, sought the response of Srinivas Gunipalli on whose plea the Andhra Pradesh High Court had stopped the introduction of English medium.

Directing the listing of the matter on September 25, the court gave the respondent, Srinivas Gunipalli, two weeks time to submit his response to the petition filed by the state government.

The Andhra Pradesh High Court had in April this year set aside the state government's decision to convert Telugu medium schools to English medium schools.

Appearing for the AP government, senior counsel K.V. Viswanathan told the court that 95 per cent of parents have chosen the English medium for their children.

SC HEARS AP PLEA AGAINST STAY ON ENGLISH MEDIUM

■ **Page 2: RTE prefers mother tongue, says SC**

SHORT TAKES



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao receives the Balapur Iddu from the members of the Balapur Ganesh Utsav Committee at Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday. The Iddu was not auctioned this year.

TS REPORTS 2,817 NEW COVID-19 CASES, 15 DEATHS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

There is no let-up in the spread of Covid-19 disease in Telangana with the state health department reporting 2,817 more infections and 19 more deaths in the state.

The latest additions for the 24-hour period between 8 pm Tuesday and 8 pm Wednesday, takes the number of deaths to 856 in the state while the total cases so far is at 1,33,406.

The Covid-19 bulletin on Thursday said that there are 32,537 active Covid-19 cases as on Wednesday evening. It said 2,611 persons have recovered taking the number of people who recovered to 1,00,013 so far.

Even as Covid-19 appeared to have a firm grip over Telangana, the greater Hyderabad municipal corporation (GHMC) area, the largest urban centre in the state, continued to see the highest number of daily cases.

On Wednesday, the city of Hyderabad and other areas that fall under the GHMC limits, recorded 452 more cases, more than twice of the next highest number of new cases 216 in Ranga Reddy district. The other districts with a high number of daily cases were Karimnagar with 164, Khammam and Nalgonda with 157 each, Medchal-Malkajgiri with 129, Siddipet with 120, Suryapet with 116, Warangal urban with 114, and Nizamabad with 97.

The department said that of the 1,33,406 cases so far in the state, 41, 356 were found to be symptomatic, with 92,050 asymptomatic. Males continue to be the major victims of the disease at 85,926 and 47,480 of Covid-19 victims are women.

MAOIST KILLED IN GUNDALA FOREST ENCOUNTER

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC KOTHAGUDEM, SEPT. 3

An unidentified Maoist was killed in an encounter at Devalagudem under Gundala mandal in the wee hours of Thursday. According to police, a special party, led by Gundala Circle Inspector Srinivas, has been conducting surprise checks after receiving reliable information about the presence of Maoists in the area.

Two persons on a bike were asked by the police to stop at Devalagudem but one of them suddenly opened fire and tried to escape from the spot.

The special police asked them to surrender but they did not heed. The police opened fire, which killed one of them while the other managed to escape. Search operations to nab him have been intensified, said police personnel.

Police recovered a weapon and the two-wheeler at the spot. This is the third such incident in the last six months in the Gundala forest area. There was an exchange of fire between police and members of CPI-Maoist in the forests located near Karakagudem in Bhadrachalam district on June 15. Constable Narasimha Rao sustained bullet injuries in the incident.

Since then, greyhounds and special party police have been conducting combing operations in the forest areas of Gundala, Allapalli and Karakagudem in Bhadrachalam district and Tadwai forest area in Bhupalapalli district.

The forest is dense and it is suspected that Maoist dalams coming from Chhattisgarh are hiding there.

● **THE SPECIAL** police asked them to surrender but they did not heed. The police opened fire, which killed one of them while the other managed to escape. Search operations to nab him have been intensified, said police personnel.

Bureaucratic tangles hits biomed waste

Officials told to increase survey; ensure waste is collected at the earliest from hospitals

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Bureaucratic tangles and fights between agencies has led to issues in the collection of biomedical waste in Telangana, leading to it accumulating in hospitals.

The Telangana pollution control board (TPCB), which handles waste via its agencies, states that they have been issued guidelines but they are not being fol-

lowed and each officer and agency is pushing the blame on others.

In Karimnagar, one agency has complained against another for overloading it as the biomedical waste is very high and the other agency has refused to take up the extra work citing diesel prices.

A senior health official of TS explained, "Earlier, hospitals would manage their own waste but there were complaints that small and medium-size

● **IN KARIMNAGAR**, one agency has complained against another for overloading it as the biomedical waste is very high and the other agency has refused to take up the extra work citing diesel prices.

hospitals cannot handle it. Due to this reason, it was handed over to the TPCB. In normal times, it was managed by them but they require extra train-

ing and also adequate machines and systems to handle waste during the pandemic. Agencies have to invest in new machines to burn different biomedical waste separately.

Instead, protocols have been sent to them but no training or no extra infrastructure has been put in place. This is leading to problems at the ground level, apart from the operational costs and person-power challenges faced by them."

Each district has two agencies who have been allotted hospitals, public health centres and small nursing homes.

These are placed in different corners and require a good amount of travel, involving diesel and person-power costs. Due to Covid-19 and the rising cases in district government hospitals and PHCs, generation of waste has doubled. In private hospitals it is lesser but still requires safe

disposal.

The agencies are getting only 50 per cent of the amount from the government due to cost cutting and private hospitals are not willing to pay which is creating problems in collection and safe disposal, leading to a chain of problems.

The TPCB has asked all its officers to increase surveillance and ensure that biomedical waste is collected at the earliest, without much delay.

OPERATION THEATRES AT OGH TO BE MOVED INTO PATIENT BLOCK

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Operation theatres of Osmania General Hospital (OGH) which were closed due to the heritage building closed will be accommodated in the in-patient block. The director of health and medical education has asked the OGH administration to accommodate it in the cardio-thoracic surgery operation theatre on a temporary basis.

AMAZON EMPLOYEE FROM HYDERABAD DROWNS IN US

Hyderabad, Sept. 3: A 23-year-old Amazon employee from Hyderabad drowned in a lake in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, on August 24.

Khaja Imran was swimming with two of his mates at the time of the incident. Eyewitnesses said that he swam too far from the shore and began to panic. His friends were unable to rescue him, and he drowned.

Later, the family got an emergency visa to visit the USA for the last rites. The family will travel on the first available flight.

— INN

STUDENTS WANT NEET TO BE PUT OFF

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Alarmed at the violations of Covid-19 standard operating procedure (SOP) on Wednesday at the JEE examination centres in Telangana, students and many others on Thursday took to Twitter and other social media platforms reiterating their demand for postponing the NEET 2020 exam scheduled for next week. Many also expressed horror and shared their own experiences at the exam centres.

On Thursday, *Deccan Chronicle* reported on the violation of SOPs during the first two days of the JEE Mains in the state. The report was widely shared, with more than 8,000 shares on Twitter. 11 petitioners in the Supreme Court also shared the report.

Students from across the country blamed the union education minister for lying to the country in saying that the exams were being conducted smoothly and demand that after the failures of SoP during the JEE Mains exams, the NEET should be postponed so that no more lives are risked.

A Twitter user, Anupama Parmeshwaran, wrote 'Absolutely worst conditions in Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh. No SOPs followed, no gloves, no mask on teachers' fac., no social distancing and a heavy public (gathering), worst condition.' Students from Jalgaon, Maharashtra and Patna also shared similar experiences of the violation of social distancing norms and faltering at JEE centres.

Demanding postponement of NEET 2020 due next week, a student and twitter user, Neha Dwivedi, said, 'We are 16 lakh aspirants and will take the exam in a single shift in a single day, with at least 32 lakh parents and staff. It will lead to a disaster. Please save us.'

Twitterati are now addressing their concerns to the President's office by sending emails and mentions on the social media platform, with the hashtag #JEEFailedPostponeNEET.

The Supreme Court is likely to hear the review plea on JEE/NEET today filed by the Chief Ministers of six opposition-ruled states: Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Maharashtra asking for a re-look into their decision to hold exams even as Covid-19 cases are spiking everyday.

The NEET examinations scheduled on September 13 will see 16 lakh students, nationally, appearing in a single shift for an offline OMC-type exam. In Telangana, 55,800 students will sit for NEET at 112 centres, whereas in AP, 61,892 students will take the exam at 151 centres next week.

● **ON THURSDAY**, *Deccan Chronicle* reported on the violation of SOPs during the first two days of the JEE Mains in the state.

● **THE REPORT** was widely shared, with more than 8,000 shares on Twitter.

● **11 PETITIONERS** in the Supreme Court also shared the report.

Flouting norms



An autorickshaw trolley carries steel rods ignoring safety measures on the busy Secunderabad road on Thursday. Autorickshaws and trucks carrying dangerous goods are on the rise in the city with the police turning the other way instead of stopping them and seizing them.

— GANDHI

18% of healthcare staff test Covid positive in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Eighteen per cent of healthcare workers (HCW) is reported in Telangana are Covid-19 positive said the Indian medical association (IMA) and union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday.

Telangana is the highest according to the central health ministry based on the data provided by the IMA on infected HCW in India. Maharashtra is 16 per cent, Delhi is 14 per cent and Karnataka is 13 per cent.

The high rate is due to low testing but now as testing has increased in Telangana experts state the numbers are bound to come down. But IMA members in Telangana that they are keeping a record of doctors but that of the other HCWs like nurses, paramedical staff, technicians, ward boys, nutritionists and others are not available.

They insist that these numbers are high but they have not been reported.

Telangana had stated that there were 2000 HCWs infected. Experts state that this number means that 11,000 HCWs have been tested. But in the case of HCWs, it is not only them but their

families too which have been infected. In some cases, not only the HCW but also the family members had to be admitted.

With more and more HCWs falling ill, it is a dual blow as their medical management requires proper attention and also the gap created while they are sick leads to less person-power in the healthcare industry to effectively function. Deaths among HCWs in Telangana are an approximate 20, 11 of whom were doctors, leading to fear in the community.

The biggest challenge noted is that all HCWs do not have insurance or preparedness for Covid-19. Dr. Sanjiv Singh Yadav, secretary of Telangana IMA, explained, "Insurance cover is not taken by doctors and very few of them have fully covered themselves during Covid-19. The concept of health insurance has to be for all medical personnel as they too have suffered financially and it has been a strain on them and their families too."

HCWs had to opt for treatment in Gandhi hospital and Nizam's institute of medical sciences. Government healthcare workers

underwent treatment in government hospitals but many serious cases were referred to private hospitals for care. Private doctors undergoing treatment in private hospitals have also had to cough up high amounts for treatment due to lack of insurance.

With no proper planning and no policy in place for treatment of HCWs, there has been an uproar with the IMA writing to the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

Dr Kiran Madhala, senior government doctor in Telangana, explained, "It was very important that at the time of an epidemic, a separate policy should have been framed for treating healthcare personnel. The worst-case scenario which is visualized during disasters has not considered HCWs, leading to this situation. Not only is it important to treat them early and get them back into the field but also ensure that maximum lives of both HCWs and common people are saved."

It is being viewed as bad policy planning as the healthcare services have been affected due to their personnel falling sick.

GOVT. READY TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUE, SAYS CM

From Page 1

The meeting decided that the House should discuss the Centre's lukewarm response to resolutions passed by the state on reservations for SC, STs and Muslims.

The Chief Minister said the government is ready to discuss threadbare all issues pertaining to people in the forthcoming legislative session and all the issues raised by opposition parties, as there is no better platform other than the Legislature to discuss matters related to people and take appropriate action.

The Chief Minister instructed ministers to prepare themselves and place all facts in the House.

He said, "We have to utilise the Assembly platform to ensure that Telangana Legislature stands as an ideal one and inspires others in the country. Members should highlight how various programmes of the government are being implemented by the government at the field level."

"The government is ever ready to answer any question, provide clarification and implement suggestions, which are practical. The member's views should reflect the facts and ground realities," he stated.

STAY | FIT British study finds micronutrients, probiotics important

Virus hits malnourished, obese

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, SEPT. 3

Malnutrition, obesity and undernourishment are also driving forces for higher viral load of the Covid-19 virus as imbalanced nutritional status is causing damage to the body compounded by co-morbid conditions and age.

A study published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* has noted that a diversified diet of micronutrients, bioactive compounds and probiotics is important to fight Covid-19.

Due to inflammation and cytokine storm in the body, the nutritional status and its ability to help the immune system fight with the virus is very important.

It has been found that those who were malnourished suc-

● **A STUDY** published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* has noted that a diversified diet of micronutrients, bioactive compounds and probiotics is important to fight Covid-19.

cumbed to infection faster and their ability to fight it was limited.

Due to the infection, they suffered from appetite loss, alternation in intestinal absorptions, further aggravating their malnourished state. This caused the gut barrier function to be further compromised leading to problems in regulating the inflammatory response of the body. The same was noted in undernourished cases with more diverse alterations in the immune system, leading to increased

susceptibility to infections.

The need for a balanced diet with a good combination of fruits, vegetables and protein is required to fight infections and ensure that the immune system functions properly. Dr Tulasi P, consultant dietitian at KIMS hospital, explained, "Foods rich in antioxidants help to reduce oxidative stress. Protein plays a major role as antibodies and hormones are made of them. Protein rich foods like milk, pulses, soya, eggs, fish must be included in the diet in these times. This will help to deal with the malnourished and under-nourished states."

The other worrying factor is obesity. Abdominal obesity is very high in India and that leads to complications in the respiratory system. The volume of lung tissues

are affected due to obesity and it allows for replication of the virus and progression of respiratory problems.

For this reason, exercise must not be missed even during the pandemic. Home exercise schedules have been recommended and people have been advised to continue to maintain their fitness levels at home which will help them check weight issues.

Western diets which are more of soft and highly processed foods must be avoided, urged nutritionists.

National institute of nutrition has stated that the diet must have legumes, whole grains, pulses, raw salads, like beetroot, carrot, radish, fermented foods like curd, idli and multi-cereal foods like ragi, sorghum and other millets.

OTHER STORIES

WATER LEVEL IN SRSP REACHES 1,089.8 FEET

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, SEPT. 3

The water level in the Sriramsagar project reached 1,089.8 feet on Thursday as against its full reservoir level of 1,091 ft.

The project is receiving around 3,000 cusecs of water inflows from upstream areas and releasing 75,130 cusecs of water into canals.

SRSP officials have cautioned that the reservoir may soon get filled. Storage of water has reached 83.72 tmc as against its gross storage capacity of 90.31 tmc.

The officials released water into Kakatiya, Saraswathi and Laxmi canals and Mission Bhagiratha drinking water needs in undivided Nizamabad, Adilabad and Karimnagar districts respectively.

527 COVID-19 +VE CASES REPORTED IN KHAMMAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, SEPT. 3

The Coronavirus is fast spreading in rural areas. Cases were reported from 45 habitations in 13 mandals in the district.

Government programmes are badly affected.

In Maturupet Primary Health Centre recorded 15 Covid-19 positive cases of the 60 tests conducted.

Dendukuru PHC recorded 16 cases against the 46 tests done. About 12 cases were recorded in the Railway Colony in Nagulavanca in Chintakani mandal of the 75 tests done.

A total of 527 Covid-19 positive cases reported from 111 habitations and four towns including Wyra, Khammam and Madhira in Khammam district. Bhadradi district recorded 113 cases on Thursday.

CHEQUES GIVEN UNDER KALYANA LAKSHMI SCHEME

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, SEPT. 3

Choppadandi MLA, Sunke Ravi Shankar handed over the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak cheques worth ₹34.03 lakh to 34 beneficiaries from Choppadandi mandal in Karimnagar district on Thursday.

Speaking at the event, Mr Ravi Shankar said that in the present situation, it is difficult for the poor to get their girl child married. Understanding their problems, Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao introduced the Kalyana Lakshmi and the Shaadi Mubarak schemes.

Though the schemes did not figure in the election manifesto, the TRS-led government has implemented the Kalyana Lakshmi and the Shaadi Mubarak schemes. More developmental and welfare activities will be taken up in the days to come to transform Choppadandi into a model constituency, the MLA assured.

● **THOUGH** the schemes did not figure in the election manifesto, the TRS-led government has implemented them.

Patients, families battle Covid stigma

Tenants worst affected many left homeless

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, SEPT. 3

Covid-19 patients and their families are facing discrimination from relatives and neighbours. This alienation is despite the district administration and the elected representatives repeatedly asking people not to victimise the Covid-19 patients or their families.

However, it is the Covid-19 patients living in rented homes that have to face the wrath of the homeowners, who force them to vacate the premises. Incidents like these have come to light from various towns in undivided Nizamabad district.

For instance, a private employee

● **WHEN THEY** reached their home, the building owner did not allow them to enter. Only after the intervention of the police were they permitted to stay. They were asked to vacate the house next month.

Mubaraknagar along with his wife and two children tested positive for the Coronavirus recently. They underwent treatment at a private hospital and recovered. However, when they reached their home, the building owner did not allow them to enter. Only after the intervention of the police did the owner permitted them

to stay. However, the landlord has asked the family to vacate the house next month. Similar incidents have been reported from other parts of undivided Nizamabad district also.

The family of a person who dies of Covid-19 have to face social stigma. There have been instances when people have had to carry the dead in JCB's, hand carts and use other methods to transport the bodies. Because of this, the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Nizamabad is providing free ambulance facility to carry the bodies of the Covid-19 patients. The ambulance will take the body from the hospital to the graveyard. This decision has given relief to the Covid-19 victims.

Most govt docs skipping work: Bhatti

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 3

Senior Congress leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka visited the Jangaon Government Hospital on Thursday and inspected the health services provided to the patients.

Speaking to the media after visiting the hospital, the Congress leader said that of the 70 medical posts at the Jangaon Government Hospital, only 30 to 40 positions are filled, of these only two or three attend duties. About 30 to 40 Covid-19 cases get reported, but most are availing treatment at private hospitals in Hyderabad. "Due to the lack of doctors and facilities, people do not trust the government hospital. The emergency, OP and casualty wards do not have a single emergency medicine kit," he said.

"During my visit, I came to know that only one doctor is available in the hospital during the day shift and one during the night shift. The other remaining doctors have private clinics where they practice mostly."

He alleged that even the MLA is backing them and has gone to the extent of asking the government doctors to refer the Covid-19 positive patients to the Yashoda hospital in Hyderabad.

Jangaon District Congress Committee (DCC) president Janga Raghava Reddy pointed out that the MCH (Mother and Child Care Hospital) in Jangaon too is known for no doctors being available. "Of the 60 posts allotted, 38 got filled, but only six or seven attend duties. Why is the state government not implementing Biometric attendance? Why are the CPAP and ventilator machines not made available for the newborns?" he questioned.

Mr Janga Raghava further added that the district hospital does not even have an ICU. Even



CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Jangaon DCC president Janga Raghava Reddy at the Government Hospital in Jangaon on Thursday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

● **THE SENIOR** Congress leader said, during my visit, I came to know that only one doctor is available in the hospital during the day shift and one during the night shift. The other doctors have private clinics where they practice mostly.

after the arrival of six new ventilators three months ago, they remain uninstalled. "The x-ray machine does not work and they have yet to repair it. For the past two years, CT scanning is not available. I know of at least 25 patients got their CT scan done from a private hospital which cost about ₹7,000," he said.

MGM HOSPITAL WELL EQUIPPED, SUPERINTENDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 3

The MGM hospital in Warangal has 15 high-flow oxygen machines worth ₹50 lakh, informed hospital superintendent, Dr K. Nagarjuna Reddy, on Thursday.

Speaking to the media, he said, "112 patients are undergoing treatment at the Covid-19 ward. 76 SARI patients are also undergoing treatment. Three professor level teams are monitoring these patients. Presently, 180 oxygen cylinders along with ventilators are readily available. In stock, we have 7,000 PPE kits, 6,025 masks and 800 sanitisers."

He said, "All requirements like sanitisers, masks, injections, medicine are available in the hospital. We have placed an order for 20,000 additional gloves."

Best Covid-19 care available at MGM: Warangal mayor

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 3

The government had ensured adequate facilities such as beds, ventilators and oxygen in the MGM hospital, said Greater Warangal mayor Gunda Prakash Rao on Thursday.

No Covid-19 patient is unhappy with the Covid-19 care facilities in the MGM Hospital. The hospital has better facilities than private hospitals, Mr Prakash Rao added.

Speaking to the media, he said that the state government had released ₹12 crore to operationalise the Covid-19 care centre in the Pradhana

Swastya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) Super-specialty.

The Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka has no knowledge of the development taking place in the MGM Hospital.

The mayor said, "Bhatti who didn't even visit the Covid-19 ward cannot criticise the government. Besides providing the best Covid-19 care, the government is also conducting Coronavirus tests in 21 centres."

Urban Development Authority (KUDA) chairman Marri Yadava Reddy said, "Of the 340 beds in the Covid-19 ward, 111 stands occupied. The government is

going to add more beds in the coming days."

"Bhatti who visited MGM Hospital on Wednesday didn't dare to enter the Covid-19 ward and interact with the patients," Mr Marri Yadava said, questioning the commitment of the Congress leaders. The mayor said that the state government was quick to respond in extending a helping hand to the areas affected in Warangal city by the unprecedented rains last fortnight.

He said that all the legislators, including the two ministers from the region, had tried their best to help the residents living in low-lying areas.

Sanjay asks KCR to release white paper on all projects in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, SEPT. 3

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar has demanded that the State government release a white paper on the Prime Minister Awaas Yojana, 2BHK housing and all the irrigation projects in the state.

Mr Bandi Sanjay visited Yellandu, Kamepalli and Khammam on Thursday and slammed the TRS government for its failure in the 2BHK housing project. He demanded that the cases filed on the two youths for exposing defects in DBR housing be lifted.

The two youth had uploaded a video highlighting the flaws in the 2BHK houses. Mr Sanjay said, "Instead of correcting the quality of material used, the government is filing cases against the youths." He met the two youth at Harichandrapuram and enquired about the case.

He alleged that the government is not giving importance to the quality of materials used in the projects in Telangana. 2BHK housing is the worst as many houses have developed leakages.

The Central government released funds under the PMAY of the Telangana government. The CM should issue a white paper on housing and other schemes in the state.

He alleged that the Chief Minister's close associates bagged all the contracts, inclusive of the irrigation and power projects even though their quotes are higher than the real cost. The government is filing criminal cases against those who expose the flaws. The Chief Minister does not respect democracy and the rights of the people, said the BJP MP.

He said, "The BJP will con-

BJP WILL EXPOSE THE LAND GRABBERS, SAYS BJP MP

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 3

BJP State President Bandi Sanjay Kumar inspected land belonging to the forest department encroached in front of the Narsampet Municipal office in Warangal Rural district on Thursday.

He said that the TRS leaders are shamelessly encroaching public and private lands. The BJP will expose the reality of the TRS party if Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao does not take action against such leaders.

He said, "The forest department takes stringent action against tribals practising podu cultivation, but is maintains silence even though the TRS leaders are grabbing forest land worth crores of rupees by forging documents."

The BJP State chief claimed that the Centre has given its share of funds in almost all the welfare schemes and programmes implemented by the State Government. "BJP is the only alternative to the TRS in Telangana. The BJP will hoist its flag in Telangana in the 2023 elections," Mr Sanjay said.

State general secretary G. Premender Reddy, state official spokesperson Enugula Rakesh Reddy, senior leaders Edla Ashok Reddy and Jatoh Hussain Naik were present along with others.

tinue its fight against the lapses in the construction of various projects. A day will come when the Chief Minister will have to answer for all his misdeeds."

Preventive measures



Police have put up barricades around the open drains and potholes to avoid accidents. The barriers have come up at the Kaman Centre, Upper side II-Town main road Lower side Doctors street and Girls Street College in Karimnagar on Thursday. — YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA



A sight to behold



An aerial view of the mini water tank built in the premises of the Ramnagar police training centre in Karimnagar for recreational and beautification purpose. The tank in 16 feet deep and is built across 1 acre. It is the initiative of police commissioner V.B. Kamalasan Reddy along with additional DCP Chandramouli in charge of the Ramnagar police training centre. — DC

GOOD NEWS Oustees can get loans from banks

Package for oustees of Yellampalli reservoir

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, SEPT. 3

A Palle Nidra programme was held at Murmoor village in Anthargam mandal in Peddapalli district on Thursday. Additional collector Lakshminarayana took part in the programme.

Speaking in the gram sabha, he said, "According to the guidelines issued by the government, a special package will be sanctioned for the oustees who lost their land to the Yellampalli reservoir. We have taken the necessary steps to resolve the issues of the oustees. The revenue officer will hold a meeting to enquire about the problems related to the Rehabilitation and

● **AFTER** identifying the real beneficiaries the cut-off date for handing over the R&R package will be announced.

Resettlement (R&R) package."

He added, "After viewing the applications received by the villagers, we will identify the real beneficiaries and announce the cut-off date for handing over the R&R package. The concerned tahsildar has received orders to issue no-objection certificates to the oustees so they can get loans from the banks by mortgaging their lands lost under the Yellampalli project."

Later, Mr. Lakshminarayana along

with the Ramagundam MLA, Korakanti Chander Patel announced Anthargam as a land issue free mandal. Mr Chander Patel said that previous governments failed to resolve the issues of the oustees. But, welfare minister Koppula Eshwar took initiation and held a meeting with the concerned officials asking to solve the land issue of the oustees.

The government is taking measures to employ the unemployed youth of the village who lost their lands. We will conduct special training classes for unemployed youth.

Revenue Divisional Officer Shankar Kumar, Tahsildar Prakash, ZPTC, MPP, MPPTC were among those who were present.



BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar interacts with the two youth who are facing charges for exposing the flaws in the 2BHK housing construction in Kamepalli mandal on Thursday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

	IndianOil	
Marketing Division	Telangana & Andhra Pradesh State Office	
NOTICE FOR ENGAGEMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR ITS CORPORATION OWNED AND CORPORATION OPERATED RETAIL OUTLETS (COCOs)		
<p>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.</p>		

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

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.

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.



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. Ankara 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

FB TO TARGET MISINFORMATION BEFORE POLL

Washington, Sept. 3: With just two months left until the US presidential election, Facebook says it is taking more steps to encourage voting, minimise misinformation and reduce the likelihood of post-election "civil unrest." The company said Thursday it will restrict new political ads in the week before the election and remove posts that convey misinformation about Covid-19 and voting. It also will attach links to official results to posts from candidates and campaigns declaring premature victories.

"This election is not going to be business as usual. We all have a responsibility to protect our democracy," Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a post on Thursday. "That means helping people register and vote, clearing up confusion about how this election will work, and taking steps to reduce the chances of violence and unrest." FB and other social media companies are being scrutinized over how they handle misinformation.

— AP

check their vote by going to the poll and voting that way because if it tabulates then they won't be able to do that. So, let them send it in and let them go vote," Trump said in an interview with WECT-TV at the Wilmington airport.

"And if their system's as good as they say it is, then obviously they won't be able to vote. If it isn't tabulated, they'll be able to vote. So that's the way it is, and that's what they should do."

— AP

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

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?

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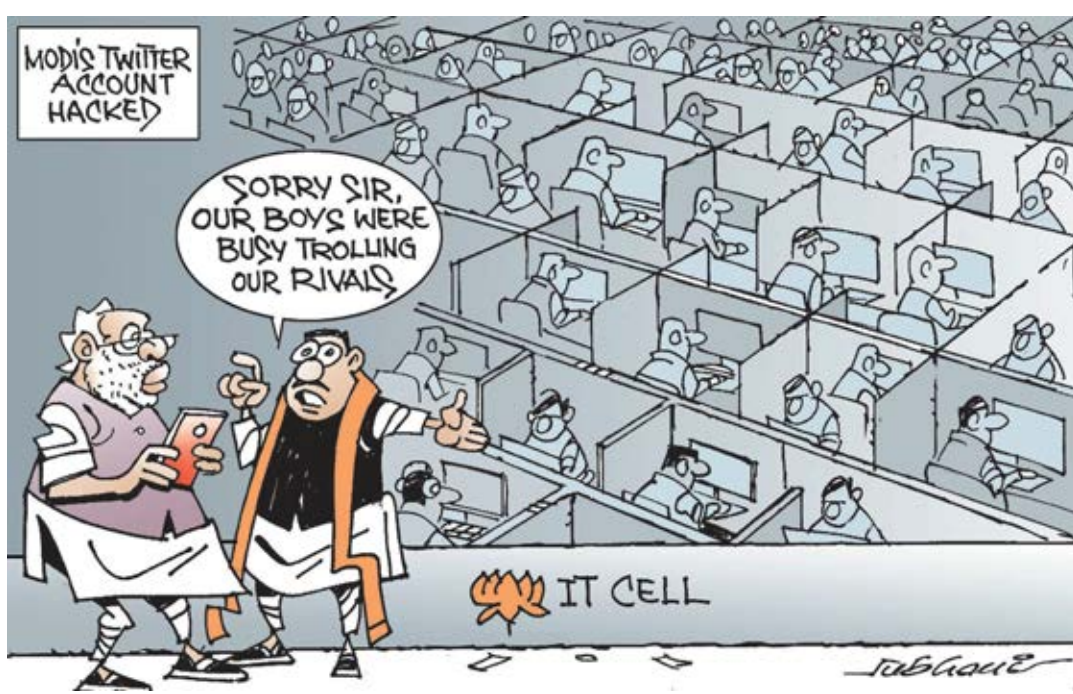
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Subhani



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

GHMC ELECTIONS

Even though the TRS is banking on 2BHK houses to win GHMC polls, it won't be that easy (*TRS banking on 2BHK houses to win GHMC polls, DC, Sept. 3*). The TRS has not solved numerous problems, especially in health-care.

Ajay Kranthi Reddy
Hyderabad

Food, clothing and shelter are the prime requirements of an individual. Therefore, a leader must check if the citizens are being provided with them or not. If these are provided without any hurdles, then definitely that party will win.

Chandra Kantha Awasthi
Hyderabad

FINANCE MINISTER

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman blamed God for the economic mess and evaded questions. During the onion crisis she said she doesn't eat onion. In all probability she is not aware of the price of petrol as her convoy of cars is taken care of with the taxpayers' money. Even rent, food and medical emergencies are taken care of with the taxpayers' money. She must take expert advice.

Lal Melwani
Hyderabad

HALT COVID TONE

For the last five months a recorded message on Covid-19 is heard on our mobiles when we make calls. By now everyone must be aware of the precautions to protect themselves. Hence, this recorded message can be stopped.

Chandrasekhar
Secunderabad

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 M r s . 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.

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

Nilofar Suhrawardy



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

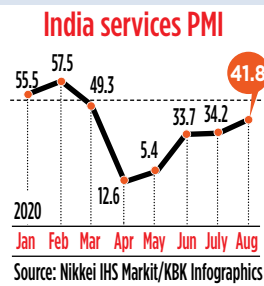
Despite showing a rise over July, services Purchasing Managers' Index continued in the contraction zone in August. Pandemic restrictions and job losses have been weighing heavily on services PMI.

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 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 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 have 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.

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, SEPT. 3

Notwithstanding the year-on-year decline in exports till now, apparel exporters are confident of clocking a positive growth at the end of the fiscal. They are banking on the increased demand for medical textiles across the globe.

Apparel exports have been down by 54 per cent between April and July. Compared to \$5,500 million exports during the period last year, shipments are down at \$2,500 million during the four-month period this year.

However, on a month-on-month basis, apparel exports have been seeing some recovery. In July, apparel clocked exports of \$1063 million against \$1364 million in the same month last year—down by 22 per cent. This gap was 99 per cent in April.

The industry is banking on the fact that it is the second largest producer of medical textiles.

"In a span of few months, we have become the second largest producer of medical textiles, including masks and personal protective equipment (PPE)," said Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPFC) chairman A. 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.

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Besides, the AEPFC 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

Cyclist Lutsenko claims Stage 6

Mont Aigoual, France: Kazakh rider Alexey Lutsenko won his first stage in his fifth Tour de France with a solo effort up Mont Aigoual on Thursday.

The Tour's top contenders were still racing far behind the 27-year-old Lutsenko on the mountain when he crossed the line at the top with towering views of southern France. Lutsenko was among a group of eight breakaway riders that surged ahead of the main pack on the 191-kilometre (119-mile) Stage 6. The stage sped south-west from the start town of Le Teil in southern France.

Lutsenko, riding for the Astana team, shook off his breakaway companions on the day's punishing final climb, up to the Lusette pass, scaled for the first time by the 117-year-old Tour. — AP

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.

The Pakistan cricket team 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 on their oldest foes in a further three one-day internationals 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.

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.

SELECTED RESULTS

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.

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 of the Netherlands in a tough contest that lasted one hour and 46 minutes on Wednesday. The winners will next play Simone Bolelli and Maximo Gonzalez. — Agencies

CAPITAL BOYS BOWL OVER COACH RYAN

Dubai, Sept. 3: Delhi Capitals bowling coach Ryan Harris is impressed with the pace at which the players are getting back into shape after months of inactivity.

After completing the mandatory six-day quarantine, Harris was finally out of his room on Wednesday evening, and oversaw his first nets session at Delhi Capitals.

Harris said it didn't look like the boys were out of practice in the past few months.

"I know that the boys haven't been able to train in the past few months due to the pandemic, but watching them bat and bowl, and seeing some shots flying over the fence, I've been impressed with them," said Harris in a team statement.

"Their work ethic is unbelievable and they seem in very good space for guys who haven't done a lot of training — they look in excellent condition," he added.

Having been allowed to set foot outside after after six days in isolation, Harris says it felt good.

"Honestly, six days isn't a lot, but it felt like three weeks for me. But when I got the message this morning from the doctor, saying I've cleared my quarantine and my tests, that was probably the best message I've ever got (laughs)," he said. — PTI



Ryan Harris

Messi vs Barca still a stalemate

● 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.

The person said club president Josep Bartomeu on Wednesday met for more than 90 minutes with Jorge Messi to discuss the 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. 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



Indian chess player P. Niyan in this file photo.

Iniyan is World Open chess star

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 3

Close to the heels of India's historic gold at the Olympiad, another chess player has achieved a unique feat. Tamil Nadu's P. Iniyan emerged champion in the 48th annual World Open chess tournament. The online event — a nine-round classical time control format — concluded on August 9, but the results were declared on Thursday after a thorough 'fairplay' analysis.

A total of 122 players from 16 countries took part in the event that had more than 30 Grandmasters in the fray. The 17-year-old Erode boy scored seven-and-a-half points out of a possible nine. He had six victories and three draws. Iniyan and Russian GM Sanan Sjugirov were tied for the top spot, but the Indian had a better tie-

break score.

Iniyan said the World Open was the most memorable event since becoming India's 61st GM last year.

"The game against Georgia's Jobava Baadur was a special one. Jobava, with an unconventional style, is a unique player and the win against him was a great achievement," Iniyan said.

En route to the title, Iniyan also defeated GMs Sam Sevian and Sergey Erenburg of the USA and Nyzhnyk Illia of Ukraine. Since the event was happening in US time, Iniyan had to burn midnight oil. "I was playing from 9.30 pm to 6 am every day. I had to prepare specifically by practising all night for a few days before the tournament," said Iniyan. who had pulled off a stunning win over World No.2 Fabiano Caruana in an online blitz event.

City find James hard to get past

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 learnt 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.

Earlier in the NBA's coronavirus quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida, the Miami Heat went down to the wire to take a 2-0 lead over the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks in their Eastern Conference second-round series.

Jimmy Butler, fouled on a potential game-winner at the buzzer, calmly made two free throws to seal a 116-114 victory for the Miami Heat.

— AFP

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