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Decommissioned aircraft carrier of the Indian Navy, INS Viraat, during its last journey from Naval Dockyard to Alang in Gujarat, where it will be dismantled, in Mumbai on Saturday

Divestment of Air India may be put off

New Delhi: Air India is not finding any takers and the privatisation may be put off by three years, delivering a blow to the efforts to divest the national carrier. It seems that due to the turbulence caused in the aviation sector by the Covid 19 pandemic, airlines are already struggling and in that scenario, there are no buyers for Air India. Tatas were supposedly frontrunners for the divestiture, but for some reason have backed out of the race for the moment after completing the due diligence process. The question is therefore whether the books revealed a bigger financial mess than what was anticipated.

₹1,350-cr package to bolster biz, jobs in Kashmir

Srinagar/New Delhi: Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday approved a record Rs 1,350 package to spur growth in businesses and jobs in Jammu and Kashmir hit by terrorism and the coronavirus pandemic. The economic package will primarily act as a lifeline to distressed entities, self-employed individuals in tourism and transport sectors and will also offset economic slowdown triggered by the contagious pandemic and delicate security scenarios since the last 15-20 years, the LG office said in a statement.

Pak risks Basmati export as India applies GI tag in EU

Islamabad: Pakistan is facing another potential threat of a major damage to its exports as India has applied for an exclusive GI tag to Basmati rice in the European Union. Pakistan on the other hand, is still yet to implement the GI law promulgated in March. Despite the fact that Pakistan produces a wide range of Basmati rice in the country and benefits from its export to the EU and other parts of the globe, New Delhi has said that it is an Indian-origin product in its application, published on EU's official journal on September 11.

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PAK-INSPIRED AL QAEDA TERROR MODULE BUSTED

NIA nabs 9 from Kerala, Bengal for plot to attack vital installations

New Delhi/ Kolkata/ Kochi: Foiling an attempt by Pakistan's terror outfit al Qaeda to set up a base in India, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday swooped on its cadres in West Bengal and Kerala and arrested nine of them.

An NIA spokesperson said the agency carried out simultaneous raids at several locations in Kerala's Ernakulam and West Bengal's Murshidabad after learning about a Pakistan-sponsored inter-state module of al Qaeda operatives at various locations in India.

The agency said the terror module has been operational for some time and was planning to carry out terror attacks at vital installations in



Alleged al Qaeda terrorists arrested by the National Investigation Agency in Kerala and West Bengal on Saturday

India and kill innocent people.

Three terrorists were held from Kerala's Ernakulam district, while others were arrested in

West Bengal's Murshidabad. No Keralites were arrested so far.

All the terrorists arrested on Saturday - Murshid Hasan, Iyakub

Biswas, Mosaraf Hossen, Najmus Sakib, Abu Sufiyan, Mainul Mondal, Leu Yean Ahmed, Al Mamun Kamal and Atitir Rehman - will be taken to

courts in Kerala and Bengal to seek their police custody. Murshid Hasan, Iyakub Biswas and Mosaraf Hossen - all working as guest workers - were arrested from Ernakulam district. Hasan was taken into custody from Pathalam, Biswas from Perumbavoor and Hossen from Aluva.

Hasan is the leader of the gang and those arrested from Kerala are also originally residents of West Bengal, the NIA spokesperson said.

A closely-monitored operation of the NIA and other central agencies began on September 11 when the premier investigating agency registered a case to probe the al Qaeda module.

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Lower excise duty on diesel, petrol: CTI



New Delhi: The Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) has written a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asking her to reduce excise duty on petrol and diesel. A copy of the letter has also been sent to Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

"Whole country is suffering from financial crisis due to Corona. We request you to reduce excise duty on petrol and diesel so that the public can get some relief from the high prices of petrol and diesel," the letter signed by CTI Chairman Brijesh Goyal says.

As of September 19, the price of petrol in Delhi stands at Rs 81.14 per litre while the same for diesel is Rs 71.82 per litre. In Mumbai, a litre of petrol is priced at Rs

87.82 while the same for diesel is Rs 78.27. Residents of Chennai are paying Rs 84.21 per litre for petrol and Rs 77.21 per litre for diesel. Similarly, a litre of petrol is priced at Rs 82.67 in Kolkata while the same for diesel is Rs 71.82 per litre.

The letter goes on to add, "Everyone's financial situation has gone awry during the caved era. In such a situation, the government should take initiative in this direction. Now people are avoiding traveling in public vehicles & they are moving with their vehicles. This has affected their pocket. Factories and farmers also use petrol and diesel, which have an impact on the economy. We Hope that you will consider our demand."

Pakistan uses drone to drop weapons in J&K

Jammu: Pakistan dropped weapons and some cash in Indian currency using a drone in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, Director General of Police Dilbag Singh on Saturday said, announcing the arrest of three LeT terrorists who had picked up the consignment near the Line of Control.

Singh said the major success was achieved on Friday evening, following a well-coordinated joint operation by police and 38 Rashtriya Rifles in Rajouri sector of Jammu region, frustrating Pakistan's design to step up violence and disturb the prevailing peace in the Union Territory.

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COVID THREAT LOOMS OVER PARLIAMENT

Monsoon Session likely to be curtailed by week

New Delhi: The ongoing monsoon session of Parliament is likely to be curtailed as several parties on Saturday reached a consensus on wrapping up the session by next Wednesday. However, the government is intent on passing the rest of the legislations scheduled for this session.

"There is a consensus on curtailing the Parliament session. We left it to the discretion of the Speaker while adjusting business of the House," a participant of Parliament's Business Advisory Committee meeting said.



Parliamentarians in the Rajya Sabha during the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament

The Speaker will announce the last working day of the House later.

The session started on September 14 and was sup-

posed to end on October 1.

So far, around 30 MPs, including Union ministers Nitin Gadkari and Prahlad Patel, have tested positive

for Covid-19 after the session began amid strict protocols.

After Prahlad Patel, Vinay Sahasrabudde, Nitin Gadkari tested positive, the Covid-19 testing protocol in Parliament was tweaked. Repeat RT-PCR tests for MPs, mandatory tests for government officials visiting parliament, and daily antigen tests for reporters and Parliament officials were introduced as it was found that none of the three MPs tested positive when they took the test earlier - during the weekend.

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‘Centre should admit country is at community spread stage’

Delhi Health Minister takes dig at govt over Covid

New Delhi: Taking a dig at the Centre on the rising Covid-19 cases in the country, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the Union government should have admitted that the country is at 'community spread' stage.

"When cases are increasing on such a large scale in Delhi and other parts of the country, we should have accepted that there's community spread. I think we are

stuck in technical terms here... but only ICMR (country's top medical research body) or the Central government can comment on this," Satyendar Jain said.

India recorded 93,337 new infections in the last 24 hours, and has been posting the highest single-day case-load in the world since early



August. It is the second-most badly hit country after the United States with total recorded coronavirus cases at 5.3 million.

When asked if there is a community spread in Delhi, the Delhi minister said, "It doesn't matter what I think. I can, for sure, say there's spread

within the community. Community spread is a technical term... scientists are better equipped to tell this."

Satyendar Jain also said there has been a downward trend in positivity rate and it will lead to good results by next week. "The positivity rate was 6.76 per cent on Friday. It has remained below 7 percent in the last two-three days. Last week, it was around 8 per cent," he said.



Delhi journo held for passing border strategy info to China

New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Saturday said arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma was passing sensitive information about India's border strategy and Army deployment to Chinese intelligence. At a press conference, Special Cell DCP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said Sharma was writing on defence-related issues for some Indian media organisations, as well as China's Global Times. He was contacted by Chinese Intelligence agents in 2016. Sharma was also in contact with some Chinese intelligence officer, the police officer said, adding the freelance journalist got Rs 40 lakh in one-and-a-half years and he was getting USD 1,000 for each information.

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All happy with Santosh's tree challenge

PURNA SINGH

New Delhi: With 'Hara Hai Toh Bhara Hai' as the slogan, the Green India Challenge, tags people on social media to plant a sapling and challenging three others to do the same to continue the chain. Green India Challenge initiated by Rajya Sabha TRS MP J Santosh Kumar has reached crores of mark in planting trees across the country.

Renowned personalities from all sectors have joined the drive as an ini-

tiative towards making India more green and pollution free. Like 'Saaho' co-stars Prabhas and Shradha Kapoor, Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari, Union Minister of State Agricultural Parshottam Rupala, Cricketer Sachin Tendulkar and many others.

In a candid interview to The Hans India, Santosh Kumar said, a few years ago there was charity drive trending on social media named as 'ice bucket' and rice bucket challenges. While discussing with friends on



Interview

taking up some activity that could do good for society and environment, we came across the idea to

start green challenge. Explaining how the Green India Challenge was initiated, Santosh Kumar said

'Hara Hai Toh Bhara Hai' makes green cover grow by tagging celebrities across India

he had planted one about two years back and challenged three. From then to now it has crossed huge numbers. Thousands of people, including movie stars, politicians and business persons were joining the movement and tagging us on our micro blogging sites. Replying to a question, Santosh Kumar said, "his inspiration is Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, who took up 'Haritha Haram' programme about six years back and around 185 crore plants have been planted

so far. This has helped in increasing the green cover from 24% to 30%. What I want from people is to create awareness among them about the importance of plants. A lot of celebrities joined this campaign across the country like Sachin Tendulkar, actor Prabhas, Bollywood star Shradha Kapoor and politicians across country are now motivating their fans and followers. Not only that, but there are a lots of schools and colleges who are now the part of the challenge."

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WHILE RAINS BATTER COLONIES

Civic staff busy in MP's daughter's marriage

- Most of GHMC staff are now shifted for sprucing up the entire stretch from the main road to the venue of MP Asaduddin Owaisi's daughter's marriage function in Rajendranagar
- Owing to this event all the workforce is now engaged and would take up a call only after two-three days, says Shastripuram's Sanitary Inspector (GHMC), Narsimhulu

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Locals expressed angst over the way several localities were neglected by the GHMC staff in recent days, most of whom are now shifted for sprucing up the entire stretch from the main road to the venue of Hyderabad MP's marriage function in Rajendranagar.

Even as Shastripuram in Rajendranagar mandal and its surrounding localities remained battered both because of rainfall and incomplete civic works for over a week, most of the workforce from the GHMC in the Circle was seen flocking to the hillock each morning for the past four days. According to lo-



You can see slush on roads and cesspools everywhere in localities including Shastripuram, Kings Colony, Owaisi Hills and B K Puram areas, an activist points out

cal, the hillock near Kings Colony which houses the lavish residence of MP, Asaduddin Owaisi would be the venue of the grand party of his second daughter's marriage on September 22.

Each time when the residents complained about Civic issues, they received a response from GHMC and other civic staff that they would not be able to serve, as they were being engaged for 'putting in order' everything before the marriage. "It is high

time that the civic authorities should have improved the situation in the localities in view of incessant rains, which battered roads and lanes. You can see slush on roads and cesspools everywhere in localities including Shastripuram, Kings Colony, Owaisi Hills and B K Puram areas. Not only pedestrians at risk, but there is a danger of two-wheelers skidding," said Syed Shoukat Ali, an activist.

He pointed out that the roads



were left without proper restoration by the contractors. "I cannot believe that these officials referred to as public servants yielded orders of leaders ignoring their responsibilities," he added.

Acknowledging that the workforce was now engaged in the a major event in the area, the Shastripuram's Sanitary Inspector (GHMC), Narsimhulu said that owing to this event all the workforce is now engaged and would take up a call only after two-three days. "For a couple of days or so there would be a disturbance and then labour will be back," he assured.

2BHK HOUSES FOR POOR

How many times you would fool poor: Bhatti to TRS

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: The CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Saturday questioned the TRS as to how many times the ruling party would fool the poor of the State by luring them with 2BHK houses. Bhatti was speaking to media persons, a day after his dissatisfaction with the verification process and abruptly concluding of the visits to 2BHK houses with Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav over challenge of showing 1 lakh houses. Bhatti claimed that Yadav conceded the defeat and put a full stop abruptly by leaving from ongoing inspections. "He fled from the spot without any courtesy to the Congress delegation, which was verifying the claims of TRS made in the Assembly," he said.

The CLP leader who was ac-

- Out of claimed 1 lakh houses, only 3,428 are visible to the eye; the government has to construct more than 96,000 houses, points out CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka
- Minister T Srinivas Yadav fled from the spot without any courtesy to the Congress delegation, which was verifying the claims of TRS made in the Assembly, flays the CLP leader



company by MLC, T Jeevan Reddy, former MPs Anjan Kumar Yadav, V Hanumantha Rao, AICC spokesperson, Dasoju Sravan and others said that each time before the elections, the TRS comes up with all false promises. "The claims of the ruling party about 1 lakh houses remains a fraud done to the people of the State," affirmed Bhatti.

During the press conference,

the CLP leader revisited the promises made by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and Ministers through visual presentation. In one such video, KCR is seen promising 2.6 lakh 2BHK houses for the poor of the City. "From 1 lakh promised houses in GHMC limits, the government is yet to construct more than 96,000 houses as only 3,428 remain visible to the eyes," he added.

New AICC in-charge to visit city in October

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: AICC in-charge for Telangana Manicka Tagore on Saturday urged the party leaders to adopt a Constituency centric approach in order to win next Assembly elections in 2023.

Tagore, along with TPCC President N Uttam Kumar Reddy, held a video-conference through Zoom App with AICC Secretaries, contested candidates of Lok Sabha, former ministers and other senior leaders. CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, AICC Secretaries N S Bose Raju and Sreenivasan Krishnan, TPCC Working Presidents Ponnann

Prabhakar and J Kusum Kumar, former Union Minister Renuka Chowdhary, former ministers Dr J Geetha Reddy, R Damodar Reddy, Marri Shashidhar Reddy, AICC Spokesperson Dasoju Sravan and others participated in the meeting.

Uttam said that Tagore would visit Hyderabad in the first week of October after the end of Parliament session. Tagore said that the Congress party would adopt a micro-level strategy by adopting a Constituency centric approach. He said that the main objective of the Congress party should be to get a majority of votes in each of 34,360 polling booths in 2023 Assembly elections.

Medical fraternity seeks more workers

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Medical fraternity from Telangana urged the government to go for permanent recruitment as there is a dire need of more Health Care Workers (HCWs) to treat Covid patients in rural and urban areas and a majority of them are reluctant to join under contract recruitment. Health Minister Eatala Rajender was urged to notify the organisation of local cadres through GAD (General Administration Department) for direct recruitment of HCWs in the interest of public health emergency. Also, the minister was urged to consider Assistant Professors in Teaching medical colleges as State Cadre posts excluding from multi zonal system. Dr G Srinivas, General Secretary of HRDA, and other members called on the Health Minister.

Centre pats TS for Covid management

The Central Cabinet Secretary appreciated the TS government for ramping up the number of Covid tests and making testing facilities available in large number of locations across the State

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: The Union government complemented the Telangana State for managing the corona pandemic and maintaining low case fatality rate compared with national average.

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal along with Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba held a video conference with Telangana Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and enquired about the steps taken in containing the spread of virus.

The Cabinet Secretary appreciated the TS government for ramping up the number of Covid tests and making testing facilities available in large number of locations across the State such as Primary Health Centres, Urban Health Centres

and Basthi dawakhanas.

The Chief Secretary informed that the government is having a close watch on the situation and fully geared up to handle the pandemic, even as the number of positive cases have started declining.

Explaining the various measures taken by the State government, Somesh Kumar said that RTCPR testing is being done on every person who is found symptomatic under rapid antigen test. The government has formulated a strategy to make all beds equipped with oxygen facilities. Special focus is being laid on managing the situation in the districts, he added. Secretary Health and Family Welfare Rizvi, Director Drugs Control Dr Preeti Meena and other health officials also attended the conference.

Govt to speed up acquisition of land for Pharma City

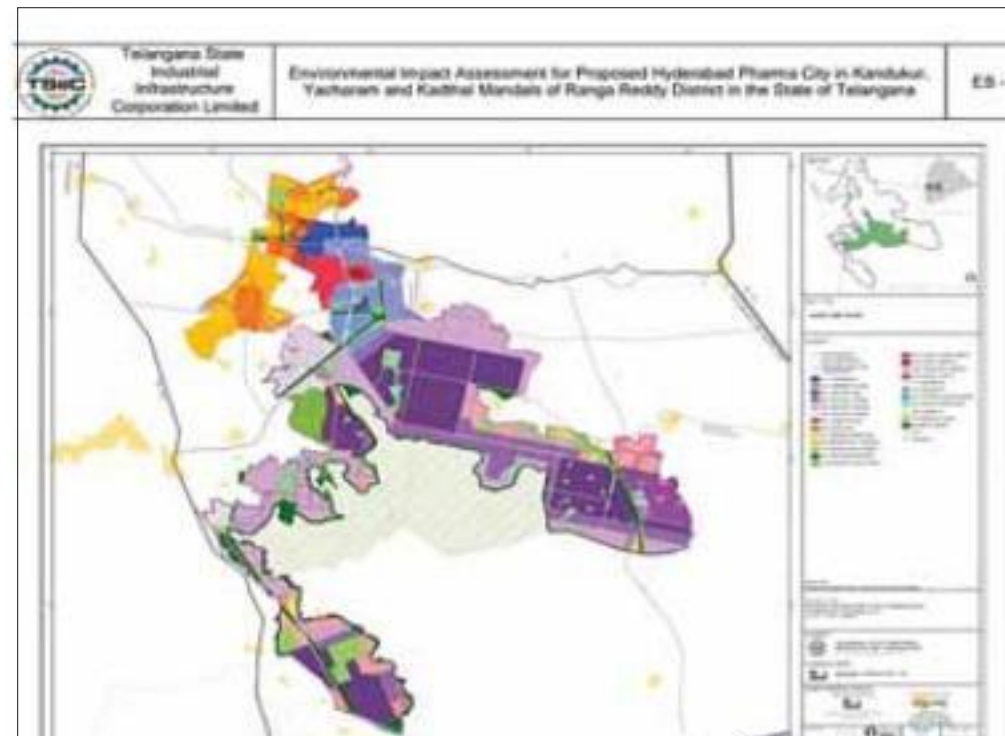
- The farmers protest against the land acquisition
- Government plans to acquiesce 19,333 acres of land

SRINIVAS GUDUPALLI

Ranga Reddy: The Telangana government has speed up the process of land acquisition work of Pharma City in outskirts of Hyderabad and planning to lay the foundation stone for Pharma City. Government has focused on the land acquisition process in Yacharam Mandal for collecting as many land as possible and also planning to acquire 19,333 acres of land as soon as possible.

On the other hand, the farmers are protesting against the land acquisition.

The Pharma City is being constructed in Tadiparti, Nanak Na-



gar, Medipally, Gurumidha villages in Yacharam mandal, Mucherla, Meerkanpet, Panjaguda villages in Kandukur mandal and Mudwin Karkalpathad, Kadthal villages Kadthal Mandal in Rangareddy district. Government estimated to acquire a total of 1,93,33 acres of

land only 7,000 acres of land was collected in three mandals till date. The government is paying Rs 16 lakh per acre to the farmers and is ready to provide residential plots to the farmers within Pharma City layout.

While the government is trying to acquire land from the

farmers, few farmers are opposing the government and are denying to give away their lands. They staged several protest at Ibrahimpatnam RDO office and locked up VRA's in Gram Panchayat office in Yacharam. The farmers are alleging that the government is paying them less for their lands and on the other hand they are also saying that they would lose their livelihood if the government takes away their lands.

It is known that the government has planned to acquire 1,474 acres in Tadipatri and the farmers have agreed to give away 700 acres and also submitted the acceptance letters to the government. Out of 678 acres the farmers have agreed to give away 220 acres of land to the government in Nanak Nagar. The officials are planning to issue the general award for the land acquisition because few farmers are protesting against the land acquisition.

Two killed in road mishap

Ranga Reddy: Two men died in a road accident near LV Prasad hospital on NH-44 in Kothur on Saturday. The car crashed the median, went over the other side of the road and collided with an oncoming lorry. The people in the car died on the spot. According to the Kothur Police both men, Balasubramayam (35), Shyam Kumar (36) were identified as the residents of Hanumakonda.

Pre-natal sex determination test is offence: Amoy

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Ranga Reddy: District Collector Amoy Kumar conducted a meeting with Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act committee at his Collectorate on Saturday.

On the occasion, the collector said that the pre-natal gender determination is an offence. So, he instructed the officials to seize the pre-natal sex determination centers. And no private hospitals should conduct the pre-natal sex determination tests. The collec-



Ranga Reddy District Collector Amoy Kumar talking to the officials

tor also instructed the officials to set up boards in the hospitals that "pre-natal sex determination is prohibited". He also said that proper measures have to be

taken for the disposal of bio-waste in the hospitals throughout the State. DMHO Swarajya Laxmi and other officials attended the meeting.

Fish seedlings released in Akkamma lake

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Ranga Reddy: District ZP Vice-Chairman Eta Ganesh released fish seedlings into Akkamma lake in Narsappaguda village in Nandigama mandal on Saturday. On the occasion, the district ZP vice-chairman said that the Telangana government is distributing fish seedling to fishermen in the State and is providing financial assistance. The State government has initiated an action plan for the development of the fishermen. The government has proved that fishermen can grow and harvest fishing in the lakes and yield income. Sarpanch Ashok, Nirati Narasimha, Suthika fisheries officials Nirati Siddulu, Yadaiah, and others were also present.



ZP vice-chairman releasing fish seedlings in the lake

Heavy rains lash parts of city, more to follow

Keesara records highest 101.1 mm rainfall

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Keesara mandal received highest rainfall on Saturday as the rains have lashed the city because of the low pressure in the Bay of Bengal. Several southern Telangana districts received moderate to heavy rainfall on Saturday. The Keesara area in Medchal Malkajgiri district recorded 101.0 mm rainfall by 6 pm on Saturday followed by Rajapur in Mahabubnagar district, which recorded 84.5 mm of rainfall.

The other places which received heavy rains include Gangaram in Sathupally (68.3 mm), Modgul in Rangareddy

district (66.8 mm), Mudigonda in Nalgonda (66 mm), Garla in Mahabubabad (63.8), Uppal (57.5), Ghatkesar (54.5 mm).

Several parts of the Hyderabad city received heavy rainfall on Saturday and there were complaints of water logging at different places. The places like Banjara Hills, Jubilee Hills, Mehdiapatnam, Begum Bazar, Basheerbagh, Koti, Kushaiguda, Uppal, Nagole, Hayatnagar, Abdullapurmet, Alwal, Saroonnagar and other places received moderate to heavy rainfall. The GHMC complaint cell received 40 grievances related to water logging and 16 about fallen trees on its call centers.

Musi river overflows in Fathepur



Water overflows on Fathepur bridge

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Ranga Reddy: The Musi river overflows after continuous heavy rainfall for the past two days in Shankarpally, the river is

overflowing and covering the roads.

The water has become stagnant at Fathepur bridge, due to this the commuters are facing problem. The officials asked the

commuters to be vigilant.

The streams in Prodduturu and Tanguturu are also overflowing. The farmers are elated as the streams are filled with water.

Collector inspects damaged road, streams



HANS NEWS SERVICE

Ranga Reddy: Vikarabad Collector Pausumi Basu inspects the damage roads and the overflowing Bacharam and Dornal streams in Dharur mandal on Saturday.

On the occasion, the collector instructed the officials to arrange barricades near damage

roads and divert the traffic from alternative routes so, that the commuters will not be facing any problem. She also instructed the officials to take measures so, that no mishap should take place near to the streams and damage roads.

RDO Upender Reddy, MPO, Sarpanch, Engineering department officials were also present.

No decision on selling only 'Made in India' products in military canteens

New Delhi (PTI): The Defence Ministry has not taken any decision on selling only "Made in India" products in military canteens run by it across the country, the government said on Saturday. "No decision has been taken in this regard," Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said in Rajya Sabha.

He was replying to a question on whether the defence ministry will consider using and selling only "Made in India" products in its stores in light of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on self-reliance and "vocal for local".

In an address to the nation in May, Modi spoke extensively on the need to focus on a "self-reliant India" and called for promoting products made in India with a larger aim of making Indian economy stronger. In his reply, Naik also said that the total turnover of defence canteens in 2017-18 was Rs 17,190 crore and it went up to Rs 18,917 crore in 2018-19. The total turnover was reported at Rs 17,588 in 2019-20. In the current fiscal, the figure has been recorded at Rs 3,692 crore till August, he said. In reply to a separate question on whether government signed a contract

with a private company to modernise 37 airfields, he replied in the affirmative. "Modernisation of airfield infrastructure has enhanced the capability in terms of facilitating operation in poor weather conditions including night operations, enhanced enroute navigation infrastructure and enhanced traffic handling capabilities," he said. To a separate question, Naik said 86 military airbases are functioning in the country. Meanwhile, the Centre on Saturday withdrew three Bills moved by the Labour Ministry in the Lok Sabha and

reintroduced them with fresh labour code provisions as part of the labour reforms initiative.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019; Industrial Relations Code, 2019; and Code on Social Security, 2019 were withdrawn from the Lower House when it assembled for the day at 3 p.m.

Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Santosh Kumar Gangwar, moved the proposal for the withdrawal of these Bills and later reintroduced them with fresh provisions.



Govt: No record of MSMEs shut down amid pandemic

New Delhi (IANS): After claiming that the government has no data on the deaths of migrant labourers amid the nationwide lockdown as well as doctors who lost their lives due to Covid-19, the Centre on Saturday said that it has no record of MSMEs that have faced closure in the wake of the pandemic.

Interestingly, in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Pratap Chandra Sarangi also said that there is no data on the number of MSMEs closed down from FY 2014-15 to FY 2019-20. On a question on the number of small and medium businesses closed from March to August 2020 due to the economic distress, the Minister said: "No such record is available." As per the government data on MSMEs, over 90.58 lakh such units exist in the country.



'97 migrants died on board Shramik Special trains'

New Delhi: The government has informed the Rajya Sabha that 97 people died on board the Shramik Specials, admitting for the first time that migrant labourers lost their lives in the trains which were run to ferry them during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In a written answer to a question posed by TMC MP Derek O'Brien, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal provided the statistics to the upper house of Parliament. "Based on the data provided by State Police, 97 persons have been reported dead till 09.09.2020 while travelling on board Shramik Special Trains during current Covid-19 situation/crisis," the Minister said. "The state police registers case under Section 174 of Cr.PC in cases of unnatural deaths and follows further legal process," the minister said.

The statement of the minister comes after the government came under criticism when the labour ministry earlier this week informed parliament that no data is available on the number of migrant workers who lost their lives during the 68-day lockdown enforced on March 25 to curb the spread of the COVID-19.

'Over 3,000 ceasefire violations by Pakistan'

Srinagar: There have been 3,186 ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the LoC (Line of Control) in Jammu over the past eight months (from January 1 to September 7), the government told Parliament this week.

This is the highest number in a year for 17 years - since the 2003 Ceasefire Agreement was brokered by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

In addition, there were also 242 incidents of cross-border firing (from January 1 to August 31), in the Jammu region, along the international border with Pakistan, Shripad Naik, Minister of State for Defence, said in the Rajya Sabha.

"Appropriate retaliation" was carried out by the Indian Army,

the minister further said, adding that all violations had been taken up with Pakistani authorities through established channel and protocols.

Eight Army personnel died for their country during the ceasefire violations this year and two others were injured. A large number of innocent civilians - men, women and children - were also killed, and a number of houses and buildings have been destroyed.

Hostilities between the two countries have also increased following the government's decision in August last year to withdraw special privileges to Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcate the former state into two union territories.



BJP MP Ravi Kishan used weed for longest period: Anurag Kashyap

Mumbai: Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap says he has a problem with actor and Member of Parliament Ravi Kishan's "self-righteous" stand on drug use when the Bhojpuri star himself allegedly used to smoke weed. Though Kashyap adds he doesn't judge Ravi for "smoking up".

Earlier this week, Ravi praised the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) for its probe into Sushant Singh Rajput death case and arrest of multiple persons in the drugs case, including actor Rhea Chakraborty. "We know the problem of drug trafficking and drug addiction is increasing. In this conspiracy, our neighbouring countries are involved... Drugs come to this country via China and Pakistan. Our film industry, too, is affected," Ravi Kishan had said. "The Government should stop this conspiracy of neighbouring countries to destroy our youth," he had added.



Anurag, who worked with BJP MP Ravi Kishan in his film Mukkabaaz, spoke about why the actor's stance on the whole issue irked him, according to News18 report.

"Ravi Kishan acted in my last film Mukkabaaz. Ravi Kishan starts his day by saying Jai Shiv Shankar, Jai Bam Bhole. Jai Shiv Shambhu. For the longest period of his time, he has been somebody who has used weed. It is life. Everybody knows it. The whole world knows. There's not a

single person who doesn't know that Ravi Kishan does not smoke up.

"He has always been functional, he has always done his job well, it did not make him dysfunctional, did not make him a monster. It did not do anything that people associate with drugs," he added. "So when he talks about it, when he takes a self-righteous stand, I have a problem with that," Anurag said.

Anurag said that he has seen more people smoke up when he was in university

than in Bollywood. "You need to clean up the country. Clean up the ghats of Benaras. Clean up UP (Uttar Pradesh), bhang is legal there. I'm not a person who would say I'm against marijuana. I don't use it. I can't use it. I wish I could use it. People are legalising it across the world. Marijuana is so good for so many ailments. And, if somebody is advocating it I will stand with that."

Ravi's statement in the parliament was also criticised by Jaya Bachchan. "Just because of a few people, you cannot tarnish the whole industry... I was really embarrassed and ashamed that one of our members in the Lok Sabha, who is from the industry, spoke against the film industry. They bite the hands that feed them," she had said.

In the same interview, Anurag also talked about his own struggle with harder, chemical drugs between 2006-2008.

Oppn demands complete waiver of farm loans

New Delhi: Opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha, demanded the government to waive interest on loans obtained by farmers and individuals during the pandemic, citing a pause in insolvency proceedings against defaulting corporates.

Participating in a debate, K K Ragesh of CPM said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and other members have told the House that the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill has been brought to save businesses and corporates. "Why is the same logic not applied in the case of farmers? Farmers are also bankrupt. Why is the government not taking any responsibility and any initiative in waiving the farmers'



loans?" he asked. Ragesh suggested that the government could at least have considered to "waive the interest on farmers loans during the moratorium period".

DMK member P Wilson accused the government of siding with the corporates. "There is discrimination between the common man and the corporate. Why this discrimination? Is the govern-

ment here for crony corporates?," asked Wilson. He demanded for a complete waiver of agriculture term loans.

Initiating the debate, Congress member Vivek Tankha said that the government should protect only those businesses which are affected by Covid-19 pandemic and not all defaulters. He claimed that "Section 10-A in the Bill states that no application for initiation of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) shall be filed for any default, whether Covid-19 related or not, arising on or after March 25 for a period of six months or such period not exceeding one year from such date as may be notified."

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MASSIVE POTENTIAL FOR OIL PALM CROP IN TS

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Telangana is poised to become one of the largest cultivators for oil palm cultivation in the country due to availability of fertile land and favorable conditions for growing this crop on a large scale, said Sanjay Goenka, MD & CEO of 3F Oil Palm Pvt Ltd.

He said that the multiple irrigation projects in the State have contributed to improved irrigable conditions making Telangana a prominent State for oil palm plantation and processing activities. "Oil palm is a very versatile crop and has multiple benefits for farmers, it gives the highest yields and returns per acre compared to most commercial crops," Goenka explained. Cur-



rently, oil palm is being grown in only 4 districts (Nalgonda, Suryapet, Khammam, Bhadradi) of Telangana and is cultivated in about 45,000 acres producing

30,000 tons of crude palm oil. Telangana's current edible oil requirement is around 4 lakh tons per annum. The deficit can easily be fulfilled by cultivating just 2

lakh acres of land resulting in 5-7 lakh tons of palm oil being produced, Goenka said that Telangana has the potential as the first State to emerge as a self-reliant State in its edible oil requirements. The State has a potential to increase the cultivable land to 7 lakh acres and the government has identified 25 districts including the existing four districts, which have the potential to grow oil palm in the State. It is also necessary for the oil palm crop to be processed within 24 hours from its harvesting. This will help ensure investments in the rural area as the processing units need to be located closer to the plantations, and in turn increased employment opportunities and development of the region, Goenka added.

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: The State government's proposal to have four new inter-city bus terminals at four different locations in the city hits roadblock with various reasons including corona and also some legal issues. The State government had proposed to have terminals and also logistic parks in the city with an aim to reduce the pressure on the city roads and to decentralise the transportation and also with a plan to generate employment opportunities for the youth in the GHMC limits.

According to the officials, the government proposed at four corners of the city including at Miyapur, Manoharabad, Shamshabad and Pedda Amberpet. The idea was to decrease the number of buses from Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station (MGBS) given the heavy traffic in and around the bus station. "With

The idea is to decrease the number of buses from Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station (MGBS) given the heavy traffic in and around the bus station

terminals at different places, the passengers may not have to come all the way into the MGBS and board at their nearest station and this would decrease the travel time and also decrease the number of buses on to the busy city roads," said a senior official.

Along with the terminals the government has also planned for logistic parks, which would provide the passengers all the facilities at one place. The officials had planned to provide better infrastructure and modern facilities to commuters and bus operators. The logistic parks would provide all the facilities for freight operators, cargo firms, truck drivers and parking facilities. Presently the city lacks a dedicated logistic park and the only one makeshift

logistic park is located at Kukatpally. The city has restrictions on the heavy vehicles during daytime and once a logistic park starts the vehicles would not need to come and unload the vehicles at the park and from there mini vehicles would carry the goods.

The official said that presently there was no progress in the proposal of terminal and logistic parks. There is some legal issue at the Miyapur site hence, the process of tendering was halted. The corona pandemic has also left an impact on the proposed plans of the government as the official said that the project may take more time with the transport sector having to suffer because of the pandemic.

Heavy rains lash parts of city, more to follow

Keesara records highest 101.1 mm rainfall

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Keesara mandal received highest rainfall on Saturday as the rains have lashed the city because of the low pressure in the Bay of Bengal.

Several southern Telangana districts received moderate to heavy rainfall on Saturday. The Keesara area in Medchal Malkajgiri district recorded 101.0 mm rainfall by 6 pm on Saturday followed by Rajapur in Mahbubnagar district, which recorded 84.5 mm of rainfall.

The other places which received heavy rains include Gangaram in Sathupally (68.3 mm), Modgul in Rangareddy district (66.8 mm), Mudigonda in Nalgonda (66 mm), Garla in Mahabubabad (63.8), Uppal (57.5), Ghatkesar (54.5 mm).

Several parts of the Hyderabad city received heavy rainfall on Saturday and there were complaints of water logging at different places. The places like Banjara Hills, Jubilee

Hills, Mehdiapatnam, Begum Bazar, Basheerbagh, Koti, Kushaiguda, Uppal, Nagole, Hayatnagar, Abdullapurmet, Alwal, Saroornagar and other places received moderate to heavy rainfall. The GHMC complaint cell received 40 grievances related to water logging and 16 about fallen trees on its call centers.

During the past three days GHMC received 236 complaints regarding water logging, 11 building collapses and 29 about falling trees.

According to the Met department officials, the city may witness more rains for the next five days with heavy rains and thunderstorms and the reason attributed to the rains was cyclonic circulation over Telangana and other places. Another low pressure area would develop in Bay of Bengal and its nearby areas on Sunday and it is going to strengthen further. GHMC commissioner DS Lokesh Kumar directed all the officers and field teams to be on alert in wake of heavy rains.

Primary contact patients are queuing up for Covid tests

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Primary contacts of positive patients are queuing up before corona testing centres every day more than the normal people. On Friday also this trend continued. Among two persons who got tested positive for Covid, one of them was a primary contact. Looking at the testing numbers, 54, 459 tests were conducted until Friday evening out of which 23,962 tests belonged to primary contacts (44 percent). Another 6, 535 tests (12 percent of day's tests) were done on secondary contacts of the positive cases.

Meanwhile, the number of fresh cases and number of recoveries were almost the same on Friday (over 2,120 each). The total Covid count is nearing 1.70 lakh mark, deceased count stood at 1,025 with nine new deaths and cured patients so far as 1.38 lakh. While GHMC's daily cases number is steady with over 300 cases, Ranga Reddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Nalgonda and Karimnagar continue to report new cases over 100 each.

POLLS FOR GRADUATES' CONSTITUENCY

OU Prof denies seeking support of TRS

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Former MLC and former Editor of The Hans India Prof Nageshwar clarified that he had not sought the support of TRS in the polls to be held for Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda, Khammam and Warangal graduates constituency.

Talking to the Editor over phone, Prof Nageshwar referring to a report, 'BJP begins groundwork for polls' that appeared in these columns on Saturday said that he had in fact not even decided whether to contest or not and hence seeking or not seeking support of TRS does not arise. "The ground situation is that there is lot of anger among people against TRS and where is the question of me seeking their support," he said.

He further said that he had always maintained cordial relations with leaders of all parties whereas the report said that he was close to Chandrababu Naidu and this amounts to maligning his image.

The Hans India report quoting BJP sources had said that he had "reportedly," sought the support of TRS. It is not the statement of the reporter or The Hans India. Similarly, the report said, "Unlike Prof Kodandaram, he maintains cordial rela-



Prof Nageshwar

tions with the political leaders of all shades and colours including the Congress leaders and the Telugu Desam National President N Chandrababu Naidu".

However, we regret that while mentioning about his profile, he was inadvertently mentioned as "Former Academician.". Prof Nageshwar is a well-known professor from Osmania University, a popular columnist and political analyst.

All happy with Santosh's tree challenge

Continued from P1

On climatic changes during pre and post lockdown period, he said, if we go through data, it is clear that pollution levels had come drastically come down during the first three months of lockdown. Talking about post lockdown, planting drive can really help in controlling pollution.

Maintaining plants is more important than planting them. Hence Santosh said he believes that all those who took up the challenge, they will also take up the responsibility of ensuring their survival. "I am sure my success rate is 90-96%," he added.

"One year ago, I gifted my brother KTR 2400 acres of land and he has planted 30 thousand plants. This year too he is planting same number. We are also creating small friendly park for children and it will get ready in two years' time," said Santosh Kumar. When asked in a lighter vein if he was inspired by actor Chiranjeevi's film 'Stalin,' where he talked about nominating three others to plant a sapling, Santosh laughed and said, "Kind of..."

Release dues under 15th Finance Commission, KTR urges Union Finance Minister

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao on Saturday urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to release pending dues under 15th Finance Commission amounting to Rs 1,433.95 crore.

The Municipal Administration Minister in a letter to the Union Finance Minister pointed out that the 15th Finance Commission recommended grants amounting to Rs 468 crore to million plus city, Hyderabad and Rs 421 crore to non-million plus cities in the State to be released in two equal instalments in June and October, 2020.

He said that the recommendation was accepted by the Centre and an Action Taken Report to this



effect was also placed in the Parliament. While the grant to million plus cities is yet to be released, the grant to non-million plus cities has been split into four instalments, against the recommendation of the Finance Commission, and the first

instalment amounting to Rs. 105.25 crore has been released on May 19. Rao said that Telangana was also denied its rightful entitlement in the grants to urban local bodies recommended by the Fourteenth Finance Commission (2015-20). While the Commission recommended an unconditional basic grant of Rs 2,711.12 crore, the amount released by the Centre was Rs 2,502.90 crore.

Though the State had fulfilled all the conditions attached to the performance grant of Rs 677.79 crore, the amount released to the State was only Rs 235.81 crore.

Thus the State was denied Rs 650.20 crore of the statutory grant to urban local bodies, though full amount was released to some other States, he said.

High Court to watch 'Bad Boy Billionaires'

Hyderabad: The High Court will watch Netflix documentary 'Bad Boy Billionaires', based on Satyam Computers founder Chairman B. Ramalinga Raju, before giving nod for release of the same.

The High Court Special Bench comprising of Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy heard a plea filed by Netflix Entertainment Service India seeking permission to release its stalled documentary.

Counsel for Netflix, Mr Neeraj Kishan Kaul informed the Court that it is a docuseries that it comprises on a source from something or the other which is in the public domain.

The moment something is in the public domain, there is no right to privacy that can be referred to by anyone. Kaul added that the re-

- **Netflix files plea in HC seeking permission to release the documentary**
- **City Civil Court, Hyderabad, has stalled the release of the documentary based on the contention of Ramalinga Raju that it would tarnish his image**

lease of Netflix's 'Bad Boy Billionaires' was stalled without hearing its client's side. He urged the Court to watch the documentary for observation.

Earlier, XXV Additional Chief Judge, City Civil Courts, Hyderabad had stalled the release of the documentary based on the contention of Ramalinga Raju that it would tarnish his image.

Chief Justice Chauhan pointed out that there are a lot of hurdles in the freedom of speech and expression that would be an extremely dangerous proposition of law to establish by any court.

The Court observes that the press is no longer what it used to be. We need to have a rethinking on the extent of the freedom of speech and expression that the press would be justified in claiming its share.

Chief Justice Chauhan stated that "Yes, there is freedom of press undoubtedly, there is freedom of speech and expression, perhaps the time has come, when we must revisit the issue now". Since 1970s the judiciary has been rushing every time to protect the press, please also reconsider this issue,

CJ opines.

Is the press of 2020 what it was in 1970... or like every other institution that has seen a certain decline? Perhaps the press is not as pure as it used to be, perhaps it is not of a great status it used to be,

LEGAL NOTES

and it is not only about the press in India, perhaps the press in the US is in the worst position than what it is in India, Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan added.

The Court wishes to watch the documentary at the weekend for observation. The weblink of the documentary was provided to the court by the petitioner counsel.

The Court directed both the parties to submit written arguments by September 24. The matter was adjourned to September 25.

Delhi journo held for passing border strategy info to China

Continued from P1

Sharma was arrested on September 14 based on inputs from central intelligence. Police have seized classified defence documents from him, the DCP said. He said that a Chinese woman and her Nepalese associate have also been arrested for allegedly paying Sharma large amounts of money routed through shell companies.

Pakistan uses drone to drop weapons in J&K

Continued from P1

"All the three Lashker-e-Taiba terrorists were residents of Kashmir and had come to pick up the consignment, which was dropped by Pakistan on this side using a drone," the DGP, who was flanked by Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu Division, Mukesh Singh, told reporters in Rajouri district. The IGP informed this was the third successful operation in the twin districts of Rajouri and Poonch since September 11. Earlier, a huge consignment of arms and ammunition was recovered from two people in Balakote sector of Poonch three days later 11 kg of heroin worth Rs 11 crore, meant to fund terrorism activities, was seized in Rajouri district.

MP seeks Centre's help on capital

New Delhi: TDP MP Galla Jayadev here on Saturday urged the Centre to intervene in the Capital issue of Andhra Pradesh and take a firm stand instead of submitting to the courts that it had no role to play.

Referring to the three capitals controversy in Lok Sabha on Saturday, Jayadev said the Centre alone had the right to name the capital under Article 248.

This issue did not figure in any other list including the Concurrent List, he said.

All happy with Santosh's tree challenge

Continued from P1

On climatic changes during pre and post lockdown period, he said, if we go through data, it is clear that pollution levels had come drastically come down during the first three months of lockdown. Talking about post lockdown, planting drive can really help in controlling pollution.

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their survival. "I am sure my success rate is 90-96%," he added.

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When asked in a lighter vein if he was inspired by actor Chiranjeevi's film 'Stalin,' where he talked about nominating three others to plant a sapling, Santosh laughed and said, "Kind of..."

Pak-inspired al Qaeda terror module busted

Continued from P1

"Large quantity of incriminating materials including digital devices, documents, jihadi literature, sharp weapons, country-made firearms, a locally fabricated body armour, articles and literature used for making home-made explosive devices have been seized from their possession," the NIA said in a statement.

"These individuals were radicalised by Pakistan-based al Qaeda terrorists on social media and were motivated to undertake attacks at multiple places, including Delhi-NCR," the agency said.

The module was "actively indulging in fund-raising and a few members of gang were planning to travel to Delhi to procure arms and ammunition," as per the initial investigations. According to sources, the group was planning attacks with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) made from potassium procured from firecrackers and planned to go to Kashmir for weapons delivery. The NIA recovered switches and batteries from Abu Sufiyan's house during the raids.

Besides, the module was trying to establish a well-organised al Qaeda network in different parts of the country, including the northeast and Jammu and Kashmir, on the instructions of the Pakistan-based handlers, the officer said. The NIA registered 17 cases related to the presence of IS in the southern states of Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, and arrested 122 accused, the minister said.

Hyderabad among six indicted in Amazon case

Continued from P1

They were charged with conspiracy to use a communication facility to commit commercial bribery, conspiracy to access a protected computer without authorization, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and wire fraud. Amazon said it has systems in place to detect suspicious activity by employees and sellers and teams that investigate prohibited activity. "Bad actors like those in this case detract from the flourishing community of honest entrepreneurs that make up the vast majority of our sellers," the company said in a statement.

Monsoon Session likely to be curtailed by week

Continued from P1

On Saturday — the sixth day of the session — the Rajya Sabha passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill 2020 and the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020. The pending Bills of this session include The Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020, The Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020, The Bilateral Netting of Qualified Financial Contracts Bill, 2020 and The Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020, The National Forensic Sciences University Bill, 2020 and The Rashtriya Raksha University Bill, 2020.

Tragedy of being a woman

This is with reference to the editorial 'Horrific Sexual crime' (Sep19). Tragedy with the victim is that she is a woman in man's world and that too in this sub-continent. Reaction of law enforcement agencies is the same both in India and Pakistan. Few years back in the infamous case of rape of woman in Park Street in Kolkata, same narrative unfortunately was set by none other than a woman Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The victim was made to look like guilty for her own plight. The State washed its hands off any breakdown of law and order conditions.

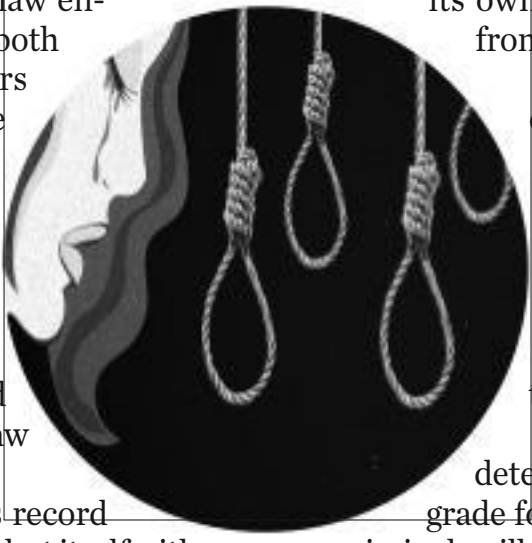
Pakistan whose human rights record is worse has not surprised anyone but itself with false ingenuity and lame reasoning to absolve themselves from any blame. Its encouraging that the

masses are taking to street protests against this inhuman and horrific crime. Pakistan which has witnessed many such heinous crimes in the past against its own women have not learned anything from it.

Most of the accused gets freed by courts because crucial forensic and police work is so pathetic and becomes impossible for prosecution to prove the crime. Culprits with few days of incarceration are freed. They are once again let loose on gullible victims and roam freely with their predatory paws.

Until and unless State government is determined to tighten the noose and upgrade forensics and cover all legal loopholes, criminals will continue to rule the streets and victims will continue to suffer physical and mental torture

Ashok Goswami, Mumbai



Civic apathy claims a child's life

It was with heavy heart I read the news "Missing girl's body found in Neredmet drain" (TH19 Sep). The news has exposed the pathetic civic infrastructure of the city which was only a few days back Hyderabad was ranked the best city to live and work in India and yet to be inaugurated Cable bridge over Durgam Cheruvu was widely promoted by GHMC as a mark and we all got awestruck. Hyderabad became a Karma Bhoomi and we moved from Delhi in 1982.

Thanks to IT, the then CM turned CEO Chandrababu Naidu did work to turn the city modern by initiating development around hillock areas where not only land grabbers, politicians (of all hue), VIP Babus, industrialist and others live was turned as IT corridor and since then there was no looking back the successive Congress CM's were no better concentrat-



Sumedha Kapuria

ing all development only in and around where they were living. For their convenience even swanky airport was established for them to easily reach there.

As a result of such short sighted vision, the development of the city was left to God. When the state was bifurcated, people like me and many others thought KCR and his clan would look beyond hillocks and Hi Tech city and it was not to be. After all, they cannot antago-

nise realtors who have funded them during Telangana agitation. The so called young and dynamic KTR who holds the ministry of Municipal Administration should hang his head in shame for the death of a young child.

I may sound harsh, but citizens here neither have civic sense or the zeal to take on the elected corporators for neglecting development. What is surprising that the associations here think that by merely making them Chief Guest in colony functions etc would make them responsible to do the work instead of taking them head on for failing to do their work. After all, are we not paying property taxes and where are they going? Is our money only for making the lives of those living in hillocks safe and better and not for those living in Neredmet and other areas of the twin city?

N Nagarajan, Hyderabad



Is this a SAD end to NDA?

The Monsoon session of Parliament, which started on 14 September is said to be taking up some historical ordinances. Three of 11 ordinances are now changing the pattern of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The present government run by this alliance has introduced Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill 2020. Among these three bills, the first one links between Agricultural Produce Prices and Quantity of Produce. It also permits the big farmers and Corporates to hoard large stocks of agricultural produce.

So, it is alleged they can create scarcity of produce artificially for exorbitant prices. The second bill allows the fixation of agricultural produce prices by market forces, in which the farmers are ultimate victims as it is devoid of licence for sellers and buyers. The third bill promotes corporate farming thereby reducing bargaining power of farmers just like Jio mobile service provider which provided service at the lowest price until it emerged as one and only service provider in the market. So, these bills are not only against interests of farmers but also over stepping into States' subject. Moreover these bills destroy the benefits of Green Revolution, MSP and food security. Thus Kaur has taken a good decision by stepping down from the Modi Cabinet and so she has really become loving daughter and beloved sister of farmers across the nation. So, other parties also must think over it and should try to make the Modi government farmer-friendly as agriculture is only sector that registered positive growth even in the midst of Coronavirus.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru

Since the passing of the ordinances on farmers' bills in June this year, restless farmers were up in arms against the NDA government over the bills on the ground that it makes them poor and landless in due course. The Centre failing to read the pulse of the agitating farmers and going ahead to get the three controversial bills on agriculture passed in the parliament without a discussion with all stakeholders only goes to show that they are more inclined to help the big business than really helping farmers.

In fact, when agriculture affects the livelihoods of half the population of the country and critical to the nation's food security is in dire need of reforms, it is ironical the government instead of addressing numerous problems facing the nation on various fronts on priority has set out to kill the proverbial golden goose.

As expected, Shiromani Akali Dal like other parties which bank heavily on farmers' votes for their survival, pulling out minister in the union cabinet Harsimrat Kaur Badal in protest against anti-farmer ordinances must serve as an eye-opener to government that it cannot its alliance partners for granted anymore. Further, this has exerted pres-

D V L N S Mridhula, Hyderabad

sure on Haryana where 10 MLAs belonging to JJP are alliance partners of BJP ruled state government to withdraw support.

Even JD(U) in Bihar and other friendly regional parties also seemingly under pressure to act against the NDA government after the three controversial bills on farm reform coming close after Electricity Amendment bill stirred a hornet's nest. The fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance that minimum support price would continue and then going all out to assuage the feelings of farmers saying that the three bills are historic and "pro-farmer" in the midst of large-scale protests in Punjab and Haryana could not have much impact on agitating farmers, even as opposition tried to fish in troubled waters by raising their voices against the bills.

The fact of the matter that the Farmers' (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and farm Services Bill, 2020 affects small farmers from securing the benefit of even small increase in wholesale prices after the new legislation opens the door to corporate business houses in agriculture cannot be brushed under the carpet because it puts farmers at an disadvantage when it comes to compete in the market place even as big business houses holds a sway over the prices.

As the voice of the opposition over the withdrawal of bills has reached a crescendo with slogans like "anti-farmer" with pressure already built with more expected to join, it is time Modi government calls all opposition including the states and farmers' organisations for a detailed discussion instead of rushing up such important bills without a debate in the house to remove irritants.

K R Srinivasan, Secunderabad

IV

This refers to the news item 'PM defends farm bills', The Hans India, September 19. The Modi government mustn't waver on the farm reform legislations despite protests in Punjab and Haryana, which prompted Akali Dal's exit from the ministry. The progressive bills relating to creating a viable alternative to agricultural market produce committees (APMCs) and facilitating contract farming can help small farmers discover fair prices for farm produce and bring better services to the farm gate. APMC's haven't lived up to their promise due to cartelisation and the difficulty of small farmers in transporting their produce to APMC market yards.

Centre's bold reforms are imperative when the States are unable to usher in such reforms as they are often hostage to big farmer and middlemen lobbies. PM Modi has made a weighty promise to farmers, 86% of whom are small and marginal farmers, to double their incomes by 2022. The status quo, including minimum support price (MSP) isn't helping enough farmers unlike direct benefit transfers, besides distorting markets and cropping patterns too.

The Centre has clarified that it isn't undermining APMC's or MSP's but merely increasing competition by allowing agribusinesses, food processors, wholesalers, exporters and big retailers to source directly from farmers. Opposition parties are joining the protests to reap political mileage, but government must improve its messaging details on the salience of these reforms to enlist the support of the farmers in favour of these progressive reforms.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

Same sex marriage

It is indeed good to learn that the Centre on Monday told the Delhi High Court that marriage between same sex couples was 'not permissible' as it is not recognised by our laws, legal system, society and our values. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted this before the court during the hearing of a Public Interest Litigation seeking declaration that same sex marriages be recognised under the Hindu Marriage Act and Special Marriage Act. However, it is pertinent to note that same sex marriage is accepted in many countries and with this wide acceptability in mind, the PIL was moved in the court. Fortunately, the court questioned the need for a PIL in the instant case.

It is also heartening to learn that the Solicitor General Tushar Mehta opposed the relief sought in the petition. He said, "Our laws, our legal system, our society and our values do not recognise a marriage, which is a sacrament, between same sex couples." He explained that the petition was asking the court to legislate and, in such circumstances, if court granted any relief would run contrary to various statutory provisions.

Thus, the Solicitor General has well preserved the order in currency in the society by opposing the same sex marriage, for same sex marriage is a taboo being followed since time immemorial. Our society has a family system in which a man and his wife builds a family by procreating progenies. In order to preserve the purity of the family, both the man and his wife have to adhere to certain rules in life. Same sex marriage can never procreate progenies and it can never be sacred as well. Further, it shatters the sacredness of a real family.

God considers family as a most sacred institution in society and therefore everyone has to attach too much importance to family. The tying of nuptial knot truly begins and enters the threshold of a family. Both the man and his wife must be faithful to each other till their end. This willingness of being faithful is the key to a sacred family

and the children born out of their wedlock are looking to their parents for guidance and for everything.

Thus, every act of the parents is very crucial before their children, who learn everything from them at their rudimentary stage. Thus, family should be taken care of and run carefully. Either husband or wife, who strays out of this sacredness or fidelity once, truly breaks the sacredness of family. Even the spouse who opts for divorce commits the sin of breaking family. There is nothing that cannot be reconciled except adultery.

Adultery is a terrible sin before God and the society. One who commits it cheat one's spouse. While marrying, both the bride and bridegroom express their willingness to be faithful till their end and thus they love each other and they are no longer two bodies but one body. They ardently love and exchange everything each other.

So, when the spouse commits adultery, he/she gives in himself/herself to another, such an act itself is tantamount to treachery. Such adulterous wife/husband breaks the sacredness of the family. Thus, the family disintegrates and eventually society suffers from such disintegration. So, it is the duty of everyone to oppose the move by certain people with ulterior motives to destroy right family system in the country.

T K Nandan, Kochi



'Delayed justice destroys the entire system'

E GAJENDRA NATH REDDY

It is such a right saying: "Justice delayed is not only justice denied but also destroys the entire system". The decision of the country's apex court to complete a time-bound trial on the cases filed against the lawmakers is a welcome one. The Supreme Court has also issued guidelines to all the High Court Chief Justices to respond in a week on the impending stays on lawmakers' cases.

The bench headed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court Judge NV Ramana and others pronounced that it is an obligatory responsibility of the people to know about their leaders and about their honesty to whom they voted and sent them as their representatives to the temples of democracy. Further, they have stated that this step is very essential to bring limpidness in all constitutional institutions that are meant for the service of the people.

This dynamic step of the Supreme

Court for the speedy disposal of cases on lawmakers is due to the PIL filed by an advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyaya in 2016 on the impending trial on lawmakers. The Supreme Court has begun its trial in September 2020 and appointed a senior advocate Vijay Hansaria as an Amicus Curie to collect the information about the cases on lawmakers. According to the Amicus Curie, there are 4000-odd cases excluding ACB cases and money laundering cases of the same. This gigantic number of cases reflects how the lawmakers have become as lawbreakers.

The MLAs, MPs and other people's representatives are extensively abusing every orbit of the governance and amassed wealth. The lawmakers that are facing charges are simply enjoying their elegant life with the help of political shields and getting stays on their charges by hiring reputed advocates and paying them a hefty fee.

The politics have become a rehabilitation camp for all the defaulters and



parties are allotting tickets to them in the want of power. These people after entering their feet in the shoes of political leaders are utilizing every opportunity to snatch the money and assets dis-

proportionately. After sitting prettily on the heap of money, they are using the same money for their cakewalk victory in elections.

It is ill conceivable that politics has

become a shortcut to increase wealth instead of service. That is the reason for the elections in our country managed rather than the people who participated. After getting elected the lawmakers irrespective of their position they are realizing the Bob Corker remark "I am a lawmaker but I don't like laws". These elected people do not know much about the constitution on which they take an oath and try to breach the same deliberately.

The country populace has seen politicians like Gulzarilal Nanda, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Tanguturi Prakasham Pantulu, unselfish leaders who have left their benchmark for honesty in politics. However, today's politicians are "lilliputs" in all fronts when we compare with them. I am very keen to quote an interesting post that I have seen in National Post (The Canadian Press) dated May 27, 2013, in which the editor posed a query to its readership 'Is honesty still part of politics asked a question? ".

However, this is a very good attempt of the country's apex court that has been instigated to act on lawmakers and revealed that it is not only for picking out the leaders having criminal history but also to cleanse the constitutional offices occupied by the accused politicians that are barricading the trial with their influence. This spirited move of the country's esteemed court has already sent jitters into the spines of crime record having politicians irrespective of their political outfits and power.

Hope it will happen in near sight and the accused lawmakers will face the trial earlier than expected and they will come out as acquitted or as convicted. This will surely make the ruffians think twice to leap into politics and propel the honest to become lawmakers. However, lack of any stringent action criminal record having lawmakers in politics may realise this naked truth "Honesty and politics always uncomfortable bedfellows". Isn't it?

Public apathy to corona pandemic is shocking

NELAPATLA ASHOK BABU

It is very unfortunate that even after six months people are not used to and habituated to practicing very important but very simple precautions to counter the Coronavirus . This is true not only with respect to India but everywhere else in the world also.

The World Health Organization and the Governments of different Countries repeatedly emphasise on: wearing of face mask, using of sanitizer very often and avoiding crowds. But people are negligent and ignoring these three simple observations or practices. It is very much glaring in India. We see normally on our way to office the masses crowding together and indulging in endless conversations without wearing masks and no sanitizer nearby.

When the Maharashtra State stood first in number of positive cases and number of active cases, it was compelled to take certain coercive measures. Now in Pune all Police are on roads to collect the challans from the general public :Rs 500 for failure of wearing a face mask for the first time and Rs 1000 for any next time (Pune District is leading the number of positive cases in the Country of late) . The same strict implementation is being done already in the States/UTs like Delhi and Odisha.

In Delhi the police are collecting even for open spitting also. It reminds me of my duties as the Observer to the Shahdara District in the NCT Delhi in January and February 2020. When I

observed the people are openly defying the law by smoking in public places and spitting, I had summoned the District Chief Medical Officer (through the District Collector & Magistrate) and I suggested he collect challans from all the violators of smoking and spitting in public places.

One of my cousins who is now the District Collector of Balasore (Baleswar) in Odisha appraised me he is collecting Rs 1.5 - 2 lakh daily from the public for not wearing the mask . If the situation is like that in a small district one can visualise how the situation is grave in dense districts like Mumbai , Thane and Pune !!

In the wake of Covid-19 the production, supply and maintenance of oxygen got enormous significance as the typical feature of this virus is the patient suffers with breathing problems and ultimately it leads to fatality. The supply of oxygen to the patient is crucial in rejuvenating the breathing and thereby snatching away the patient from the clutches of death. Entire Country was awakened to the dire need of more oxygen supply when eight patients of private hospitals have been shifted to Government General Hospital due to lack of Oxygen in Ahmedabad.

In order to ensure the continuous supply of oxygen the Union Government has issued serious instructions to all the States to facilitate hassle-free movement of vehicles carrying oxygen. The Maharashtra Government has accorded the ‘status of Ambulance’ to the vehicles carrying oxygen. Means it will get priority in the



transport compared to any other vehicle. All oxygen production units multiplied their production by working for three shifts at the behest of the State Govt. The Hospitals dedicated to Covid patients have been ensured 80 per cent of total production by a special order. The State govt officials of Excise and Drugs & Pharmaceuticals departments were kept at the manufacturing facilities round the clock to keep constant watch.

When the govt and officials works day and night to protect the lives of people, some unscrupulous elements work the other way round. During my visit to one hospital with more than 100 beds as part of inspection of exorbitant medical bills the Director of the Hospital aired his grievance regarding this. The neighbouring colony people who were mostly the retired people troubled the hospital by objecting to the sound during the filling up oxygen

from a tanker to the storage reservoir of the hospital. The neighbours also petitioned the Municipal Corporation to close the hospital as the vehicles carried oxygen creating noise.

How cruel and senseless these people were !! The general public who are at their safe carved houses should have been more sympathetic to the hospital which has been treating thousands of Covid patients during this pandemic (I advised them to take the help of police if they repeat nuisance or post a video on social media so that the people would understand how mean those people were).

As far as supply of medicine including the crucial medicines like Remdesivir, Flavipiravir, etc are concerned the supply has been streamlined very much. The Drug Controller's constant vigil on each and every supplier makes the way through. The Agencies are directly being contacted by the patient/Attendant

and they are being supplied without fail. Black marketing of these high-end drugs come to negligible.

As per the statement of Union Health Minister Dr Harshavardhan the PM Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Kendras meant to provide supply of medicine and drugs at an affordable cost to the general public started the sales of Face masks, sanitizers and other Covid- related items.

The students are more affected social group during this extraordinary pandemic situation which is unprecedented in the human history of last one century. Particularly the School Students are worst affected. The Central Govt issued guideline to open the Schools for the Standards of 9 to 12 from November 01. But this is on voluntary basis while observing all COVID precautions. The Odisha Govt and declared it as Zero Academic as for the students , but the details are not known. The Himachal Pradesh Govt trying to open the Schools on an experimental basis. As a response to the pandemic situation most of the States relaxed the total quantum of the syllabus for the School students. The Governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana reduced the burden of 30% syllabus on the similar lines.

Another important development took place with regard to the terminology of COVID-19. Participating in a debate most of the MPs objected to the phrase of Social Distance. They pointed out it is reminding the social stigma already prevalent in the Indian Society. Accepting their point the Chairman of Rajya Sabha and the Vice

President of India suggested the phrase Safe Distance instead of Social Distance.

Almost of all States have started all kinds of economic activity. Maharashtra Govt has issued standard operating procedure for the hospitality sector. Timeline for submission of Life certificate for the pensioners has been extended up to December 31, 2020. To meet the demand of more Doctors the Andhra Pradesh started four new Medical Colleges. The Election Commission of India (ECI) is all set to announce the schedule to conduct the polls for the Bihar Legislative Assembly. The Railways have started the operation of 80 passenger trains to different destinations. In all 7 Metro cities the Metro Rail started its operation in all lines to the fullest scale.

All said and done with a regular observation of three or four precautions the people can skip the wrath of corona virus. Mainly the five leading States namely Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh should take the lead to contain the spread of virus. Particularly the 35 districts which are contributing for half of total cases of the Country should display an exemplary performance regarding this. In other words 100 odd top class Officials will now direct the drive against this dreaded virus.

(The author is Joint Commissioner of IncomeTax and Enquiry and Inspection Authority into exorbitant medical bills by Corporate and Private Hospitals on COVID-19 patients, Pune.)

Chinese imperialism poses incurable threat to world

BINAY KUMAR SINGH

Two viruses have taken over the world. One, a minuscule creature called Covid-19, has killed more than 8,00,000 people around the globe, but is slowing down and will most likely be eliminated in the coming months. Vaccines have already been developed against it and once inoculated, citizens of the world can expect to go on with their normal lives. However, it is the second virus, that of Chinese imperialism, which poses a long term and a much more potent and incurable threat to the world at large.

China's shadow looms large over the world. Not only geopolitically, but also in the economic and cultural realms, the Chinese are attempting to remake the world as per their conception of a master-serf relationship. Though in international relations, politics, economics and culture are interrelated, it is important to discuss them separately in order to bring out the nuances of Chinese imperialism.

The age of colonisation and imperialism ended for good in the wake of the breakup and reordering of the international order. This order was based on liberal principles of free trade, respect for international law, prevalence of democratic norms and a security architecture underlined by the presence of two superpowers. Intra and inter country disputes did happen but they were generally localised at best or limited to particular regions.

It is only with the entry of China on the world stage in force that global disruptions have



started to manifest themselves brutally. The 2008 financial crisis decimated economies of the West and the East Asian Tigers but China emerged unscathed, riding on the success of its impervious wall which prevented (and still prevents) foreign investments unless approved by the Big Brother Xi. China by then had established mass manufacturing bases in major parts of the country and impeded by human rights or basic minimum wages, yoked its population to work tirelessly. The end result: China now mass produces everything from a needle to an airplane.

This has enabled it to dump its produce on other countries initially through the pretensions of free trade (now censored by the WTO) and later through the mega-ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI has been used by China to weasel its way

through national sovereignties like a hot knife through butter. Pakistan and Sri Lanka are best examples of what international observers euphemistically call "Debt Trap Diplomacy" but in reality is a gross usurpation of national authority.

China's tentacles, unlike Covid-19's, reach far and wide. In fact, Europe faces a double whammy of being repeatedly hit by the coronavirus and China almost simultaneously. With access to the Piraeus port of Greece, China has already started dumping products of all kinds in the European Common Market system. Italy's untimely submission to Covid-19 was also made possible due to its proximity to the Chinese trading system. After all, Covid-19 and China have become synonymous with each other. In terms of politics, China has undertaken a multi-pronged attack

across international borders of many countries.

India has been the first to bear the brunt of Chinese Janus-faced policies of illegal aggression on one hand, while calling for normalisation of trade and other relations on the other. However India is not the only one. The US faces a challenge of another kind. There is a real threat of China's disinformation campaign affecting the outcome of the US elections in November.

China's Thousand Talents Program has already ensured massive theft of data and exclusive technology from the US, the latest being Zhengdong Cheng of College Station, Texas who has been charged with making false statements and hiding his affiliations to the PLA. With Taiwan, China is playing the waiting game, pushing its ships and jets closer to the island nation with every passing week under the garb

of exercises. Hong Kong for all matters has stopped existing as an autonomous region with only its nomenclature remaining unchanged.

China has also been active on the cultural front. The various China Study or Culture Centres opened in a number of countries act as both espionage and propaganda centres. There is a proactive effort to disseminate Xi Jinping Thought, a constricting ideology that aims to cement the Chinese President as the centre of China's absurdist and all-encompassing universe.

The number of mushrooming Confucius Institutes all over the world teach everything but Confucian values. They are a front to propagate Chinese communist ideology under the facade of an educational institution and are now being investigated by a number of governments for their links to "The Party". Chinese Students Associations have also been implicated in a number of countries to stifle criticism of Tibet and Xinjiang by expatriate Chinese students through use of violence and coercion.

Covid-19 is something that will ultimately have a cure. As it is, its lethality is very limited. However, the bigger virus of Chinese Communist Party keeps growing potent everyday and to counter it, the entire world needs to come together. The vaccination to get rid of the Chinese communist virus, though much more painful than the Covid-19 affliction, will have to be undertaken.

(Binay Kumar Singh is a columnist and researcher. Views expressed are personal)

Bengal wax artist makes statue of actor Sushant Singh Rajput

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A veteran wax artist of West Bengal has sculpted a full-sized statue of actor Sushant Singh Rajput as a mark of tribute. Sushanto Roy (64), state's first wax artist, has chiselled the statue, having striking resemblance with the actor who was found hanging at his Mumbai apartment on June 14. Sushant Singh Rajput's death case is currently being probed by CBI and other central agencies. It took Roy one and half month to complete the statue of the actor at his studio here in West Burdwan district.

The veteran artist had previously sculpted wax statues of megastar Amitabh Bachchan, football legend Diego Maradona and Marxist patriarch Jyoti Basu since 2001. His wax sculpting of former President Pranab Mukherjee occupies a pride of place at Rashtrapati Bhavan. "I sculpt the statues of personalities with whom I feel emotionally attached in some way or the other. Whose life and works inspire me. Be it Amitabh Bachchan, Jyoti Basu, Pranab Mukherjee or Maradona.

"The wax statue of Sushant was also made for the same reason, though I regret that I will never be able to show it to the actor, whose struggle in acting career should be an inspiration to all aspiring actors," Roy, who has decided to keep the statue in



his own museum, told PTI on Saturday. The veteran sculptor also said that news of Sushant being a victim of nepotism also struck a chord with him "as despite being the first wax artist in the state having earned plaudits from big personalities, my request for a plot for a gallery in city or recognition from the government had never been considered by either the state or central governments."

"Both Sushant and me had been fighting against odds but never gave up," he said drawing parallels. He recalled despite having wax statues at Jaipur and the wax museum in Rajarhat, the only recognition he got was from the Mamata Banerjee government in 2013 as a citation paper in recognition of his works. "I had also sculpted wax statues of Mamata Banerjee and Narendra Modi but didn't have the scope to show it to them," the 1980 gold medal winner from Indian Art College said.

The veteran craftsman is spending his entire savings to build a state of the art private museum in Asansol to preserve his works for display.

OPTICAL INDUSTRY LOOKS FOR CALIBRATED SUPPORT

M SOMASEKHAR

The ongoing pandemic has had a significant impact on both the practice of ophthalmology and the eyecare market in India, like most sectors. For the months between April to June, most of the small practitioners were shut, the major eyecare centres did emergency procedures.

Even as the economic activity has been opened up in a phased manner by the Union and State Governments, there is very little momentum in eye health practices. Several reasons underscore this trend. For example, people are postponing elective surgeries, Govt's have slowed down schemes and focussed completely on COVID19 and falling income levels are forcing people to drop buying beyond vision devices.

An optimistic estimate will show 30-35 percent opening up of eyecare centres in Metros and State capitals now compared to pre-COVID 19. There have been attempts to push online business by some of the players like Lenskart etc., says Ramachandran P, an industry veteran and Business Consultant, Eyecare Sector.

The near term outlook also is quite challenging say experts spoken to. With the contraction in the economy and revenue shortfalls hitting states, it's anybody's guess as to how the consumer trends will

change and Govt programmes suffer. Investment in new technologies and equipment could also fall. Therefore, the optical industry needs to rethink its strategy of meeting consumer demands.

Indian domestic industry

According to a Deloitte report the size of the Indian eyewear market was USD 7.4 billion in 2018. It was projected to grow at a CAGR of over 9 per cent to reach USD 13.6 billion by 2024 driven by strong demographics and the growing economy.

Given the potential, the domestic optical industry has been gearing up to invest in manufacturing and scale up. The eyewear market is dominated by unorganized sector accounting for nearly 75 percent of the overall market.

At present, most of the players are Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), except for Titan, Lenskart etc. More than half a dozen of the global biggies like Essilor, Bausch & Lomb, Johnson & Johnson, Hoya Corporation, Carl Zeiss etc prominently present. The welcome trend is the growth of the organised sector in recent years.

However, the cost of capital is the impediment that entrepreneurs are facing today. "We must create an industry climate for mass-scale manufacture of all products wherein Indian and FDI investments can also come in. But this has to be



supplemented by ancillary industries also being set up along with mass manufacturing", says Ramachandran.

The Chinese dependence

The dependence on China for a range of finished products and raw material is significant as on date. For example, in the manufacture of spectacle frames there are just a handful of MSMEs in making plastic and metal frames. But, more than 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the volumes are imported from China. The spectacle lenses are processed and finished according to the doctor's prescription and the con-

sumer's taste. The casting of lenses from liquid monomer is again made in China, which could be approximately 90 percent of Indian consumption says Ramachandran. Even in sunglasses, up to 90 percent of volumes consumed in the country are imported, with China bagging the lion's share. Out of the total eyewear import, China accounts for a total of 80 percent according to industry sources – thus making it the single largest exporter of eyewear to India.

While there are some MNCs, who are expanding to cater to domestic demands and exports, there is a huge opportunity

to attract investments for an alternate production destination to de-risk their world requirements manufactured in China, feel experts. But, it's easier said than done. To get onto the lucrative, but competitive road, efforts have been focussed on creating quality infrastructure, good logistics and efficient export procedures, quality and trained manpower. Make in India is certainly one way.

The industry needs a push through the creation of an Optical corridor and a few manufacturing clusters with subsidised land and power to compete with China. There is also a need to move into high end technology products as India enjoys a competitive edge over China due to better IPR laws and manpower.

The rapid growth in use of smart, digital devices is leading to eye fatigue. Similarly, the early exposure to computers and mobile phones among children is bringing its own challenges. There is a need to have corrective and protective lenses.

Vision Challenges and poor

In the Indian context the huge burden of vision correction in itself is both a challenge and impediment for the growth of the optical industry. Institutes like the LV Prasad Eye, Sankar Nethralaya, Rajendra Prasad Ophthalmology Centre and many have been doing immense service in reaching out to the poor and needy to. In

recent years, the India Vision Institute (IVI) has joined hands with these and global companies to reach more people quickly.

The focus is on creating and addressing the twin problems of awareness and reducing the incidence of cataract and refractive error among school going children and the old.

According Vinod Daniel, CEO of IVI, over 100 million people need access to a pair of glasses but don't have. In many parts of rural India, people are not aware that they cannot see well because they don't have access to a pair of glasses. The absence of outlets where they can go and test and skilled manpower makes it a challenge for half of India's population living in rural areas to be fully productive in life.

In a study of working men and women in India, wearing reading glasses was found to increase productivity by 34 per cent and workers income by 20 per cent. As much as 80 per cent of what children learn is acquired through visual processing of information, he explains.

States like Telangana recently launched 'Kanti Velugu' programme, to provide spectacles to the poor. Several states have different programmes. Efforts by NGOs with support from some lens makers have also been working in the are. But, the efforts are small compared to the scale and range of the problem.

India's external debt zooms to \$559 billion

India's total external debt increased by 2.8 per cent to \$558.5 billion at the end of March mainly on account of a rise in commercial borrowings, according to a report released by the Finance Ministry.

The external debt stood at \$543 billion at end-March 2019. The ratio of foreign currency reserves to external debt stood at 85.5 per cent as at end-March 2020, as compared to 76.0 per cent a year ago, the report said. External debt as a ratio to GDP rose marginally to 20.6 per cent as at end-March 2020 from 19.8 per cent a year ago, India's External Debt: A Status Report: 2019-2020' showed. Compared to end-March 2019, sovereign debt shrank 3 per cent to reach USD 100.9 billion, it said, adding, this decrease was primarily due to a fall in FII investment in G-Sec - the second largest constituent - by 23.3 per cent to \$21.6 billion from \$28.3 billion a year ago.

Loans from multilateral and bilateral sources under external assistance - the largest constituent of the sovereign debt - grew 4.9 per cent to \$87.2 billion, it said. Non-sovereign debt, on the other hand, it said, rose 4.2 per cent to \$457.7 billion mainly due to an increase in commercial borrowings - the largest constituent - by 6.7 per cent to \$220.3 billion.

Outstanding NRI deposits - the second largest constituent - at \$130.6 billion was almost equal to the level a year ago, it said. In most emerging markets, as the economy expands, foreign debt typically accumulates to address shortage of domestic savings, India is no exception to this phenomenon. Economic activity in India influences the accumulation of external debt, reflecting the policy over the years of enabling private sector to access foreign debt and this was reflecting as stock of non-sovereign debt (private sector debt) is four times that of the sovereign debt at end-March 2020. Further, it said, non-financial corporations are the biggest debtors, accounting for 42 per cent of total debt, followed by deposit-taking corporations (28.3 per cent), and general government (18.1 per cent). However, as the momentum of economic activity slowed in 2019-20,



External debt as a ratio to GDP rose marginally to 20.6 per cent as at end-March 2020 from 19.8 per cent a year ago

the private sector's appetite to access foreign debt ebbed, resulting in relatively lower growth of 6.7 per cent in the stock of commercial borrowings as at end-March 2020 when compared to that recorded during the first five years of the previous decade.

The report observed that the stock of NRI deposits as at end-March 2020, being almost equal to the level recorded on March 31, 2019, needs to be seen in the context of, among others, softening of interest rates on NRI deposits.

"About 81 per cent of the total stock of external debt is long-term, i.e., having maturity of greater than one year, predominately in the form of commercial borrowings and NRI deposits," it said. Remaining 19 per cent of debt is short-term, primarily in the form of short-term trade credit. Short-term trade credit, constituting about 95 per cent of the total short-term debt, is used for financing imports.

Noting that the US dollar is the predominant currency for denomination of India's external debt with a share of 53.7 per cent of the total debt as at end-March 2020, it said, the US dollar appreciation as on March 31 this year over the level a year ago resulted in a valuation gain of USD 16.6 billion. In other words, it said, excluding these valuation gains, increase in India's external debt as at end-March 2020 over the level a year ago would have been \$32 billion. Thus, moderation in accumulation of India's external debt as at end-March 2020 reflected, among others, slowing economic activity and appreciating US dollar.

Time to see brighter sides of the Covid-19 pandemic

The world on the cusp of new globalisation in digital way; for some, home will be the permanent office

P MADHUSUDHAN REDDY

India's Covid-19 trajectory is on expected lines. Our country recently crossed Brazil in novel coronavirus caseload to second place with over 53 lakh cases now. This dubious distinction will not end here though. India will soon cross the US and emerge at the top of the world's Covid tally list. That's but natural as our nation is adding nearly one lakh new infections every single day.

And the daily count is set to go up further. There are good reasons for it. India is a fertile ground for any pandemic or contagious disease because of the geographical and economic reasons that prevail. It's the same with Covid-19 as well. Our nation is home to the second highest population after China. But in the land area, we are far behind our communist neighbour and the US, the world's third largest populated nation. India's total land area is 3.287 million square kilometres. Compare that with China. The communist country, with a land area of 9.597 mnsq km, is 2.9 times bigger than India. But the population difference between the two nations is just 60 million (6 crore). The US, whose population (33 crore) equals to less than one-fourth of India's, is three times bigger than our country in land area (9.833 mnsq km).

Therefore, population density, at 500 people per km, in India is very high compared to the US (34/km) and China (145/km). Moreover, we are saddled with poverty and a poor healthcare ecosystem that borders on dysfunction at times. The less we talk about our currency the better. Thanks to our ever-depreciating rupee, salaries in India are the lowest in the world. Of course, they fell further now. Due to low income sources, majority of people look for debt whenever they or their family members fall sick. Besides, per capita living space in India is dismal, to say the least. These factors mean India has all the requisite ingredients that could spread the invisible enemy at a jet speed.

However, there is a brighter side as well to India's grim Covid story. Thankfully, mortality rate is comparatively low in India even if we take into consideration the handiwork of some State governments to suppress Covid death toll. This low mortality rate is neither because of our healthcare system's efficiency



nor because of our administration's effectiveness. It's because of the demographic dividend India enjoys currently. As much as 62.5 per cent of our population is in the prime age group of 15-59 years. Further, people aged 65 and above, who are said to be more vulnerable to Covid, are just 5.3 per cent of the total population. This population mix has come to India's rescue during these trying times.

Anyway, India is already into the ninth month of the chaotic Covid world. So, it's time to see other brighter sides of the pandemic instead of focusing excessively on doomsday scenarios, as we eagerly wait for the proverbial defence called vaccine. I am not saying here that the vaccine will be a reality. Till date, not many vaccines have been effective against virus infections. Therefore, we need to keep our fingers crossed. Coming to the positive sides of the pandemic, people are spending more time at home. So, traffic is relatively less on the roads these days. For many, home has become the new office. Software major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) announced that nearly 75 per cent of its total employees would permanently work from home by 2025. Many more software companies may follow suit. So, there will be no Monday blues for those who permanently work from home! No surprise if the US companies recruit Indians and ask them to work from home in India instead of going to the US on one visa or the other. Getting a US work visa is a Herculean task these days, isn't it? Online meetings

and education will be the new norm.

Globally reputed universities may also launch 'Study From Home' courses as students can attend online classes from anywhere in the world. That way, the world is on the cusp of a new wave of globalization in digital way. This would not have been possible but for the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite ravaging the world, the pandemic has opened doors for new opportunities and avenues.

And such developments will lead to revolutionary changes in work culture and working dynamics in every field. It's very likely that all the jobs in all the sectors that can be executed remotely will be shifted to 'Work From Home' model. Online shopping will gain further traction. Such drastic changes in lifestyles will lead to lesser traffic on roads and lower pressure on public transport systems.

Recently, I happened to go to some interior places in Telangana. In villages, labour shortage is a perennial problem. More so for the agriculture sector. With many students and those who lost their jobs in cities returning to their homes in villages, agriculture activity is getting a steady supply of labour now. However, not many people are going out for shopping and eating. There are no tours and pleasure trips. For god's sake, movie theatres are closed. Our world is a quieter place now. More so are the densely populated cities and towns. It's time to soak in this quietness and enjoy it as there is every chance of some things going back to old ways in the post-Covid world.

Of course, these unprecedented times have brought a lot of pain to businessmen and en-

No surprise if companies in the US and other countries recruit Indians and ask them to work remotely from home in India instead of going to the US on one visa or the other. Getting a US work visa is a Herculean task these days, isn't it? It's very likely that all the jobs in all the sectors, that can be executed remotely will be shifted to 'Work From Home' model



trepreneurs as hotels and restaurants are closed, the transportation sector is in doldrums and tourism came to a standstill. Shopping mall operators are in a dilemma whether to open them or keep them shut as people cut consumer spending. Millions have lost their jobs and with it, their livelihoods. However, there is no way out from this pain unless the governments chip in.

Therefore, saying economy is in tatters is an understatement. It's in total chaos. India may need at least two to three years to recover the lost ground as the impact of the Wuhan, China-born coronavirus on the Indian economy is more severe than on other nations including the US, the world's largest economy. But there is no escape route. India will have to live with the virus and the economic destruction that it has brought on us.

So, the only thing we can do now is to stay positive and move on. But we need to take enough precautions and preventive steps not to be in Covid positive territory. For, Covid positive means one will be in negative territory for at least two weeks and if one gets unlucky, beyond. Be positive in life, but don't become Covid positive. Surprisingly, most of the powerful leaders across India have suddenly gone silent on the Covid pandemic and some of them are also behaving as if nothing is happening around them and everything is safe. But people are really worried about what is in store for them and when this crisis will be over. A reassuring word will go a long way in infusing optimism among them. Let's hope something of that sort will happen soon.

Economy needs course correction

Covid crisis an opportunity to get back to the basics and to focus on economic prosperity

HIMANSHU MANGLIK

Covid-19 caught the world off-guard. It is embarrassing. It is embarrassing that the economic distress is more acute in India than in the rest of the world, especially when India was projected by many as the emerging star. Published data indicates that GDP contracted by 23.9 per cent during the previous quarter, businesses have had to shut down, jobs are vanishing, incomes are stressed and with unfriendly taxation structures the expansion plans and investments by most businesses are on hold. Even as factories try to shore up production with the gradual unlocking, the efforts to make labour laws more employer friendly are stressing the labour market. Consumer demand has weakened, supply chains are disrupted, the MSME and the informal sectors are faltering and, as jobs continue to dry up, consumer sentiments are tanking. The road ahead is not easy.

The future, as it is unfolding, is worrying. The VUCA concept, so familiar in the corporate world, is mild compared to the current state of the Indian economy. The Niti Aayog had released a report in 2019 that more Indians have fallen into poverty, hunger and inequality in the past two years. The Covid-19 lockdown will certainly have pushed many more into poverty. The unemployment rate in India, which averaged 9.21 per cent from 2018 until 2020, reached an all-time high of 23.5 per cent in April of 2020. It is as if India is on a mountain road and with the weather turning humid and sticky, the road ahead is expected to be treacherous. Continuing straight on the path will further destroy economic value. The option is to take a hairpin bend and change course to reach the destination. Many skilled navigators are recommending manoeuvring the hairpin bend before the road conditions get worse. The navigator must take a call.

The choice requires good judgement. If it continues straight, India will consolidate nationalist pride and achieve the religious unification of the country. The loss of economic prosperity will probably be offset in the short term by the fervour of reclaiming the past that is so deeply embedded in the complexed psyche of its people. It will take them back to the concept of destiny, uncomplaining and helpless resignation to fate. Religion is, after all, the opium of the masses. It will help if they are shackled to the past and continue hallucinating for a future, believing that the Gods will



Unless corrected, India is headed to a typical situation that the erstwhile BIFR would have classified as 'Sick Business' and in need of a turnaround strategy. A turnaround situation is amongst the toughest challenges that businesses face

bless them for their patience. This route may appear simpler but in reality it is like quicksand and more treacherous.

The hairpin bend, on the other hand, leads to tougher terrain and is much more difficult to navigate for laymen. It requires vision, professional expertise and willingness to identify and accept weaknesses to find solutions. It leads India to a scientific temper. It embraces a dream of equality and brahminization through economic upliftment and liberalism, questioning of religious dogmas and pursuing excellence. It radiates across five fingers - agricultural reforms, industrial output, employment and jobs, national security and strengthening of democratic institutions.

If India aspires to be a superpower then it has to demonstrate its ability to navigate the tough terrain. It needs to evolve beyond the identity of a unified religious nation. The Covid disruption is an opportunity to get back to the basics and to focus on economic prosperity which every individual needs and aspires towards. Subroto Roy, who studied economics at the Delhi School of Economics before becoming an RBI banker and then an entrepreneur, says: "We have to return to the Keynesian era of welfare economics. India is a young nation of 120 crore people who need food, work and income. In the post-Covid environment, the focus must be to ensure that everyone is gainfully employed as propagated by Keynes. The need is to create employment and put money in the hands of the people. If we rely only on the free market mechanism that insists on economic efficiency then companies will want to reduce liabilities

to protect profits and return on their investments. The post-Covid situation will be exceptional and the government has to play a crucial role."

It is, after all, the leadership tasked with steering the country to economic prosperity. The Covid Syndrome and its impact is perhaps the biggest crisis of the century and has thrown up several faultlines that we have ignored until now. Unless corrected, India is headed to a typical situation that the erstwhile BIFR would have classified as 'Sick Business' and in need of a turnaround strategy. A turnaround situation is amongst the toughest challenges that businesses face - often, because they refuse to acknowledge that they need help and the remedial action keeps getting postponed. For a turnaround strategy to be successful, it presupposes an acceptance that the business has begun to self-destruct.

Turning around a disrupted business is far more difficult than accelerating a successfully running business. India is facing all the typical challenges of a turnaround situation - dropping revenues (GDP), insufficient profits (growing deficit), cultural dissonance, demoralised and complexed employees (weakened institutions) amongst others - and requires clear vision and policies that cut through clutter to only focus on making the business healthy. The crisis is being accelerated by the systematic dumbing down of society which, in turn, is creating tunnel visions and discourages critical thinking. We seem to have switched off our minds as though on a roller-coaster ride in an amusement park, paying for the thrill and novelty, mistaking it for a momentary thrill and expecting things to be normal when the ride stops. We need to quickly get off the ride and accept reality. There is a growing gap between the euphoria of hope and the ground reality. The only ideology that will work will be the ideology of economic welfare.

India needs to re-evaluate its two routes to becoming a superpower. Either continue on the path of systematic social change at the cost of the economy or take the hairpin bend and focus on economic revival and social stability. Navigating the hairpin bend will be tough but if India does not course correct now then the revival will be even tougher. India will have been caught in the turnaround trap.

(Himanshu Manglik is founder and president, WALNUTCAP Consulting LLP. The views expressed are of the author) (IANS)

Apple stock plunges 22%, \$500bn eroded

A broad sell-off in the overall tech sector amid an 'underwhelming product launch event this week has resulted in Apple stock plunging nearly 22 per cent from its intraday record high of \$137.98 on September 2, losing around \$532 billion in market value. According to a CNBC report, it took just 12 trading sessions for Apple to plunge more than 20 per cent from its all-time high, giving up more than half a trillion in market capitalisation.

The iPhone maker last month scripted history by becoming the first American company to touch \$2 trillion in valuation.

Earlier this month, the market cap of Apple touched \$2.3 trillion, surpassing the entire value of all the companies in the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index, also called the FTSE 100 which is the UK's top share index.

While Apple's market value was around \$2.3 trillion (1.7 trillion pounds), all the companies in the FTSE 100 had a combined value of 1.5 trillion pounds.

Demand for Apple's shares reportedly boosted by the company's decision to divide its shares to make it easier for individuals to invest in the company. Apple's board of directors had approved a four-for-one stock split, effective from August 31. But things dramatically changed afterwards.

The company this week announced new hardware and updated software, including the Apple Watch Series 6, the iPad Air, a fitness service and service bundles called Apple One.

However, Apple did not announce any new iPhones.

Toni Sacconaghi, senior research analyst at Bernstein, called the event "relatively underwhelming." "We believe it could be difficult to move users from competitive music, video or gaming services, where they are often entrenched," Sacconaghi said in a note. "We continue to believe that Apple should look to more creatively bundle its hardware + services into integrated subscription bundles." Gene Munster from Loup Venture, however, was quoted as saying that the key takeaway from the Apple event is how the company is "masterfully upselling its consumers."

QUIZ NO. 140

HANS BIZ QUIZ

Theme: 'Bancassurance Partnerships'

1. Bharti AXA General Insurance partnered with which bank to offer 'Smart Plan Shop Package Policy', shop insurance for the financial protection of the bank's retailers and merchants?

- a) Airtel Payments Bank
- b) NSDL Payments Bank
- c) Fino Payments Bank
- d) Jio Payments Bank

2. Which two companies partnered and launched "Mosquito Diseases Protection Policy (MDPP) at Rs 99 per annum to protect against seven common mosquito-borne diseases - Chikungunya, Dengue, Elephantiasis, Japanese Encephalitis, Kala-azar, Malaria, and Zika virus?

- a) Paytm Payments Bank and ICICI Lombard General Insurance
- b) Airtel Payments Bank and HDFC ERGO General Insurance
- c) Fino Payments Bank and TATA AIG Insurance Company
- d) Jio Payments Bank and Apollo Munich Health Insurance

3. With which home finance company did SBI Life Insurance Company pact to offer the company's range of products to the lender's customers?

- a) GRUH Finance Ltd
- b) Repco Home Finance
- c) Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd
- d) LIC Housing Finance

4. With which Payments Bank, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has partnered to leverage the Payments Bank's deep distribution network and digital reach to offer millions of uninsured Indians with innovative and affordable life insurance products?

- a) Paytm Payments Bank
- b) Jio Payments Bank
- c) India Post Payments Bank
- d) Airtel Payments Bank

5. With which payments bank did ICICI Lombard tie up to launch a dengue and malaria policy that covers treatments up to Rs 10,000 at a premium as low as Rs 49?

- a) Fino Payments Bank
- b) Paytm Payments Bank
- c) India Post Payments Bank
- d) Jio Payments Bank

6. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has entered

into an agreement with which Payments Bank to have a wider reach and offer its protection and savings products to its customers utilising the bank's point of sale network across the country?

- a) Airtel Payments Bank
- b) Paytm Payments Bank
- c) NSDL Payments Bank
- d) Jio Payments Bank

7. Paytm signed a strategic partnership with which of the below to enable customers of Paytm to purchase insurance products?

- a) Aviva Life Insurance Co
- b) Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Co
- c) Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance Co
- d) HDFC Life Insurance Co



8. State-owned India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) entered a strategic partnership with which insurance company to provide life insurance solutions, especially at the doorstep of every household in the country?

- a) Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance Ltd.
- b) Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Co Ltd.
- c) Max Life Insurance Co. Ltd.
- d) Shriram Life Insurance Co. Ltd.

9. Kotak Mahindra General Insurance partnered with which of the finance companies to offer Covid-19 cover to its customers?

- a) Muthoot Finance Ltd
- b) Bajaj Finance Ltd
- c) Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited
- d) Shriram Transport Finance Company

10. Yes Bank has entered a bancassurance partnership with which life insurance company to serve and offer customised insurance products to its customers?

- a) Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance Co. Ltd
- b) Birla Sun Life Insurance Co. Ltd.
- c) Max Life Insurance
- d) DHFL Pramerica Life Insurance Co. Ltd.

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

KEY

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

ITALIAN OPEN

Djokovic, Nadal enter quarter-finals

Rome (IANS): Top seeds Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal have entered the quarterfinals of the Italian Open with straight-set wins in their respective third-round matches.

On Friday, Djokovic defeated his fellow Serb FilipKrajinovic 7-6 (7), 6-3 to enter the last eight of the tournament for the 14th straight year.

"It was definitely one of the longest sets I think I have ever played," said Djokovic as per the ATP Tour website after the match. "Never easy, I think, emotionally to play against someone that is one of my best friends for many years...I think the first set could have gone a different way, as well. "Fortunately for me it went my way and that allowed me to swing through the ball a bit more in the second set. Maybe physically and mentally, he dropped a level and I used my opportu-



nities and capitalised to win in straight sets."

In other Round of 16 match, nine-time champion Nadal cruised past 2019 Monte-Carlo Masters finalist DusanLajovic 6-1, 6-3 to reach his 15th Rome quarter-final.

"I played at I think a very positive level of tennis. Of course it

needs to keep improving. I need to keep working on a couple of things that are not coming automatically. But I can't ask for more," Nadal said. "(It was) another great evening for me against another good opponent. Can't complain at all. Much better (than) what I expected."

Lorenzo Musetti, 18, who had

upset three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka and Japan's top player Kei Nishikori in the tournament's opening two rounds, lost to DominikKoeper of Germany 6-4, 6-0.

Fourth-seeded MatteoBerrettini defeated Stefano Travaglia 7-6 (5), 7-6 (1) in an all-Italian contest to reach the last eight.

In the women's draw, top-seed SimonaHalep beat Ukraine's DayanaYastremska 7-5, 6-4. Second seed Karolina Pliskova registered a 6-4, 6-3 win over Russia's Anna Blinkova.

Former world number one Victoria Azarenka advanced to the quarterfinals as her opponent Darya Kasatkina of Russia retired during the first set with the scores at 6-6.Ninth-seeded GarbineMuguruza eased into the final eight as she Johanna Konta of Great Britain 6-4, 6-1.

Suarez named in Uruguay squad for World Cup qualifiers

Montevideo (IANS): Barcelona striker Luis Suarez is among the 26 players named in Uruguay's squad for FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Chile and Ecuador slated to be played next month. The squad also includes Real Madrid midfielder Federico Valverde, Juventus midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur and Inter Milan defender Diego Godin, reports Xinhua news agency. But there was no place for striker EdinsonCavani, who is yet to find a new club after parting ways with Paris Saint-Germain in June. The 33-year-old has not played since March. Celeste head coach Oscar Tabarez named six uncapped players in the squad: Ronald Araujo, Mauro Arambarri, Nicolas De La Cruz, Diego Rossi, Damian Suarez and Rodrigo Munoz. The South American zone World Cup qualifiers were originally scheduled to begin in late March but were suspended because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

IPL 13

Maxwell to be eligible for selection for Kings XI's opening game



'We've to make sure DC do right by the fans'

Dubai (IANS): Delhi Capitals (DC) coach Ricky Ponting expects his players to "do right by the fans" and give their best in the face of the challenges that come with playing in the highly competitive Indian Premier League (IPL) amid the Covid-19 pandemic.



In a pre-tournament press conference held virtually on Saturday, Ponting said that the players would have to keep in mind the support they would get in India. "We know that we would have great support all around India, certainly in Delhi. We just have to make sure that we are doing right by the fans and spectators. So far, the coaching group has done a good job to get the players prepared and now it is up to all of us to make sure we are ready to for the first game tomorrow," said the former Australia captain. The 45-year-old former batsman said that the season would be significantly different from anything that the players have experienced earlier, stating the lead-up to the tournament itself had been different. "It's going to be different, everything about our preparations so far have been completely different anyway," Ponting said.

Dubai (IANS): Kings XI Punjab on Saturday confirmed that Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell will be available for selection for their opening game of the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) against Delhi Capitals.

On their official website, Kings XI Punjab informed that Maxwell arrived in the UAE on September 17 following Australia's England tour. "He would now be required to complete only a three-day quarantine period in the team hotel instead of the normal five, as per regulations, as he arrived into the country from an already bio-secure bubble in England," Kings XI said.

"With his quarantine period scheduled to be complete on Saturday, Maxwell would be eligible for selection for Kings XI Punjab's season opener against Delhi Capitals on September 20," it added.

Maxwell was in great form in the recently concluded T20I and ODI series against England. He was the Player of the Series in the ODI series which Australia won 2-1.

With Maxwell's arrival in the UAE, Kings XI's 25-member squad for IPL 13 is now complete, with the likes of MujeebRahman, Nicholas Pooran and Sheldon Cottrell arriving earlier in the week.

With the full squad having arrived in the UAE and no injuries being reported yet, Anil Kumble and the rest of the Kings XI Punjab management will have a full roster of 25 players to choose from for their season opener on Sunday.

DC face Kings XI Punjab in their first match of the season on Sunday in Dubai.

FIFA approves revised 2019-2022 budget

Zurich (IANS): Football's global governing body FIFA has predicted a drop of \$120 million in revenue for the period 2019-2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as the FIFA Congress approved a revised budget for the four-year financial cycle.

The 70th FIFA Congress convened remotely for the first time, as all the 211 member associations joined via videoconference on Friday.

The revised 2019-2022 revenue budget has been reduced from \$6.56 billion to \$6.44 billion. FIFA said the drop of \$120 million reflected the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, but insisted that investment in football would continue unchanged for the full 2019-2022 cycle, with a reduction in the expense budget to compensate for lower revenues, reports Xinhua news agency. Meanwhile, FIFA President Gianni Infantino restated FIFA's support for the football community during the crisis.

"We have been able to act quickly and decisively. We have prepared the Covid-19 Relief Plan for a global value of \$1.5 billion. This is unprecedented," said Infantino. Since the approval of the Covid-19 Relief Plan in June, FIFA has received applications from over 150 member associations.

This day in 2007: Yuvraj hits Broad for six 6s in Durban

New Delhi (IANS): It was on this day in 2007 when former Indian all-rounder Yuvraj Singh created history in the shortest format of the game as he hit six consecutive sixes in an over bowled by England fast bowler Stuart Broad in the inaugural edition of the ICC T20 World Cup.

During the group game against England at the Kingsmead in Durban, Yuvraj hit six consecutive 6s against Broad in the 19th over of Indian innings. The flamboyant all-rounder played an unbelievable knock of 14-ball 58 which helped India post 218 runs on the board in their allotted 20 overs.

His innings ultimately proved to be the difference between the two sides as India won the match by 18 runs, re-



stricting England to 200/6 in their stipulated overs. The drama began in the 18th over when the MS Dhoni-led side were on 171/3. Yuvraj, who came to bat after the dismissal of Robin Uthappa, had hit Andrew Flintoff for two fours in the 18th over, which infuriated the England bowler. The duo got involved in an verbal altercation

which came to an end following an intervention from the on-field umpires.

Following the incident, the left-handed Indian batsman got pumped up and it was Broad who bore the brunt of his onslaught in the very next over. Yuvraj hit the first ball of the 19th over, over deep mid-wicket for a six. The next maximum came over backward square leg boundary, third over wide long-off, fourth over deep point boundary, fifth over square leg and final six over wide long-on.

"13 years! How time flies!!" Yuvraj said in an Instagram post on Saturday while recalling the famous match of the ICC World T20 where India emerged victorious as they defeated arch-rivals Pakistan in a pulsating final.

Hockey India conducts online workshops for new technical officials

New Delhi (IANS): After the launch of the open application submission system for registration of hockey coaches and technical officials in India on the Hockey India Member Unit Portal in July earlier this year, a number of candidates submitted their application to register as an umpire or a technical official.

Among the applications, Hockey India has shortlisted 124 candidates as per its eligibility criteria after they were nominated by their respective registered state member units.

Hockey India is currently organising a set of online workshops as part of the induction program for the shortlisted candidates. The workshops are being organised from September 12-October 10.

After the completion of the workshops, further shortlisted candidates will become a part of Hockey India potential list who will then be eligible to be appointed for the upcoming Hockey India sanctioned sub-junior and junior category tournaments.

TOUR DE FRANCE

SorenKragh Andersen wins again on Stage 19

Paris (IANS): It was a double delight for Denmark's SorenKragh Andersen in the ongoing Tour de France after the Sunweb rider soloed clear of a select move to take a second victory in Stage 19 at Champagnole.

Sam Bennett all but secured the green jersey while there was no change at the top as PrimozRoglic retained the yellow jersey on Friday.

Kragh Andersen picked up his second Tour stage win in a week with an emphatic solo victory from a strong 12-man break after the rolling 166.5km stage into the Jura.

The Danish powerhouse surged clear of a move containing green jersey rivals Bennett, Peter Sagan and MatteoTrentin with 15kms remaining. With the chasers unable to join forces behind, the 26-year-old held on to secure his Sunweb team's third victory of the race.

Just as what happened in Stage 14 to Lyon, Slovenia's Luka Mezgec won the sprint for second place. The Mitchelton-Scott sprinter led home a Belgian trio of Jasper Stuyven, Greg van Avermaet and Oliver Naesen, with Kragh Andersen's teammate Nikias Arndt completing that



group 53 seconds down and just ahead of Welshman Luke Rowe.

While Trentin (CCC Team) had made the attack which pre-empted Kragh Andersen's decisive move, the Italian came home behind Ireland's Bennett (Deceuninck-QuickStep) and Slovakia's Sagan (Bora-Hansgrohe) one minute in arrears after the trio marked each other out in the battle for green.

Bennett's eighth place means he extends his lead over both Sagan and Trentin in the points classification, effectively ending Sagan's forlorn quest to win an eighth green jersey in Paris. Barring disaster, Bennett will become the first Irishman since Sean Kelly in 1989 to win the Tour's fabled green jersey.

Hyderabad FC strengthen defence, sign OdeiOnaandia

Hyderabad: Hyderabad FC have completed their fifth new foreign signing for the season in Spanish defender OdeiOnaandia, the club announced on Saturday. The 30-year-old defender joins from Spanish Segunda Division side CD Mirandes and has penned a one-year deal till the end of the 2020-21 season. "I am very happy to sign for Hyderabad and I'm looking forward to start training under Coach Manolo and competing alongside my new teammates. It is going to be an exciting season for sure. I have heard a lot of positive things about the Indian Super League from other players that I have played against. I know it is a league that is in constant growth and I cannot wait to be a part of it," said the Lekerio-born defender after completing formalities. Odei joins Hyderabad after two of the best seasons in his career where he helped his side Mirandes first to a promotion to Segunda Division in the 2018-19 season, and then to a strong finish in a higher division in the 2019-20 season. In fact, the biggest highlight of their season was the run to the semifinals of the Copa del Rey, the Spanish Cup competition.



FIFA approves revised 2019-2022 budget

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Meanwhile, FIFA President Gianni Infantino restated FIFA's support for the football community during the crisis.

"We have been able to act quickly and decisively. We have prepared the Covid-19 Relief Plan for a global value of \$1.5 billion. This is unprecedented," said Infantino. Since the approval of the Covid-19 Relief Plan in June, FIFA has received applications from over 150 member associations. "FIFA is not facing a crisis, but football is," said Infantino. "The money goes where it has to go: to football and to help football." Infantino also reiterated FIFA's prioritisation of women's football through the recently-launched FIFA Women's Development Program and investment totaling \$ one billion over the current four-year cycle.

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