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A man along with his goats sit under an umbrella during rain, on the outskirts of Chennai, on Tuesday

Greta calls for postponement of JEE and NEET

New Delhi: Amid a growing chorus for postponing various central examinations, including NEET and JEE, grew louder across India, Sweden's teen environmentalist Greta Thunberg recently joined the out- rage by expressing her concern about Indian students being forced to give exams during the COVID-19 pandemic. "It's deeply unfair that students of India are asked to sit national exams during the Covid-19 pandemic and while millions have also been impacted by the ex- treme floods. I stand with their call to #PostponeJEE_NEETinCOVID," the student activist tweeted. ▶ P3

Govt may plan 2nd stimulus once cases decline

Mumbai: The Union government may look at introducing a second set of fiscal stimulus measures once the Covid-19 infections abate and the psychological fears in people's minds ebb, a top finance ministry official said on Tuesday. The government has also observed that 40 per cent of the cash transfers directly into the beneficiaries' accounts recently have been saved and not spent, leading to a feeling that there are limitations of the stimuli measures and hence, making timing the most important factor, Union expenditure secretary TV Somanathan said.

Parliament Monsoon Session likely from Sept 14

New Delhi: The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, recommended that the Monsoon Session of Parliament be held from September 14 to October 1 and with 18 sittings. Aggressive prepara- tion has been going on in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for the ses- sion. Rehearsals will take place in Parliament with an eye on physical and social distancing norms to ac- commodate members. Several meetings of both Secretariats were held by Rajya Sabha Speaker M Venkaiah Naidu and his Lok Sabha counterpart OP Birla.

NIA names JeM chief Azhar in Pulwama

New Delhi/Jammu: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) in its chargesheet in the 2019 Pulwama terror attack case has named Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar, his brothers Abdul Rauf Asghar and Ammar Alvi, slain JeM terrorist Mohammad Umar Farooq, suicide bomber Adil Ahmed Dar and other terrorist commanders operating from Pakistan. These are apart from the six arrested accused in the case.



13 KILLED IN MAHA BUILDING CRASH

■ Several missing in Raigad mishap
■ 5-yr-old among 80 persons rescued

Raigad (Maharashtra): Thirteen people have died and several are still missing after a residential building collapsed in Maharash- tra's Raigad district late on Mon- day. The rescue operation has been going on for more than 24 hours.

Seven bodies were found in the last two hours in the debris, offi- cials said. More than 80 people have been rescued since Monday.

Three teams of the NDRF (Na- tional Disaster Response Force) and 12 teams of the fire brigade are at the spot. The five-storey build- ing, which was about seven years old, had over 45 flats.

The rescue officials had a brief moment of relief when they pulled out a four-year-old alive from the debris this afternoon. A video showed them bursting into cheers



4-year old, Mohammed Bangi, pulled out alive from the rubble of a collapsed five-storey apartment building



Rescue personnel sift through the rubble in search of survivors at the site where a five-storey apartment building collapsed, at Mahad in Raigad district on Tuesday

when the boy was found.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "Saddened by the building col- lapse in Mahad, Raigad in Maha- rashtra. My thoughts are with the families of those who lost their dear ones. I pray the injured re- cover soon. Local authorities and NDRF teams are at the site of the tragedy, providing all possible as- sistance."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah

described the incident as "tragic" in a tweet and said that he has spoken to SN Pradhan, the chief of the dis- aster response force to provide all possible assistance.

"A case has been registered against the developer and architect. Whoever will be responsible, strict action will be taken against them. It would take another seven-eight hours to clear the debris," Collector Nidhi Chaudhary said.

DELHI SERO SURVEY

Covid most prevalent among 5-17 age group

New Delhi: Minors aged be- tween 5 and 17 are most ex- posed to the novel coron- avirus in Delhi, according to a serological survey con- ducted in the city this month. Conducted between August 1 and August 7, the survey, second in the city, showed that 29.1 % of the population in the national capital has now developed antibodies against SARS

CoV-2.

As many as 15,000 people from four age groups partic- ipated in the survey -- around 25% of them below 18, 50 % between 18 and 50, and the rest aged above 50.

A prevalence rate of 34.7 % was found among the par- ticipants aged between 5 and 17, the survey results show. As many as 31.2 % of the peo- ple aged above 50 have re-

covered from COVID-19, it shows.

Among those in the 18- 50 age group, 28.5 % people have developed antibodies against the virus. Indian Council of Medical Re- search data suggests that people aged between 21 and 50 account for 61.31 per cent of the COVID-19 cases recorded in India till August 21.

Experts say children could be contracting the infection from adults in their family and domestic helps.

Dr Mahesh Verma, the head of a Delhi government committee tasked with strengthening the prepared- ness of hospitals to battle coronavirus, said, "It is diffi- cult to keep children and youngsters home-bound. Even if they are not going to

school, they might be going out to play... or they might have contracted it through an indirect route. But it's just a prediction and needs to be studied." "It's still very com- plex how people are getting infected. I know a couple of families that are not step- ping out but their members have still contracted COVID-19," he added.

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₹2K currency notes not printed in FY20: RBI

New Delhi: Currency notes of Rs 2,000 were not printed at all in fi- nancial year 2019-20, ac- cording to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The central bank's Annual Report for 2019-20 also showed that the supply of banknotes during the pe- riod was lower by 23.3 per cent than in the pre- vious year, mainly due to the disruptions caused by the outbreak of Covid-19 and the ensuing lock- down.



Activists urge govt not to increase women's marriage age

New Delhi: Over 100 civil society organisations have urged the gov- ernment against increasing women's minimum age of mar- riage, claiming it will do little to improve the health of mothers and infants.

In a joint statement, the rights organisations asked how increas- ing the minimum age of marriage is a step forward when it denies many more women matrimonial status and rights.

They also asked how will it help criminalise families whose sur- vival needs and insecurity compel them to not just marry early, but to also enter the workforce early. The government is considering



revising the age of marriage of women and for that a task force has been formed. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also touched upon

the subject in his Independence Day address.

However, the civil society or- ganisations have urged the gov-

ernment against increasing the age of marriage, claiming "it will not further gender equality, women's rights or empowerment of girls, and will do little to im- prove the health of mothers and infants".

"It is only in the most superficial sense that having 21 years for both men and women is a sign of gender equality, but somehow this idea has great appeal in liberal circles.

"If legal equality should be imple- mented in the letter of law when it comes to age, it may be worth con- sidering making it 18 years for both men and women, as is the case in most parts of the world," the state- ment endorsed by 2,500 young

voices and over 100 civil society or- ganisations said.

They said raising the age at mar- riage through law will only crimi- nalise, not prevent, early marriage. "Over the last few years there have been moves to make laws more and more punitive as if all the answers can be achieved through legal change. Merely having a new mini- mum age of marriage law for women at 21 years without the pres- ence of enabling opportunities in the form of access to higher educa- tion and decent job opportunities translates effectively into young women being even more trapped in their natal homes," it said.

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Yamuna flowing near warning level in Delhi

Delhi govt takes up relief operations

New Delhi: The water level of the Yamuna river was recorded at 204 metres at 10 am on Tuesday, precari- ously close to the warning level of 204.50 meters, ac- cording to officials.

Water was being released into the river at the rate of 7,418 cubic metres per sec- ond (cusec) at 10 am from the Hathnikund barrage in Haryana's Yamunanagar district, an official of the Ir- rigation and Flood Control Department said. The flow rate was the same at 8 am and 9 am, the official said. The water level of the river was recorded at 204.38 met- res at 8 am on Monday.

Normally, the flow rate at the Hathnikund barrage is 352 cusec, but the discharge is increased after heavy rainfall in catchment areas.

Last year, the flow rate had peaked to 8.28 lakh cusec on August 18-19, and the water level of the Ya- muna had hit the 206.60 meter-mark, breaching the danger mark of 205.33 meters. The Delhi govern- ment had to launch evac- uation and relief opera- tions after the overflowing river submerged many low-lying areas.

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Womenia



Relationship habits most people think are toxic

TEJAL SINHA

LETTING SOME CONFLICTS GO UNRESOLVED

People like to fantasize about 'true love'. But if there is such a thing, it requires us to sometimes accept things we don't like.

Successful couples accept and understand that some conflict is inevitable, that there will always be certain things they don't like about their partner, or things they don't agree with—all that's fine. You shouldn't need to feel the need to change somebody in order to love them. And you shouldn't let some disagreements get in the way of what is otherwise a happy and healthy relationship.

Sometimes, trying to resolve a conflict can create more problems than it fixes. Some battles are simply not worth fighting. And sometimes, the most optimal relationship strategy is one of live and let live.

BEING WILLING TO HURT EACH OTHER'S FEELINGS

It's important to make something more important in your relationship than merely making each other feel good all of the time. The feeling-good—the sunsets and puppies—they happen when you get the important stuff figured out: values, needs and trust. If you feel smothered and want more time alone, you need to be capable of saying that without blaming your partner and they need to be capable of hearing it without blaming you despite the unpleasant feelings it may cause.

These conversations are crucial if we want to maintain a healthy relationship, one that

Traits that don't fit our traditional narrative of what love should be are actually necessary ingredients for a healthy relationship

meets both people's needs.

BEING WILLING TO END IT

Romantic sacrifice is idealized in our culture. The truth is our standards for what a "successful relationship" should be are pretty screwed up. If a relationship ends and someone's not dead, then we view it as a failure, regardless of the emotional or practical circumstances present in the person's lives. And that's kind of insane. Sometimes the only thing that can make a relationship successful is ending it at the necessary time, before it becomes too damaging. And the willingness to do that allows us to establish the necessary boundaries to help ourselves and our partner grow together.

FEELING ATTRACTION FOR PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE RELATIONSHIP

Our cultural scripts tell us that once we're in love, that's supposed to be the end of the story. And if someone flirts with us and we enjoy it, or if we catch ourselves having an occasional errant sexy-time fantasy, there must be something wrong with us or our rela-

tionship. But that's simply not the case.

In fact, it's healthier to allow oneself to experience these feelings and then let them go. When you suppress these feelings, you give them power over you, you let them dictate your behavior for you rather than dictating your behavior for yourself.

ACCEPTING YOUR PARTNER'S FLAWS

Every person has flaws and imperfections. You can't ever force a person to change. Therefore, you must date somebody who has flaws you can live with or even appreciate.

The most accurate metric for your love of somebody is how you feel about their flaws. If you accept them and even adore some of their shortcomings; their obsessive cleanliness, their awkward social ticks and they can accept and even adore some of your shortcomings, well, that's a sign of true intimacy. It may be our imperfections that attract one another in the first place. But it's our imperfections that decide whether or not we stay together.

QUICK TIP

HIGH WAIST PANTS

Apart from high waist jeans, 90's fashionistas also rocked high waist palazzos and pants. Look for materials like viscose and modal for a flattering drape and flow. Pair them with a poplin crop top and block heels for a stylish look.



The scalp and hair of a newborn are just as delicate as their skin and needs equal attention too, according to ayurvedic experts who have shared key tips to keep the hair and scalp of your baby healthy.

The right amount of care and choosing a specific hair care routine for babies in the growing days will help in getting significantly thick, soft, and healthy hair.

"Oiling is the first step to ensure healthy hair growth. Most babies are prone to dry scalp, dandruff, and scanty growth, which can be managed by a daily oil massage," Dr Prathibha Bab-

shet, Ayurveda Expert, R&D, The Himalaya Drug Company, said in a statement.

"It is always advisable to opt for products which contain natural ingredients and are known to be safe and gentle for baby's hair," Babshet added.

While selecting the right hair oil, use a product that is gentle, safe, and scientifically researched, and is free from mineral oil, alcohol, parabens, synthetic colour and phthalates.

"A baby hair oil with herbs like Amla, Gotu Kola, Methi, Bhringaraja, and oils like coconut, almond, olive and sesame helps moisturize scalp, prevent

Here's how to keep hair, scalp of your baby healthy

dryness, nourish hair, and make it soft and healthy," Babshet advised.

Amla in the hair oil helps strengthen hair and promote hair growth, gotu kola helps improve hair density, bhringaraja helps strengthen and darken hair, and Methi helps prevent hair loss and strengthen and moisturize hair.

The goodness of coconut oil helps moisturize scalp, prevent dryness, and promote healthy hair growth, almond oil helps condition, nourish, and soften hair, olive oil helps keep hair silky and lustrous, and sesame oil helps in nourishing hair.

Massage your baby's scalp regularly to improve blood circulation and promote hair growth and use a soft towel and gently pat to dry hair; this will prevent breakage.

"Your baby's hair and scalp are sensitive during the initial months, making it vulnerable to allergies and irritation. So, try and avoid using the same oil for body and hair," Babshet said.

Initiative for circular and Sustainable Fashion

Lakmé fashion week announces the second edition of circular changemakers - Initiative for circular and sustainable fashion and textile enterprises to get access to investors and strategic partners

Circular Design Challenge (CDC), an initiative by R Elan's 'Fashion For Earth', Lakmé Fashion Week and UN Environment- India's first and largest sustainability award in fashion partnered with Intellectap's Circular Apparel Innovation Factory (CAIF) to launch a program 'Circular Changemakers' last year.

The initiative invited start-ups to participate and showcased innovations and solutions for a circular economy across the textile and apparel value chain. After a successful first edition, the program is set to return to Lakmé Fashion Week 2020. CAIF is an industry-led platform with the mission to strengthen capabilities and build the ecosystem needed to transition to a circular textile and apparel industry in India.

'Circular Changemakers' welcomes applications from start-ups across the country, a key criteria is increasing the use of alternative and sustainable inputs and minimizing wastes.

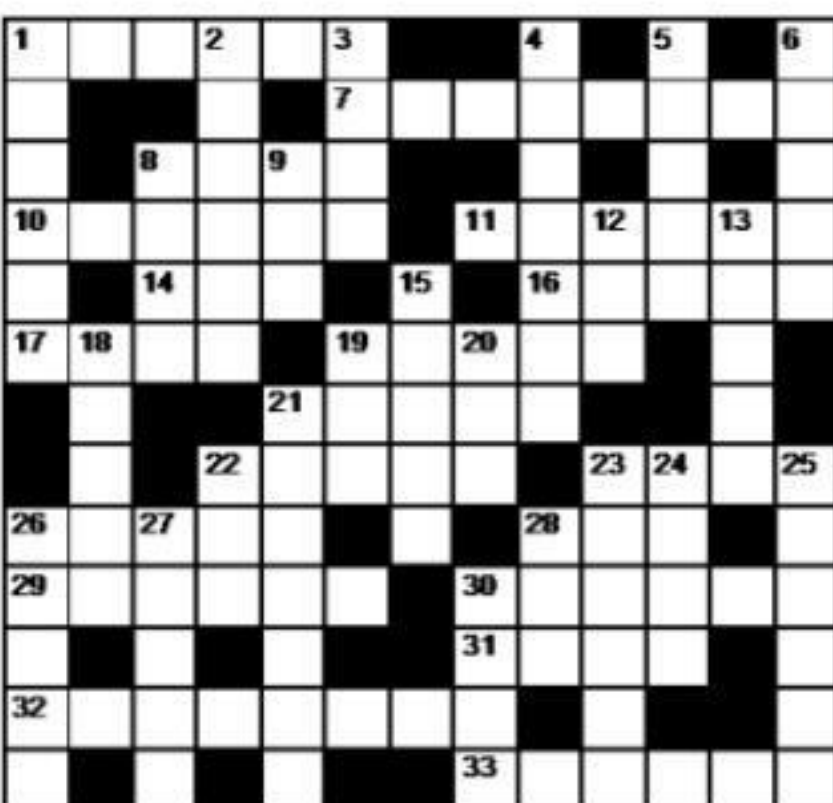
Entry for applications open now. Entries fitting these criteria and looking for investors and strategic partnerships can submit their applications at <http://circulardesignchallenge.net/changemakers.php> The last date to submit entries is September 15 2020.

From the pool of applications, up to 6 start-

ups will be chosen to participate in a bootcamp by industry experts. The three-module bootcamp focuses on providing visibility to change-makers in the sustainable and circular fashion space, exposing them to important aspects of 'Capital Raising', 'Business & Financial Modelling' and 'Investor Pitch Development'.

Following the bootcamp, enterprises will pitch their value proposition and business model to an esteemed panel of investors on Sustainable Fashion Day at the upcoming edition of Lakmé Fashion Week. They will get the opportunity to receive investments and partnerships through their pitch to a group of potential strategic investors from reputed impact investment funds. Darshana Gajare, Lead Sustainable Fashion at IMG Reliance said, "Circular Design Challenge and Circular Changemakers is our commitment to provide a platform for upcoming brands and start-ups working tirelessly towards making fashion and textiles a cleaner business. With Sustainability at the forefront, now more than ever, we're looking forward to the upcoming edition with CAIF."

Vikas Bali, CEO, Intellectap said, "As a first of its kind investor readiness program designed to surface innovations in the sustainable fashion space, we were excited by the industry's response to the first edition of Circular Changemakers."



SOLUTION TO AUGUST 25

CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 Old name for a South East Asian country (6)
- 7 Unvarying pitch (8)
- 8 By oneself (4)
- 10 Mousy sound (6)
- 11 Beat (6)
- 14 Flow back (3)
- 16 Poetic feet of one kind (5)
- 17 Norse poems (4)
- 19 ___ to : adhered closely to ? (5)
- 21 Mother-of-pearl (5)
- 22 Burdened (5)
- 23 Nerve network (4)
- 26 Love for fine objects of art (5)
- 28 Very small (3)
- 29 Gunk (6)
- 30 Cured (6)
- 31 Indolently (4)
- 32 Salutation (8)
- 33 Blunders, blotches or bungles (6)

Down

- 1 Whipped cream dish (6)
- 2 One-celled creature (6)

- 3 Berserk (4)
- 4 Analgesic (7)
- 5 Computer communications device (5)
- 6 Sums owing (5)
- 8 Took to court (4)
- 9 Experiments may be carried out here, in short (3)
- 12 Cigarette, colloquially speaking (3)
- 13 Terminate (5)
- 15 Sore (5)
- 18 Satan (5)
- 19 Scoundrel (3)
- 20 Vase (3)
- 21 Mischievous (7)
- 22 In short, suffix of all Indian PLC's ? (3)
- 23 Domains or provinces (6)
- 24 Hard to grasp (4)
- 25 Supplies (6)
- 26 Churchillian gesture (1-4)
- 27 Less polite (5)
- 28 Marry (3)
- 30 Elated (4)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO AUGUST 25

NEWS ROUNDUP

Kajol hopes 'celfie' and 'compassion' will outlast Covid

Actress Kajol hopes compassion will outlast and outgrow Covid. She shared her thoughts in a new post on social media.

In a new Instagram selfie, Kajol looks at the camera, with her specs placed on her head.

"C for celfie, C for Compassion, C for COVID, aiming for the first two to outlast and outgrow the last one. Keep on swimming! #CFor

#GrowAndGlow," she wrote

Kajol's sister and actress Tanishaa Mukerji took to the comment section and wrote: "Miss you".

On the work front, Kajol is set to make her digital debut with "Tribhanga", directed by Renuka Shahane. It is a drama set in Mumbai, weaving a complex tale that goes back and forth through three generations of the same family, from the late 1980s to present day.



I stand with students: Greta Thunberg backs demand to defer JEE, NEET



New Delhi: Climate activist and global icon Greta Thunberg put her weight behind the nationwide "postpone JEE NEET" movement saying conducting exams during coronavirus pandemic and extreme floods was "deeply unfair" on students.

"I stand with their call to #PostponeJEE.NEETinCOVID," Ms Thunberg, who has 4.1 million followers on Twitter, wrote on the microblogging website where the hashtag #MODIJI.POSTPONE.JEENEET was already trending. While her tweet invited many responses from young men and

women across the globe, the climate activist - who has just returned to school after a "gap year" of creating awareness about the climate emergency - also faced a lot of backlash for her stand.

The demand to cancel the IIT and medical entrance exams has been gaining ground across the country with students and parents highlighting how they have been badly hit by floods that have affected many states, including Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Politicians across par-

ties have also backed the demand highlighting that this was not only "unsafe" because of Covid, but also "unjust" in view of the floods.

"Students and parents are under enormous mental stress. Considering the current restrictions on public transportation, the allotted exam centres are not uniformly accessible to all aspirants," DMK chief MK Stalin said in a letter to Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal.

Former Union Education Minister and senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal had also made similar arguments saying such an ap-

proach towards education was "elitist".

The Education Ministry has maintained it will not postpone the JEE and NEET exams, both of which are scheduled to be held in the first half of September. Petitions on the subject were also dismissed by the Supreme Court which said "life cannot be stopped". The JEE, NEET exams were first cancelled in May when the nationwide lockdown was in force and the total coronavirus cases were fewer.

India has been recording the world's highest daily spike in coro-

navirus figures since August 8. The country has already logged more than 31 lakh cases of the disease. The number of fatalities climbed to 58,390.

Bollywood actor and social worker Sonu Sood has requested the government to postpone the NEET, JEE examinations due to the coronavirus pandemic. He tweeted, "It's my request to government of India, to postpone the #Neet/#JEE exams in the current situation of the country! In the given #COVID19 situation, we should care utmost & not risk the lives of students!"

PULWAMA ATTACK CHARGESHEET

JeM chief Azhar, bros named

New Delhi/Jammu (IANS): The National Investigation Agency (NIA) in its chargesheet in the 2019 Pulwama terror attack case has named Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar, his brothers Abdul Rauf Asghar and Ammar Alvi, slain JeM terrorist Mohammad Umar Farooq, suicide bomber Adil Ahmed Dar and other terrorist commanders operating from Pakistan.

These are apart from the six arrested accused in the case.

The NIA has filed a 13,500-page chargesheet in the special NIA court in Jammu along with the pictures and digital evidence of the Pulwama terror attack. An NIA official told IANS: "The agency filed a chargesheet (on Tuesday) against Azhar, Asghar, Alvi, their slain nephew Farooq, six arrested accused, and absconding accused Sameer Dar in the Pulwama terror attack case at a Jammu special NIA court."

The NIA said that it has also named two Pakistani nationals - Mohammad Kamran and Mohammad Ismail alias Saifuddin, both IED experts. The official said that the agency has prepared a watertight case against the people named in the chargesheet along with all the irrefutable evidence,



including their chats and call details to highlight the role of Pakistan in the February 14, 2019 attack in which 40 CRPF troopers were killed.

The official said that this attack was a plot hatched by the Pakistan-based terror group to project the attack as part of the home-grown militancy in Kashmir. The NIA has also accused several top commanders of the terrorist group in its chargesheet.

The agency arrested Mohammad Iqbal Rather, 25, a resident of Budgam, Jammu & Kashmir in July this year. He is accused of fa-

cilitating the movement of Farooq, the JeM terrorist and a key conspirator in this case, after he infiltrated into Indian territory in Jammu region in April 2018.

Farooq, along with others, had assembled the IED used in the terror attack. The NIA in its chargesheet accused that Farooq, who infiltrated in India was an IED expert. Farooq along with suicide bomber Adil and absconding terrorist Sameer Dar prepared the IED that was placed in the Maruti car that was used in the terror attack.

Sameer had come out of the car

500 meters away from the attack site.

Earlier, the NIA found that Rather was in constant touch with the Pakistan-based leadership of the JeM and was in communication with them over secure messaging applications and was also part of the transportation module of the terrorist organisation.

The other five arrested accused named in the chargesheet are - Shakir Bashir, Mohammad Abbas Rather, Waiz-ul-Islam, and the father-daughter duo of Tariq Ahmad Shah and Insha Jan - all alleged over ground workers of the JeM.

‘Yoga with cow’ session in UK upsets Hindus

London: An exotic "yoga with cows" session at a Lancashire dairy in the United Kingdom has triggered a controversy after it was met with objection from a section of people from the Hindu community for allegedly offending Hinduism and "trivialising" its core concepts.

Lancashire Farm Dairies held a session of six people at a farm in Leyland where the practised UK's first cow yoga class, the HuffPost UK reported. It was conducted as a way of encouraging people to resume physical activities amid the coronavirus lockdown. The concept of practising yoga with animals is believed to be helpful for reducing stress levels.

However, soon the session was slammed by Hindu cleric Rajan Zed, president of the Universal Society of Hinduism, in Nevada. Zen hit out at the event and its organisers for "trivialising two serious concepts of Hinduism: cows, (considered sacred in Hinduism) and the ancient discipline of yoga."

The cleric shot a letter to the dairy objecting to the classes and urged for an immediate stop "before they became a trendy fad with herds of people flocking to dairy farms to do yoga alongside cows, with many visualising it as an In-



stagram opportunity".

"The cow is the seat of many deities and is sacred and has long been venerated in Hinduism. They should not be used as a prop for human entertainment. Cows were inappropriately used in such events, causing unnecessary disturbance to cows and putting them in stressful situations. Cows should be left well alone and accorded the respect they deserve," Zed told HuffPost UK.

In his letter, he further accused the team of participants of "diluting the profound, sacred and ancient discipline of yoga" and that "unpredictable cows could be a distraction in a path of self-discovery that drew the yogi inwards."

Zed has urged the Lancashire Farm Dairies to rethink, revisit and

reevaluate its yoga classes with cows. "We suggest that companies should send their senior executives for training in religious and cultural sensitivity so that they have an understanding of the feelings of customers and communities when introducing new products, organising events or launching advertising."

Meanwhile, in a rejoinder, Jack Morrison, brand manager at Lancashire Farm Dairies, tendered an apology for "any offense caused". Morrison said, "We can only apologise if the recent fitness activity has caused offence. As you can imagine, this wasn't our intent. The activity itself was in reaction to a recent study saying physical exercise had fallen during the Covid-19 lockdown."

Cop assaults boy in Delhi, suspended

New Delhi: A constable has been suspended after a video surfaced purportedly showing him beating up a boy with a baton in southwest Delhi as another policeman stood nearby, officials said on Tuesday.

A departmental inquiry has also been initiated against the constable after the incident occurred at R K Puram area, police said.

In the video that went viral on social media, the constable who was on his night duty can be seen beating up the boy with a stick as another cop stood watching the act. The boy's age has not been ascertained yet.

‘AYUSH Minister stable but recovery to take time’

Panaji (IANS): Union Minister of State for Defence and AYUSH Shripad Naik is currently stable, but his recovery could take a "long time", a Manipal Hospital doctor said here on Tuesday. Consultant oncologist at Goa's Manipal Hospital and Naik's personal friend Dr Shekhar Salkar also said that Naik had tested negative for Covid-19 late on Monday and as per norms another test has been conducted to re-confirm his Covid status, results of which would be available late on Tuesday. "He is good now. He is stable. He will need a long time to recover. It will not be a fast recovery," Dr Salkar told reporters, after a team of doctors appointed by the Union Health Ministry examined Naik at the private hospital near Panaji, where the Union minister has been admitted.

4 held for journalist's murder in UP

Lucknow: A journalist working with a Hindi news channel was on Monday night shot dead in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh, police said.

He has been identified as Ratan Singh (45).

"A journalist working with a Hindi news channel was shot dead on Monday night in Phephana. He has been identified as Ratan Singh (45)," Additional Superintendent of Police Sanjay Yadav said.

Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said four people, Dinesh Singh,



Arvind Singh, Suneel Singh and Moti Singh, have been arrested in this connection.

According to the police, the journalist was involved in a property dispute with his neighbour Dinesh Singh.

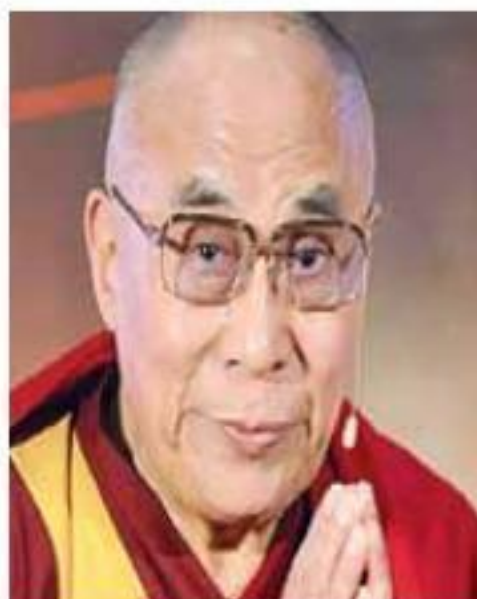
"Ratan had a dispute regarding property with his neighbor. On Monday evening, there was a fight between the two sides, and the neighbour shot at him. Accused Dinesh Singh is also Ratan Singh's parccener," Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said.

Dalai's security tightened after arrest of Chinese spy

Dharamshala: Himachal Pradesh police and central agencies have tightened security around where Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, resides at McLeodganj - Headquarter of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), near Dharamshala.

The move comes after the arrest of suspected Chinese spy Charlie Peng in Delhi last week. A Chinese woman, Lan Hoo, and another person, identified as Sonu Bangtoo, were detained by Himachal Police for their alleged links with Charlie Peng.

The Dalai Lama is one of the highly protected figures in India enjoying three-tier security.



Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said since it has come to notice of the police that the Chi-

nese spy arrested in Delhi was running a hawala racket, and he had transferred some money to these two persons. He said the state government is looking into the matter.

"Two persons, who are now detained by the state police, were regularly tracking the movements of the Dalai Lama and passing the information to Charlie Peng. They purportedly have got money in lieu of it. In view of this, the security of the Dalai Lama has been strengthened. We can't make any compromise on the Tibetan spiritual leader's security at any cost," said CM Jai Ram Thakur.

Conflict in BJP over MLA Champion's return

New Delhi (IANS): There has been an uproar over the return of controversial Uttarakhand MLA Pranav Singh Champion back to the BJP.

The rumblings against Champion's return have also reached Delhi as some leaders of the party's state unit are preparing to meet BJP President J.P. Nadda and lodge their complaint on the issue. Party leaders believe that Champion has let down the party with his antics several times. They fear the return of the MLA who has been infamous for firing guns many times in public will have an adverse effect on the BJP's image.

The party may also have to bear the consequences of the move in the 2022 Assembly election. Last year, Champion was expelled by the BJP for six years after a video of him dancing while consuming alcohol went viral.

Champion, Khanpur MLA in Haridwar district of Uttarakhand, has a longstanding link with controversies. One of his videos went viral in July last year showing him dancing with alcohol while holding guns. When the video went viral, the party fired him. A month earlier, Champion had threatened to kill a journalist in Delhi, even after the party suspended him for three months.

INDIA'S RECOVERY RATE REACHES 75.9%



New Delhi: With 60,975 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, India's COVID-19 tally rose to 31,67,323, while recoveries surged to 24,04,585 pushing the recovery rate to 75.92 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The death toll climbed to 58,390 with 848 fatalities being reported in a span of 24-hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate has declined to 1.84 per cent.

There are 7,04,348 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 22.24 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated. India's COVID-19

tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 3,68,27,520 samples have been tested up to August 24 with 9,25,383 samples being tested on Monday.

Of the 848 fresh deaths, 212 are from Maharashtra, 127 from Karnataka, 97 from Tamil Nadu, 86 from Andhra Pradesh, 61 from Uttar Pradesh, 57 from West Bengal, 43 from Punjab, 18 from Jharkhand, 17 from Madhya Pradesh, 13 each from Delhi and Gujarat, 12 from Rajasthan and 11 from Kerala.

Ten fatalities have been reported each from Assam,

Haryana and Odisha, nine each from Chhattisgarh and Telangana, seven each from Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand, five from

Puducherry and Tripura, four from Goa, three from Bihar, while Andaman and Nicobar Islands have registered two fatalities each.

Of the total 58,390 deaths, Maharashtra has reported the maximum at 22,465 followed by 6,614 in Tamil Nadu, 4,810 in Karnataka, 4,313 in Delhi, 3,368 in Andhra Pradesh, 2,987 in Uttar Pradesh, 2,908 in Gujarat, 2,851 in West Bengal and 1,246 in Madhya Pradesh.

IIT Alumni Council disbands Covid vaccine plan

New Delh (IANS): IIT Alumni Council has announced formal disbanding of the Covid vaccine initiative that was part of the six-month C19 Task Force.

The vaccine team concluded that none of the available approaches and claims were adequately backed by disclosed scientific data, patient research and clinical studies. In addition to getting the vaccine paradigm right, factors like adjuvants could play a critical role.

"Somewhere we have to consider

the mathematics of an ambition statement. No more than 2 per cent of Covid patients need critical care. There is a fair surety that most of these can be cured by antibody based biologics.

"On the other hand, for vaccination, we would probably need to vaccinate 98 per cent of our population. Chasing 2 per cent of the population with a 98 per cent sure cure has a far better probability of success than chasing 98 per cent of the population with a 2 per cent

surety of safety and efficacy," said Daljit Singh, an IIT Alumnus and former President of Fortis Healthcare.

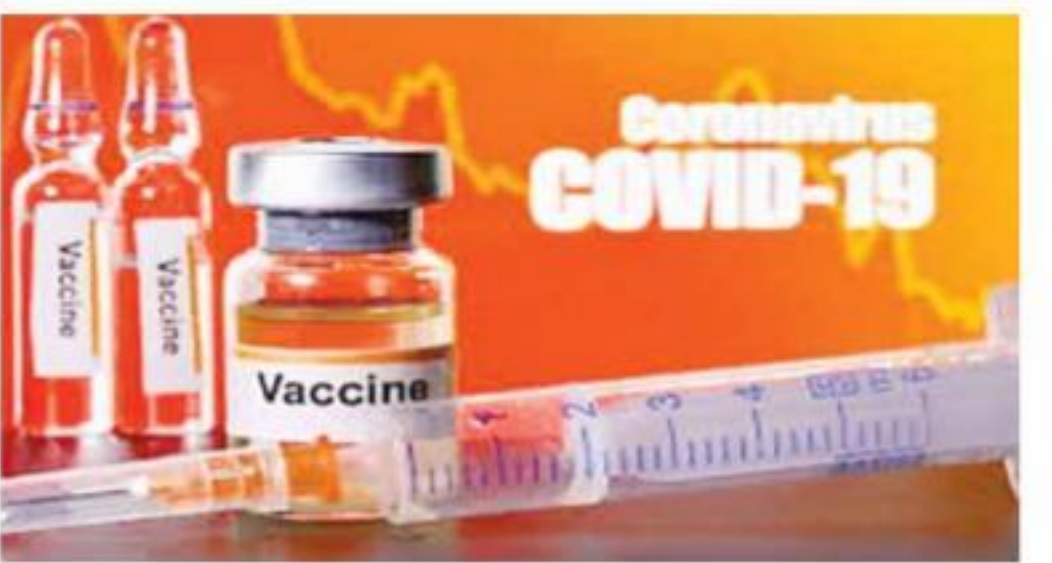
Some of the vaccine approaches being attempted globally involve injecting a deactivated virus or simulated protein fragment into the body so as to induce the body to generate antibodies. The adverse reaction of the vaccine injection as well as the efficacy and lifespan of the antibodies is unknown.

All of this is currently work in

progress under initiatives like MegaTx. Even though India has more patient data than probably any other country in the world, it is not sufficient to deliver a vaccine as yet.

"IIT Alumni Council team concluded that developing a vaccine based on conventional research and clinical trials takes several years. Even then there is no certainty. For example even after 28+ years and over \$100 billion of funding, a HIV Aids vaccine is yet to suc-

ceed. "Commercialising a vaccine within a few weeks or months should not be done considering safety aspects. The first logical step to developing a universal vaccine is accelerating research using simulation in preference to actual patient trials. It may not be advisable to subsidise or mass deploy a vaccine whose safety and long term efficacy is unproven," said Ravi Sharma, President of the IIT Alumni Council.



Changing dynamics of India's airport sector

Of late, the country's airport sector is witnessing rapid changes. This is more so in the private sector currently dominated by GMR and GVK groups, both having their roots in Telugu States. India got its first private airport under public private partnership (PPP) mode when Cochin International Airport (CIAL) was opened in 1999. Over 10,000 NRIs invested in the project anchored by the Kerala State government. Air India and other companies also chipped in with their investments. Subsequently, GMR Group, with roots in Andhra Pradesh, developed Greenfield Hyderabad international airport which commenced operations in 2008. After the successful execution of the Hyderabad airport, it went on to expand Delhi airport and executed several such projects overseas too. Hyderabad-based GVK Group also forayed into the airport sector by developing Bengaluru international airport. Subsequently, it ex-

panded Mumbai international airport (MIAL), the country's busiest airport. The group is also in the process of developing Rs 20,000-crore Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIAL), a Greenfield airport in Mumbai, in partnership with the Maharashtra government. Thus, GMR and GVK groups emerged as dominant players in the airport sector in India in the last one decade or so. But with the entry of Gujarat-based Adani Group led by billionaire Gautam Adani, the dynamics in the country's airport sector are fast changing now. In February 2019, Adani Group, which is a dominant player in ports and energy sectors, won mandate to operate, manage and develop six airports across India, thus emerging as the third biggest airport operator in the private sector in a short span. They include Airports Authority of India (AAI)-operated airports in Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and Mangalore. Last week, the Union Cabinet cleared leasing out of Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram airports to Adani. It will also get three other airports once Covid-19 threat subsides. The latest development is that Adani is in active talks to buy out the entire stake of GVK in Mumbai airport. GVK currently

owns 50.5 per cent stake in MIAL that owns and operates the Mumbai airport. Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) owns 10 per cent stake while 13.5 per cent share is with Bidvest, also a South African company. In March last year, Adani Group signed a deal with Bidvest to buy its stake in the Mumbai airport for Rs 1,248 crore. But GVK blocked the deal by invoking its right of first refusal. However, GVK failed to raise funds to buy out Bidvest's stake and the issue subsequently landed in courts. In a surprise development, GVK recently landed in a CBI case for alleged misuse of funds to the tune of Rs 705 crore belonging to the Mumbai airport. The premier investigating agency alleged that GVK Group caused a loss of Rs 310 crore to the exchequer. ED also registered a case on this. In these changing circumstances, debt-ridden GVK Group might have decided to exit from the Mumbai airport. If this deal goes through, Adani Group will emerge as the country's biggest private sector airport operator, pushing back GMR and GVK groups. Anyway, the increased presence of the private sector in the airports segment will benefit passengers as private airport operators provide world class facilities.



Indian education: From light to darkness

DANISH MANNINGACHALI & SAMHITA S AYALURI

Despite having a well-planned and enlightening curriculum and a comprehensive education system till high school, only a fortunate few can attain proper education as the ever-increasing poverty deprive a huge majority of proper pedagogy in the country. Though education is supposed to be free and compulsory until the age of 14, the fact that rules rest in rulebooks is everybody's knowledge.

Though the few educated liberals and urban intelligentsia raise a hue and cry over the crumbling democracy in the country and the cumulative dominance of fanatic forces in the corridors of power, nothing seems to change the fate of star-crossed millions who live in the backwoods in utter misery and abject discrimination.

It is against this backdrop, the present dispensation is trying to wipe out history and progressive lessons from the curriculum, in its evil design to flourish on illiteracy and ignorance of the masses.

In a ridiculous development, a popular WhatsApp video that is still in circulation points fingers at the minority communities of India for the country's rapid growth in population. The video condemns the minorities who are assumed to wage a religious war to have the majority of their kind in the country. Though some experts tried to debunk this message by presenting some facts and statistics, how far it helped to reach the people no one knows. This could have also perhaps been answered by a student from the ninth grade who learnt a chapter on 'Population' in the subject of Social Science. The chapter puts forth questions like, "How has the population grown and changed through time?" A prominent leader of the ruling party and a powerful Minister in the Union Cabinet is rumoured to have instructed the party's IT cell to use WhatsApp extensively to spread disinformation, or fake news, to create a good perception about the party's 'good intentions', due to its large presence on this social media platform. With rampant fake news spreading across the country through social media, it is rather important for students, the future leaders, to become a force against fake news which could be through accessing authentic information through school textbooks.

However, recently, the CBSE notified the reduction of up to 30% of the curriculum for Grades 9 to 12, due to the prevailing pandemic situation, which forced the authorities to reduce the number of working days considerably. While it is an attentive and an appreciative move to reduce the curriculum, what chapters have been slashed, is a cause of concern. Along with the chapter on 'Population' from Grade 9 Social Science book, other chapters such as 'Democratic Rights' (Grade 9), 'Democracy and Diversity' (Grade 10), and 'Gender, Religion and Caste' (Grade 10), among others, were deleted.

'Democratic Rights' is an essential chapter for students because more often than not, unawareness about people's own rights is the reason why

'Democratic Rights' is an essential chapter for students because more often than not, unawareness about people's own rights is the reason why there are so many oppressed people in the country. As you may now guess, there is a need for more people to be aware of their fundamental rights, to say the least. To get to the root of why we have oppressed Dalits, tribes, and religious and other minorities in India, the answer would be the failure of citizens in assertion of these rights and failure of the government to upkeep the right to constitutional remedies. Thus, the awareness of rights is essential to forfeit oppression. If the political leaders of the country want a senile population that would listen to every whim of theirs, then the way to do that would be to either take away the citizens' rights or to make the future generation unaware of their rights. Removal of chapters that create awareness and other similar ones increases the possibility of the latter taking place.

there are so many oppressed people in the country. The six fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution are – Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right against Exploitation, Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural & Educational Rights, and Right to Constitutional Remedies. As you may now guess, there is a need for more people to be aware of their fundamental rights, to say the least. To get to the root of why we have oppressed Dalits, tribes, and religious and other minorities in India, the answer would be the failure of citizens in assertion of these rights and failure of the government to upkeep the right to constitutional remedies. Thus, the awareness of rights is essential to forfeit oppression. If the political leaders of the country want a senile population that would listen to every whim of theirs, then the way to do that would be to either take away the citizens' rights or to make the future generation unaware of their rights. Removal of

chapters that create awareness and other similar ones increases the possibility of the latter taking place.

It is worrisome to comprehend that chapters on 'Democracy and Diversity' and 'Gender, Religion and Caste' were completely removed. India is a country that is divided across religion and caste? It is almost as if we have forgotten to appreciate our diversity. We see lynching, caste atrocities, and gender discrimination happening around us on a regular basis. Our national capital – Delhi – is also not free of communal riots. What if there was no discrimination based on gender, caste, or religion in our country? What if we stood by the Right to Equality, that is imbedded in our constitution? What if we created a safe space for people to live in solidarity? These chapters included in the curriculum could act as a remedy to these challenges. It is rather important to re-learn how to appreciate people from diverse backgrounds and co-exist. Awareness about pressing issues is the first step toward solving problems, without which, we question the expectations of how the future generation would solve socio-economic problems.

Along similar lines, chapters on Federalism, Nationalism, Secularism, and Citizenship have been completely scrapped from the subject of Political Theory for Grade 11. With increasing discourses on bringing the right essence of nationalism and protecting secularism and citizenship in our country, especially after the extreme and essential debates on CAA-NRC-NPR that began in 2019, the scrapping of these chapters, even as a one-time measure for now, almost seem to act strategically to mum further discourses about the regressive actions of the government. When we look at History syllabus for class 12, partial or complete deletion of chapters happened in History Part-II (Medieval India) and Part-III (Modern India), while Part-I (Ancient India) saw zero deletion either partial or complete. It is perturbing that even chapters such as partition and the J&K separatist politics which one might consider to be very important when children learn history have seen the axe of CBSE.

With the pandemic ravaging the country in this unprecedented situation, the schools have closed for a long time, and rightfully so, resulting in the loss of valuable time which could have been utilised to slowly and steadily to work through the curriculum, while adapting to the virtual education mode which urban India has the privilege of. Instead of the Education Board outrightly eliminating complete topics from the curriculum, prioritised portions should have been included. Alternatively, the board could prescribe a reading list, documentaries or videos even – for the ease of viewing online and on televisions – to cover the important topics while exploring new methods of learning. If the interests of students who wish to take the common national exams is to be highlighted, this would also be handy for them in the future, without causing bias between batches. With the three-way intertwining of the pandemic with the access to education and the political economy of education, the winner of this demolition derby will surely implement his wicked machinations hands down.

A few lessons from Entebbe terror play

B ARAVINDA REDDY

Terror is a commonly used instrument to achieve political goals. Similarly, methods of meeting terror and denying the objectives sought to be achieved by terror groups are important material for the study of the play of politics. The raid on Entebbe airport in Kampala in Uganda on the intervening night of 3 and 4 July 1976 is a classic and dramatic example of how terror was used and how it was joined by the opposing party. 44 years after the incident, by hindsight, we can analyse the operation and refresh lessons learnt long ago with a new perspective. The lessons of Entebbe raid are still a guide to a country like India which faces terror acts on a regular basis.

On Sunday, 27 June, 1976, Air France flight No 139 from Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, scheduled to fly to Paris was hijacked by two German and two Palestinian hijackers after taking off from a stopover in Athens, Greece. The hijackers were from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The architect of the strategy to hijack planes of western countries was Dr Wadie Haddad, the deputy of Dr George Habash who formed the PFLP. A large number out of the 228 passengers in the plane were Jews. After hijacking, the plane was taken to the Entebbe airport in Kampala, Uganda. Three more terrorists joined the hijackers at the airport. The hijackers demand was to release 53 'freedom fighters' imprisoned in five countries majority of whom were Palestinians held up in Israeli prisons. Unable to accede to the demand of the hijackers, Israel launched a military operation on the airport in Kampala. All the hijackers lost their lives in the operation and the hostages were freed. The military operation was code-named as 'Operation Thunderbolt'.

'Group think' is a term coined by social psychologist Irving L Janus to refer to a practice in which people strive to achieve consensus setting aside their personal views on an issue. This usually happens in a situation where there is an authoritative figure who dominates the group. When options were considered by the Israeli Cabinet to resolve the hijacking issue, the almost unanimous opinion was to negotiate and release prisoners from Israeli jails as demanded by the hijackers. Decision-makers in Israeli government were keenly aware of the ruthlessness of the hijackers and the loss of life in earlier hijackings. Initially they were not prepared to risk the lives of hostages and ruled out a military operation as not feasible. The Cabinet, the Army chief and the Opposition leaders were all for a negotiated settlement. The group was led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The only dissenting voice was Shimon Peres, the Defence Minister. Shimon Peres was not a favourite of the Prime Minister in the Cabinet and he did not see eye to eye with the PM on many issues. Ultimately it was the Defence Minister who corralled the group to change the group think and opt for a military solution. Had



the group think prevailed, the consequences for Israel would have been catastrophic in terms of loss of prestige in international community and in giving further impetus to terror activities worldwide.

On the sixth day of the hijack drama, Dora Block, an elderly Israeli woman and one of the hostages got a food particle stuck in her throat while eating lunch in the holdup area of the hostages. The hijackers allowed her to be taken to a hospital for a check-up. A doctor in the hospital using an instrument removed the food particle from her throat. After her brief stay in the hospital, Dora Block was supposed to be sent back to the detention area of the hostages. Kenyan Health Minister, Henry Kyemba, after visiting Dora Block in the hospital, decided to keep her in the hospital till the hostages are released so that she could have a better stay in the hospital compared to the cramped and unhygienic conditions in the hold-up area. For Dora Block fate was unkind. It is believed that Idi Amin, the Ugandan dictator got her killed in revenge for the Ugandan soldiers killed in the raid.

The plan of the Israeli raiding party was to conduct the operation in total silence and surprise so as not to give reaction time to the hijackers to harm the hostages. The Ugandan dictator, Idi Amin, who was helping the hijackers used to come now and then to the airport in a black Mercedes car to talk to the hijackers and the hostages on the progress of negotiations. The planners of the raid thought that using a black Mercedes car and dressing up the advance raiding party to resemble Idi Amin and his companions, they could fool the Ugandan soldiers and head straight to the hold-up area without arousing suspicion. But things turned out differently. As the black Mercedes car of the advance raiding party approached the road that led to the old terminal, the place where the hostages were

kept, one of the armed Ugandan sentry who was 100 yards in advance of the control tower, lifted his rifle and called out 'advance'. It could have been a routine challenge and the soldier might not have fired. But the commanding officer of the advance raiding party, Yoni Netanyahu, thought otherwise and fired at the sentry. Soon, there was a burst of gunfire and sound. The element of surprise was gone and the hijackers were alerted.

The operation would not have been successful but for the cooperation of the hijackers.

In the eyes of the world and Israel, the operation was a great success. Only two Israeli soldiers including the Commanding Officer, Yoni Netanyahu were killed. All the seven hijackers were also killed. All the hostages except three were rescued. Conducting a military operation 2200 miles away from their homeland in a clockwork precision with minimal loss of life was an event unmatched by any military exploits in contemporary military history anywhere in the world. But the story had a twist. As said earlier, the element of surprise was gone by the exchange of fire in the initial moments of the operation. With the time given, the hijackers could have killed the hostages. They chose not to kill but opted to fight the raiding party. In the gunfight they perished but left the hostages to live.

For the entire eight days during the saga of the hijack, the attention of the world was riveted on the incident and on the Palestine issue. It was a mega publicity campaign worth millions and millions of dollars for the cause of Palestine. Winston Churchill, late Prime Minister of the UK observed that history is written by victors. The story of Entebbe is always a narration about the bravery of Israeli soldiers and how they pulled off an impossible hostages' rescue. The vanquished hijackers too have

an interesting untold story to tell. How they smuggled firearms and explosives into the airplane at Athens airport without the security noticing them? How did they persuade the Ugandan President to allow them to run their operation from the Ugandan soil? Why did they choose not to harm the hostages when they had a chance? The answers to the questions above could have made an interesting story.

Taking a cue from the operation at Entebbe, many countries prone to terrorist attacks set up special military units. The German special unit GSG-9 inspired by Operation Thunderbolt stormed hijacked Lufthansa Boeing 737 at Mogadishu airport in 1977 and rescued all hostages. Three years after this incident, Britain's special unit SAS stormed the Iranian embassy in London, rescued all but one hostage by killing five terrorists. Our country has its own special operations force called National Security Guard (NSG). The NSG was used to neutralise terrorist attack on Mumbai in November 2008. The lasting impact of the raid was the realisation that terror need not stun into submission and that it can be fought and won.

The one issue which is yet to be resolved regarding terror attacks is how to minimise the effort and cost in dealing with them. The sponsor of terror employs a small group and gives them minimal equipment. The opposing party, usually a nation, has to deploy a large group of its armed forces with a high cost. In Kashmir today, a small group of terrorists sneaks into our borders and we have to use hundreds of our soldiers to silence them. The war on terror will be won when we learn how to equal or slash the cost of an operation with that of the sponsor of a terror attack.

(The writer is a retired IAS officer of Telangana cadre)

Starting online classes a welcome move

The decision of conducting online classes from September 1, officially starting the new Academic Year is good news for students and parents. Everyone is expecting success of online classes. The State-run Door Darshan channel Yadagiri and Tsat channel should consider the request of telecasting every programme at least twice. The government should make sure consistency in power supply. Every student should get new textbooks. Considering the losses of some months of the academic year, periods duration can be extended. Parents should be taken into confidence in all academic related matters. Teachers should inspire the students with their lecturers.

D Kishan Prasad, Ramakrishna Colony, Karimnagar dist

Introduce multilingual system in schools

The corona pandemic is teaching a number of lessons to the society. When we see or read pitiable episodes of migrant labourers, we find that their wards are not attending schools for years. They are their children are unable to go to the schools in their workplace because the schools adopt their State language as medium of instruction. To overcome this problem, schools should introduce multilingual system. It is the act of using, or pro-

LETTERS

moting the use of, multiple languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. It should be imported to the classroom now widely and wisely. Language is a complex phenomenon. It is not just a means of communication. Language is thought also. India is a land of many languages. The teacher must respect the various languages like Telugu, Urdu, Kannada, Oriya and others spoken by children and provide space for each linguistic community in the classroom. Freedom should be given to learners to use mother tongue at every stage. Multilingualism promotes scholastic achievement and cognitive growth and social tolerance. Teachers should make use of translation, paraphrase, code mixing and code switching very efficiently. Multilingualism is the norm of the day. The world today is becoming increasingly multilingual. The use of mother tongue will help in learning second language or foreign language.

Pesala Narayana, Badvel, Kadapa district, AP

Vaccine invention should be speeded up

The Covid-19 pandemic infections are spiking beligerently throughout the country. Six months have passed since the killer virus was spotted, yet it remains uncontained. Andhra Pradesh State is reeling with increased positive cases and deaths. Media reports say in

Telangana also, virus contracted cases would have been six times more than the present figures if the testing had been done to all residents. Today we have more than half a dozen vaccine candidates and all are in the third and the last phase of trial. It is appalling to note how this feral virus is being spread among even people strictly confined to four walls. Quickening the mission vaccine launched by the Central government is the need of the hour to exorcize the virus.

N Ramalakshmi, Secunderabad

Reservation for locals aimed at poll victory

The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister recently announced that the State government would make necessary legal provisions to reserve government jobs for local people. Reservation of any kind has an emotive value for its beneficiaries and the so government decision may give comfort to some people, but many of them think that this decision of MP Chief Minister is beneficial only for his own party in the next elections because it is very important for the BJP and political parties to please the voters. Reservations have always been linked to politics in every State, there is no harm in integrating a reservation system in recruitment process for selected sections of jobs.

Khushbu Ved, Hyderabad

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House sites process put on fast track in AP

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati: Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy said that house sites worth Rs 22,000 crore will be registered in the name of 30 lakh women belonging to weaker sections in the state and expressed hope that the state government would get a favourable verdict from the Supreme Court so that it can go ahead with the distribution of house site pattas to the poor very soon.

During a video conference under Spandana, the Chief Minister directed the officials to complete the process related to layouts, markings and lottery to select beneficiaries. He asked to focus on the layouts which are not done properly and plant saplings in the layouts.

He directed the officials to conduct review meetings with tahsildars and ensure the collection of all details including photos, boundaries of plots and others required for registration of house site pattas.

The Chief Minister said there are reports that bank managers are creating problems by not giving YSR Cheyutha amount deposited in unencumbered accounts of women and directed the district collectors to speak to the bank managers regarding it and ensure the money is given to the women.

On NREGS, the Chief Minister said the material component expenditure should be Rs 10 crore per week in every district in the state.

He said construction of buildings of village/ward secretariats should be completed by March 2021 and said the government has focused on strengthening Anganwadi centres in the state. Anganwadi centres will be changed to YSR Pre-primary schools and 10 types of facilities will be provided in the schools.

An action plan will be prepared by next week to revamp 55,000 Anganwadi centres under Naadu-Nedu scheme.

The Chief Minister directed the district collectors and JCs to focus on Naadu Nedu programme in schools and ensure quality in the works and complete all the works by September 5 as the government is planning to reopen the schools by then.

CM refers reports of banks not giving Cheyutha money to women, asks officials to speak to managers as banks have no claim on the amount deposited in unencumbered accounts of beneficiaries

Bail rejected for Ramesh hospital staff

- Court says the hospital management should have checked the safety measures before setting up Covid centre

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Vijayawada: The additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge rejected the bail petition filed by the staff of Ramesh Hospital on Tuesday.

It may be recalled that general manager of Ramesh Hospital Dr Kodali Rajagopal Rao, general manager Kurapti Sudarshan and Covid care centre coordinating manager Pallabothu Venkatesh were arrested holding them responsible for the August 9 fire mishap that occurred in the Hotel Swarna Palace which was turned into Covid care centre. The advocate on behalf of the petitioners contended that that District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) gave permission for setting up Covid care centre in the hotel and the hospital management believed that the hotel management followed the safety measures.

Agreeing with the prosecution argument, the court held that the hospital management which has vast experience in running hospital should have checked the safety measures.

The hospital management could not shirk from their responsibility by simply saying that the DMHO accorded permission, it was said. Relying on the report submitted by the joint collector, the judge said that there were inadequate fire safety measures and the management did not check the specifications thoroughly.

HC stays arrest warrant on Dr Ramesh

Asks whether officials concerned have been made accused in the case for according permission for Covid care centre in the hotel

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Nelapadu (Amaravati): In a respite to Dr Ramesh, chairman and managing director of Dr Ramesh Hospitals, Justice D Ramesh of Andhra Pradesh High Court stayed the arrest warrant and further action against the physician while hearing the quash petition filed by Dr Ramesh on Tuesday. Counsel for Dr Ramesh Thota Sridhar pointed out that the hotel has been in business for the last several decades and the officials issued permission to the hospital management to run the Covid care centre. Justice Ramesh asked the government whether the officials who gave permission to the hospital were also made accused or not. "Then the district collector, joint collector and district medical and health officer should also be included in the list of accused," he said.

The single judge bench also wanted to know whether the hotel was treated as airport quarantine centre in the past.

The additional advocate general said that the interim orders could not be given when the case was under investigation.

Setting aside his objections, Justice Ramesh issued interim orders staying the arrest warrant against the physician.

Congress leader ends life over Covid

- Sirigireddy Gangi Reddy jumps under a train after his test results come positive

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Kadapa: A senior Congress leader committed by jumping under train after he was tested positive for Covid-19.

According to sources, Sirigireddy Gangi Reddy, 52, of Yerraguntla mandal had been undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Prodduturu for high fever and respiratory problems.

Three days ago his test results came positive for Covid. After learning of the results, Gangi Reddy went missing from the hospital since August 23. Reportedly panicked over the disease, he jumped under a train at Sunnapurallapalle village of Yerraguntla mandal late on Monday night.

This is second such incident in the district. Earlier, an 18-year-old boy from Rajupalem village under Kamalapuram mandal committed suicide after he had tested positive for coronavirus.

Dy CM holds Ramesh Hospitals squarely responsible for the tragedy

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Vijayawada: Describing the fire accident at Swarna Palace as unfortunate, Deputy Chief Minister and minister for health Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) squarely blamed the management of Ramesh Hospitals for the tragedy. "The management was not only irresponsible but also collected huge fees from the victims. We have issued two notices to the managements returnable by August 30," he said.

He along with ministers Vellampalli Srinivas and Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao and district collector A MD Intiaz on Tuesday distributed cheques each worth Rs 50 lakh to the family members of the victims who perished in the fire accident in the Covid care centre of Swarna

AP CM warns pvt hospitals on fees

- Says stringent action will be taken against the hospitals which charge in excess of fees prescribed by the govt for Covid treatment
- Tells officials to fully equip all Covid hospitals with oxygen supply and other paraphernalia and rate hospitals accordingly
- Expresses relief over easing of flood situation in both Godavari and Krishna rivers

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati: Severe action should be initiated against hospitals which are charging more than the government-stipulated charges for Covid-19 treatment, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy said.

Presiding over Spandana programme here on Tuesday with district collectors and SPs, the Chief Minister said that efforts should be made to look after the Covid-19 patients on humanitarian grounds and severe action should be taken against hospitals which were charging more than what was stipulated in the GO issued by the government.

The Chief Minister expressed happiness that the state stood first in conducting tests and added that those with risk factor could be saved if tests were conducted in the clusters rapidly. He said the sooner Covid-19 cases were identified the better as the patients could be sent home for quarantine. He asked the collectors to speed up the identifying process for the pandemic so that the patients could be discharged at the earliest.

The Chief Minister said that all the Covid-19 hospitals should be fully equipped with oxygen supply and other paraphernalia for the treatment of patients and accordingly the hospitals should be given ratings. The ward, village volun-



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy addressing District Collectors and SPs as part of Spandana on Tuesday

teers and mandal-level committees should monitor whether the hospitals have proper equipment to face any fire mishap. He said lessons should be learnt from the recent fire mishap at a Covid-19 hospital in Vijayawada.

With reference to Aarogyasri, the Chief Minister said that help desks should be created at all the PHCs, CHCs and area hospitals and create Arogya Mitra posts there to monitor the situation in the centres.

The Chief Minister said that Arogya Asara scheme should also be strengthened and implemented earnestly by giving the patient Rs 225 on daily basis or Rs 5,000 at the time of leaving in a month. He said priority should be given to the appointment of doctors and nurses in the Covid-19 hospitals and ensure that they are not understaffed.

Meanwhile, reviewing the flood situation, the Chief Minister said by God's grace the flood situation in Godavari river has decreased and said that the inflows were less than 10 lakh cusecs. The situation in even Krishna has eased and at Srisailem they have started closing the crest gates. He said crop loss should be estimated before September 7.

He said a plan should be prepared by September 7 to pay an additional compensation of Rs 2,000 each to the victims of Godavari floods.

No one will be spared in SCs/STs cases, asserts Jagan

Alleges that the previous govt overlooked atrocities against Dalits

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati: Claiming that nobody is above law, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said even an SI or a CI was not spared by the government which registered SC, ST Atrocities cases against them.

Speaking at the Spandana programme in the presence of SPs and collectors, the Chief Minister said this was not the case during the previous regime when the government used to overlook atrocities against Dalits and other atrocities cases.

But now the government was committed to equal justice to all and booking SC, ST Atrocities cases even against SIs and CIs who had committed crimes.

He said four or five such instances had taken place where immediate action was initiated against the accused.

He said the entire system should change and even relatives of higher-ups should not be spared in cases of atrocities

against the weaker sections. In this connection he recalled the tansure case when immediate action was taken.

He said all the policemen down from constables should be given orientation classes and sensitised to face the situation.

"The home minister, the DGP and the additional DG should take immediate action in such cases to bring about a change of attitude in the society. Our home minister is a Dalit and our DGP is an ST. It is our responsibility to protect the backward classes," said the Chief Minister adding that there is need for bringing about a qualitative change in the attitude of the people.

A special department has been created to deal with cases of illegal liquor manufacture and sand mafia, said the Chief Minister.

He said there should be no wrong-doing and even the ministers, MLAs and political leaders were not above law. He said there should be no room.

Srivari trust quota tickets for Sept released

Tirumala: TTD released online quota for Srivani Trust for the month of September with daily numbers ranging up to 100.

However, TTD has cancelled quota for September 19 in view of Brahmotsava Dwajorhanam and on September 23 as it is Garuda seva. It may be recalled that TTD extended one-time VIP Break Darshan facility for Srivani trust donors. The break darshan availing facility for the contributions they have made to the Trust have also been extended from six months to one year in view of Covid-19 restrictions.

APSSDC inks pact with NRDC

Tadepalli: AP State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) signed a memorandum of understanding with National Research Development Corporation to establish innovation, incubation and production centres at the forthcoming skill development colleges throughout the State.

Activists urge govt not to increase women's marriage age

Continued from P1

Parents in situations of disadvantage will feel constrained to marry them off by any means possible rather than wait till the age of 21 when dowry and marriage expenses would leave them debt ridden, the statement said. The civil society organisations recommended that instead of raising the age of marriage, the government must strengthen schooling from pre-school to higher secondary as a bridge to higher education is absolutely vital, along with job guarantees and learn while you earn opportunities for adolescents, especially for those from marginalised sections. "Reinforcing nutritional programmes in

anganwadis and schools to address nutritional deficit among adolescents, especially girls, widening access to reproductive health, contraception, and abortion services for all, including preventing unsafe abortion and medical practices," it said. The activists endorsing the statement include Enakshi Ganguly, independent activist and co-founder of HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, Madhu Mehra, executive director at National Coalition Advocating for Adolescent Concerns, Mary E John, senior fellow at Centre for Women's Development Studies and Kavita Ratna, Director-Advocacy at Concerned for Working Children, a child rights non-profit.

Covid most prevalent among 5-17 age group

Continued from P1

Dr Gauri Aggarwal, the founder of Seeds of Innocence and Genestrings Lab, New Friends Colony, said, "Children might have contracted the virus from someone in their house who was regularly stepping out. The schools are closed and there are very few people who are organizing gatherings where children are also present." It is possible that they got infected while going to parks or through domestic helps. There are lots of cases where domestic helps have spread the infection, she said.

Polavaram project works continue despite floods

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Polavaram: In spite of the adverse conditions like severe flood to River Godavari, the construction of Polavaram project has been going on with the Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited (MEIL) leaving no stone unturned to complete the project in the stipulated time.

At Polavaram, Godavari river received a maximum flood of 21 lakh cusecs. Even with this kind of massive flood, MEIL continued the work uninterrupted.

Satishbabu Angara, the project in-charge, MEIL, says, "Two lakh cubic metre concrete work has been completed on the spillway so far in addition to 1.10 lakh cubic metre concrete work in spill channel. The excavation of 20,000 cubic metre of the hill, Gap-3 concrete dams, Gap-1 diaphragm wall and earthworks are in progress at 902-hill. During floods, we are making girders and setting them up, constructing the

- Advance planning is helping in adverse conditions
- Safety and precautionary measures are the key, says the MEIL

concrete dam and diaphragm wall. Since MEIL has taken up the project, two lakh cubic metre concrete work on the spillway and one lakh cubic metre work on a spill channel were completed."

Despite the floods, MEIL is continuing the work in the non-overflow block in the spill channel. The excavation works of 902-hill are underway during the flood. This excavation will facilitate the flood flow through the spill channel after the completion of the project. MEIL has undertaken these works with advance planning in anticipation of adverse situations.

Yamuna flowing near warning level in Delhi

Continued from P1

Delhi's Water Minister Satyendar Jain had on Monday said the government was ready to deal with any flood-like situation. "We have a flood control system ready and it will be activated when any situation demands it," he said. The government has a plan ready for all the areas along the Yamuna, right from Palla village to Okhla, he said. The water level of the river rose due to heavy rainfall in its catchment area over the last few days. The IMD has predicted a spell of heavy to very heavy rainfall in Northwest India between August 26 and August 29.

Covid-19 puts brakes on Roti exchange fest

Continued from P1

Officials are planning for conducting the event at the Dargah premises without allowing devotees, and exchanging Rotis which would create another disaster in the district due to the presence of population across South India. Rotis are labelled in education, health, employment, foreign

tour and education, political career and others. New Roti names have also been included recently during the TDP regime. A senior official from the Tourism department said people can exchange Rotis at their doorsteps following the tradition during the festival time giving no scope for spreading the virus.

3 Covid vaccines ahead in race in India: ICMR

Continued from P1

He said that it is necessary to understand the different stages of testing. Under this, the first volunteer is given one dose of vaccine and the second dose is given after 14 or 28 days. After that at least two or four weeks, antibodies in their blood are tested to see if they are born.

Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday said though testing for Covid-19 has been increased exponentially, there has been a steady decline in the positivity rate and highlighted that the number of active cases of the infection reduced by 6,423 for the first time within a span of 24 hours.

TODAY'S QUOTE

3 lakh MSMEs registered on Udyam portal

“More than 3 lakh registrations have taken place in the months of July and August and now the speed is going up. The process for registration of MSMEs through the government website is absolutely free.

-MSME Secretary **A K Sharma**



COVID

Weekend curbs hurting retail industry

Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Tuesday said that weekend restrictions and lockdowns across several states are adding to the woes of retail businesses which have already been severely hit by the pandemic and the nationwide lockdown. Over 10 States continue to impose 'irrational' weekend lockdowns.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)

US Dollar	78.78	South	
Euro	92.32	African Rand	5.07
UAE Dirham	22.26	Hong Kong Dollar	11.03
Thai Baht	2.71	Japanese Yen	0.8
British Pound	101.39	New Zealand Dollar	51
Australian Dollar	55.97	Saudi Riyal	21.8
Canadian Dollar	59.06	Swedish Krona	9.76
Swiss Franc	85.06	Singapore Dollar	57

DELHI WEDNESDAY 26 AUGUST 2020

BIZ BRIEFS

SBI Cap to fund Amrapali projects

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked SBI Capital (SBI CAP) to begin funding for six housing projects of the Amrapali Group, after it informed the top court that so far, it has found only these six to be viable. A bench of Justices Arun Mishra and U.U. Lalit directed SBI CAP to begin funding for six projects, after the financial institution, which manages the stressed asset fund for stuck realty projects, informed the top court that it cannot fund all the projects. Senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for SBI CAP, contended before the bench that SBI Cap had a detailed meeting with the court-appointed receiver and his committee, and they agreed, in principle, to finance the Amrapali projects.

Al's deadline extended

New Delhi: The Centre on Tuesday extended the deadline for submitting the bids to buy 100 per cent stake in national carrier Air India to October 30 from August 31. The extension was made via the eighth corrigendum to the global invitation for Expression of Interest (Eoi) for the proposed divestment of Air India, which was issued by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM). According to the corrigendum, the changes have been made as per the requests received from the interested bidders "in view of the prevailing situation arising out of Covid-19". As per the preliminary information memorandum (PIM) issued in January, the date for submitting the bid was March 17, 2020. It was subsequently extended several times. The last date for submission was August 31.

DRL unveils new product

Hyderabad: Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd on Tuesday announced its entry into the hospital nutrition segment with the launch of 'Celevida Maxx' in India. It is a unique addition to Dr Reddy's nutrition portfolio and is designed to help manage the nutritional needs of Cancer, Critical Care and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) patients in India, a press release from the company said. M V Ramana, Chief Executive Officer of Branded Markets (India and Emerging Markets), Dr Reddy's Laboratories said, "We are pleased to foray into the hospital nutrition segment in India. With Celevida Maxx, we look forward to strengthening our presence in the nutrition segment and continue making a positive impact on patients lives."

Indian exports to clock growth

New Delhi: India has a significant opportunity to improve its exports due to the ongoing shift in the global trade dynamics, Acute Ratings and Research said on Tuesday. The ratings agency said that deterioration of trade relationships between China and its major partners such as the US, Australia and Japan gives India an opportunity to expand its exports. "We also expect that most of the world's developed nations, including those in Europe, will make an effort to reduce their dependence on China, wherever applicable, and diversify their supply base for strategic reasons," the agency said in a statement. "This will benefit Indian exporters in various sectors such as pharma, chemicals, automotive, textiles, leather and even agricultural products over the medium term". The statement cited that such a trend has started to become visible in June with India's exports to Australia having grown by 78 per cent.

RBI bats for more reforms

Says wide-ranging reforms essential to recoup Covid-induced losses, rev up GDP

Mumbai: Declining capacity utilisation, weakening of consumption demand and overhang of stressed balance sheets are restraining new investments, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Tuesday while calling for wide-ranging reforms to regain losses due to Covid-19 crisis and return to the path of sustainable economic growth.

The corporate tax cut of September 2019 has been utilised in debt servicing, a build-up of cash balances and other current assets rather than restarting the capital expenditure cycle, it said. "These underlying developments suggest that the appetite for investment is anaemic and in need of more reforms," said the central bank in its 2019-20 annual report.

The RBI said that Covid-19 crisis can be converted into an opportunity by using an online provision of education and training to implement reforms in the social infrastructure by skill development and reskilling so as to prepare a labour force equipped to keep pace with a big thrust on infrastructure. It said high-frequency indicators point to a retrenchment in the activity that is unprecedented in history. Moreover, the upticks that became visible in May and June after the lockdown was eased in several parts of the country appear to have lost strength in July and August mainly due to



Leveraging on IT has to be a key element of the future development strategy by reducing transaction and communication costs and by improving the quality of capital

- RBI in its annual report

reimposition or stricter imposition of lockdowns, suggesting that contraction in economic activity will likely prolong into Q2. But business sentiment and manufacturing purchasing managers' indices (PMIs) ceased deteriorating, world trade growth seemed to be bottoming out and service sector PMIs remained in expansionary

territory. However, the impact due to factor income loss (capital and labour) of 68 days of lockdown on the manufacturing and mining sectors could be as high as Rs 2.7 lakh crore

At the same time, said RBI, the pandemic has also exposed new inequities - white-collar employees can work from home while essential workers have to

work on-site exposed to the risk of getting infected.

In some areas of work like hospitality, hotels and restaurants, airlines and tourism, employment losses are more severe than in other.

"The priority is to move to policy strategies that ensure a sustained increase in farmers' income alongside reasonable

Improvement in rate transmission

Mumbai: Adjustments in banks' deposit and lending rates in response to changes in the repo rate improved during 2019-20, especially in the second half of the year, the RBI said on Tuesday.

This was catalysed by the mandated linking of the interest rates

on new loans to certain sectors such as personal and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), effective October 2019, to an external benchmark, the Reserve Bank said in its annual report.

The external benchmark can be the policy repo rate, three-month,

six-month T-bill rates or any other benchmark published by the Financial Benchmarks India (FBI). During October 2019-June 2020, the weighted average lending rate of domestic (public and private sector) banks declined in respect of fresh rupee loans sanctioned for housing



loans by 104 basis points (bps), vehicle loans by 102 bps, other personal loans by 115 bps and MSME loans by 198 bps, the report said.

More fiscal stimulus steps likely once Covid subsides

Mumbai: The central government may look at introducing a second set of fiscal stimulus measures once the Covid-19 infections abate and the psychological fears in people's minds ebb, a top Finance Ministry official said on Tuesday.

The government has also observed that 40 per cent of the cash transfers directly into the beneficiaries' accounts recently have been saved and not spent, leading to a feeling that there are limitations of the stimuli measures and hence, making timing the most important factor, Union Expenditure Secretary T V Somanathan said.

It can be noted that the government's first round of fiscal stimulus was announced in late March, and included measures

Union Expenditure Secretary says normal economic activity in 'abeyance' due to fear



like extra spend of nearly 2 percentage points of GDP. The RBI delivered two deep rate cuts before surprising all with a pause this month, leading some analysts to opine that the government will have to do the heavy lifting now.

Speaking at an event hosted by Dun and Bradstreet India, So-

manathan said normal economic activity is in "abeyance" right now and it has nothing to do with what the government has done or not done, but attributed the same to fears among the people.

"Right now, the evidence is that the problem is not susceptible of stimulation by fiscal or government measures. It's not as if people are waiting for something to be done by the government and then they are ready to go out and resume normal economic activity," he noted.

Somanathan also said the health situation remains "very vulnerable" in many parts of the country and all the personal services activity beyond finance and insurance, like cinema halls, malls and restaurants have been severely impacted.

Q1FY21 GDP might shrink by 25%:ICRA

New Delhi: India's Q1FY21 GDP is expected to contract by 25 per cent, ratings agency ICRA said on Tuesday.

ICRA pegged the contraction in Indian GDP and the gross value added (GVA) at basic prices in year-on-year (YoY) terms in Q1 FY2021 at around 25 per cent each.

"The economic performance was primarily weighed down by the considerable drag imposed by three key production sub-sectors, namely manufacturing, construction, and trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting," ICRA said. "These sub-sectors, which together account for a sizeable 45 per cent of the economy, are assessed to have suffered heavily in volume and profitability terms during the lockdown quarter."

Mkts make modest gains amid firm global cues

Mumbai: Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty closed in the green for the third straight session on Tuesday, propped up by financial stocks amid firm global cues. Lack of buying triggers and profit-bookings in index heavyweight Reliance Industries capped the gains for the benchmarks, traders said.

After a choppy session, the BSE index ended 44.80 points or 0.12 per cent higher at 38,843.88. The NSE Nifty inched up 5.80 points or 0.05 per cent to close at 11,472.25. Bajaj Finance was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.39 per cent, followed by SBI, Tech Mahindra, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank and Axis Bank. On the other hand, NTPC, Sun Pharma, Nestle India, Tata Steel, L&T, Infosys and Bajaj Auto were among the laggards, shedding up to 1.61 per cent. Global markets



were largely positive after the US and China affirmed their commitment to a phase-1 trade deal. "Indian markets exhibited characteristic volatility, trading undecidedly, before ending flat with a slight positive bias. This was in spite of positive global cues after the US and China reaffirmed their commitment to a previous trade deal and also due to progress in virus vaccine development.

"In the Indian markets this positivity was offset by losses in index blue-chips. The markets are trading uncertain due to lack of domestic triggers.

Govt may tweak ₹ 3L-cr credit scheme

FM bats for faster disinvestment decisions, says structural reforms key priority

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the government is open to further tweaking the Rs 3 lakh crore credit guarantee scheme for providing collateral-free loans to small businesses.

According to industry association CII, with which the minister had a closed-door meeting, she also said that domestic revenue generation is a concern as sectors like tourism, real estate, hospitality, and airlines have been affected "disproportionately" by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a meeting with the members of CII, Sitharaman said structural reform is a key priority for the government and it will move fast on the Cabinet-cleared disinvestment proposals, including that of banks.

"The (Rs) 3 Lakh Crore scheme is open for professionals now and Government is open to more tweaking, changes if required," CII tweeted Sitharaman as saying.

Earlier this month, the gov-



Sectors like tourism, real estate, hospitality, and airlines have been affected 'disproportionately' by the Covid-19 pandemic

- FM Nirmala Sitharaman

ernment had widened the scope of the Rs 3-lakh crore credit guarantee scheme by doubling the upper ceiling of loans outstanding to Rs 50 crore and including certain individual loans given to professionals like doctors, lawyers and chartered accountants for business purposes under its ambit, apart from MSMEs.

Till August 20, banks have disbursed more than Rs 1 lakh crore loans under the Rs 3-lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS), which was announced as part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package.

The minister further said that every announcement has had a

structural reform component with it, and the government is reaching out to industry to understand their concerns.

"Structural reforms are key priority for the government, reflected in government announcements to address Covid-19 challenges," Sitharaman said.

On the private investment cycle, she said that in September 2019, the government had reduced corporate tax rate but investments could not happen due to Covid-19.

With post-Covid reset happening, data-driven manufacturing models and newer investments can happen in FinTech, she said.

"Some sectors such as

tourism, real estate, hospitality, airlines have been affected disproportionately. Domestic revenue generation is a concern," Sitharaman said, adding the government is working with the Reserve Bank of India to ensure adequate support to banks

On the issue of local manufacturing, Sitharaman said that Productivity Linked Incentives (PLIs) scheme has met with excellent response and has helped speed up manufacturing of critical bulk drugs and APIs in six states.

On delayed payments by the government agencies, she said that the Finance Ministry is taking periodic reviews to expedite payments due to the industry.

Responding to a question about the need for lowering GST rates on 2-wheelers, she assured that this was indeed a good suggestion as this category is neither a luxury nor a sin good and hence merits a rate revision. Consequently, this will be taken up with the GST Council, she added.

Growth comes to halt as posts remain vacant



PV SATYANARAYANA

Khammam: People in the erstwhile Khammam district are getting nominal services from municipalities due to huge vacancies, while development also took a back seat.

People and political parties alleged that the rulers have no commitment in filling vacancies and the people are facing the brunt. According to the information, there are four municipalities - Kothagudem, Yellandu, Palvoncha and Manugur in Bhadrachalam district and three municipalities - Madhira, Wyra and Sattupalli in Khammam district. Khammam Corporation is separate. Majority posts under these municipalities including Khammam Cor-

poration are vacant for the last few years and the government has turned a blind eye in filling the posts.

The officials working now have said that they were unable to complete office work with the few employees and officers and facing problems from public. The Engineering department has occupied first place in the number of vacancies, which made the contractors to work as per their whims and not maintaining quality in the construction works.

According to available information, 10 posts in Yellandu, 10 in Kothagudem, 9 in Manugur, 13 in Sattupalli, 10 in Wyra and 12 in Madhira municipalities are vacant in administration, revenue, accounting, planning,

sanitation, health and engineering sections.

In Kothagudem municipality, the key post of town planning officer and AE posts are vacant. There are 20 posts vacant in sanitation and health section in the erstwhile Khammam district. In planning section also, out of 36 posts only 10 are working.

In Kothagudem municipality, out of total 148 posts, only 54 are working and the remaining 94 posts are vacant.

CPM district secretary Nunna Nageswara Rao alleged that due to vacancies in engineering department, development works are going on at a snail pace. He demanded the State government to fill up all vacancies and ensure development takes place and people will get all services.



TS Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukender Reddy

All set for Assembly meetings from Sep 7

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Nalgonda: TS Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukender Reddy stated that all set for Assembly meetings as per Covid-19 norms, which will be held from September 7. Apart from maintaining social distance, automatic thermal screening meters are being arranged at the entrance of the Assembly, he added.

Speaking to the media in Nalgonda on Tuesday, Sukender Reddy described the fire accident at Srisailem power station is unfortunate. He appreciated Minister Jagadish Reddy and GENCO CMD Prabhakar Rao for taking active part in the rescue operations in Srisailem. Later, he paid tributes to the martyrs in Srisailem power station fire incident and added that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has already assured that the government will take care of the victims' families in all aspects.

Quality food, other amenities at flood shelters

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Kothagudem: The efforts made by the district administration in ensuring quality food and other amenities to the flood victims in the district has won accolades from many.

The flood victims were lodged at around 50 flood shelters in seven mandals in the past 10 days. The officials have shifted people from the affected villages to nearby flood shelters, when River Godavari reached third warning level at Bharachalam on August 16.

After that, the river reached final warning level twice in the past couple of weeks in Bharachalam, as a result over 5,000 people were shifted to the shelters. District Collector Dr MV Reddy issued strict orders to provide quality food and other facilities to the villagers and not to neglect them.



Food being supplied at a flood shelter in Bhadrachalam on Tuesday

Flood victims were given egg twice, vegetable biryani for lunch, besides nutritious breakfast, snacks in evening. Special dishes on Sundays were served. Not just the food, the Covid norms were followed strictly with health camps and sanitizations in the shelters.

Ramanaiah of Burgampahad thanked the officials for taking good care of them at the shelters and for providing quality food and other amenities.

The Collector also conducted surprise visits to the camps often and expressed anger when lunch was not served on time at a relief camp.

Meanwhile, the flood level in the river receding and reached 33 feet at Bharachalam on Tuesday, the Collector informed. With the river slowly reaching normal level the flood victims were being allowed to go back to their homes.

Ganja worth ₹95 lakh seized, four held

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Bhadrachalam: Police have seized ganja worth Rs 95 lakh and arrested four persons and seized two vans here on Tuesday. According to Assistant Superintendent of Police Rajesh, the police found out two vans moving suspiciously near Ambedkar Centre in the town during regular vehicle checking. Cops found out 1,240 kgs dry ganja packets in the vans after they stopped and searched the vehicles. They arrested four persons and seized two vans. The arrested persons were identified as Naresh Kumar and Mukesh Kumar, both natives of Haryana State; and Balivir and Jitender, both belong to Rajasthan.

Circle Inspector B Vinod, Sub-Inspector B Mahesh and staff participated in the programme.



Police producing seized ganja and arrested persons at Bhadrachalam on Tuesday

Peddadagada registers highest Covid-19 cases

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Wanaparthy: Peddadamagada, a small village in Chinnambavi mandal of Wanaparthy district, has registered the highest number of Covid-19 cases in a span of 10 days. This clearly speaks volumes that coronavirus pandemic is not just confined to urban areas but spreading fast into rural areas parts such as small villages and hamlets across erstwhile Mahabubnagar district.

Peddadamagada has a population of over 1,500 and majority of them are migrating laborers and a few of the educated ones have gone to bigger cities like Hyderabad and Kurnool for livelihood. However, post relaxation of lockdown majority of the people returned to their village and taking up agriculture and other works available locally. Despite this, until recently there was not a single corona positive case registered from this village.

"Post corona relaxation, several people returned to the village and until recently we are all safe and didn't afraid of Covid-19. But since the past 10 days, we are witnessing increasing number of Covid-19 cases and this is causing fear among the locals because of which many are confining themselves to their homes," said Venkatachary, a resident of Peddadamagada.

With as many as 102 cases registered from Peddadamagada

village, the district health authorities got alerted and focusing to contain further spread of the virus by conducting awareness and sensitizing the people to wear masks and maintain proper self-hygiene.

District Health Officer Dr Srinivasulu said that it came as a surprise to the health department as this village has registered more than 102 cases in just 10 days. All those, who have been tested positive, were put in isolation and given proper treatment. At the same time, the villagers were also advised to follow social distancing, wear masks and adopt self hygiene and asked to do regular hand wash so as to make sure the virus does not spread to others, he added.

The locals suspected that the recent visit of a government officer to this village to distribute pension amount to the aged people could be the main reason for the sudden spike of corona positive 19 cases in Peddadamagada. They came to this conclusion because majority of those, who have contracted the virus, were aged above 60 years.

As the pandemic is spreading rapidly in this village, the villagers are urging the health authorities to take immediate steps to contain the virus from further spreading and save the people from the deadly virus.

Homeopathy medicine distributed in Sathupalli

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Khammam: Senior TRS leader Dr Matta Dayanand launched administering of homeopathy medicines free of cost to people in Sathupalli Assembly constituency on Tuesday. Camps were organised at Anjanapuram, Nutankal, Gudur, Ramachandrapuram and Muvva Gudur villages in Tallada mandal in the district on Tuesday under the aegis TRS and Asha Charitable Organisation. Dr Dayanand plans to distribute medicines to nearly three lakh people.

On the first day, homeo medicine has been administered to nearly 12,000 persons of different age groups.

Dr Dayanand stated that Arsenicum album 200, a homeopathic medicine prescribed by Union AYUSH Ministry was being given to the public to boost their immunity.

After distributing medicines, the camp organisers explained to the villagers about safety precautions to contain the spread of coronavirus. Stress was laid on the need of wearing face masks, maintaining social distance and proper sanitation practices was explained to the people.

As the State government has made Rapid Antigen Testing kits



Senior TRS leader Dr M Dayanand administering homeo medicine to a girl in Sathupalli on Tuesday

available at all Primary Health Centre and Community Health Centre, the public if have Covid symptoms, should undergo test-

ing at the centres, he added. A large number of TRS leaders and Asha Charitable Organisation members were present.

No elections for cooperative water associations since 10 years

AKULA SRINIVAS PRASAD

Adilabad: As elections haven't conducted for cooperative water associations for the past 10 years, the development of hundreds of water bodies across the State was stalled and many ponds have been encroached in Adilabad, Nirmal, Asifabad and Mancherial districts. The Telangana government, which has been conducting all elections since the formation of separate State, is reportedly forgot about conducting elections to water associations, which are committed to develop ponds, reservoirs, Sri Ram Sagar Project, Kadem and Komaram Bheem Asifabad projects and more.

Usually, after the government releases election notification for the cooperative water associations, all the farmers that will cultivate under the pond (ayacut), would elect chairman and director from among them. The members of the governing body will take steps to manage ponds, release of water to crops, water usage,

developing ponds with farmers' coordination, repair sluices, cleaning water canals, maintaining ponds etc.

In 2007, water association elections were held for ponds covering 100 acres of irrigated land (under the ponds). In 2008, the then government of the then united Andhra Pradesh held elections for irrigation cooperative societies and their term ended in 2010. The then AP government had extended the tenure for another two years, since then election weren't held.

After the formation of Telangana State, the TRS government has launched Mission Kakatiya for the development of irrigation projects, ponds and check dams and forgot cooperative water association elections. Farmers in the joint district are demanding the government to conduct elections for water associations.

Speaking to The Hans India, Adilabad District Cooperative Officer D Mohan said no notification has been issued since the formation of separate Telangana State.

GODAVARI RIVERBANK EROSION

Farmers fighting nature's fury

ADEPU MAHENDER

Mulugu: Rain may have stopped now but the floodwaters in River Godavari that tripped its course surging into hundreds of acres of croplands still remained, giving a pale picture of those living in the countryside whose major subsistence is agriculture.

The sewage swirls caused by the recent monsoon deluge in Warangal forced MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao to visit the city and extend the government's support to the city-dwellers. But for the local Congress MLA Seethakka, there was none to console the hapless farmers, who lost their crops in the surging Godavari waters. Riverbank erosion is a major problem for the croplands in the floodplains of Godavari. It erodes croplands depositing sedimentation.

Although the farmers were en-



The cropland inundated by the surging Godavari floodwaters near Podumuru village under Mangapet mandal in Mulugu district

countering the phenomenon for ages, their grievance finally caught the eye of the government after that devastating Godavari

floods in 1986 destroyed hundreds of acres of cropland and brought down many houses, displacing thousands of people in

the tribal belt of Eturnagaram and Mangapet mandals.

In 2007, the then combined Andhra Pradesh government, which conducted a survey, has decided to construct 15-kilometer karakatta (embankment) dividing work into five packages - Gangagudem 3.1 kms, Ramanagudem 5.6 kms, Kamalapuram 5.7 kms, including setting up of 11 outfall sluices (toomulu in local parlance), repairs to old karakatta etc. with an estimated cost of Rs 46 crore. However, the work on it didn't go smoothly due to hiccups in land acquisition. The government was able to acquire only 38 acres against the need of nearly 180 acres. As a result, the work on karakatta between Mangapet and Kamalapuram came to a halt.

The Central Designs Organisation and other experts who inspected the region in 2017 had expressed concern over the flood impact on riverbank villages. Following which the irrigation wing prepared a proposal with an estimated cost of Rs 128.56 crore. The proposal also suggested acquiring 315 acres so that perma-

nent measures could be taken to avoid flooding and soil erosion. Since then, the government is yet to give a go-ahead to the works, in spite of the assurance given by the then Irrigation Minister T Harish Rao.

L Narasimha Rao of Podumuru village under Mangapet mandal said, "Floodwaters washed away my farmland. Even though the floods recede, the cropland is left with alluvial sedimentation. It takes a lot of hard work to remove the riverine sand dunes. With the government not taking measures to construct the karakatta, we are living under constant fear of facing floods." Godavari floodwaters surged into hundreds of acres of cropland between Mangapet and Akinepally Mallaram, he added. Speaking to The Hans India, Mulugu MLA Seethakka said, "The embankment of Godavari is the only way that saves Adivasis from floods. From Devadula to Akinepally Mallaram, the tribal pockets are in distress whenever Godavari is in surge. I urge the Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao to clear the embankment proposal file as early as possible."



Junior doctors staging a demonstration in front of MGM Hospital in Warangal on Tuesday

Junior docs demand health insurance

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Warangal: Junior doctors staged a demonstration outside the MGM Hospital in Warangal on Tuesday, demanding the State government to bring them under the ambit of health insurance.

The junior doctors, who boycotted duties, said that they have been working in precarious conditions and the government needs to recognize their

services to the Covid-19 patients. The doctors alleged that the MGM hospital management has failed to provide basic safety provisions despite their repeated appeals.

Dr M Bharath said that the government has to provide health insurance to all the junior doctors. In case a doctor succumbs to Covid-19, their kin should be given ex-gratia of Rs 1 crore and a government job, he demanded.

Punjab govt has money for TikTokers but not us, says boxer Simranjit

New Delhi (IANS): Olympic-bound boxer Simranjit Kaur is still in search of a job despite a "promise" being made by Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh five months back.

In January, when Simranjit -- who recently qualified for Tokyo Olympics -- shared her financial problems with the mediapersons, Amarinder immediately took to Twitter and assured all the help to the Indian boxer. "I have directed Secretary, Sports to immediately look into what needs to be done," he had said. Cricketer Harbhajan Singh, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju also at that time had thanked the media for highlighting Simranjit's struggle.

However, Simranjit claims she has not received any help from the state government. "I

don't know much about their (government) criteria. I was promised Rs 5 lakh also but who cares? Whereas, TikTok stars got their money from the Punjab government well on time," an emotional Simranjit said while narrating her eternal wait story to IANS.

"I was also promised a job in Punjab government when I met Chief Minister sir in March, again who cares?"

"Why they want us, the athletes, to keep begging for what we deserve or promised?" she added.

"I haven't got a written assurance as of yet. Not a single paper in writing. I don't know whom to meet or request. I can't do anything much. Lockdown has stalled everything, everywhere, so let's see when all this get over and when I get a



job. They should understand, I really, really need it (job)," the boxer said.

Simranjit, who hails from Ludhiana's Chakar village, is the sole breadwinner of her family of five, which includes two younger brothers, elder sister and mother. Her father, who worked at a local grocery store, died in July 2018 due to a heart attack. Since then, the family is entirely dependent on what Simranjit earns from participating in international tournaments.

The 24-year-old boxer is currently in the national camp in Patiala. "My training is going great guns. I want to win a medal at the Tokyo Games. It was great to resume training after a long wait because of the nation-wide lockdown.

The boxers also said she

keeps herself engaged with some creative work. "I do drawing to keep my mind fresh and focused. It is one of my passions. I also do sewing which I learnt from my mother (Rajpal Kaur). I am not just sitting at home and letting any negativity come to my mind. However, there are times when I feel a little worried because of my job and family. But then my mother always keeps motivating me," she said.

Simranjit, who won a 64kg World Championships bronze in Delhi in 2018, had lost the 60kg trials for 2019 Worlds to the seasoned Sarita Devi. However, she improved her game to beat Sarita in the Olympic qualifier trial and secured a quota place by claiming a silver medal in the Asia/Oceania qualifying event in Amman.

Sunrisers Hyd unveil spate of sponsors ahead of IPL 13

Hyderabad (IANS): Sunrisers Hyderabad, the Sun Group-owned franchise and 2016 champions of the Indian Premier League (IPL), have unveiled a spate of existing and new sponsors for the 13th edition of the tournament, slated to take place in the UAE.

Leading the line-up of principal sponsors is JK Lakshmi Cement Ltd. The cement brand was signed as title sponsor earlier this year in January which the franchise has successfully managed to retain for the tournament starting next month from September 19.

As a title sponsor, JK Lakshmi Cement logo will be carried on the 'jersey front'.

Ralco Tyres and Valvoline are other principal sponsors and their logos will be carried on the back and right upper chest on the front of jersey, respectively.

Jio, TCL, Dream 11, Jai Raj Steel, Nerolac and Colgate have all signed on as partners for IPL 13, with their logos and branding set to be prominently displayed on the team's match kits.

Tyka, Fancode, IB Cricket and Double Horse have also partnered with the franchise.

Commenting on the development, K. Shanmugam, CEO, Sunrisers Hyderabad, said: "We are extremely happy to have so many prestigious brands on board for the 2020 edition of Indian Premier League.

"The interest from sponsors has been incredibly positive and encouraging in spite of the tough times. We are nothing but proud and grateful to have unflinching support of our partners which is an immense source of inspiration for the squad to continue giving their best to the game. Together with our sponsors and fans, the Orange Army look forward to putting up a solid show like every year."



'Gayle will be part of KXIP core group'

Dubai (IANS): Kings XI Punjab captain KL Rahul has said star opening batsman Chris Gayle will be a part of the core group of the side for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season.

Swashbuckling West Indies opener Gayle, who reportedly attended legendary sprinter Usain Bolt's birthday party in Jamaica, tested negative for Covid-19 and now is all set to leave for the UAE for the upcoming edition of the IPL. "We at Kings XI Punjab have had a great experience with Chris and me luckily, I have played with him for years now, we have shared great friendship, we have had some partnerships in the middle, he



is a great guy to have in the team," Rahul said in a video posted on the official website of the IPL.

"He will be a part of our core group, with the kind of experience he has, he will be somebody who will win matches for us," he added.

According to several media reports, Gayle was one of the

members who attended Bolt's 34th birthday party. However, the left-hander batsman tested negative twice for Covid-19 post the incident and will be leaving for UAE to join his Kings XI Punjab teammates ahead of the IPL season starting September 19. "Couple of days ago. 1st Covid-19 test... Before travel I need 2 negative test," Gayle's Instagram story said.

In another post, he wrote, "The last one went a bit too far in my nose. Phew. Result was negative."

"I'm going to stay home for 2020... not gonna travel again... nah sah! Tan a mi yard!! Keep the change! Excuse me! (sic)" he added.

Delhi Capitals appoint Harris as new bowling coach

New Delhi (IANS): Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Delhi Capitals on Tuesday announced former Australian fast bowler Ryan Harris as their new bowling coach.

The 40-year-old will join the Delhi Capitals side in the UAE for the upcoming season of the IPL slated to start from November 19. James Hopes, who was the team's bowling coach in 2018 and 2019, will be unable to travel with the team this year owing to personal reasons, the Delhi-based franchise said.

"I am delighted to be back in the IPL," Harris said. "This is a huge opportunity for me to contribute to the franchise's ambitions of lifting the coveted IPL trophy. The Delhi Capitals side has an impressive bowling line up, and I can't wait to start working with them all." A late entrant in international cricket, Harris has 113 Test wickets, 44 ODI wickets, and 4 T20I wickets to his name. In 2009, he won the IPL with the Deccan Chargers. Injuries forced him to announce his retirement in 2015. Since then, Harris has undertaken coaching assignments with the Australian team, Big Bash League side Brisbane Heat, and even Kings XI Punjab in the IPL. He joins the Delhi Capitals coaching staff featuring Ricky Ponting, Mohammad Kaif, Samuel Badree and Vijay Dahiya. This year's IPL is slated to be played across three venues in the UAE -- Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah -- until November 10.



India's first virtual sports festival for children launched

New Delhi (IANS): India On Track has partnered with some of the worlds leading sporting entities to host an online sports festival from September 1 to 5. In a one-of-its-kind opportunity, the festival will have interactive sessions on football, basketball, baseball and badminton for children aged 5-18 years.

A series of virtual sessions are part of the plan, with focus on training, nutrition and injury prevention, fun games and quizzes, skill challenges and various interactive activities.

These programs will be conducted by utilising training protocols from some of the world's best sport entities, including LaLiga Football Schools, NBA Basketball School, Prakash Padukone Badminton Schools & Major League Baseball First Pitch.

At the end of the festival, training scholarships and merchandise will be awarded to participants who win skill challenges set by the technical partners.

"After successfully conducting numerous NBA Basketball School online sessions, we are thrilled to join hands with India On Track again for this initiative. In these unprecedented situations, chil-

dren sitting at home are constantly on the lookout for physical activities and these sessions will serve as a perfect platform to brush up their basketball skills and stay active in a fun way," said Marc Pulles, Basketball Operations Team Leader, NBA India.

"Football was one of the first sport to start during the ongoing global pandemic, and it gave the world a glimmer of hope. We at LaLiga Football Schools continued with online training and now with the India On Track sports festival we invite kids to register in large numbers so that they can learn the finer nuances of the game and also keep themselves match ready when outdoor sports resume in full swing," stated Javier Cabrera, Technical Director, LaLiga Football Schools India.

"I think the IOT sports festival is the perfect opportunity for children to access the best possible learning of sports like Baseball from global experts. Major League Baseball is excited to be a part of this initiative as we grow in our objective to build awareness and develop baseball in India," said David Palese, Manager, Baseball Development, Major League Baseball.

ENG VS PAK THIRD TEST (LUNCH)

Anderson made to wait for 600th scalp as rain plays spoilsport

Southampton (IANS): England pace spearhead James Anderson was made to wait for his 600th wicket as rain played spoilsport yet again to wash out the first session of play on Day 5 of the third and final Test against Pakistan at the Ageas Bowl on Tuesday.

Anderson grabbed his 599th Test wicket as England remained in the driver's seat against Pakistan who reached 100/2 following on at stumps on the rain-hit Day 4. Looking to become the first pace bowler to take 600 Test wickets, Anderson trapped Abid Ali (42) in front to snare his 599th wicket before bad light forced skipper Joe Root to resort to spin, as off-spinner Dom Bess and the England captain bowled the last few overs before play was abandoned.

Only spin legends Muttiah Muralitharan (800) of Sri Lanka, Australia's Shane Warne (708) and India's Anil Kumble (619) have more wickets than Anderson in the game's longest format. England asked Pakistan to fol-



low on after the tourists managed 273 in reply to hosts' mammoth 583/8d in the first essay, riding on a maiden double century by Zak Crawley and a brilliant hundred by Jos Buttler.

At the close of play on Day 4, skipper Azhar Ali, who scored a gritty 141 in the first innings, and Babar Azam were at the crease on 29 and 4, respectively. Openers Abid Ali and Shan Masood shared a 49-run stand before Masood was trapped in front by Stuart Broad. Anderson then sent

Ali back as Pakistan remained 210 runs in arrears. Anderson, who returned figures of 5/56 in the first innings, and could have had at least three more wickets had catches not been dropped off his bowling on Day 3, saw wicketkeeper Jos Buttler drop yet another catch off his bowling in the first session on Monday.

Brief scores: England 583/8d vs Pakistan 273 & 41/2 (Azhar Ali 29 batting, Babar Azam 4 batting; James Anderson 1/18, Stuart Broad 1/23).



SUAREZ SET TO LEAVE BARCELONA, SAYS RADIO STATION

Madrid (IANS): FC Barcelona striker Luis Suarez looks to be on his way out of the club after local radio station RAC1 reported that new coach Ronald Koeman has told the Uruguayan that he doesn't form a part of his plans for the coming season.

The radio station, which has very close links to the club, reported that Koeman phoned Suarez this Monday and gave him the news in a brief conversation, writes Xinhua news agency. Suarez's contract at the Camp Nou is due to expire at the end of June 2021 and the 33-year-old's lawyers will presumably speak to the club to try to rescind that deal to allow him to become a free agent.

Suarez arrived at Barcelona in 2014 from Liverpool and he has since scored 198 goals and given 109 assists in 283 appearances to become the third-highest scorer in the history of the club.

Stopped watching IPL since Sachin's retirement, says Sushma Verma

New Delhi (IANS): Legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar has been the heartbeat of Indian cricket fans for decades. There have been several instances where cricket fans said that they have stopped watching the sport following Tendulkar's retirement in 2013.

It turns out that Indian women's wicket-keeper batter Sushma Verma is no different as the 27-year-old recently revealed that she used to be an avid Mumbai Indian follower until the Master Blaster called it quits after the 2013 season of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

"I don't watch much of the IPL now. I used to watch Mumbai Indians play when Sachin used to be a part of it," Sushma told IANS while adding that Test cricket is something she enjoys the most.

Like any Indian cricket fan, Sushma also admitted her admiration for the 47-year-old cricket icon and remembered an instance when the Himachal Pradesh-based travelled to Dharamsala to watch Tendulkar play for the Mumbai Indians. But



she had to go back home disappointed.

"I do admire Sachin Tendulkar a lot. Actually, Mumbai Indians had come to Dharamsala to play and I was hoping to see Sachin play. But Sachin did not turn up to play. So, after that I decided not to watch it again," Sushma said.

The wicket-keeper batswoman, who is currently looking to get back into the Indian side, further said she is also a MS Dhoni fan and remembered

an instance when she met the recently retired former Indian captain.

"I have met Dhoni with the whole team and I introduced myself to him and told him that I am too a wicketkeeper. Then he told me to keep up the good work. I like his style of batting and he was a great Indian captain," said Sushma.

The 27-year-old has so far played 1 Test, 38 ODIs and 19 T20Is for the Indian women's team