

IN BRIEF

6 robbers arrested in Noida with ₹70k cash

New Delhi: A gang of six robbers, including three women, have been arrested here and a country made pistol, a knife, ₹70,000 cash, gold and silver ornaments, and a few documents have been recovered from them, the police said on Monday. According to senior superintendent of police (SSP) Kalanidhi Naithani, the gang had robbed a house in Chiranjiv Vihar Colony under the Kavi Nagar police station limits on July 28. Following the robbery incident, a group of eight dacoits was identified using CCTV footage, the police said. Of them, three men and three women were nabbed on Sunday night. Two of their accomplices attempted to escape on a two-wheeler and fired on police personnel after being cornered near Shyama Prasad Mukherji Park, it added. When the police team fired in retaliation, one of them sustained a bullet injury in the leg while the other managed to escape, the SSP said, adding that the injured man was arrested and taken to a hospital.

37-yr-old arrested in extortion case

New Delhi: A 37-year-old associate of gangster Jitender alias Gogi was arrested for demanding extortion of ₹5 lakh from a person in Delhi's Alipur area. The police said that it has also recovered one country made pistol and two live cartridges from the possession of the accused. The accused has been identified as Devender Kumar Verma, a resident of Ambekar Colony in Alipur area. According to DCP (Outer North) Gaurav Sharma, a complaint from a kirana (grocery) shop owner in Alipur area regarding extortion of ₹5 lakh was received on July 29. "A case was registered and an investigation was taken up. The CCTV cameras and other witnesses helped in identifying accused Devender and subsequently he was apprehended," said the DCP. "During interrogation, it was revealed that he was a close associate of Gogi and is an informer in the area. When he required money on the directions of Gogi, he planned to extort money from the complainant," said the DCP.

Woman, daughter killed in car crash

Noida: A woman and her teenage daughter died in a car crash on a highway in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida on Monday, while her son and the driver were hospitalised with injuries, police said. The incident took place on the Eastern Peripheral Expressway and the four were returning to their home in Dadri from Ghaziabad after celebrating Raksha Bandhan, the police said. "The speeding car allegedly collided with a truck, leaving the mother-daughter duo dead on the spot, and the other two passengers severely injured," a police official said. The deceased have been identified as Shashi (36) and her daughter Bhoomi (14). Her son Himanshu (16) and driver Mohit (22) are hospitalised, the official said. Further legal proceedings are being carried out, the police added. — PTI

Police busts gang of ATM card-cloners

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has busted a gang of ATM card-cloners with the arrest of two persons who used to target people at ATM booths on the pretext of helping them withdraw cash, police said Monday. They said Anil Kumar (26) and Vinod Kumar (39) have allegedly duped more than 100 people so far. They said the two came to police's notice on Sunday, when Howrah Rajdhani Express arrived at New Delhi Railway Station, at around 10.25 AM. Three suspicious-looking persons were noticed who tried to pace away on seeing the staff, they said, adding two of them were apprehended while their associate Ravi managed to escape. On checking their bags, 41 ATM cards of different banks and two ATM cloning machines and ₹20,000 were found, they said. During interrogation, the accused disclosed that Ravi is the kingpin of the gang and had recruited Anil and Vinod into this racket, they said.



A doctor ties rakhi on the wrist of a child at CWG village covid care center in New Delhi on Monday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Man absconding in hit-and-run case arrested in Rohini area

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

A man who had been on the run for the past 10 days after hitting a 16-year-old boy with his speeding car in north-west Delhi's Rohini was arrested in the city, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on July 23 near Palm City Society. The accused, Sandeep Singh, was arrested on Saturday, they said.

Singh owns a few farms and other properties in Haryana and NCR region, the police said.

According to a complaint lodged by the victim's cousin brother, Harshit (22), he and Ajar Mehra were out on July 23 and their scooter broke down around 11 pm, they said.

Mehra was pushing the scooter down the road and Harshit was walking with him when a speeding Audi hit the two-wheeler from behind, severely injuring the teenager, they said.

Harshit alleged that the accused stopped the car for a moment and briefly stepped out of the vehicle before fleeing the spot. The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital where he died, they added.

DCP (Rohini) P.K. Mishra said the vehicle of the accused was identified as its logo and number plate fell on the road during the accident.

"Though we recovered the car from Rohini after a few days, the owner couldn't be identified because the vehicle was registered in the name of a construction company in Telangana," he said.

"Later, it was learnt that the owner had sold the vehicle," he added.

During investigation, the Delhi Police took help from its Telangana counterparts to identify the owner of the car. During questioning, the car owner told police that he sold it in August last year, the officer said.

Delhi reports 805 new Covid cases, total reaches 1,38,482

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

The national capital has registered 805 new novel coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours, taking the tally to over 1.38 lakh, while the toll rose to 4,021 with 17 more deaths. The Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday handed over compensation of ₹1 crore to Dr Joginder Chaudhary's family members who succumbed to coronavirus.

The three-figure count for the new Covid cases was recorded on a day when the total number of tests conducted was 10,133. The number of active cases stood at 10,207, down from 10,356 the previous day. The total number of cases climbed to 1,38,482.

"Seventeen more fatalities have been recorded in the past 24 hours, taking

the toll to 4,021," said the health bulletin by Delhi health department. On Sunday, the daily cases count had dipped to 961 and there were 15 deaths from the pathogen. On June 23, Delhi had reported the highest single-day spike of 3,947 cases till date

On Sunday, the daily cases count had dipped to 961 and there were 15 deaths from the pathogen. On June 23, Delhi had reported the highest single-day spike of 3,947 cases till date.

Mr Kejriwal had tweeted, "Deaths in Delhi come down to 15. Less than 1000 cases. Let's all keep working hard to ensure that the downward trend continues."

Mr Kejriwal and Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain, meanwhile, met the family of late Dr Joginder Chaudhary who succumbed to coronavirus and handed over compensation of ₹1 crore to them.

Dr Chaudhary, a 28-year-old junior resident doctor at Delhi government's Baba Saheb Ambedkar (BSA) Hospital, succumbed to the coronavirus last month. He had contracted COVID-19 on June 27.

Dr Chaudhary had joined the casualty department of BSA in November last year. He hailed from Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district. The junior doctor was admitted at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital's ICU ward. Unable to meet the cost of Covid treatment, Dr Chaudhary's father, a farmer, was helped by the medical fraternity in New Delhi.

Man held for illegally routing internet calls on Indian numbers

Noida, Aug. 3: A call centre was busted here for allegedly routing international internet calls to Indian phone numbers by illegally bypassing the legal gateway for such connections besides causing revenue loss to the government, police said on Monday.

Sumit Kumar Bisdah, 27, who was running the call centre, was arrested from Laxmi Nagar in Delhi after an FIR was lodged in Noida on a complaint by officials of the department of telecommunications (DoT), government of India, they said.

Besides the revenue loss, the call centre had posed a threat to national security by the act. Additional deputy commissioner of police, Noida, Ranvijay Singh said, after a joint raid by the local Sector 20 police and a DoT team.

"Based on the information, the illegal set-up was tracked at two houses in Sector 2 and Sector 8 of

Noida. Equipment and evidences were collected from the two spots and based on that, Bisdah was arrested from Laxmi Nagar in Delhi," a police spokesperson said.

"He had illegally installed the telecom set-up and used his system to divert voice calls from international numbers to Indian phone numbers, bypassing the legal connection gateway," the spokesperson said.

"His acts have caused heavy loss to the Telecom department and the Indian government. His illegal act could have also jeopardised national security," the police official added. Additional DCP Singh said licence was provided to the call centre for a limited activity but it was running more than permissible channels.

Discrepancies were found in their documents during verification done by DoT technical officials, he said. — PTI

Why no helmet by CJI? Bhushan says sorry for just one remark

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

Activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan on Monday told the Supreme Court that "expression of his opinion however outspoken, disagreeable or however unpalatable to some, can not constitute the contempt of court."

Mr Bhushan said this replying to notice issued to him on July 22, by the top court in a suo motu criminal contempt proceedings taking cognizance of his two tweets on June 27 and 29, 2020. Notice was also issued to Attorney General K.K.Venugopal and the California based tweeter company.

Defending his two tweets that were taken cognizance of by the top court for initiating suo motu contempt proceedings against him,



Prashant Bhushan

Bhushan has cited several top court judgments including from overseas court and the views of eminent authorities on legal matters who have voiced concern over the "chilling effect of criminal contempt on the freedom of speech and expression."

Mr Bhushan in his 142-page reply affidavit says that his June 27, 2020, tweet on the role of four CJIs, present Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and three preceding him, is his bonafide impression about the functioning of the top

court.

In an almost reiteration of July 27, tweet, Bhushan has said that he strongly believes that "democracy has been substantially destroyed during the last six years"; and "by its acts of commissions and omissions, the Supreme Court has allowed the emasculation of our democracy" and "the role played by the last four CJIs has been very critical in this regard."

"My tweets are nothing but a small attempt to discharge responsibility towards the future at the present juncture in the history of our republic. In this context and without prejudice, I would like to explain why I said what I did. Anyone may disagree with my views but that would not render my bonafide opinion to be contempt of court," says the affidavit.

Delhi BJP to live stream Ayodhya Bhumi Pujan**Plans to light 11 lakh diyas, a mega laser show**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

Lighting of 11 lakh diyas (earthen lamps), a mega laser show, and live telecast through LED screens across the city are some of the events being planned by Delhi BJP to make 'Bhumi Pujan,' for the construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya on August 5, a "memorable" moment.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, on Monday, said that Lord Rama lives in the hearts of crores of people and BJP has been at the forefront of the movement for construction of his temple in Ayodhya. This is why it wants the occasion to be remembered by generations to come.

"So, it's also a matter of great pride and joy for us that after 500 years the dream of Ram Temple is going to be realised on August 5. We have planned a series of events to make the 'Bhumi Pujan' a memo-

SHARING THE celebration plans, Adesh Gupta said that Delhi BJP workers will distribute 11 lakh diyas (earthen lamps) among the people across the city on Tuesday. These will be lighted on the evening of the 'Bhumi Pujan' to mark the occasion

nable moment for everyone in Delhi," Mr Gupta added.

He pointed out that many people would have loved to go to Ayodhya for the 'Bhumi Pujan' ceremony which is not possible now due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Sharing the celebration plans, he said that Delhi BJP workers will distribute 11 lakh diyas (earthen lamps) among the people across the city on Tuesday. These will be lighted on the evening of the 'Bhumi Pujan' to mark the occasion.

"A mega laser show is also being planned for the occasion at a promi-

nent location in the city, but it is yet to be finalised," said the Delhi BJP president.

Giant LED screens are being installed at prominent places in all the 70 Assembly constituencies in Delhi for people to watch live the telecast of the ground breaking ceremony for Ram Temple in Ayodhya on August 5.

The party MPs, MLAs, Delhi BJP office bearers, and other senior leaders will be present at these locations to watch the ceremony. Social distancing norm and other precautions against Covid-19 infection will be fully observed during the celebration.

"Lord Rama is not only worshipped by crores of Hindus, he also symbolises cultural nationalism. So, 'Bhumi Pujan' for his grand temple at Ayodhya, thanks to the Supreme Court and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, assumes a huge significance for us as well as the society at large," he added.

Noida: 79 new Covid-19 cases take tally to 5,509, active 921

Noida, Aug. 3: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Monday recorded 79 new Covid cases which pushed the district's tally to 5,509, official data showed.

The number of active cases rose to 921, as 43 more Covid patients got discharged since Sunday, according to the data for a 24-hour period released by the UP health department.

The number of active cases in the district showed a steady rise over the past week. There were 886 active cases on Sunday, up from 846 on Saturday, 796 on Friday, 730 on Thursday and 679 on Wednesday, the data

showed. So far, 4,545 patients have recovered from Covid in Gautam Buddha Nagar, the second highest among districts in UP after Lucknow (4,728), it showed.

The district has recorded 43 deaths linked to coronavirus so far, with a mortality rate of 0.78 per cent among positive cases, according to official statistics.

The recovery rate of patients dropped slightly to 82.50 per cent from 82.89 per cent on Sunday. It was 83.31 per cent on Saturday, 83.89 per cent on Friday, 84.77 per cent on Thursday and 85.48 per cent on Wednesday, as per the statistics. — PTI

Hookah in hotels and restaurants banned by govt

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The Delhi government on Monday banned the use of hookahs, with or without tobacco, in all public places, including hotels, restaurants and bars, with immediate effect to control the spread of Covid.

Smokers are likely to be more vulnerable to Covid as smoking means the fingers are in contact with the lips which increases the possibility of transmission of the virus, the health department said in an order.

"Smokers may also already have lung diseases or reduced lung capacity which would greatly increase the risk of serious illness," it said.

Smoking products such as water pipes often involve the sharing of mouthpieces and hoses, which could facilitate the transmission of Covid in communal and social settings, the health department said.

Therefore, the use and sharing of hookah, with or without tobacco (herbal hookah), "which might further increase the spread of SARS-CoV2, is strictly prohibited in all public places, including hotels, restaurants, bars, pubs, eateries, discotheques, etc. In Delhi with immediate effect to prevent and control the outbreak of Covid", it said.

Delhi has so far recorded 1,38,482 Covid cases and 4,021 people have died due to the disease. — PTI

Sultry weather likely to continue entire week: IMD

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The national capital reeled under sultry weather on Monday as rains continued to play truant.

The weather department said similar conditions will prevail the entire week, as only scattered light rains are predicted during the period.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative figures for the city, recorded a maximum of 37.4 degrees Celsius, three notches more than the normal.

The mercury remained between 35 and 38 degrees Celsius at most places.

Humidity levels oscillated between 61 and 82 per cent.

The Safdarjung Observatory has recorded just 6.7mm rainfall in the last three days against the normal of 28.3 mm — a deficiency of 76 per cent.

In July, the weather station gauged 236.9 mm precipitation, which was 12 per cent more than the normal of 210.6 mm. — PTI

Man finds lizard in sambar at top restaurant, FIR lodged

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

The Delhi police has registered an FIR against Saravana Bhavan, a popular South Indian vegetarian restaurant chain, after a customer allegedly found a dead lizard in his bowl of sambar at its outlet in Connaught Place.

According to a senior police official, Pankaj Agarwal, a regular visitor to the restaurant, walked into Saravana Bhavan with his two friends on Saturday night and ordered dosa and sambar.

"As they were having their meal, Agarwal found a dead lizard in his bowl of sambar and captured it on his mobile phone," said the



called up the police," Mr Agarwal said.

The restaurant did not respond to phone calls for reaction.

According to DCP (New Delhi district) Eish Singhal, based on the complaint they have registered an FIR against the restaurant under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others).

"The matter is under investigation. The police has asked the restaurant to provide the CCTV footage, the details of the cook, and its license. It has also asked the restaurant for the ingredients used in the sambar," said the DCP.



President Ram Nath Kovind celebrates Rakhi with nurses of The Trained Nurses' Association of India at Military Nursing Service and President's Estate Clinic. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Covid: Most Bengal ATMs short of cash

Kolkata: Several ATMs in West Bengal are running short of currency as private entities entrusted with the cash-filling task are operating with skeletal staff, sources said on Monday. Many lenders have outsourced the exercise to such entities, who are responsible for the maintenance and operation of ATMs in the state, they said. West Bengal convener of All India Bank Officers Confederation (AIBOC) Sanjay Das said these private companies generally withdraw money from chests every Friday, since banks in the state are shut on Saturday and Sunday. "I visited two ATMs near my place on Monday morning, and both were dry. Many in the neighbourhood, too, complained about it. Today being Rakhi, I had planned a feast for my brother, but with the little cash I had, it could not materialise," said Ananya Dasgupta, a resident of Jadavpur. — PTI

Girl dies in a bid to save her friend

Tura: A 13-year-old girl in Meghalaya died after falling into a river while trying to help her friend who was slipping into a waterfall, police said on Monday. The incident took place at 2:30 pm on Sunday when the girl along with three of her friends went to the waterfall at the Daram Gurakol stream near Rongkuchong village, they said. The girl, identified as Mima Patiasa K Sangma, saw one of her friends losing balance and slipping into the water while they were standing near the edge of the waterfall. Without worrying for her own safety, she reached out and saved her friend. But while trying to do so, she fell into the river, Superintendent of Police, North Garo Hills district, Abraham T. Sangma said. — PTI

Heavy rain: Red alert in Mumbai

Mumbai: The India Meteorological Department issued a red alert for Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts in Maharashtra for Tuesday after upgrading its earlier rain forecast from "heavy-very heavy" to "extremely heavy". An IMD official on Monday said the "extremely heavy" forecast means Mumbai, Raigad, Thane, Pune and Ratnagiri may get more than 204.5 millimetres of rain in a period of 24 hours. "Mumbai, Thane, Pune would receive extremely heavy rainfall in isolated places on Tuesday and Wednesday. Raigad has a similar forecast between Monday and Wednesday," he said. — PTI

Kerala police to enforce curbs

Thiruvananthapuram: With contact cases in Kerala increasing rapidly, the state government on Monday decided to entrust state police with the task of enforcing restrictions in containment zones, contact tracing, ensuring people in quarantine stay indoors and social distancing is followed strictly in public places. The new measures were announced by chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan at a press conference here on a day when Kerala recorded 962 cases of Covid-19. The police has been directed to identify and mark containment zones, ensuring the restrictions in containment zones are adhered strictly, he said. Mr Vijayan said the police will make sure that those in quarantine stay indoors.

3 electrocuted in UP's Muzaffarnagar

Muzaffarnagar: A 48-year-old man was electrocuted when he came in contact with a high-tension wire at Kasampur village under Chapar police station limits here, police said on Monday. The incident took place on Sunday evening as Rashid was returning home from a shop and he accidentally came in touch with the power line, they said. In another incident, a youth was electrocuted when he came in contact with a power line in Kailash Nagar village under Ratanpuri area of the district. The incident took place when he was loading some wooden logs onto a tractor trolley. — PTI

■ VIP movement should be as less as possible, says Raut

Uddhav unlikely to attend Ram temple 'bhumi puja'

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Owing to the coronavirus outbreak in Ayodhya, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray is not likely to attend the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram Mandir in the holy town.

"The situation is critical in Ayodhya and everyone believes VIP movement should be as less as possible. The Prime Minister is going there, we wish him well. The CM can go there later any time," said senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Monday.

PM Narendra Modi will perform the bhoomi puja of the proposed Ram Mandir at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh on August 5.

Mr Raut's remarks have come after UP cabinet minister Kamal Rani Varun succumbed to the virus. Earlier, there were reports that 17 people connected with the event — a priest and 16 policemen and security guards — have tested positive for coronavirus in Ayodhya.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who would be present at the function, has also announced that he has tested positive for coronavirus.

"We do not want to bring politics in the ceremony. There is a kind of medical emergency in Ayodhya. It is important that the PM is going there. We will go there later," he said. Mr Raut reiterated Shiv Sena's contribution towards the Ram Mandir movement saying his party laid the foundation of the temple construction. "The temple would not have been possible had the Masjid not been brought down. Even the BJP, VHP and the Sangh Parivar have accepted that Sainiks razed the mosque," he added.

Incidentally, Mr Thackeray had earlier suggested that in the view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the bhoomi puja ceremony should take place via video link.

Kin ostracised after Odisha scribe tests Covid positive

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 3

Despite repeated appeals by the state government to curb Covid-19 stigma, there seems no relenting on the part of certain sections of people.

In a fresh instance, a Cuttack-based video journalist has allegedly fallen prey to such inhuman behaviour. As per reports, the family of the video journalist, who tested positive for the novel coronavirus, has been allegedly ostracised by the locals. Unable to bear the action against his family members, the journalist has threatened to end life if the State government does not intervene into the matter.

"After I tested positive for novel coronavirus on July 29, my family was ostracised. The health workers and Anganwadi workers of ward number 3 also did not turn up to help my family members, who are under home quarantine," the journalist alleged.

"Though, the Cuttack Municipal Corporation sanitised my locality, they did not sanitise my house even after I tested positive for the virus. I request to behave sensibly with my family, else I will commit suicide," the videographer threatened.

With no other option left, the journalist, who is placed under isolation at a local Covid Care Centre (CCC), took to the social media seeking chief minister Naveen Patnaik's intervention in the matter.

In the video message, the camera person requested the CM and Cuttack collector to help his distressed family.



People move past the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas workshop ahead of the ground breaking ceremony of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on Monday. — PTI

Will go for darshan after PM leaves: Uma

Bhopal: Former Union minister Uma Bharti on Monday said she will go for darshan of Lord Ram in Ayodhya after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others leave the venue of the ground-breaking ceremony for Ram temple construction there, in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. The 61-year-old senior BJP leader's comments came a day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah said he tested positive for the coronavirus.

Bharti was among the leaders of the Ram Janambhoomi agitation and is an accused in the Babri mosque demolition case. The ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram temple is scheduled to be held on Wednesday. — PTI



Babri litigant will gift 'Ramnami' stole to PM

Ayodhya: Iqbal Ansari, who was a litigant in the Ayodhya land dispute case, has decided to gift a "Ramnami" stole and a copy of the Ramcharitmanas to Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he attends the bhoomi puja ceremony for the Ram temple here on Wednesday.

"Yes, I have received the invitation from Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust for the bhoomi puja ceremony. I will certainly attend it. The dispute is over now after the court's verdict," Ansari, 69, told PTI.

"Our Prime Minister is coming. I will meet him and give him a 'Ramnami' stole (with Ram's name written on it) and Ramcharitmanas as a present," Ansari said. His father Hashim Ansari, the oldest litigant in the land dispute case, died at the age of 95 in 2016. — PTI

Special dress with nine gems for Ram Lalla

Ayodhya: For the past three and a half decades, brothers Shankarlal and Bhagwatlal 'Pahaadhi' have been stitching clothes for Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. Their dedication will be manifest in the splendid dress they have meticulously crafted for the deity to wear on August 5, during the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram temple.

Operating from their shop named after their late father Babulal and located in the city's Badhi Kutiyaa area, the brothers

stitch clothes for only deities and seers.

"My father late Babulal started stitching the clothes of Ram Lalla in 1985. He used to carry our sewing machine to the Ramjanmabhoomi and stitch the clothes with me and my elder brother in tow," Shankarlal, 54, told PTI on Monday.

"The three of us used to make the clothes of Lord Ram. The dresses were made and stitched virtually in front of the deity. Since then, our work is continuing," he said.

Shankarlal said that for Wednesday, the day of bhoomi puja to mark the beginning of the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, two sets of dresses have been made — one is green, while the other is orange.

"The clothes are made using soft material such as 'makhamal' (velvet). After all, they are for Ram Lalla who is a child. The green dress has been made keeping in mind the day-specific colour, while orange is considered auspicious," he said. — PTI

Soz: I am still under house arrest, govt remark false

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 3

Congress leader Saifuddin Soz on Monday claimed that he not only continues to remain under house arrest but the police have now locked the entrance gate to his house near the Srinagar Airport from inside as well so that no one could enter the premises either.

"I continue to be under house arrest. The only thing that has changed is, a lock has been put on my gate from inside also," the 83-year-old opposition leader said in a signed statement. He added, "I've already explained my position that I continue to be under house arrest".

Referring to the Jammu and Kashmir government's statement made in the Supreme Court on July 30 that he was not under house detention but a freeman, Mr. Soz reiterated, "The government made a false statement before the Supreme Court and outside it too. It continued to spread falsehood, rather unnecessarily." He asserted, "Certain observers from outside the State (J&K) have been asking as to why the Supreme Court allowed narration of lies in its courtroom. To that question, I can only say that the country's judicial system can take notice of all such situations."

A day after the J&K government had informed the SC that Mr Soz was not under house detention, its spokesman Rohit Kansal reiterated that he was never detained.

Resume talks to solve Kashmir issue: Hurriyat

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 3

The separatist amalgam Hurriyat Conference faction headed by Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Monday called for a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue and said that further delay in it may aggravate the security and political situations in the South Asian region.

"We at the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) have always wanted a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the will and aspirations of all the people of J&K. We stand firm and committed on this demand," it said in a statement here.

The amalgam faction urged both India and Pakistan to resume dialogue at the earliest "to seek a permanent and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue as per the aspirations of the people of J&K, by including them as the main stakeholders." It asserted that it were the people of the erstwhile state who "are bearing the brunt of the conflict for the past 73 years and living in hellish conditions."

The Hurriyat Conference said that the Centre's August 5, 2019 "muscular move" and its "most brutal implementation" on ground is a "most sordid chapter in the tragic saga" of J&K. "It's been one year and lockdowns and imprisonments continue while one after another anti J&K people and anti majority community laws and ordinances are being thrust



Mirwaiz Umar Farooq

on the people as reminders of aggression. Even observance of religious occasions is barred," the statement alleged.

It said that the "unilateral decision to change the demographic and physical character of J&K and undermine its disputed nature acknowledged by the world will not change the reality of the Kashmir issue nor the need to resolve it peacefully". It cautioned that the government decisions have only increased the resentment in almost all regions of J&K manifold and that people of Kashmir "have and will continue to protest it despite the severest crackdown being foisted on them."

Meanwhile, People's Democratic Party (PDP) announced on Monday that it will observe August 5 as "black day". While speaking to reporters, a group of party activists including Rouf Bhat said that "unconstitutional measures" taken on August 5 last year and later "have left disastrous impact on J&K, worse than a natural calamity could leave."

It said that the party will hold a protest on August 5 but refused to disclose the venue for obvious reasons.



Daughters Drishti and Disha consign flames to the mortal remains of Rajya Sabha member Amar Singh at a crematorium at Chhatarpur in New Delhi on Monday. Due to Covid-19 protocols, Singhs last rites were performed in the presence of a limited number of people. — PTI

Mother sells gold earrings for daughter's education

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 3

The mother of a Class 8 student in Odisha has sold her earrings to buy a smartphone for enabling her child to attend online classes.

According to reports, Archita Bhoi, a student of Rordhapur Government Upper Primary School and native of Balisahi village in Salipur block of Cuttack, was facing difficulty to attend the online classes as her family did not have a smartphone. Her father, a daily-wage earner, could not buy her a smartphone due to financial distress.

ONLINE CLASSES



Archita Bhoi

Archita was forced to stay at home after her school was closed while her father, Gagan Bhoi, a daily wage labourer was also left jobless after the Covid-19 lockdown.

As the girl was promoted to her upper class, her school recently announced to adopt online teaching to com-

mence their academic session following the state government's decision. However, Archita had to face difficulties in attending virtual classes without a smartphone and therefore was forced to discontinue her studies.

"Initially, I was attending the online classes with a friend who lives around two kilometres away from my village. But visiting so far every day was difficult," she narrated.

With no option left, Archita's parents decided to buy her a smartphone so that she could take online classes. But as it was too costly for them, Archita's mother decided to sell her gold earrings.

Shivraj tests positive again, will extend stay in hospital

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG 3

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's samples tested positive again on Monday making him extend his stay in the hospital here where he was admitted on July 25 for treatment of Covid-19.

A health bulletin from Chirau Hospital where he has been admitted, said, "CM's RT-PCR test for SARS-Cov-2 on the 9th day was positive. His medical parameters are normal".

Earlier on Sunday, Mr Chouhan tweeted that he was healthy and not showing any symptoms of infection. He would be discharged from the hospital if his latest samples tested negative.

State home minister Narottam Mishra also confirmed that Mr Chouhan would stay in hospital for now.

Mr Chouhan would

PC son Karti +ve, symptoms are mild

New Delhi: Congress MP Karti Chidambaram on Monday said he has tested positive for Covid-19. In a tweet, the son of former finance minister P Chidambaram said his symptoms are mild and he has gone into self-isolation on medical advice. "I have just tested positive for #Covid. My symptoms are mild and as per medical advice I am under home quarantine. I would urge all those who have recently been in contact with me to follow medical protocol," Karti tweeted. This comes a day after Union minister Amit Shah tested positive for Covid.

chair Tuesday's virtual cabinet meeting from the hospital, he added.

Madhya Pradesh has reported 33535 coronavirus positive cases and 886 deaths so far.

Wear visor, not mask while exercising in gyms

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Ahead of the reopening of yoga institutes and gymnasiums, the health ministry on Monday issued Covid-19-appropriate protocols to be followed at such facilities like allowing only asymptomatic people, maintaining social distancing, disinfecting equipment and wearing of visor while exercising as far as possible.

All yoga institutes and gymnasiums in containment zones shall remain closed and only those outside such zones will be allowed to open, the 'Guidelines on Preventive Measures to Contain Spread of Covid

in Yoga Institutes & Gymnasiums' stated.

"Spas, sauna, steam bath and swimming pools (wherever applicable) shall remain closed," the document said.

The guidelines lay down the processes and premises redesigning, including proper placement of equipment, that need to be followed before reopening such establishments. Yoga institutes and gymnasiums have been asked to plan the floor area based on four square metre per person.

Persons above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant women and children

► **GUIDELINES FOR reopening gyms, yoga centres issued by Union health ministry**

► **SANITISERS AND thermal screening devices must at entry points of gyms**

below the age of 10 years are advised not to use gyms in closed spaces, the guidelines said.

For the first time since the coronavirus lockdown came into force on March 25, the government has allowed opening of yoga institutes and gymnasiums from August 5 as part of the

'Unlock 3' phase. The guidelines state that at the entry point at all such facilities, it is mandatory to have hand hygiene (sanitiser dispenser) and thermal screening provisions.

"Only asymptomatic persons (including staff) be allowed in the premises. All persons to be allowed entry only if using face cover/masks," it said. "Individuals must maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet. Use of face covers/masks is mandatory. However, during yoga exercise or exercising in gyms, only a visor may be used," the document said. — PTI

SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON



General public is here by informed that one Person Name: Arif Kurashi, S/o Akbar Kurashi, R/o Gali No. 22, Part-4, A Block, Sonia Vihar, Delhi. Age: 23 Years, Height: 5'3", Face: Round, Complexion: Shallow, Built: Medium, Wearing: Green Colour Shirt, Blue Colour Jeans Pant and White Shoes in feet, has been missing since 23.06.2020 from his house, Delhi.

In this regard a DD No. 87, dated 27.06.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Khajuri Khas, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this Person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this Person kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in
Website: http://cbi.nic.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

SHO
P.S. Khajuri Khas, Delhi
Ph. 011-22962735, 8750870727
DP/187/NE/2020

SHORT TAKES

Terror incidents come down in Kashmir Valley

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

There has been a decrease in terrorist violence in Kashmir with 70 incidents reported this year against 107 in the same period last year, said sources in security establishment. According to a report, security forces were able to foil six attempts of IED blast in Kashmir Valley by the terrorists through their timely detection, preventing serious casualties. The report said that the security forces have been able to stabilise situation in Kashmir after Article 370 was abolished last year in August. It said security forces carried out aggressive anti-terrorists operations to prevent them from creating trouble in the valley and also increased alertness at the LoC so that Pakistan is not able to send large number of terrorists into Kashmir. Due to these measures, the number of active terrorists present right now in the Valley has come down to below 200. Last year, there were intelligence reports that some 350 terrorists were waiting at various launch pads in PoK to infiltrate into J&K. However, Pakistan has increased ceasefire violations with 2,662 number of such incidents reported along LoC till July end. In current year, security forces were able to kill 148 terrorists out of which 14 were foreign terrorists from HM, LeT and JeM. This when in the whole 2019, 152 terrorists were killed in Kashmir by security forces. In 2018, 215 terrorists were neutralised by security forces.

Ayodhya

■ Continued from Page 1
event, said it was a “historic and emotional” moment which will lay the “foundation of a new India”.
“It is not only a historic but also an emotional moment as after 500 years the Ram temple work will start. It will be the foundation of a new India,” he said. The chief minister urged the people to light earthen lamps, decorate temples and recite Ramayana in memory of those “who laid down their lives in the temple struggle”.
For those who are keen to visit Ayodhya, arrangements will be made to bring people from every district once the coronavirus pandemic is over, he said.
The CM reached Ayodhya in the afternoon and visited the Ram Janmabhoomi site where the bhoomi puja is to be held. He also paid obeisance to Ramlalla (the idol of Lord Ram as an infant), visited Hanuman Garhi temple and gave directions to senior officers from the dais, where the main event is scheduled to be held.

Digvijay

■ Continued from Page 1
occasion for the construction of the temple has come. Don’t allow your arrogance to create obstruction in the way,” Mr Singh tweeted.
The Rajya Sabha MP further said that Jagat Guru Swami Swaroopanandji Maharaj (Shankarayacharya of Dwarka Peeth) had said that August 5 was an inauspicious muhurat for the ground-breaking ceremony of Ram temple. “For the convenience of Modiji this inauspicious muhurat was fixed. This means that Modji is above the Hindu beliefs of thousands of years. Is this Hindutava?” he said.
Claiming that some leaders had tested positive for coronavirus as they had ignored the tenets of the Sanatan Dharma, he tweeted, “Modiji, how many more people you want to send to hospital by laying the foundation stone of the Ram temple. Yogiji, advise Modi. In your presence, the tenets of Sanatan Dharma are being broken. What is compelling you to allow all this to happen?”
“In such a situation, shouldn’t the UP CM and PM be in home quarantine? Are the quarantine rules only for the public?” he added.
Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mr Chouhan who tested positive for Covid-19 and is recuperating in a private hospital in Bhopal, countered Mr Singh saying, “The very name of Lord Ram makes inauspicious times auspicious”.
“Congress leaders who were denying the existence of Lord Ram have started commenting on the timing of bhumi puja for Ram temple. Oh Congressmen, merely invoking the name of Lord Ram turns a time auspicious,” Mr Chouhan tweeted.

Cong MPs slam own govt over Punjab liquor deaths

Flag ‘clear-cut failure’, demand probe by CBI, ED

Chandigarh, Aug. 3: Two Congress parliamentarians targeted their party-led government in Punjab on Monday over the spurious liquor tragedy, which has claimed over 100 lives, and petitioned the governor for probe by the CBI and the ED into the “illegal” trade in alcohol.
Rajya Sabha members Partap Singh Bajwa and Shamsher Singh Dullu alleged “clear-cut failure” on the part of the state administration and claimed the tragedy could have been averted, had chief minister Amarinder Singh acted in time on their complaints about illegal liquor businesses.
After meeting governor V.P. Singh Badnore, Congress leader Bajwa said they had demanded probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) into the alleged illegal liquor trade in the state.
The MPs said the tragedy was “bound to happen” in the “absence” of timely action by the Congress government.
The death toll in the spurious liquor tragedy, which has been unfolding in Tarn Taran, Gurdaspur and Amritsar since Wednesday evening, rose to 105 on Monday.
“Had CM acted in time, the hooch tragedy would not have taken place.... We have been highlighting this issue since 2017,”



Partap Singh Bajwa and Shamsher Singh Dullu alleged ‘clear-cut failure’ on the part of the state administration and claimed the tragedy could have been averted, had Amarinder Singh acted in time on their complaints

Dullu said, adding that it was the responsibility of the state government to act tough against liquor smugglers.
He alleged that there has been rampant inter-state smuggling of illicit liquor during the coronavirus-induced lockdown.
The two leaders said they would meet Congress president Sonia Gandhi and, thereafter, take up the issue with the prime minister and the Union home minister.
“We will also raise the issue of deaths of people in Parliament,” said Mr Bajwa.
He said the chief minister or the police chief or the chief secretary should have visited the areas where people died after consuming spurious liquor.
In a letter handed over to the governor, the MPs said for many months, loss to the public exchequer due to smuggling of liquor by licensed distilleries, functioning of illegal distilleries and production of spurious liquor in Punjab has been in news.
“We have raised this

■ RS MEMBERS Partap Singh Bajwa and Shamsher Singh Dullu alleged ‘clear-cut failure’ on the part of the state administration and claimed the tragedy could have been averted, had Amarinder Singh acted in time on their complaints

issue as it shows a clear-cut failure of the administrative machinery in the state.... There has been blatant smuggling of liquor from Punjab to other states especially during the Covid lockdown period, they said in the letter.
“The liquor mafia have escaped the clutches of law with impunity and are well connected to those in power. This nexus has allowed their actions to go unchecked and unregulated, they alleged.
Spurious liquor was being manufactured and sold all over the state.... Smuggling, functioning of illegal distilleries, production and circulation of spurious liquor cannot be done without the active connivance of officers of excise and taxation department as well as Police Department. All our efforts to get these criminals reined in were ignored,” they claimed.
The Rajya Sabha members alleged that the chief minister and his team chose to “disregard” these issues when highlighted by them. —PTI

Gehlot writes to PM over locust attack

Jaipur, Aug. 3: Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding that the locust menace affecting many states of the country be declared a national disaster, according to a statement on Monday.
In the letter, Mr Gehlot said the outbreak was an international problem and the Centre should coordinate will all affected countries to tackle the menace.
He said that it would be appropriate to declare the locust menace as national disaster due to possible damage to crops of kharif and rabi crops, and the weak economic condition of farmers and states due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.
It will further strengthen the capacity of states to deal with locust out-



Ashok Gehlot

breaks, the CM said.
Mr Gehlot informed Mr Modi that locusts had started coming in Rajasthan from April 11 and 32 out of the 33 districts had been affected.
In addition to Rajasthan, locust attacks have been reported in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. This has become a multi-state problem, he added.
Locust outbreaks have been seen on such a large scale in the country after several decades. In such a situation, declaring this problem as a national disaster will be in the interest of all the affected states and the farmers, Mr Gehlot said. —PTI

Rahul slams PM over rising Covid spread

New Delhi, Aug. 3: With the country reporting over 50,000 Covid-19 cases for the fifth day in a row, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi took a swipe on Monday at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had said “the right decisions at the right time means India is better off”.
Mr Gandhi put up a graph on his Twitter account showing India at the top of the chart of 10 countries with the highest number of coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours. “The right decisions at the right time means India is better off than other countries. PM,” Mr Gandhi wrote on Twitter. —PTI



Lata didi and Sindhu wish Modi on Raksha Bandhan

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Singer Lata Mangeshkar, badminton player P.V. Sindhu and spiritual leader Amritanandamayi were among several personalities who on Monday posted Raksha Bandhan messages for Prime Minister Narendra Modi which, he said, would inspire him and give him strength.
Praising his efforts as the PM, Mangeshkar, 90, posted an audio note accompanied by a video montage of her pictures with the PM on Twitter.
The singer said she couldn’t send a rakhi to him because of the pandemic. “I couldn’t send rakhi today, the reason for which the entire world is aware of. Narendra bhai, you have worked so hard for the nation, spoken so well for it, that the citizens will never be able to forget



— Lata Mangeshkar, singer

well for it, that the citizens will never be able to forget,” she said.
Mangeshkar said that on Raksha Bandhan, she wanted the prime minister to promise that he would continue to take the country forward.
“Today, millions of women in India won’t be able to tie you a rakhi. But you can understand. If possible, then on this day of rakhi, promise us to take India ahead.

Namaskar,” she added.
In his response, the PM said the singer’s message has filled him with fresh energy. “Lata didi, on this auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan, this emotional message from you has filled me with immense inspiration and energy. With the blessings of millions of mothers and sisters our country will reach greater heights and achieve success,” Mr Modi tweeted. —PTI

India eyes \$25bn defence manufacturing turnover by ’25

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The government is eyeing a turnover of ₹1.75 lakh crore (\$25 billion) in defence manufacturing by 2025 as it has identified the sector as a potential driver to boost the overall economy, according to a draft of a major policy prepared by the defence ministry.
The draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy 2020 (DPEPP) set an export target of ₹35,000 crore (\$5 billion) in aerospace and defence goods and services in the next five years,

which has been estimated as part of the total projected turnover.
The policy is envisaged as overarching guiding document of the defence ministry to provide a “focused, structured and significant” thrust to production of military hardware and platforms for self-reliance and exports, officials said.
Officials said the policy is aimed at developing a dynamic, robust and competitive defence industry, including aerospace and naval shipbuilding, to cater to the needs of the

■ THE DRAFT defence policy set an export target of ₹35,000 crore in aerospace and defence goods and services in the next 5 years, which has been estimated as part of the total projected turnover

armed forces.
In May, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman rolled out a number of reform measures for the defence sector including making separate budgetary outlay to procure

■ Bihar IPS officer probing case ‘forcibly quarantined’ Actor Sushant had bipolar disorder, Mumbai top cop

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Actor Sushant Singh Rajput was suffering from bipolar disorder, a mental condition characterised by extreme mood swings, at the time of his death, Mumbai police chief Parambir Singh said on Monday amid clamour by Bihar politicians for a CBI probe.
The tussle between the Mumbai police and their counterparts from Bihar touched a new high after an IPS officer, who had landed in Mumbai on Sunday for leading the SIT investigating in the case, was, meanwhile, forcefully placed under quarantine after the authorities having waived off the ritual for the Bihar police team that arrived earlier.
The Mumbai police commissioner also stated that they have sought a legal opinion on “inter-jurisdictional” probe being conducted by the Bihar police. The investigation into suicide of Sushant Singh Rajput seems to have lost



Patna police officer Vinay Tiwari (left) and his hand stamped indicating the isolation period till August 15.

priority amidst the tussle between two police forces which has now taken a political turn.
The issue resonated in the two Houses of Bihar legislature, with lawmakers across the political divide demanding a CBI investigation into the death of the 34-year-old Patna-born actor.
Both Mumbai and Patna police are probing the case.
Rajput, who impressed his audience with his performances during his short but promising career, was found hanging in his rented apartment in Mumbai’s Bandra on June 14.
“It was found that the actor had bipolar disorder,

Netas across partylines in Bihar seek CBI probe

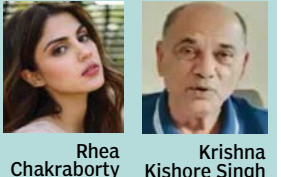
NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, AUG. 3

The tussle between Bihar and Maharashtra police over the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput intensified on Monday after a IPS officer from Patna, Vinay Tiwari, was directed to stay under home quarantine by the BMC authorities.
Reacting over the incident Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar said, “Whatever happened to the officer was unfortunate. Our DGP will speak with the authorities in Mumbai”.
When asked whether he would speak with Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray regarding the alleged mistreatment of Bihar cadre IPS officer in Mumbai, Mr Kumar said that “this is not a political issue for us. We are aware of our legal responsibilities. Bihar DGP would be discussing the issue with authorities in Mumbai”.
The alleged mistreatment of the Bihar police team also snowballed into a political controversy. Political leaders across the partylines raised the issue in the state assembly and urged the Bihar CM to recommend a CBI probe into the death of Sushant Singh Rajput.
The demand was first raised by Neeraj Singh Bablu, a BJP MLA and Sushant Singh Rajput’s cousin. “It is evident that the Maharashtra government is trying to create hurdles in the way of Bihar police who has been sent to investigate the case. Forcing an IPS officer to stay under home quarantine hours after he arrived in Mumbai to lead the probe also raises serious doubts,” BJP MLA and Rajput’s cousin said.
Neeraj’s demand for CBI probe was supported by the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav who said that “the RJD was the first party to make the demand. I have also requested the state government that the upcoming film city in Rajgir should be named after Sushant”.

Lawyer: Rhea not missing, hasn’t got summons from Bihar cops

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Actor Rhea Chakraborty’s advocate refuted Bihar police’s claim that she was “missing”, and said till date she has not received any summons from them in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput death case.
The Bihar police earlier said their team had failed to locate Chakraborty. However, her advocate Satish Maneshinde, in a statement, said, “The contention of Bihar police that Rhea Chakraborty



is missing is not correct. Till today, no notice or summon has been received by her from the Bihar police.”
Chakraborty’s statement has already been recorded by the Mumbai police, Maneshinde said. “She has cooperated with the Bandra police as and when called,” the statement said.

and state minister Sanjay Jha who came forward to “stand for the truth”.
Mr Singh had, in his complaint on which an FIR was lodged on July 25, accused actress Rhea Chakraborty and her family members of abetting his sons suicide, besides

defrauding him of his money and subjecting him to blackmail.
His decision to go public on the matter for the first time comes in the backdrop of alleged non-cooperation of Mumbai police with its Patna counterpart. —PTI

The frontline warriors



A woman ties rakhi on Raksha Bandhan to a doctor, who reportedly helped residents during Covid-19 surge at the Dharavi slum, in Mumbai on Monday. —PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

4 AUGUST 2020

Restoring status quo in Ladakh: Long haul ahead

The border stalemate with China continues in eastern Ladakh. This is a sanitised way of putting things. However, the bitter reality is that the military standoff is in areas that lie well to the west of the absurd claim line of China first propounded in November 1959 - as its westernmost region; in other words, many kilometers inside Indian territory, which India did not accept. The threat is that even if China vacates some of this in order to appear reasonable in diplomatic or military negotiations, it will still be inside Indian territory or on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). And the risk - on the basis of what appears to be in the minds of policy makers in Beijing behind the scenes - is that China may seek to compel India to accept the territories it may vacate as no man's land. This means Indian patrols may not return to those areas. The Chinese ambassador in New Delhi was unambiguous in his public remarks less than a week ago that Chinese forces were within the "traditional" frontier of China. This would appear preposterous not only to Indians but also to objective international observers of China's frontier regions, particularly in relation to its sovereignty claims on Tibet and Xinjiang and also China's ambitions in respect of its southern and south-eastern maritime frontiers that rub up against several countries of the Indo-Pacific. The region China claims in Ladakh has been incorporated as part of its Xinjiang military district. This means China has pushed the Uighur country by thousands of square kilometers west of the Tarim river basin to which it is geographically, historically and culturally confined after gobbling up Aksai Chin in the 1950s.

Regrettably, China's present claims, no matter how outrageous, have been buttressed by Mr Modi. Those areas. The Chinese ambassador in New Delhi was unambiguous in his public remarks less than a week ago that Chinese forces were within the "traditional" frontier of China. This would appear preposterous not only to Indians but also to objective international observers of China's frontier regions, particularly in relation to its sovereignty claims on Tibet and Xinjiang and also China's ambitions in respect of its southern and south-eastern maritime frontiers that rub up against several countries of the Indo-Pacific. The region China claims in Ladakh has been incorporated as part of its Xinjiang military district. This means China has pushed the Uighur country by thousands of square kilometers west of the Tarim river basin to which it is geographically, historically and culturally confined after gobbling up Aksai Chin in the 1950s.

Regrettably, China's present claims, no matter how outrageous, have been buttressed by the Prime Minister's June 19 remarks made in a conference with senior opposition leaders, leaving them aghast. Now Beijing throws Mr Modi's words at us and tries to absorb territories to which it laid no formal claims before November 1959 (which India had not accepted in any case). It is not likely to be easy correcting this Himalayan blunder, although our external affairs minister, our defence minister and top military leaders are working hard at it. Four rounds of military negotiations and conversations between India's and China's foreign ministers, and our national security adviser with his counterpart on boundary negotiations, have been largely futile. A fifth round commenced Sunday and nothing is known about its outcome. In light of the Chinese ambassador's recent observations, it is unrealistic to expect encouraging news. In response to Chinese moves all along the approximately 4,000-kilometre Himalayan frontier, India too has massed its forces. But the job they have is to push back invaders. It looks like it will be a long haul through a bleak winter. Accompanying international political moves are an imperative.

Not the model patient

These are testing times. Home minister Amit Shah, Uttar Pradesh BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh and Karnataka CM B.S. Yediyurappa have all been diagnosed with Covid-19 within hours of one another. In a sobering turn, the only woman in the UP Cabinet passed away a day after another senior party leader in Andhra Pradesh also succumbed to the coronavirus. The SARS-CoV-2 is indeed the great leveller — or not — with Lok Sabha MP Karti Chidambaram and Tamil Nadu governor Banwarilal Purohit found positive among others. India's Covid-19 tally has risen to 18 lakhs — the daily case count surpassed 57,000 on successive days.

Over in Ayodhya, 15 policemen and a priest had contracted the coronavirus and by Monday, the number rose by five. But that — and the pandemic raging — has not deterred the Prime Minister and his loyal entourage from their bhoomi puja agenda. At any rate, only five people will be on the dais — including RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, chief minister Yogi Adityanath and the PM.

Commendably, a few are distancing — despite receiving an invitation even while Babri demolition co-accused L.K. Advani and M.M. Joshi were only asked over telephone, Uma Bharti will not attend — she would be at another spot on the Saryu bank. She would arrive only after “everyone has left, in order to protect the PM and thousands others”. No one can find fault with Ms Bharti's intentions this time. Nor of information technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who went into self-isolation having met Mr Shah over the weekend.

Mr Shah's decision to get himself admitted in Medanta, Gurugram, has drawn flak. Opposition leaders wondered as to why he chose to give reputed facilities like AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital a miss since public institutions need the patronage of the government to inspire trust. But conversely, when the country's home minister chooses private hospitals over public ones, it does say something about, if not the latter's efficiency, but the government's own investments in and expectations from public healthcare. The virus has completely exposed it. India simply does not have the infrastructure to tackle the coronavirus.

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary

Covid-19 returns, holidayers bear brunt; A Suitable Boy looks great!

Another scorching weekend, 100 F! And while we dither as a country between being locked down or being let out, pubs are full — especially those which can offer outside seating. You don't see much social distancing there nor on the beaches where people flock every warm weekend. Many are working from home, so office time is flexible — and what can one do when sunshine beckons?

But now everything is changing, because Covid-19 is back. Leicester was the first city to be out under lockdown a fortnight back. Now the virus has spread to Manchester, East Lancashire and Yorkshire. With Eid this weekend, there was a lot of inconvenience for Muslims as any meeting between more than two families indoors is banned under lockdown.

Before that, the rules of going out kept changing as well as for holidaying abroad. After an initial complacency till mid-March, and a tight lockdown till mid-July, things had begun to finally move forward. Both the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson and the Chancellor “Dishy” Rishi, wanted to restart the economy in a

hurry. But Boris is now worried, scared of a second wave. So rules changed again, catching holiday makers unawares.

Earlier last week, foreign travel to European destinations was allowed. Then Spain had a second wave of Covid-19. Many who had landed in sunny Spain, including a UK Cabinet Minister, were told that upon return they face a fortnight's quarantine.

As the policies are now being made keeping in mind the capricious ways of the virus, the rest of the year is going to be tough, till the vaccine arrives.

Last Sunday, we had the first episode of *A Suitable Boy*, based on novelist Vikram Seth's much loved book, and directed by Mira Nair. This is the first TV serial from the BBC with all Indian characters, who are not (for a change) caricatures or stereotypes. And not served with a dash of colonial masala, either. Nor is this a story of the Raj like Jewel in the Crown with mixed nationalities. This is hundred percent desi. It looked beautiful and got five star

reviews in the newspapers. So India, of a distant past, should be part of our Sunday evenings for a while. Yes, the local Indians are being critical about it — as are Indians elsewhere too — but this is the BBC version of India, and it looks good and feels good.

Speaking of the BBC, it is sad to record the passing away of Kailash Nath Budhwar, the first Indian head of the BBC Hindi and Tamil service. He had heralded an important change — as before him the head of the Hindi service had invariably been White. For many in the United Kingdom and listeners of the BBC Hindi Service he had been the voice of India, and will be missed.

Central London is deserted. But at the Trafalgar Square, there is a new presence. The fourth plinth has been reserved for bold and experimental sculpture which is given space for a while and then another one comes along. The latest is called *The End is by Heather Phillipson*. It is a sculpture of whipped cream with a cherry on top. But it's not all cheery as there is a fly climbing up the side and a small

drone. Don't laugh. It is thirty feet high and weighs nine tons. The artist said that it symbolised something about to collapse, like the United Kingdom after Brexit. Previous sculptures have been equally adventurous or pretentious, depending on which side you are on. One was a 'thumbs up', another was of Nelson's famous ship Victory inside a bottle.

It was Ken Livingstone, while Mayor of London, who had the idea of opening up the empty plinth for installations or sculptures by young artists. Well done Ken! Looking at it I am always reminded of the empty canopy near India Gate. After the removal of the statue of King George V, in 1968, it has remained empty. Perhaps it too could be given over to modern Indian sculptors, displaying contemporary work.

Every time a new list comes out of people raised to Peerage, the House of Lords gets abused in the media as useless, waste of money and so on. Boris has just announced his list and it is the usual mix of party political cronies—donors, retiring MPs, dissidents from the

Opposition etc. But two names are noteworthy as friends of India. Jo Johnson, an old friend who was posted in Delhi as a correspondent for Financial Times, then became an MP and Minister in the United Kingdom under successive Conservative governments. Jo had resigned on grounds of conscience because he could not agree with brother Boris's Brexit policy. Jo was helpful in setting up the Gandhi Statue in Parliament Square. The other is Nemat Talaat (Minouche) Shafik the Director of the London School of Economics (LSE). She has set up Mahatma Gandhi Scholarship Fund for Indian students coming to LSE with a donation of £100,000 from the Gandhi Statue Memorial Fund.

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author. Her 6th book, the biography of the 1930s superstar, Devika Rani, The Longest Kiss, will soon be out.



Subhani

China's real target may be Arunachal Pradesh



Mohan Guruswamy

I have always believed that with having Lobtained by hook or crook just about all they wanted in Ladakh, the real prize the Chinese are eyeing is Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese have never been explicit on how much of Arunachal they seek. I once saw an official map in a travel agent's office in Lhasa that showed only the Tawang tract as Chinese territory. In other maps I have seen in China, they have their border running along the foothills, which means all of Arunachal or what they now call “Southern Tibet”.

The Chinese based their specific claim on the territory on the premise that Tawang was administered from Lhasa, and the contiguous areas owed allegiance to the Dalai Lama. Of late, the Chinese have given a glimpse of what their true intentions are by laying claim to Bhutan's Sakteng wildlife reserve area, which falls just below the Tawang tract. When you look at this in the map, their intentions become clear. They are looking for a direct passage from occupied Tibet into the Assam valley.

The Mughals' Imperial India spanned from Afghanistan to Bengal but didn't go very much below the Godavari in the South.

The Imperial India of the British incorporated all of today's India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It was the British who for the first time brought Assam into India in 1826 when they defeated Burma and formalised the annexation with the Treaty of Yandabo.

Only in 1886 did the British first foray out of the Brahmaputra valley when they sent out a punitive expedition into Lohit valley in pursuit of marauding tribesmen

who began raiding the new tea gardens. The area was apparently neither under Chinese nor Tibetan control: there were no protests either from the Dalai Lama or the Chinese agent in Lhasa. The British stayed put.

Tibet remained in self-imposed isolation and the race to be first into Lhasa became the greatest challenge for explorers and adventurers in the second half of the 19th century. Not the least among these were the spies of the Survey of India, the legendary pundits. The most renowned of these was Sarat Chandra Das, whose books on Tibet are still avidly read today. As the adventurers, often military officers masquerading as explorers, began visiting Tibet, the British in India began worrying.

Reports that the most well known of Czarist Russia's military explorers, Col. Bronislav Grombchevsky, was sighted in Tibet had Lord Curzon, Governor-General of India, most worried. In 1903 Lord Curzon decided to send a military expedition into Tibet led by Grombchevsky's old antagonist, Col. Francis Younghusband.

A brigade of Gurkhas and Tommies went over the Nathu La into the Chumbi valley and advanced unhindered till Xigatse. A Tibetan military force met them there but offered what can only be described as passive resistance at a place called Guru near Gyantse. Not a shot was fired back as the British Indian troops rained bullets on them, killing thousands.

From Xigatse, Younghusband made a leisurely march into Lhasa. The British got the Tibetans to agree to end their isolation and having extracted trade concessions, withdrew in

1904 the way they came. In 1907, Britain and Russia formally agreed that it was in their mutual interest to leave Tibet “in that state of isolation from which, till recently, she has shown no intention to depart”.

In 1913 the Tibetans declared independence after the collapse of the Chinese Qing dynasty and the establishment of a republic under Sun Yat Sen. They drove the Chinese garrisons in Tibet into India over the Nathu La. Also, in 1913, the British convened the Simla Conference to demarcate the India-Tibet border. The British proposed the 1914 McMahon Line. The Tibetans accepted it. The Chinese representative, however, initialed the agreement under protest. But his protest seemed mostly about the British negotiating directly with Tibet as a sovereign state and not over the McMahon Line as such.

In 1935, at the insistence of Sir Olaf Caroe ICS, then deputy secretary in the foreign department, the McMahon Line was notified. In 1944, J.P. Mills ICS established British Indian administration in NEFA, but excluding Tawang, which continued to be administered by the Lhasa-appointed head lama at Tawang, despite the fact that it lay well below the McMahon Line. This was largely as Henry Twynam, Assam's governor, lost his nerve and did not want to provoke the Tibetans.

In 1947 the Dalai Lama (the same gentleman now in Dharamsala) sent newly-independent India a note-laying claim “to some districts” in NEFA/Arunachal.

On October 7, 1950, the Chinese attacked the Tibetans at seven places on their frontier and made known their intention of reasserting control over all of Tibet. As if in response, on February 16, 1951, Maj. Relangnao “Bob” Khating, IFAS, raised the Indian tricolor in Tawang and took over the tract's administration.

The point of this narrative is to bring home the fact that India's claim

over Arunachal Pradesh doesn't rest on any great historical tradition or cultural affinity. We are there because the British went there. But then the Chinese have no basis whatsoever to stake a claim, besides a few dreamy cartographic enlargements of the notion of China among some of the hangers-on in the Qing emperor's court. The important thing now is that we have been there for over a hundred years and that settles the issue.

Arunachal Pradesh has a very interesting population mix. Only less than 10 per cent of its population is Tibetan. Indo-Mongoloid tribes account for 68 per cent of the population. The rest are migrants from Nagaland and Assam. As far as religious affinities go, Hindus are the biggest group with 37 per cent, followed by 36 per cent animists, and 13 per cent Buddhists. Recent census figures suggest a spurt in Christianity, possibly induced by pocketbook proselytising. In all, there are 21 major tribal groups and over 100 ethnically distinct sub-groupings, speaking over 50 distinct languages and dialects. The population of about a million is spread over 17 towns and 3,649 villages. With the exception of a few villages of Monpas that live north of the McMahon Line, it's an ethnically compact and contiguous area.

It is true that historically India never had a direct border with Tibet till the British took Kumaon and Garhwal from Nepal in 1846 and extended its domain over Arunachal in 1886. But the formidable Himalayas were always culturally a part of India and formed a natural barrier against ingress from the north, whether Tibetan or Chinese.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, has held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS ON AYODHYA

As the government is already pulling out all stops to make the Bhumipujan a spectacular event, it also needs to canvass Ayodhya as a global spiritual destination on the lines of Mecca and Jerusalem to disseminate Hinduism and generate employment and revenue.

As Saudi Arabia earns 75,000 crore from the pilgrimage of Mecca yearly, Ayodhya has the potential of doing it manifold by promoting the analogy between the Lord Rama and Abraham of Abrahamic faiths. In 2014, PM Modi had made a promise to make Varanasi as a pilgrimage destination. Ayodhya could even generate one lakh crore in revenue if the plan is promoted and managed well. It's high time to realize where the wind is blowing and make the most out of it.

Rahul Chouhan
Ujjain

EDUCATION PLAN

EVEN A cursory glance into the National Education Policy (NEP) announced by the BJP government makes one feel that this is a replica of the vicious 'Kula kalvi thittam', conceptualised and tried to be implemented in the state of Tamil Nadu by former chief minister C.Rajagopalachari. There can be no second opinion that the policy is aimed at creating more drop outs even at the school level, with the carrot offer of vocational studies purposely brought in to hit the students from the marginalised, middle class and disadvantaged society and make education out of their reach. The NEP also aims at promoting Sanskrit and Hindi at the cost of the other languages.

Tharcus S. Fernando
Chennai

HOOCH TRAGEDY

THE DEATH of over 100 people due to consumption of hooch in Punjab is a matter of concern. It seems that the sale had been going on without restrictions. This business continues to thrive due to the careless attitude of law enforcement agencies.

Yugal Kishore Sharma
Faridabad

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: letters.asianage@gmail.com.

IN BRIEF

Ex-Pope Benedict ill after German trip

Berlin: Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI has fallen ill after his return from a trip to his native Bavaria to visit his brother, who died a month ago, a German newspaper reported Monday. The daily Passauer Neue Presse quoted Peter Seewald, a biographer of the retired pontiff, as saying that the 93-year-old has been suffering from a facial infection since his return to Rome. Seewald, who has published several book-length interviews with Benedict, handed over a copy of the biography to the former pontiff on Saturday, the newspaper reported.

Isaias forecast to turn into hurricane

Vero Beach (US): Isaias was forecast to become a hurricane on Monday as it neared landfall in the Carolinas after bands of heavy rain from the tropical storm lashed Florida's east coast. The US National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane warning from South Santee River, South Carolina, to Surf City, North Carolina, in its 5 am advisory. Tropical Storm Isaias had maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph) and was expected to strengthen into a Category 1 hurricane, with winds of 74 mph (119 kph) or more. "We are forecasting it to become a hurricane before it reaches the coast this evening," senior hurricane specialist Daniel Brown said.

Drug peddling cat escapes Lanka jail

Colombo: A cat detained at Sri Lanka's main prison while allegedly trying to smuggle drugs and cell phone SIM cards has escaped, media reports said on Monday. The feline was detected by jail intelligence officials on Saturday at the high-security Welikada Prison, a police official said. He said nearly two grams of heroin, two SIM cards and a memory chip were found in a small plastic bag tied around the cat's neck. But it escaped on Sunday from a prison room where it was kept, the *Aruna newspaper* said. There was no immediate comment from prison authorities. The prison had reported an increase in incidents of people throwing small packets of drugs, cell phones and phone chargers over the walls in recent weeks.

China, Oz envoys fight over SCS

Beijing: A look at recent developments in the South China Sea, where China is pitted against smaller neighbours in multiple territorial disputes over islands, coral reefs and lagoons. The waters are a major shipping route for global commerce and are rich in fish and possible oil and gas reserves. Chinese and Australian diplomats sparred on Twitter over Beijing's actions in the South China Sea following Australia's endorsement of a US statement that it would recognise virtually none of China's territorial claims there. Australia recently filed a memorandum with the United Nations saying the claims were "without legal basis," plunging Canberra into the controversy that has drawn angry responses from Beijing.

EX-BELGIAN KING'S STATUE DAMAGED DURING PROTEST

Brussels, Aug. 3: A bust of late Belgian king Leopold II, who exploited the country's brutally-run former central African colony as a personal estate, has been vandalised for a third time. Ruling the Belgians between 1865 and 1909, Leopold II was revered at home as the builder of his country, but his legacy came under the spotlight this year as anti-racist protests spread around the world. During his reign, the land that was then the Belgian Congo and is now largely in the Democratic Republic of Congo was run for his profit and millions of Africans were killed, tortured or died of the hardship of forced labour. When "Black Lives Matters" protests erupted this year triggered by anger in the United States at the latest police killings of unarmed black suspects, Leopold's many monuments were targeted. The latest incident is thought to have taken place late Friday, when a statue of Leopold outside the Africa Museum just outside Brussels was once again daubed in blood-red paint.

Ransomware fear looms on US polls

FBI, security dept alert local governments

Washington, Aug. 3: Federal authorities say one of the gravest threats to the November election is a well-timed ransomware attack that could paralyse voting operations. The threat isn't just from foreign governments, but any fortune-seeking criminal.

Ransomware attacks targeting state and local governments have been on the rise, with cyber criminals seeking quick money by seizing data and holding it hostage until they get paid. The fear is that such attacks could affect voting systems directly or even indirectly, by infecting broader government networks that include electoral databases. Even if a ransomware attack fails to disrupt elections, it could nonetheless rattle confidence in the vote. On the spectrum of threats from the fantastical to the more probable, experts and officials say ransomware is a particularly realistic possibility because the attacks are already so pervasive and lucrative.

The FBI and Department of Homeland Security have issued advisories to local governments, including recommendations for preventing attacks.

"From the standpoint of confidence in the system,

● **RANSOMWARE ATTACKS** targeting state and local governments have been on the rise, with cyber criminals seeking quick money by seizing data and holding it hostage until they get paid.

● **THE FEAR** is that such attacks could affect voting systems directly or even indirectly, by infecting broader government networks that include electoral databases.

I think it is much easier to disrupt a network and prevent it from operating than it is to change votes," Adam Hickey, a Justice Department deputy assistant attorney general, said in an interview. The scenario is relatively simple: Plant malware on multiple networks that affect voter registration databases and activate it just before an election. Or target vote-reporting and tabulation systems.

"With the 2020 election, election infrastructure has a target on its back," Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold said. "We know that election infrastructure was attempted to be undermined in

2016, and we know the techniques are shifting." The number of attacks has escalated in recent years, with targets including Texas' transportation agency and city computers in New Orleans.

A December report by cybersecurity firm Emsisoft tracked attacks against at least 966 entities that interrupted 911 services, rendered medical records inaccessible and hindered police background checks. "We're seeing state and local entities targeted with ransomware on a near daily basis," said Geoff Hale, a top election security official with Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Steps taken to improve security of voter registration systems after the 2016 election could help governments fend off election-related ransomware attacks. They've also acted to ensure they can recover quickly in the event of an attack. Colorado, for example, stores redundant versions of its voter registration data at two separate secure locations so officials can easily shift operations.

Backups are regular so the system can be quickly rebuilt if needed. — AP

RAJAPAKSA BANKS ON DIVIDED OPPN

Colombo, Aug. 3: Sri Lanka's ruling party led by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa is assured of a sweeping victory in the twice-postponed general election on Wednesday as the main Opposition is "badly divided," according to Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) senior leader Basil Rajapaksa.

"The oldest party, (United National Party), is badly divided and they would be soundly defeated," Basil, the main organiser of the party led by his eldest brother Mahinda, told reporters on Sunday as the public campaign ended.

"The UNP would only finish fourth in certain areas, they can't even be the second in other areas," he said. He said that the entire Opposition would poll less than half of the SLPP's total votes. However, he said that the ruling party is expected to finish short of its target of 150 seats in the 225-member Parliament. — PTI

● **IN A** video message released before his LoC visit, Qureshi said he was visiting the LoC along with the Defence Minister to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people. The two ministers visited the Chiri Kot Sector where they were briefed by the Army about the latest situation of the LoC, officials said.

nal matter of India, the Ministry of External Affairs has reiterated. Pakistan has been unsuccessfully trying to drum up international support against India for withdrawing Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5 last year and bifurcating it into two union territories. India has categorically told the international community that the scrapping of Article 370 of the Constitution was its internal matter. It also advised Pakistan to accept the reality and stop all anti-India propaganda. — PTI

Sanofi faces manslaughter charge for epilepsy drug

Paris, Aug. 3: French prosecutors have indicted pharma giant Sanofi for manslaughter over birth defects linked to an epilepsy drug, the company said on Monday, in a long-running case that has also seen it charged with fraud.

The charges relate to the drug valproate, marketed as Depakine among other trade names, which studies say has caused disabilities in about 15,000-30,000

children whose mothers took the medicine while pregnant.

On the market since 1967, the drug is used to treat epilepsy, migraines and bipolar disorder.

But research found that when pregnant women took the drug, their children had an elevated risk — between 10 to 40 percent — of congenital malformations, autism and learning difficulties.

Sanofi is facing separate charges of aggravated fraud and unintentionally causing injury in 42 cases filed by families, but insists it had warned health authorities of the drug's risks already in the 1980s.

On Monday, the company confirmed a report in Le Monde newspaper that prosecutors have now also charged it with manslaughter. — AFP

World's largest cargo plane



Israeli policemen stand near an Antonov An-225 Mriya strategic airlift cargo aircraft, the world's largest cargo plane, upon landing at Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport in Lod, east of Tel Aviv, on Tuesday. The aircraft arrived in Israel carrying US Oshkosh military vehicles, which will be fitted to be used Iron Dome systems purchased by the US military, as per an August 2019 agreement. — AFP

Iran hits hawkish former US expert with symbolic sanctions

Tehran, Aug. 3: Iran on Sunday imposed symbolic sanctions on a hawkish former expert with the White House National Security Council, Iranian state media reported.

A statement from Iran's Foreign Ministry said the sanctions on Richard Goldberg were implemented because of his role in what it called "US economic terrorism against interests of the Islamic Republic and its citizens," the IRNA news agency reported. Goldberg will not be eligible for Iranian visas or accounts in Iranian financial insti-

● **GOLDBERG WILL** not be eligible for Iranian visas or accounts in Iranian financial institutions, nor will he be qualified to have any financial transactions with Iranian entities, the statement said.

tutes, nor will he be qualified to have any financial transactions with Iranian entities, the statement said.

"Today I gain a new badge of honor: 'sanctioned' by Iran for coordinating @realDonaldTrump's maximum pressure campaign," Goldberg tweeted on Sunday. Goldberg has been an advocate for tough measures against Iran, and until January worked on Iranian issues at the National Security Council.

He now works with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank that's long advocated a maximalist approach against Iran.

Tehran sanctioned the think tank and its CEO last August for their role in promoting sanctions and what the Islamic

Republic called "economic terrorism" against Iran. President Donald Trump reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran after he unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear accord between Iran and Western powers in May 2018.

Iran later responded by slowly abandoning nearly every aspect of the agreement, although it still allows UN inspectors access to its nuclear sites. The sanctions have caused Iran's oil exports, the country's main source of income, to fall sharply. — AP

Covid-19 outbreak hits Norway cruise ship, 40 tested positive

Copenhagen, Aug. 3: A Norwegian cruise ship line halted all trips and apologised on Monday for procedural errors after an outbreak of Coronavirus on one ship infected at least 4 passengers and 36 crew members.

The 40 people on the MS Roald Amundsen who tested positive have been admitted to the University Hospital of North Norway in Tromsø, north of the Arctic Circle, where the ship currently is docked.

"A preliminary evaluation shows that there has been a failure in several of our internal procedures," Hurtigruten CEO Daniel Skjeldam said in a statement. He added the company that sails along Norway's picturesque coast between Bergen in the south and Kirkenes in the north is "now in the process of a full review of all procedures, and all aspects of our own handling."

The cruise line has contacted passengers who had been on the MS Roald Amundsen for its July 17 and July 24 departures from Bergen to the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, which is known for its polar bears. All 158 crew members on MS Roald Amundsen have been tested and 122 were negative. There were 209 guests on the first voyage and 178 guests on the second voyage. But since the cruise ship line often acts like a local ferry, traveling from port to port along Norway's western coast, the virus may not have been contained onboard. — AP

UK rolls out 2 new rapid Covid tests to hosps, labs, care homes

London, Aug. 3: Two new tests, both able to detect the Coronavirus in just 90 minutes, will be rolled out to hospitals, care homes and laboratories across the UK to increase testing capacity and distinguish between Covid-19 and winter flu in the coming months, the British government said on Monday.

One of the tests, the 90-minute LamPore swab tests, will be supplied by Oxford Nanopore, an Oxford University spin-off co-founded by Indian-ori-

gin CEO Gordon Sanghera, who believes it also offers an "accessible global testing solution".

"We are honoured to be playing a part in fighting Covid-19 in the UK, and preparing the country for the winter virus season. Ever since we founded Oxford Nanopore, our mission has been to create disruptive, high performance technology that has a profound, positive impact on society," Sanghera said. Oxford Nanopore will be making 450,000 90-minute

LamPore swab tests available across adult care settings and labs in Britain from next week. These tests will be able to process swab and saliva samples to detect the presence of Covid-19 in 60 to 90 minutes.

The other new rapid test, which uses DNA to detect viruses, will be rolled out across NHS hospitals from September, with 5,000 DNA machines supplied by DnaNudge to provide 5.8 million tests in the coming months. — PTI

Masks mandatory outdoor in France

Paris, Aug. 3: Beach resorts along France's Atlantic coast, picturesque promenades on the Loire River, farmers markets in the Alps - they're among scores of spots around France where everyone is now required to wear a mask outdoors.

The outdoor mask rules taking effect on Monday are on top of a nationwide decree last month requiring people to wear masks in all stores and other indoor public places. Pressure is grow-

ing on the government to mandate outdoor mask use on a national level, too.

France is seeing an uptick in Coronavirus infections, with hundreds of new clusters in recent weeks, notably as young people gather at waterside cafes or dance parties and families get together for summer vacation. Several sites around France have started requiring masks outdoors in recent days. — AP

VIKAS KHANNA TO HELP INDIAN STREET VENDORS

New York, Aug. 3: Michelin-star chef Vikas Khanna, who will soon reach the milestone of having distributed 25 million meals across India amid Covid-19, is now aiming to provide essential supplies to 10 million street vendors and their families facing hardships due to pandemic. "We are securing ration and are planning about 10 million meals around the country for street vendors, who actually hold the true heritage of Indian food in their hands," Khanna said. — PTI

SPACE | ODYSSEY**After 45 years, US astronauts land into Gulf of Mexico in a dramatic manner with parachute**

Nasa astronauts back safely in SpaceX module

Cape Canaveral, Aug. 3: Two Nasa astronauts returned to Earth on Sunday in a dramatic, retro-style splashdown, their capsule parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico to close out an unprecedented test flight by Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

It was the first splashdown by US astronauts in 45 years, with the first commercially built and operated spacecraft to carry people to and from orbit. The return clears

the way for another SpaceX crew launch as early as next month and possible tourist flights next year.

Test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken arrived back on Earth in their SpaceX Dragon capsule named Endeavour, less than a day after departing the International Space Station and two months after blasting off from Florida. The capsule parachuted into the calm gulf waters about 40 miles off

the coast of Pensacola, hundreds of miles from Tropical Storm Isaias pounding Florida's Atlantic coast.

"Welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," said Mission Control from SpaceX headquarters. "It's a little bit overwhelming to see everybody here considering the things that have gone on the last few months since we've been off planet," Hurley said after arriving back home

in Houston on Sunday evening where they were greeted by a small masked-gathering of family and officials, including Musk.

Musk had rushed to Houston from SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California, to welcome them. He was clearly moved — and relieved — while addressing the group.

"I'm not very religious, but I prayed for this one," he said. The astronauts' ride back to Earth was

fast, bumpy and hot, at least on the outside.

The spacecraft went from a screaming orbital speed of 17,500 mph (28,000 kph) to 350 mph (560 kph) during atmospheric reentry, and finally to 15 mph (24 kph) at splashdown. Peak heating during descent was 3,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,900 degrees Celsius). The anticipated top G forces felt by the crew: four to five times the force of Earth's gravity. — AP



The SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour spacecraft lands with Nasa astronauts Robert Behnken and Douglas Hurley onboard in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Pensacola, Florida. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	36,939.60	-1.77
Nifty 50	10,891.60	-1.64
S&P 500*	3,298.16	0.83
Dollar (₹)	75.00	-0.26
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.18	-0.37
Euro (₹)	88.30	0.55
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,678.185	0.33
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.17	0.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.837	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.566	0.030

* As of 9:30 PM IST

UPI transactions reach a new high in July

As more people preferred contactless payments due to Covid-19 fear, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions touched a new high in July. UPI transactions in July reached 1.49 billion compared to 1.34 bn in June, a growth of 11 per cent. After a decline in April, transactions had picked up and had stood at 1.23 bn in May. In value terms, UPI recorded transactions worth Rs 2.9 lakh crore in July, up by 11 per cent.

SpiceJet asked to stop 5-day discount sale



The DGCA has asked SpiceJet to stop its five-day discounted sale of tickets as the government-imposed fare limits, with upper and lower fare limits, are in place till November 24. SpiceJet on Monday morning announced a five-day "1+1 offer sale", offering one-way base fares starting as low as Rs 899 and a complimentary voucher with a maximum value of Rs 2,000 per booking for use in future bookings.

Job search for WFH rises 440% in February-July

Job searches for remote work or work from home in India have increased by over 442 per cent between February and July, the highest globally. Amid the pandemic, many jobs have become work-from-home jobs and with the flexibility and a variety of career options, it has become more popular than ever, global job site Indeed said. The job postings grew in sectors such as software tech, healthcare and marketing.

PVR's rights issue offer oversubscribed

Multiplex operator PVR's rights issue has been oversubscribed, according to data available with stock exchanges. Its rights issue opened on July 17 and closed on July 31. According to issue subscription data, PVR proposed to issue 38.23 lakh equity shares. The company's board had fixed rights issue price at Rs 784 per equity share, including a premium of Rs 774 a share over face value of Rs 10 per share.

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■ Person days under MGNREGA drops 57%

Steep fall in rural job days in July

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Employment generated under the MGNREGA has dropped 57 per cent in July against the previous month. The rural employment guarantee scheme has been seeing month-on-month increase in person-days since April after the lockdown hit urban centres.

The initial data published by the government shows that the number of person-days has dropped from 64 crore in June to 27.3 crore in July, which is a massive drop of 57 per cent. Even the employment provided to households has come down by 41 per cent from 3.89 crore in June to 2.29 crore in July.

Both person-days and household employment have been growing since April. In the lockdown month of May, person-days stood at 56.8 crore, which was higher than the initial data for July.

Work demand too dropped 31 per cent in July-from 6.2 crore in June to 4.26 crore in July. Work demand among households too dropped by 27.7 per cent.

According to Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, the sowing under kharif crop happened faster this year and the lower levels of farm activity in July would have reflected in the MGNREGA employment data. "The CMIE data also shows that the farm jobs have come down by 4 mil-



lion in July compared to June. During the lockdown months, farm jobs had bucked the overall employment trend. Seasonally farm jobs are

lesser in July compared to June," Shah said.

Compared to July 2019, person-days generated last month are still higher as a better monsoon improved the kharif acreage and sowing activity this time. Further, availability of labour also was higher this time due to the reverse migration of the labourers from urban centres.

Chances of these labourers having gone back to urban centres are very less in July as has been evident from the lower manufacturing PMI data. Manufacturing PMI, which was rebounding after hitting a historic low in April, dipped in July. "In July many of the industrial centres were still under lockdown. More relaxed restrictions in August can see better industrial activity. By September, we could see re-migration of the labourers happening as the wages as well as job demand are better in urban centres compared to rural areas," said Shah.

REALTY SENTIMENTS HIT ALL-TIME LOW

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Real estate sector sentiments have hit an all-time low in the June quarter. While future sentiments have seen an improvement, they still remain pessimistic.

The Knight Frank-Ficci-Naredco Real Estate Sentiment Index fell to 22 in the June quarter from 31 in March and 53 in December.

However, the score for future sentiments moved up to 41 in the June quarter against 36 in the March quarter.

Economic indicators dampen market spirit

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Stock market's benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty continued their losing trend due to deteriorating economic indicators on account of rising Covid cases and the lockdown impact.

RBI policy announcements scheduled for later this week also kept investors cautious and bearish. The Sensex declined 667 points, or 1.77 per cent, to 36,939.60 in one of the biggest single-day fall in the last five months. The Nifty-50 closed below 11,000 at 10,891.60, losing 181.85 points, or 1.57 per cent.

The market, after outperforming global peers in July, saw profit taking on Monday as the July manufacturing PMI data came lower at 46 compared to 47.2 in June, an indicator of low economic activity in the country compared to other parts of the world.

The July manufacturing PMI data in China came in at 52.8 and the Euro area PMI came in at 51.8,

which seemed to have raised alarm bells among investors in India.

Domestic loan growth also moderated to 5.8 per cent year-on-year for the fortnight ended July 17, 2020, said a report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services, adding "We expect loan growth of private banks to moderate to around 10 per cent versus around 18 per cent projected earlier (pre-Covid) for FY21."

Financials lost the most on Monday, as the Nifty Bank Index fell 2.33 per cent, led by IndusInd Bank (-3.74 per cent), Kotak Bank (-3.57 per cent), Axis Bank (-2.93 per cent), HDFC Bank (-2.60 per cent) and ICICI Bank (-0.88 per cent).

IT stocks also saw profit booking after gaining maximum among all sectors in July. The Nifty IT Index was down 0.64 per cent led by TCS (-1.42 per cent), Infosys (1.11 per cent) and Tech Mahindra (1.05 per cent).

"Most private banks reported sequential decline in loan growth," Motilal Oswal said.

Manufacturing PMI contracts in July

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

With continuous slump in the manufacturing activities from intermittent lockdowns, India's manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index, or PMI, declined to 46 points in July from 47.2 in June, still an improvement over the decline from 30.8 in May.

The manufacturing PMI in July contracted for the fourth month in a row, staying below the 50-mark separating contraction and expansion in growth. This is the index's longest spell of contraction since March 2009.

"The survey results showed a re-acceleration of declines in the key indices of output and new orders, undermining the trend towards stabilisation seen over the past two months," noted Eliot Kerr, an economist at IHS Markit.

"Anecdotal evidence indicated that firms were struggling to obtain work, with some of their clients remaining in lockdown, suggesting that we won't see a pick-up in activity until infection rates are quelled and restrictions can be further removed," Kerr added.

Last week, the IMF said high-frequency indicators signal plateauing of economic activity in India as the positive impact from unlock is not as strong as the negative impact of the lockdown.

GMR Infra to sell land, other non-core assets

New Delhi, Aug. 3: GMR Infrastructure is working on disinvestment of non-core assets, including land, and hopes to yield "significant value" even from 50 per cent of land monetisation, according to a document.

The airport-to-port conglomerate in an investor presentation said land at strategic industrial locations will benefit from the possible manufacturing dislocation from China.

"Plan is to divest large part of other assets identified as non-core divestment initiative," the document said and noted that it has 10,500 acres of port and industrial land and "even 50 per cent land monetisation" could yield significant value.

About its Kakinada Special Investment Region (SIR) in Andhra Pradesh, the group said that it is in discussion with a large number of clients for monetisation of land.

"Government of Andhra Pradesh signed MoUs with Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd to set up a refinery cum petrochem project in 2,500 acres and with HPCL-GAIL consortium for Petrochem complex in 2,000 acres land," it said and added that in addition, a pact has been inked with a stainless steel manufacturer for 500 acres and an Australian lithium refinery for 100 acre.

The port-based Kakinada SIR in the Krishna-Godavari basin has plans to set up an all



weather multi-purpose deepwater port, a logistics park, a petrochemicals cluster and an eco-industrial park, it said.

As per the document, an area of 4,650 acres there has been notified as SEZs and utility and environment approvals are in place.

In the Kakinada SEZ in Andhra Pradesh, however, the company has continued its efforts for various government approvals and technical studies and added that demand for industrial parks is expected to revive to pre-Covid-19 levels.

The group said infrastructure has not been much affected in the region due to Covid-19 as the company was able to re-mobilise and commence work quickly as workers were hailed from neighbouring areas and Hosur.

About the Krishnagiri SIR (Tamil Nadu), the

company said infrastructure development in 275 acres is in progress with all approvals in place.

The company said it is leveraging locational advantage to create clusters in aerospace, automobile, logistics, engineering and electronics sectors besides setting up a special investment region in joint venture with Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (Tidco).

It said while the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (Sipcot) will acquire 500 acres for an industrial park, it has leased 20 acre to Toyota Boshoku for a manufacturing unit.

GMR Infrastructure's consolidated net loss for the quarter ended March 31 narrowed to Rs 1,126.82 crore, as against Rs 2,341.24 crore loss in the January-March period in FY19.

—PTI

Samsung crafts comeback as anti-China wave surges

SANKALP PHARTIYAL, HEEKYONG YANG NEW DELHI/SEOUL, AUG. 3

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd is forging a comeback in India's smartphone market with a new range of budget devices and a ramped-up online presence, aiming to recoup ground ceded to Chinese rivals such as Xiaomi Corp. Samsung, the only major non-Chinese player in the country, has already begun to gain ground, and a surge in anti-China sentiment in India following a border clash in June is expected to provide a fresh boost.

Samsung jumped to the No. 2 spot with 26 per cent market share in the second quarter behind Xiaomi's 29 per cent, according to tech researcher Counterpoint, as the South Korean company's diverse and inhouse supply chain helped it avoid product delays suffered by rivals during coronavirus lockdowns.

It was in the third position with a 16 per cent share in the previous quarter.

Once the unrivalled leader in the world's sec-



ond-biggest smartphone market, Samsung has over the past three years lost Indian customers to Chinese brands, whose devices are perceived as better value.

But India still accounts for some \$7.5 billion in annual retail smartphone revenues for Samsung, according to Counterpoint, making it the company's biggest market outside the United States.

It has built what it has described as the world's largest mobile phone man-

ufacturing plant on the outskirts of New Delhi, where it tests new devices and often assembles them for export.

That manufacturing power, and Samsung's ability to source many components internally, is helping it gain ground amid the pandemic. Chinese smartphone brands Xiaomi and Oppo suffered local production hiccups and product delays due to Covid-19, but Samsung was able to keep delivering phones smoothly.

Now it is building on the momentum. Samsung has launched seven new smartphones since June, three of them under Rs 10,000, including one in the Rs 5,600 range.

"The Covid crisis has pushed people to use smartphones for everything from online education to digital payments to even connecting with friends on video calls. That's why these budget phones are focused on the mass market," said a source familiar with Samsung's strategy in India.

—Reuters

Wockhardt to supply vaccines to UK



Bengaluru, Aug. 3:

Wockhardt Ltd will supply millions of doses of multiple Covid-19 vaccines, including that being developed by Astra-Zeneca and Oxford University, under a deal with the UK government announced on Monday.

Shares of Wockhardt jumped 10 per cent after the news in a downcast Mumbai market. The company has reserved fill-and-finish capacity—the final manufacturing step of putting vaccines into vials or syringes and packaging them—as part of the agreement, it said.

This is the latest step by the UK to secure supplies and production of Covid-19 vaccines after striking four deals with drugmakers to buy their potential shots.

"Fill finish is a critical step in the process to get the vaccine in a form to be given to patients. The agreement with Wockhardt will boost our capability to ensure that," Kate Bingham, chair of UK Vaccines Task Force, said in a statement.

The UK government has also reserved one fill-and-finish production line at a Wockhardt subsidiary in Wrexham, Wales for its exclusive use for the next 18 months to secure supply. It is expected to start the Wexham line in September.

AstraZeneca has indicated it would need 30 million fill-and-finish doses of their vaccine candidate. —Reuters

Consumer behaviour changing: Chandra

New Delhi, Aug 3: A

tremendous transformation, stemming from Covid-19, is expected in the mobility segment over the next two years, as consumers' move to "slow" travel—with personal versus public/ shared transport—is likely to shape the future demand for passenger vehicles, according to Tata Motors chairman N. Chandrasekaran.

The turnaround journey of the company's domestic business has also been disrupted in 2019-20, as demand deteriorated sharply on the back of an abruptly slowing economy coupled with the spread of Covid-19.

Addressing shareholders at the company's annual report for 2019-20, Chandrasekaran said the global auto industry has grappled with multiple

issues during the year.

"On one hand, we saw greater clarity emerge on Brexit; yet on the other hand, mounting trade tensions, muted global growth and enhanced regulatory norms have fundamentally changed the contours of the business environment in which we operate. Next came the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the final quarter of the year, which has ushered in a new reality for industries across the world," he said.

Chandrasekaran further said, "As we look ahead over the next two years, we anticipate a tremendous deal of transformation stemming from Covid-19.

Consumer behaviour will change in numerous ways, from demanding more integrated digital experiences to



N. Chandrasekaran

prioritising health and safety features across purchasing decisions. The move to 'slow' travel and personal (versus public and/or shared) transport may shape future demand for passenger vehicles."

Greater scrutiny will be placed on building environmental sustainability and climate resilience into the very core of business models, he said adding the Tata Motor Group is "well placed to

meet the demand opportunities that will arise from these important and fundamental shifts".

Referring to the performance of Tata Motors Ltd (TML), he said over the past two financial years, TML focused on refreshing its portfolio, improving structural efficiencies and streamlining internal processes. In doing so, TML turned a corner and delivered improved market shares, profitability, and positive free cash flows.

"In FY19, we delivered positive net income of Rs 2,021 crore, after making losses for five years. In both FY18 and FY19, TML produced positive free cash flows, following five years in negative territory." However, in FY20, this turnaround journey has been interrupted." —PTI

BAJAJ AUTO SALES DROP 33%

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 3

The pandemic pulled down Bajaj Auto's total sales in July by 33 per cent on a year-on-year basis. The auto major's total sales during the month fell to 2,55,832 units from 3,81,530 units sold during the same month last year. Domestic sales of the Pune-based company in July this year were at 1,58,976 units as against 2,05,470 units, down 23 per cent, Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing.

SHORT TAKES

Not yet in Lanka
League: Irfan

New Delhi: Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan on Monday said he hasn't confirmed his availability in any franchise-based T20 league at this stage, refuting reports that he could participate in the inaugural Lanka Premier League (LPL) starting August 28. A report in ESPNcricinfo had stated that "Pathan is among 70 foreign players to have shown interest in playing the Lanka Premier League (LPL)" and his name will be "put in a player draft unless one of the five franchises choose him to be a marquee player." However, the 35-year-old who announced his retirement in January this year, said he is not available at the moment. "I wish to play T20 Leagues around the world in future, but at this stage I haven't confirmed my availability in any Leagues," Pathan wrote on his twitter handle. Pathan has played for Chennai Super Kings, Delhi Daredevils, Kings XI Punjab, Rising Pune Supergiants and Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL. — PTI

Payment issues,
says players body

New Delhi: Many players have been dealing with the issue of late payment or non-payment of salaries in a host of domestic T20 leagues across the world, states the latest annual players' report.

The Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA) found that over a third of all players have suffered in recent years. The Men's Global Employment Report 2020, put together by FICA, found that 34 per cent of all players had experienced payment issues. Global T20 Canada, Bangladesh Premier League, Abu Dhabi T10, Qatar T10, Euro T20 Slam and Masters Champions League are the six league identified as having problems in clearing the players' dues. While the BPL is the only established Full Member-run league in the list, others such as the GLT20 Canada, the Abu Dhabi T10 and the Euro T20 Slam have attracted well-known players from across the world. — PTI

Cool Keshavan
is luge coach

New Delhi: Shiva Keshavan, the first Indian representative to compete in the luge event at the Winter Olympics, has been appointed chief coach as well as the High Performance Director of the national team by the Luge Federation of India. In a letter addressed to the Arjuna awardee, the federation informed Keshavan of its decision to appoint him for the twin role while acknowledging his achievements representing India in the past 22 years. "The federation considered your performance and achievements and noted with appreciation that you have represented India for 22 years and have participated in 6 Olympic Games," federation president Deepa Mehta wrote. The 36-year-old has also been handed the responsibility of talent scouting, infrastructure planning. Keshavan represented India in six Winter Olympics from 1998 to 2018. He quit after the 2018 edition of the Games. — PTI

NIS STARTS
A COURSE IN
NUTRITION

New Delhi: The Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports (NSNIS) Patiala and CSS-SRIHER, Chennai, on Monday launched six-month online courses in sports physiotherapy and sports nutrition aimed at grassroot-level development in the country. It was a part of an MOU signed between the two institutes to launch these certificate courses in sports science which will give an opportunity to young qualified professionals to further specialise in their area of expertise. In the first leg, sports physiotherapy and sports nutrition courses have been launched online with admission to the courses starting on Monday. Sports Authority of India also plans to introduce courses in physiology, sports biomechanics, strength and conditioning, sports psychology. — PTI

AGE OLD PROBLEM
BCCI moves in to weed out overage players

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The BCCI on Monday said it will grant amnesty to registered players who voluntarily declare any age fraud but those found to be in breach of the unusual scheme could be slapped with a two-year suspension.

The measures will be applicable to all cricketers participating in the board's age-group tournaments from the 2020-21 season onwards.

"Under this scheme, players who voluntarily declare that they have manipulated their date of birth by submitting fake/tampered documents in the past will not be suspended and allowed to participate in the appropriate age group level if they disclose their actual date of birth (DOB)," the BCCI said in a release.

"Players have to submit a signed letter/email along with supporting documents to BCCI Age Verification Dept. revealing their actual DOB before 15th September 2020."

The apex body also made it clear that if the players don't accept it now and are later found to be guilty of age fraud then they will be heavily sanctioned.

"However, if registered players do not disclose the facts and are found to have submitted fake/tampered DOB proof documents by BCCI, then they will be banned for 2 years, and after completion of 2-year suspension, they will not be allowed to participate in age group tournaments of BCCI, as well as, age group tournaments organised by the State Units."

The BCCI also said that "all cricketers committing Domicile fraud, including senior men & women, will be banned for 2 years" and "voluntary disclosure scheme does not apply for cricketers who have committed domicile fraud."

Among other measures, the governing body said for the under-16 age group tournament "only players who are between 14-16 years old will be permitted to register." — PTI



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (right) with NCA chief Rahul Dravid in this file photo.

Board draws guidelines to
resume cricket training

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The BCCI is forming a Covid-19 task force and it will include, among others, former captain and National Cricket Academy chief Rahul Dravid, the apex body said in its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to State associations.

Players will have to sign a consent form before resuming training at their respective centres as per the standard operating procedure, which bars anyone above 60 years of age and individuals with underlying medical conditions from being part of the camp.

For resumption of training at the NCA in Bengaluru, the Covid task force will include Dravid, a medical officer, a hygiene officer and BCCI AGM, Cricket Operations.

The 2019-2020 domestic season ended in March but the upcoming season, which usually starts in August, is set to be cur-

tailed due to the health crisis. "The health and safety of players, staff and stakeholders will be the sole responsibility of respective State Cricket Associations," read the BCCI guidelines on resumption of cricket. Support staff, officials and ground staff over 60 years of age and with individuals with underlying medical conditions are barred from attending

training camps until "suitable guidelines are issued by the Government".

Before the commencement of the camp, the medical team should acquire travel and medical history (past 2 weeks) of all players and staff through an online questionnaire. Any player and staff suspected to have Covid-19-like symptoms should undergo PCR tests.

"Two tests one day apart (Day 1 & Day 3) should be done to account for false negatives. If both the test results are negative, only then they should be included in the camp," read the SOP.

The players will have to wear a N95 mask (without a valved respirator) on the way to the stadium and will be encouraged to wear eyewear in public places as well as during training. Players are advised to take their own transportation on way to the stadium. — PTI

SJM SLAMS
BCCI FOR
CHINA LINK

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Shocked over the BCCI's decision to continue with the Chinese sponsors for the IPL, the RSS-affiliate Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) on Monday said people should consider boycotting the T-20 cricket league.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Indian Premier League (IPL) Governing Council have shown utter disrespect to the Indian soldiers killed by Chinese troops with its decision to hold the cricket league with its Chinese sponsors," SJM's co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan said in a statement.

"At a time when the country is striving hard to make our economy free from Chinese dominance in the markets, the government is making all efforts to keep China out of our markets, this act of the IPL Governing Council is an aberration," Mahajan said.

VIVO, a Chinese mobile phone manufacturer, is the title sponsor of the IPL and has paid over ₹2,000 crore to the BCCI for a five-year deal.

BCCI invites bids for kit sponsor

Meanwhile, the BCCI on Monday invited bids for the team's kit sponsor and official merchandising partner rights through a tender process to replace Nike, whose contract is set to expire next month. The sports apparel giant had a four-year deal for ₹370 crore with a royalty of ₹30 crore.

Under the Invitation to Tender (ITT), the winning bidder will be granted the right to be the kit sponsor and/or the official merchandising partner and various other associated rights. — PTI

Indian shuttlers
in cozy groups

New Delhi, Aug. 3: India have been handed relatively easy draws in the twice rescheduled Thomas and Uber Cup Finals slated to be held from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark.

The Indian men's team has been placed in Group 'C' alongside 2016 champions Denmark, Germany and Algeria, while the women's side has been clubbed with 14-time winners China, France and Germany in Group 'D' in the draw which was staged at the Badminton World Federation (BWF) headquarters in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

Both the men's and women's team are seeded fifth in the tournament, according to the BWF release.

Indonesia, 13-time former champions, and six-time former winner Japan will headline as the top seeds for the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup respectively.

The prestigious event was originally scheduled to be held from May 16-24 but was postponed to August 15-23 before finally rescheduling it in October due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

No tournament has been possible since BWF had

shut down their World Tour and other sanctioned tournaments following the completion of the All-England in March due to the global health crisis.

In Thomas and Uber Cup Final, the top two teams in each group at the end of the group stage will make it to the knock-out round.

The Indian women's team had lost to champion China in the semifinal stage in the 2016 edition of Uber Cup. They also reached the semifinal in the 2014 New Delhi edition.

— PTI

THOMAS CUP (men)
Group A: Indonesia, Malaysia, Holland and England.

Group B: China, Taiwan, Australia and France.

Group C: Denmark, India, Germany and Algeria.

Group D: Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Canada.

UBER CUP (women)

Group A: Japan, Taiwan, Egypt and Spain.

Group B: Korea, Indonesia, Australia and Malaysia.

Group C: Thailand, Denmark, Scotland and Canada.

Group D: China, India, France and Germany.

FAN FRAME



Aditya Bidarkar (centre) had the opportunity to meet South African cricket legend Jonty Rhodes (right) and Ryan Maron in Bengaluru in November last year.

RUSSELL, JAMES BOOST
ROCKETS PAST BUCKS

Miami, Aug. 3: Russell Westbrook scored 31 points and James Harden added 24 Sunday to rally the Houston Rockets over NBA overall leader Milwaukee 120-116 despite a big night for Giannis Antetokounmpo. The Bucks led 112-104 after Khris Middleton's three-pointer with 3:14 to play, but Houston closed the game with a 16-4 run.

The Rockets went 21-of-61 from three-point range, matching an NBA record for the most three-point attempts by a club in a non-overtime game, with Daniel House hitting four and Harden among five other players who landed three from outside the arc. The Rockets also rallied from seven points down in the final minute to defeat Dallas on Friday.

Westbrook, on a career-best run of 36 consecutive games with 20 or more points, hit 10-of-21 from the floor, 1-of-3 from beyond the arc, and 10-of-12 free throws. Harden had six steals, seven rebounds and seven assists.

Greek big man Antetokounmpo led the Bucks with 36 points, 18 rebounds and eight assists. Middleton had 27 points and 12 rebounds and Brook Lopez added 23 points and 12 rebounds. — AFP

Eye on Fifa Cup,
talent hunt is on

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday said the government is riding on "mainstay" football to make India a sporting powerhouse and announced the formation of five zonal committees to hunt talent across the country.

Rijiju said the talent hunt initiative, to be funded by the Sports Authority of India under the Khelo India Programme in partnership with the All India Football Federation, will be the "most aggressive exercise" ever done. The committees will be formed in the next few months.

"We will form five talent scouting committees in the next few months, one for each zone — north, south, east, west and northeast — under Khelo India Programme of SAI in partnership with AIFF," Rijiju said during a virtual programme organised by Football Delh to mark the 36th birthday of India captain Sunil Chhetri.

"We cannot go with the usual approach, we have to go deeper in a professional way. It will be the most aggressive exercise we had ever done. We have to find out talented children below 12 years from every nook and corner of the country," he added. — PTI

GAMES IN GOA
LEAGUE UNDER
FIX SCANNER

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The Asian Football Confederation has red-flagged six matches of last year's Goa Professional League for possible "match manipulation" but the state association on Monday said there was not enough evidence.

The AFC had written to the integrity officer of AIFF, Javed Siraj, in March informing about "suspicious betting patterns indicative of match manipulation" in six matches held between October 16 and November 19 last year.

Goa Football Association secretary Jovito Lopes said his organisation had conducted an investigation but said match-fixing could not be proved due to a lack of evidence.

The matches involved local teams Calangute Association, Panjim Footballers, Guardian Angel Sports Club, FC Goa II and former I-League sides Dempo, Salgaocar and Sporting Clube. — PTI



England fast bowlers Chris Woakes (left) and Stuart Broad celebrate a wicket on the final day of the third Test against West Indies at Old Trafford in Manchester in this file photo. — AFP

Pace problem for England

London, Aug. 3: England have the luxury of six specialist pacemen in their 14-man squad for this week's first Test against Pakistan at Old Trafford — a welcome "headache" for captain Joe Root.

The skipper can call on veteran new-ball partners James Anderson and Stuart Broad, the express pace of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood and the impressive Sam Curran and Chris Woakes.

The hosts rotated their

quicks during last month's 2-1 series win over the West Indies which, together with the upcoming campaign against Pakistan, forms a programme of six Tests in seven weeks.

That is a particularly tough schedule for fast bowlers in a season cut short by the Coronavirus pandemic.

England's management has argued no paceman can play all six Tests, with the restrictions imposed by maintaining a bio-secure "bubble"

requiring several options to be immediately at hand.

But it is an issue they will need to handle with care given they have now lost the opener in eight of their past 10 multi-match Test series, which for all their resilience could prove costly if it happens against Pakistan.

Broad revealed on Sunday he felt "so low" after being omitted from the West Indies opener that he considered retiring. — AFP

Misbah wants Pak to get off blocks early

London, Aug. 3: Pakistan coach Misbah-ul-Haq has urged his side to get off to a flying start in their Test series with England, saying they must be at their best "right from the word 'go'".

England are notoriously sluggish starters and have lost the opener in eight of their past 10 Test series,

including a recent 2-1 home success against the West Indies that marked international cricket's return from the coronavirus lockdown.

Misbah, suggesting England would have the advantage of momentum, told reporters on Monday: "We should be ready for an England team that

have already had three matches of experience and they won their last two Test matches. We have to really come in this Test series right from the word 'go' at our best if we want to win a Test series or a Test match here.

"We are aware that England have a slight advantage but if we are

alert and go 100 percent in the first Test match, that is the only way we can beat England, otherwise we will find ourselves in difficulty."

Misbah believes his side also have the batsmen to give their bowlers enough runs to defend. "It's always tough with the Duke ball in England

where the ball moves around off the seam and also in the air," Misbah said, adding, "but this is where you can really fight and our batting looked in great shape in the last two series. We played in Pakistan but even in Australia we managed to score good." — AFP