

Headlines at a Glance - 12th September 2020

written by iasexam.com | 12/09/2020



COVID-19 could fuel more conflict, poverty, starvation: UN

Top UN officials have warned that the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated discrimination and other human rights violations that can fuel conflict, and its indirect consequences are dwarfing the impact of the virus itself in the world's most fragile countries. UN political chief Rosemary DiCarlo and UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock on Wednesday painted a grim picture to the UN Security Council of the global impact of the pandemic that has blanketed the world, with over 26 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and more than 860,000 deaths. Mr. Lowcock warned the council that the indirect economic and health effects from the crisis in fragile countries "will be higher poverty, lower life expectancy, more starvation, less education and more child death". He said roughly a third of the cases and fatalities are in countries affected by humanitarian or refugee crises, or those facing high levels of vulnerability. But the full extent isn't known because testing in these fragile countries is very low and in some places many people are reluctant to seek help, perhaps fearing being quarantined or fearing they won't get useful medical treatment, he said.

SOURCE: *The Hindu*

Taliban and the Afghan government to hold a meeting

Six Taliban prisoners accused of involvement in the killings of American, French and Australian nationals were released from Afghan custody on Thursday and flown to Doha, Qatar, according to two Afghan officials, paving the way for formal peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government to begin in the coming days.

The high-value prisoners will be placed under temporary house arrest, according to the two officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will travel to Doha for the talks, President Trump said during a news conference Thursday, adding that “we’re getting along very, very well with the Taliban and very well with Afghanistan.”

The talks are a key foreign policy objective for the Trump administration as it looks to withdraw U.S. troops from the country.

SOURCE: *BBC News*

Germany tests warning sirens for first time since end of Cold War

Germany on Friday carried out the first nationwide test of its civil alarm systems since the end of the Cold War, sounding several alarms. People also received emergency push notifications on their smartphones across the country. The newly created National Warning Day, or Warntag, will now be observed every year on September 10 to inform the public about what to do in the backdrop of a national emergency, the Guardian reported. The alarms, which began blaring at 11 am in the morning, continued for at least 20 minutes, the report stated. The state authorities had tried to alert and prepare schools, care centres, and shelters for asylum-seekers in advance to prevent any panic.

The office also laid down a protocol so that the country’s residents will be able to assess the nature of the situation based on the tone of the alarm bell. A siren that changes its pitch without any interruption serves as a warning, while a single tone that continues for a minute without wavering signifies the end of an emergency, the report added.

However, the experiment did not go entirely as planned. Several residents reported that they had not received the emergency push notifications on their smartphones, while some claimed that they received it after a delay.

SOURCE: *The Indian Express*

Trump nominated a second time for Nobel Peace Prize

A member of the Swedish Parliament on Friday nominated President Trump and the governments of Kosovo and Serbia for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize over economic cooperation and trade talks. This announcement marks the second 2021 Nobel Prize nomination for Trump, who received support from Norwegian Parliament member Christian Tybring-Gjedde on Wednesday over the commander in chief's role brokering relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Avdullah Hoti, the current prime minister of Kosovo, said on both Facebook and Twitter that he was "extremely grateful" for the nomination. The Trump administration spearheaded talks between the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo, with the two Balkan states agreeing to normalize economic relations in a meeting at the White House last week. Trump praised the development during a signing ceremony in the Oval Office, saying the administration has "made additional progress on reaching peace in the Middle East."

SOURCE: *Livemint*

India Post launches Five Star Villages Scheme to ensure 100% rural coverage of postal schemes

The Department of Posts has launched a scheme called Five Star Villages, to ensure universal coverage of flagship postal schemes in rural areas of the country. The scheme seeks to bridge the gaps in public awareness and reach of postal products and services, especially in interior villages. All postal products and services will be made available and marketed and publicized at village level, under the Five Star Villages scheme. Branch offices will function as one-stop shops to cater all post offices – related to the needs of villagers. The schemes covered under the Five Star scheme include: i) Savings Bank accounts, Recurring Deposit Accounts, NSC / KVP certificates, ii) Sukanya Samriddhi Accounts/ PPF Accounts, iii) Funded Post Office Savings Account linked India Post Payments Bank Accounts, iv) Postal Life Insurance Policy/Rural Postal Life Insurance Policy and v) Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana Account / Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana Account. If a village attains universal coverage for four schemes from the above list, then that village gets four-star status; if a village completes three schemes, then that village gets three-star status and so on. Launching the scheme, the Union Minister of State for Communications, Shri Sanjay Dhotre said that the scheme is being launched on pilot basis in Maharashtra; based on the experience here, it will be implemented nation-wide.

SOURCE: *PIB*