

IN BRIEF

AAP running from responsibility: BJP

New Delhi: The Delhi BJP on Sunday attacked health minister Satyendar Jain for claiming that patients from outside the city are the reason for the rise in Covid cases here, and alleged that the AAP government was running away from its responsibility. Mr Jain has attributed the recent rise in cases to "patients from outside getting tested here". "I fail to understand whether it is Delhi chief minister or his ministers who consider outsiders and migrants in the city as a problem?" Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta questioned. "Earlier also, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that people from Bihar come to Delhi with a ₹500 ticket and get back after availing treatment worth ₹5 lakh. Also, the AAP had denied treatment for people from other states, while the Centre had ensured treatment for them," Mr Gupta claimed. — *PTI*

2 bodies recovered from Ganga Canal

Ghaziabad: A NDRF team on Sunday recovered the bodies of two men from the Ganga Canal near here, two days after their vehicle fell into it and they drowned, police said. They have been identified as Ashish Dhyani and Vinod Kumar, Superintendent of Police (Rural) Neeraj Kumar Jadaun said. On Friday, the men, along with their friends Paramvir and Sanjeev, were on their way to the Defence Research and Development Organisation in Chandigarh for some contract work when their vehicle fell into the canal in Hapur district. Paramvir, who was driving the car, managed to swim across the canal with the help of a police sub-inspector, while the others went missing. During a rescue operation the same night, the NDRF had pulled out the car with the help of a machine. The force searched for the three men on Saturday, but failed to trace them, the SSP said.

27-yr-old involved in uprooting ATMs held

New Delhi: A 27-year-old man allegedly involved in uprooting ATMs in Delhi and the National Capital Region was arrested on Sunday after a brief exchange of fire in south Nangaldewat village, police said. The accused, identified as Arshad Khan, a resident of Rajasthan's Alwar district, was part of an interstate gang of robbers who targeted ATM booths across the NCR, they added. "We received specific information that the suspect would be coming in the area in the evening to commit a similar crime. So our team laid a trap and nabbed him after he was spotted coming in a car," DCP (Special Cell) P S Kushwah said. On being cornered, Khan fired four shots at the personnel of the Special Cell of the Delhi Police who had gone to nab him, he said, adding that as the police team fired in self defence, one of the bullets hit the accused in his left leg and he was overpowered.

'Monsoon can have serious health issues'

New Delhi: With the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, doctors at Motherhood Hospital have warned parents against a host of health related issues in kids that come along in this season. Heavy rainfall leads to a series of problems in the cities — be it water logging or floods. If parents don't pay attention to their child's health then the kid can become susceptible to diseases like viral fever, pneumonia, dengue, malaria, typhoid, and hepatitis A. "Some of the most common diseases which surface strongly during monsoon are vector borne. Diseases like dengue, chikungunya, and malaria spike during this season because a moist environment is the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. "It is important to identify the various breeding spots in the city and treat them timely to prevent a possible outbreak of diseases at a time when we are already reeling under the rising cases of coronavirus infection," said Dr Ramani Ranjan, a consultant paediatrician and neonatologist at Motherhood Hospital in Noida.

Delhi's edu board likely to be operational by 2021

Will be optional for private and govt schools, says Sisodia

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Delhi's own school education board is expected to be operational by next year, however, unlike other states it will not be imposed on government schools, according to deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia.

Giving details of plans for setting up the state education board, Sisodia said the board will be in sync with the reforms proposed in the new National Education Policy (NEP) and the focus will be on continuous evaluation and not year-end exams.

"We have recently set up two committees for working on the proposed board as well as curriculum reforms. An ideal situation would be that we make it operational by next year. Initially, around 40 schools will be affiliated to the board, which could be either government or private," Mr Sisodia said.

"What happens in other state boards is that the private schools are free to make their choice whether they want to opt

Civic bodies to introduce NEP from current academic session: Adesh

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Days after the Union government announced the new education policy (NEP), the BJP ruled municipal corporations plan to introduce it from the current academic session. Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta told this newspaper that work has been started to adopt the new curriculum based on the NEP.

Last week, Mr Gupta held a discussion with the top leadership of BJP ruled three municipal corporations and directed them to start working on implementing the new policy.

"The new education policy will be implemented in all municipal schools in the current academic session and the consultation process has started. The new policy talks on overall development and empha-

sises on learning and skill development," added Mr Gupta. The party also decided to rope in the academia for suggestions to design the new curriculum.

"With the help of well-known academicians, a new curriculum will be drafted soon for implementation," said Delhi BJP.

About 10 lakh students study in over 1,500 schools run by the three municipal corporations. The civic bodies impart primary education as mandated by the statute. BJP national vice president Shyam Jaju said that an awareness campaign and consultation process for the new education policy has been going on for the last two months.

According to Mr Jaju, the party had held several rounds of consultation via webinar and online meetings in the last two months.

for CBSE, ICSE or state board, while government schools follow the state board. We will have no

imposition. It will be optional for both government and private schools. We want to make the

board so enriching and useful, that there is demand for it," he added.

The Delhi government had last month constituted two committees to prepare the scheme and framework for the formation of the state education Board and curriculum reforms.

The AAP dispensation had announced the plan to set up a separate board of education for the national capital in its annual budget in March.

Mr Sisodia, who is also Delhi's Education Minister, said his government is studying the recently announced new education policy in detail.

"We are studying the policy in detail. We have already been working on some of the reforms proposed in it. There are a few anomalies but there are a few good things too. I have told the two committees that our board will be in sync with the National Education Policy because as a nation we are together but the focus will not be on evaluating students once a year and encouraging rote learning in process," he said.



Youngsters ride bicycles at Raisina Hill during unlock 3.0 in New Delhi on Sunday. — *PTI*

Several highrises without STPs, penalty soon: Noida Authority

Noida, Aug 9: Several high-rise societies in Noida lack sewage treatment plants, while those installed in some societies are not working in accordance with the guidelines of the National Green Tribunal, officials said on Sunday.

Most of these 33 societies are located in Sector 7x area (referring to societies in sectors 74 to 79) and Sector 137 of the city, where the Noida Authority had carried out inspection on August 2 and 8, they said.

The inspection was done to check the enforcement of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) order in connection with water pollution. We will be soon

penalising builders and the association of apartments (AOAs) concerned for flouting rules, officials said.

"During the inspection, it was found that maximum societies have not even constructed sewage treatment plants (STPs).

Skytech Matrot, Amrapali Silicon in Sector 76, Assotech Windsor Court, Sikka Karmic and Aditya Urban Casa in Sector 78 are major among them," the Authority said in a statement.

"Some societies that have STPs were found to be functional but not in accordance with the NGT guidelines. Major among such societies are

Supertech Capetown, Antriksh Golfview - II, Sunshine Heights, AIMS Max Gardenia, GH - 08 in Sector 75, Max Valis, Paras Tierra Sector 137, Blossom County, Ajnara Home in Sector 137, and Antriksh Forrest," it stated.

The Authority said a report is being presented to the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board and the NGT for action against the builders and AOAs concerned under the Water Conservation Act, 1976.

"The penalty amount against offenders will be calculated and notices sent to them. Such inspections would continue in the future also," it added. — *PTI*

ELECTRIC VEHICLE POLICY

EV makers want exclusion of lithium scooters

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Electric vehicle manufacturers have hailed the new electric vehicle policy of the Delhi government and hope it will look into exclusion of e-scooters with speed of upto 25 Kms per hour from the incentive scheme.

As per the policy, only electric two wheelers with minimum top speed of 40 Km per hour will be eligible for incentives.

Sohinder Gill, director general of the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV), said the electric vehicle (EV) policy of the Delhi government extensively covers key measures required by the industry to move in the right direction.

"However a small miss-

ing point in the policy is that it does not support the lithium battery e-scooters with speeds upto 25km per hour that are particularly popular with Delhiites because of their attractive prices and extremely low running costs," Mr Gill said.

With a bit of support of the Delhi government the adoption of such e-scooters would have grown manifold, he said hoping the government would



Asha hold placards and shout slogans during a protest to draw attention to their plight of underpayment and lack of protection from Covid in New Delhi on Sunday. — *AFP*

Covid situation in city under control: Kejriwal

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Delhi recorded 1,300 fresh cases of the novel coronavirus on Sunday taking the infection tally to over 1.45 lakh, while the death toll mounted to 4,111. As many as 1,30,587 patients have recovered, migrated or been discharged while the number of active cases stood at 10,729. Thirteen people died of Covid in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 4,111. While Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said the Covid situation in Delhi is under control and the recovery rate is improving.

Speaking at the inauguration of a hospital in Ambedkar Nagar, he said in case the situation takes a turn for the worse, the government is fully prepared to deal with it.

"The Covid situation is under control. All parameters are good, the recovery rate is improving, positivity ratio and deaths have reduced," Mr Kejriwal said.

He said the inauguration of the hospital is a step towards strengthening the health infrastructure in the city. "We have gradually increased the number of Covid beds," he added.

"The hospital was conceived in 2013. It is a 600-bed hospital. We are inaugurating the first 200 beds which will be used for the treatment of Covid patients," he said at the

Jain blames outsiders for surge in coronavirus cases

New Delhi, Aug. 9: Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday attributed the recent rise in Covid cases in the national capital to "patients from outside getting tested here".

On Saturday, 1,404 new Covid-19 cases and 16 deaths were reported in Delhi, taking the tally of cases to 1,44,127.

While 1,130 people recovered from the infection on Saturday, there are 10,668 active cases. The death toll rose to 4,098, Jain told reporters.

The number of active cases on Saturday rose to 10,667, from 10,409 the previous day, according to the Delhi government's health bulletin.

"There have been

launch event.

"I pray to God that these 200 beds are not needed in the future... we never get to a situation where we have to use these beds. But even if the situation becomes bad again, we are fully prepared to deal with it," he said.

CM Kejriwal said the rest of the beds and ICUs will become operational within a month-and-a-half. "This hospital was scheduled to begin operations after a few months, but it has been inaugurat-

reports that coronavirus cases are increasing in the national capital. Many patients from outside Delhi are getting tested here, hence the rise in the number of cases. There is otherwise a decline in cases here," Mr Jain told reporters.

The health minister also said hospital admissions have also increased due to the patients coming from outside Delhi.

In June, Delhi lieutenant governor Anil Bajjal had overruled the AAP government's decision to reserve hospital beds in city-run and private hospitals only for residents of the national capital afflicted with the coronavirus infection. — *PTI*

350 cops to participate in guard of honour quarantined

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Delhi police has quarantined over 350 police personnel, who will be part of the guard of honour at Red Fort on Independence Day, as a precautionary measure.

According to a senior police official, these personnel of the force of all ranks — from constable to deputy commissioner of police — have been quarantined at a newly built police colony in Delhi Cantonment.

Special commissioner of police (Armed

Police) Robin Hibu, who is in charge of the arrangements, said the 350 personnel are doing well and none of them have any Covid-19 symptoms.

"All personnel, who are currently in quarantine at the police colony here for over a week now, have been provided with all facilities and are strictly following social distancing norms. After their parade rehearsals, they immediately sanitise themselves. All precautions are being taken," said a senior police official.

More than 2,500 Delhi police personnel have been infected with Covid-19 so far.

Noida's Covid tally nears 6,000, total tally at 5,945

Noida, Aug. 9: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Sunday recorded 77 new Covid cases, pushing the district's tally to 5,945, official data showed. The number of active cases in the district stood at 929, with 85 more patients getting discharged since Saturday, according to the data released by the UP health department.

So far, 4,973 people have recovered from Covid in Gautam Buddha Nagar, the second highest in the state after Lucknow (6,531), it showed.

The district has recorded 43 deaths linked to coronavirus till now and the mortality rate among positive cases stands at 0.72 per cent, according to official statistics.

The recovery rate of patients improved slightly to 83.65 per cent from 83.29 per cent on Saturday.

Gautam Buddha Nagar stands 12th on the list of districts in the state in terms of active cases.

The maximum active cases are in Lucknow (6,082), followed by Kanpur Nagar (4,840), Varanasi (2,349), Allahabad (1,995), Bareilly (1,763), Gorakhpur (1,539), Jaunpur (1,186), Aligarh (1,247), Ghaziabad (1,035), Azamgarh (1,004) and Ballia (996), according to the data.

There are 47,890 active cases across Uttar Pradesh. So far, 72,650 patients have recovered across the state, the data showed. — *PTI*

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SHORT TAKES

Fake Naxals held for extortion bid

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha police on Sunday arrested three youth for allegedly trying to extort money from a farmer while impersonating Maoists in Jayapatna area in Kalahandi district.

Farmer Tulasiram Nayak from Pujhariguda village under Jayapatna police limits got a call a few days asking him to pay ₹10 lakh. The caller while identifying himself as a Maoist further told Tulasiram to fulfill the demand at the earliest, failing which he will face dire consequences. Following this, Tulasiram lodged a complaint at the Jayapatna police station. According to a plan laid out by the police, Tulasiram called up the person who was demanding ₹10 lakh and convinced him to take ₹70,000 initially.

UP bus driver dies in road accident

Noida: The driver of a state-run bus was killed on Sunday after the vehicle collided with a truck on a highway in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, the police said. The roadways bus had around 25 passengers on board when the incident took place around 4 am in the Badalpur police station area, they said. "The bus had started from Farrukhabad and was bound for Delhi but met with an accident with a truck. The bus driver suffered severe injuries while some passengers had minor injuries," an official said. "Bus driver Omkar Singh, a native of Farrukhabad, was taken to a nearby hospital but he succumbed to injuries," the policeman said. — PTI

UPSC topper Malik meets Haryana CM

Chandigarh: UPSC civil services exam topper Pradeep Singh Malik on Sunday met Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, who congratulated him and said that his achievement would inspire other youth of the country. Mr Malik along with his father Sukhbir Singh met Khattar in New Delhi, a state government release said. The UPSC topper, who hails from Sonipat in Haryana, met the chief minister to seek his blessings, it said. Mr Khattar told Mr Malik that his achievement would inspire other youths of the state and the country, and presented him with a shawl. He also honoured Sukhbir Singh and said that the credit for Mr Malik's success also goes to his father, the release said. — PTI

500 kg of poppy seized in Haryana

Chandigarh: The Haryana police on Sunday seized 500 kg of poppy husk and nearly 65 kg of "ganja" (cannabis) from Jind and Palwal districts respectively and arrested four persons under the NDPS Act. While the poppy husk consignment was seized from near a canal between Ujhana and Neppewala villages in Jind districts, the ganja was seized in two different raids in Palwal district. The poppy husk consignment was seized by a team of crime investigating agency of Haryana Police on a tip-off that a huge consignment of some narcotic has been kept near the canal for being sent to Punjab. On receiving the information, the police team rushed to the spot and seized the poppy husk consignment and arrested a man, identified as Mohit, a Haryana police spokesperson said. Initial investigations revealed that the accused had kept the drug consignment near village Ujhana, where in-laws of his sister reside. — PTI

J&K: 3 arrested for killing woman

Jammu: Three people have been arrested for killing a 70-year-old woman in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, the police said on Sunday. Vakeelan Devi, a resident of Rasli-Thakrai village, was found dead near Rasli Gaderan in the Basantgarh area on August 2, a police official said. During the course of investigation, police detained some suspected persons for questioning and later, three of them — Des Raj, Kaka Ram and Sanjay Kumar — confessed that they had committed the crime, the official said. He said the inquest proceeding was converted into a criminal case. — PTI

Sushant case: ED grills Rhea brother for 18 hrs

'Responses by brother-sister duo largely incomplete'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG 9

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) questioned Showik Chakraborty, brother of actor Rhea Chakraborty, for about 18 hours and has summoned the actress again for questioning on Monday in connection with the money laundering case linked to the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. Following questioning of Rhea on Friday, the agency is probing the trail of ₹2.5 crore worth fixed deposit of the late actor, to ascertain if it was diverted to Chakraborty. The interrogation has hinted towards the possibility of the money having been allegedly siphoned off with the help of her chartered accountant (CA).

The ED officials said the responses given by the brother sister duo was largely incomplete that gave rise to many questions. The team questioning them has hence sought for another round of questioning and Chakraborty has again been summoned on Monday. Her father has also been called to record his statement. The officials said they may grill Showik again for questioning citing his inability to answer several basic

Raut: Politicisation of case a conspiracy against Maha

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, AUG. 9

Shiv Sena spokesperson and executive editor of the party mouthpiece *Saamana* Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed "pressure tactics" were being used in the case of actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death and the issue was being politicised as part of a conspiracy against Maharashtra. It is wrong to see the unfortunate suicide of the actor from a political angle, the leader penned in his weekly column "Rokhthok" in the

mouthpiece.

"If one wants to indulge in politicisation and pressure tactics, anything can happen in our country. It looks like the script of Sushant's case was already written. Whatever has happened behind the curtains is a conspiracy against Maharashtra," Mr Raut said.

The Centre's "interference" in Rajput's case was an insult of the Mumbai Police, he claimed, adding the CBI may be a Central agency, but it "wasn't independent and impartial".

questions pertaining to expenditure.

"The probe is underway and Chakraborty will be questioned again. Financial details are being scrutinized," said ED officials.

The agency has already questioned Chakraborty's CA Ritesh Shah in connection with the incident and are verifying the books of accounts to ascertain the money flow. The ED is investigating the alleged laundering of the money

to the tune of ₹15 cr that were allegedly swindled from Rajput's bank account as per the allegations of his father.

On Saturday Chakraborty told the ED that the 500 sqft residential property in Khar (east) was bought using her money and that she had not taken any monetary help from Rajput. The 34-year-old actor was found hanging from the ceiling in the bedroom of his Bandra apartment.



A view of flooded district hospital after monsoon rainfall in Jabalpur on Sunday.

— PTI

Removal of Shivaji statue in Belgaum triggers row

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 9

The removal of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue in Belgaum district in Karnataka has triggered an uproar in Maharashtra, with the Shiv Sena and NCP condemning the BJP-led Yediyurappa government for the incident. The saffron party however has alleged that local Congress MLA was responsible for the removal of the statue.

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said that the Maharashtra government should take opposition parties into confidence on this issue. All parties should come together to

protest against the incident under the leadership of BJP leader Devendra Fadnis. We are ready to protest in Belgaum, but are the opposition willing to do so, he asked.

"Few days back, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had mentioned the name of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj while performing the bhoomi puja of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. But his own party's government has removed Maharaj's statue in Karnataka," he added.

NCP state chief Jayant Patil too slammed the BJP saying its affection for Chhatrapati Shivaji is limited only to votes. Instead they always have hatred towards Maharaj, he said.

Taking cognisance of the incident, the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government has shot off a letter to Karnataka Chief Minister Yediyurappa, seeking reinstatement of the statue of the legendary Maratha warrior king. State minister Eknath Shinde, who is also the minister in-charge for coordination on Maharashtra-Karnataka issues, had said that the statue had been installed with the permission of the gram panchayat in Mangutti village, but the administration removed it deliberately.

Shiv Sena workers also held protests across the state over the issue in Belgaum.



Participants perform to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples at Baganpara in Birbhum, West Bengal, on Sunday.

— PTI

10 killed in fire at Covid care centre

Amaravati, Aug. 9: As many as 10 patients died at a star hotel converted to a coronavirus treatment centre here on Sunday when panic-stricken inmates tried to flee a fire suspected to have been caused by a short circuit, the government said.

Director General of Disaster Response and Fire Services Department Md Ahsan Raza said one COVID-19 patient was charred to death while nine died of asphyxiation caused by the smoke.

Three women were among the 10 victims.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Thirty two people have been rescued by Andhra Pradesh Disaster Response and Fire Services Department.

A hotel staffer broke his back and was hospitalised after he jumped out a window on the first floor in a bid to save himself after the fire broke out.

A criminal case under Sections 304 (2) and 308 of Indian Penal Code has been registered against the managements of hotel Swarna Palace and

Ramesh Hospitals even as the state government constituted two committees to conduct a detailed probe into the exact cause of the fire and other lapses that led to the tragedy.

The state government said negligence on the part of the Ramesh Hospitals management in running the Covid Care Centre in the hotel since mid-July, was prima facie established.

"Swarna Palace is a major fire hazard. It did not even have proper exit points and that made the rescue operation very dif-

ficult and we had to use ladders to bring down the trapped people," Raza told PTI.

Chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced an ex gratia payment of ₹50 lakh each to the next of kin of the 10 victims.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Reddy over phone and enquired about the incident.

Reddy told Modi that a private hospital had taken the star hotel on lease to treat Covid-19 patients.

— PTI

11 members of Pak Hindu family found dead in Raj

Jodhpur, Aug. 9: Eleven members of a family of Pakistan Hindu migrants were found dead at a farm in Rajasthan's Jodhpur district on Sunday morning, the police said.

A member of the family, however, was found alive outside the hut they lived at Lodta village of the Dechu area, over 100 km away from Jodhpur city, an officer said.

"But he claimed to have no idea about the incident, which believed to have happened in the night," said superintendent of police (rural) Rahul Barhat.

"We are yet to ascertain the cause and means of death. They appeared to have committed suicide by consuming some chemical in the night," Mr Barhat said.

He said there was a smell of some chemical in the hut, suggesting they consumed something.

The family belonging to the Bhil community had come to India from Pakistan's Sindh province in 2015 on a long-term visa.

They had been living at the Lodta village farm, which they had hired for farming, for the past six months. There was neither any injury mark on any of the bodies nor any evidences of any foul play, the SP said. "But we have roped in a forensic team and a dog squad before arriving at any conclusion," he said.

Preliminary investigation indicated that there was some dispute in the family over some issue.

▶ **THE POLICE** said that there was a smell of some chemical in the hut. There was neither any injury mark on any of the bodies nor any evidences of any foul play.

"Once we interrogate the survivor, we would be in a position to find out what had led to this incident," he said.

According to a police officer, the victims lived under threat from the family of their daughter-in-law, the wife of Kewal Ram, the surviving member of the victim family.

She has been living with her family in Jodhpur for the past some time due to some dispute, said the police officer, citing this as a possible trigger for their suicide.

According to Kewal Ram (35), they had dinner between 9 pm and 10 pm on Saturday night and went to sleep.

"I went to guard our crop from animals and slept there," he said.

In the morning, when he came back, he found all his family members dead.

"I then called my nephew who rushed to the spot with some other persons and informed the police," said Kewal Ram, expressing his ignorance about the incident.

The bodies have been sent for autopsy in Jodhpur and a medical board has been constituted to find out the cause of their death.

— PTI



DMK leader Kanimozhi

'Was asked if I was Indian as I don't know Hindi'

CISF orders probe

Chennai/New Delhi, Aug. 9: DMK MP Kanimozhi on Sunday alleged that a CISF official asked her if "she was an Indian" as she could not speak Hindi, while the paramilitary force ordered an inquiry asserting that it is not its policy to insist upon any particular language.

The Dravidian party member of Parliament thanked the CISF for immediate response and assurance to take action.

"Today at the airport a CISF officer asked me if 'I am an Indian' when I asked her to speak to me in Tamil or English as I did not know Hindi," Ms Kanimozhi, who is also the DMK's women's wing secretary, said on her official Twitter account.

According to party sources, the incident occurred in Chennai when the MP was at the airport to board a Delhi flight in the afternoon.

She has reached the national capital and she will be there for a few more days and has official engagements.

"I would like to know from when being Indian is equal to knowing Hindi," she tweeted with the hashtag #hindiimposition.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) sought details from her soon after.

"Warm greetings from @CISFHQs. We sincerely acknowledge your unpleasant experience.

Kindly DM journey details; name of airport, location, date, and time of the incident for appropriate action in the matter," the CISF tweeted.

Soon, the CISF said it has "ordered an Enquiry into the matter. It is not the policy of CISF to insist upon any particular language".

"The MP replied saying 'Thank you for the immediate response and assurance to take action'."

Ms Kanimozhi is the member of Parliament from Thoothukkudi in Tamil Nadu.

— PTI

PMO's deadline for Naga pact

■ **Continued from Page 1**
an accord will be signed after the surrender of the inventory of weapons by the cadres, the sources said the Union home ministry, in consultation with the interlocutor, was also preparing a rehabilitation package for the Naga rebels.

Clarifying that the Covid-19 situation had delayed the peace process, the sources said the government had already rejected the demand for a separate flag and constitution for Nagaland, but the NSCN (I-M) was still insisting on discussing these issues. Saying these two contentious issues may be left for negotiations between the state and Central governments after the signing of the accord, the sources said a vested interest group was

working overtime to derail the peace process. "As Naga peace talks started in 1997, a vested interest group is already developed and active. They know they can't derail the peace process so they have been working hard to ensure that the status quo is maintained," the sources said, while rejecting media reports making claims such as a change of interlocutor to the NSCN (I-M) refusing to join the talks, etc.

About the talks being held in New Delhi instead of Kohima, the sources said the decision to hold the talks in New Delhi was taken by Mr Ravi given the health issues of 86-year-old NSCN (I-M) general secretary Th Muivah, who is now under treatment in New Delhi.

The security sources

said the interlocutor and NSCN (I-M) negotiators may have more than one or two rounds of meetings before finalisation of the modalities of the Naga pact for which the NSCN (I-M), the working committee of Naga National Political Groups and other stakeholders will be the signatories.

It is significant that the Naga insurgency has been one of India's oldest conflicts. Right from Independence, the Naga groups have asserted their distinct identity and sought to break away from the Indian Union. Led by Angami Zipo Phizo, the movement for secession took a violent turn in the 1950s.

When some elements signed a peace accord with the government, a more radical outfit — the

Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) — was set up under the leadership of T. Muivah, Isak Swu and S.S. Khaplang. The group later split.

In 1997, New Delhi began engaging closely with the NSCN, led by Isak and Muivah (I-M). A ceasefire was declared. Multiple rounds of talks were held. Violence dipped — even though the insurgents maintained a parallel government in the state. And in August 2015, a framework agreement was signed that has not only managed to neutralise the Naga extremists but also shattered the backbone of the insurgency across the entire Northeast. A distinct evolution in the Naga position is visible, the security sources added.

THE ASIAN AGE

10 AUGUST 2020

Kozhikode highlights air safety imperative

It would be some time before we get to know what led to crashlanding of the Air India Express flight at Kozhikode airport on Friday, which claimed the life of 18 passengers including the pilot and the co-pilot. The Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has already initiated an investigation into the accident in which the aircraft, part of the Vande Bharat Mission, carrying 191 passengers including the crew skidded off the runway and ran into a ditch. Inclement weather and poor visibility coupled with human error have been cited as early reasons but the whole truth will come out only when the investigation is completed. It should also reveal if the systems were made to make amends for the errors that caused a similar accident in Mangaluru airport 10 years ago.

An aircraft is a magnificent engineering product which has evolved over a century and air travel is the safest mode of transport if we consider the number of people using it. This is basically because it is system-dependent, and recalibrates itself if something goes wrong anywhere in the system. It is imperative on the part of the regulators and the authorities to pick lessons from the Kozhikode incident and improve it further.

While awaiting the investigation report, we must comment on the grace, presence of mind, valour and selflessness, which were on display at Kozhikode immediately after the mishap

While awaiting the investigation report, we must comment on the grace, presence of mind, valour and selflessness, which were on display at Kozhikode immediately after the mishap. The local residents of the nearby Kondotty town in Malappuram district rushed to the accident site, launched the rescue operations in no time and, with the help of the rescue team from the airport, completed the job in about less than two hours. They evacuated all the passengers and rushed them to the nearby hospitals despite knowing the fact that they are operating in a Covid containment zone and that many of the passengers could have been infected with the coronavirus. The timely intervention has considerably reduced the casualty, according to doctors. The social media was awash with photographs of youngsters rushing to hospitals and queuing up to donate blood for people of whom they have not heard before.

That, however, should bring certain other disturbing facts to the attention of the government. The DGCA had banned the operation of wide-bodied aircraft under Code E from May 2015 after an inspection by the regulator flagged safety concerns and later in 2018 allowed the same. The aircraft that met with the accident does not belong to that class but experts have already called for a reassessment of the safety standards. The table-top airport, which is traditionally considered accident prone, needs expansion of its runway and the proposal to acquire about 100 acres for the project has been hanging fire for long. The Airports Authority of India, which runs the airport, and the government of Kerala must act in tandem, discuss it with the people and their representatives and complete the project after meeting their demands at the earliest so that all types of aircraft can have safe landing there.

Setback for Tamils, Muslims

The overwhelming victory of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) in the August 5 elections to the island nation's Parliament is a triumph of Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism and a consolidation of power by the Rajapaksa family. It just follows a popular political trend across the globe, wherein people with power and privilege hunger for more power and more privilege and hand over governments on a platter to politicians whom they believe would do that for them.

In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese perhaps chose the Rajapaksa family because they were enamored by the way prominent brothers, Mahinda and Gotabaya, ruthlessly quelled the LTTE in 2009. Or do the people believe that as a large family of rulers — another brother Basil and Nirmal, son of Mahinda, included — the Rajapaksas would do a better job in showing minorities their place?

Whatever it is, political trends that lead to the concentration of power in the hands of a family yanks democracy off the feet of nations. With such a brute majority in Parliament, the brothers are only likely to make sweeping constitutional changes to enhance the authority of the President and to continue ruling the country for a longer time. There are also indications that they would fashion the government on the lines of a military regime. Already Gotabaya, who came in as President in November, has appointed many serving and former military officers to key bureaucratic posts.

Since Gotabaya stormed into government by stoking ethnic Sinhala nationalism and SLPP has now romped home exemplifying such a majoritarian agenda, the ruling family would have no qualms about subjugating the minorities, Muslims and Tamils in particular. And when the minorities look up to the government for an assurance to realise their legitimate aspirations, the pardoning of military officers charged with war crimes during the end of the civil war in 2009 by the Rajapaksas can be least assuring.

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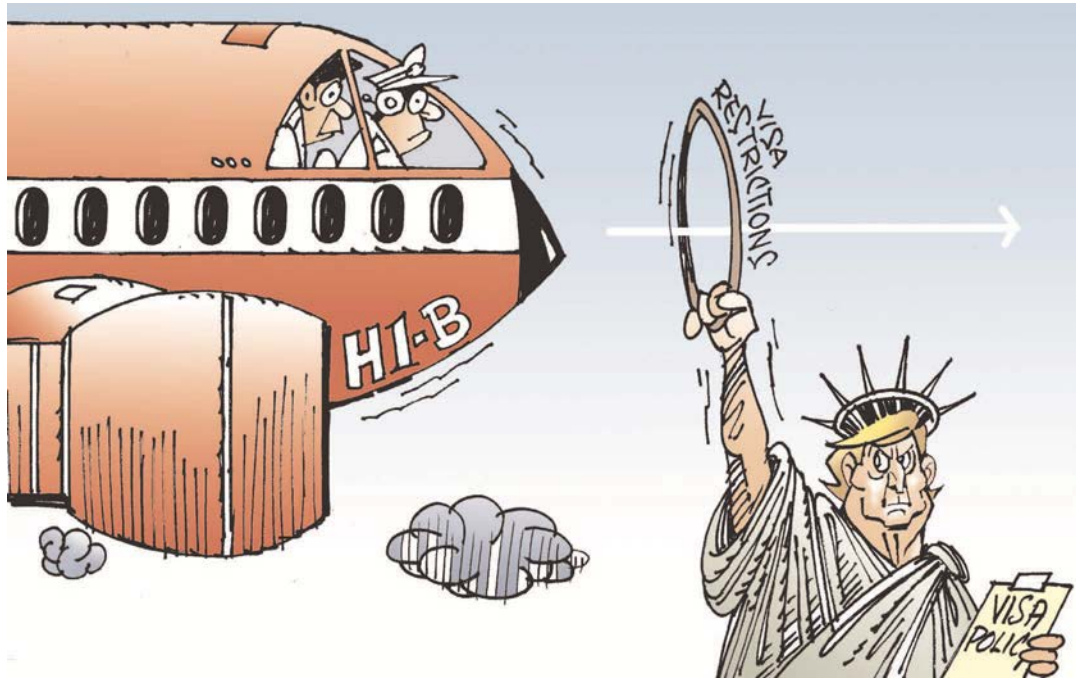
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Subhani



Will ‘Ram Rajya’ lead to a more tolerant India?



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Religious disputes, involving historical memory, and deeply divisive recent communal clashes, are not easy to resolve. But the manner in which India got over the Ram Mandir versus the Babri Masjid dispute must be a unique template for the rest of the world. When the talks failed, the matter was left to the Supreme Court. The judgment, which finally came in November 2019, was a remarkable compromise. It condemned the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 and asked for all those responsible for this act to be prosecuted. The Ram Mandir Trust was awarded the disputed land for the building of the new temple. Simultaneously, the country's highest court also ordered that five acres of land should be allocated elsewhere for the construction of a mosque. In a country where some 80 per cent of the population is Hindu, Shri Ram will finally get a temple in his name in his hometown and at his birthplace after a struggle for over a century through a hard fought legal title suit!

There were some commentators in the media who proclaimed that August 5, 2020, the date of the shilanyas of the temple, marked the death of secularism in India. Frankly, I consider all such remarks ludicrous. Does secularism banish religious faith and worship in India? On the contrary, the Constitution guarantees both as part of our fundamental rights. If so, why should the building of a temple, pursuant to the decision of the highest court of the land, be the

harbinger of such unredeemed doom? The Muslim litigants, who were party to the judicial dispute, may not have been entirely happy about the final verdict, but they accepted it. The same "secular" commentariat has no objection if a mosque or a church is built. In the past, they had always maintained that a solution to the prolonged dispute should be found either through mutual accommodation or through a judicial verdict. Why then this pained hand wringing? In fact, it is my firm conviction that it is precisely this kind of reflex reaction that does the greatest disservice to the cause of secularism in this country.

Perhaps the problem with the critics is the pageantry that marked the ceremony. But this was hardly a chance that the BJP-RSS was going to miss. A temple was becoming a reality after 136 years of struggle. Its consecration had to be done in accordance with Hindu rituals, and the entire ceremony was bound to be telecast live. There was criticism too about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in the function. But the precedent of our first President, Rajendra Prasad, inaugurating the

Perhaps the problem with the critics is the pageantry that marked the ceremony. But this was hardly a chance that the BJP-RSS was going to miss. A temple was becoming a reality after 136 years of struggle.

restored Somnath temple in Gujarat, in spite of the advice of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru against it, is telling. Secularism in our country is not about the absolute separation of the State and faith. It is about the fundamental freedom of following one's faith, while respecting all other faiths. Babu Rajendra Prasad was one of the most prominent followers of Mahatma Gandhi. He was uncompromisingly secular. But his evocative defence of his decision was simply this: "I believe in my religion and cannot cut myself away from it." In other words, just like Gandhiji, he did not see a contradiction between being a practising Hindu and the imperative to respect all religions. Indeed, if one reads the debates of the Constituent Assembly on the question of secularism, this — and not the European construct of a complete separation between the State and religion — was the interpretation accepted by the vast majority of its members.

This being said, what is important for the future is a closure to the kind of communal politics that we have recently seen. Devotees of Shri Ram would do well to remember that he was "maryada purushottam", the very epitome of right conduct, the role model of correct behaviour. Shri Ram would never sanction irrational anger, unwarranted violence, or unnecessary vengeance, particularly

against the weak or the innocent. In fact, in Tulsidas's *Ramcharit-manas*, there is a very significant line in the description of Ram Rajya: "sab nar karahin paraspar priti" (all human beings would harbour mutual affection for each other). It is Shri Ram again who — in Tulsidas' words — tells Bharat: "Par hith saras dharam nahin bhai, par peeda sam nahin athamai" (there is no greater virtue than the welfare of others, and no greater sin than injury to others)." This did not make him a passive god. He fought hard against injustice and defeated Ravan. But even in this form, he harboured no personal enmity, and remained the embodiment of the *saumya rasa*, eternally in equipoise and equilibrium, rational and restrained, and certainly not the kind of person who would approve taking the law into one's own hands.

Thus, when Prime Minister Modi in his speech at the ceremony said that Ram stands for the unity of India, it must be assumed that what he meant was that Ram, as the embodiment of mercy, compassion, justice and right conduct, must guide our actions in the future. BJP ideologue Ram Madhav quotes Swami Chinmayananda to say that Ayodhya itself stands for "ayuddha" (non-war or peace), which should augur peace forever among all communities. If the otherwise noble greeting of Jai Shri Ram has been weaponised by illiterate bigots, Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on Jai Siya Ram in Ayodhya on August 5 is a good sign. We must remain vigilant to ensure that such sentiments are, indeed, implemented in the future. Hinduism, and its intrinsic tolerance for all faiths, would want that to happen.

The writer, an author, is a former diplomat and in politics

LETTERS

DOCTORS DEPARTED

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a toll on the medical fraternity with 196 doctors, mostly general practitioners, perishing to the virus. Tamil Nadu led the list of fatalities with 43 deaths, followed by Maharashtra and Gujarat (23 each), Bihar (19), Karnataka (15), Andhra Pradesh and Delhi (12 each) in that order. Out of 196 doctors who died, 170 were above the age of 50. General practitioners made up 40 per cent of the deaths. The government would do well to recognise their extraordinary efforts by providing cash incentives.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

SUICIDAL CONGRESS

CONFUSION is worse than a wrong direction and at the moment the Congress seems to be mired in the first. It is at its wit's end figuring out how to posture as a pro-Hindu party. But it can't compete with the champion in the field. Will it now go around bandying about as badges of honour what it once took pains to hide, oppressing those who spoke up to the contrary, viz. its own moves that led to the fall of the mosque? Who will bite? So if the Congress projects itself aggressively as a party working for the poor and marginalised it will do itself a big favour. After all, now is the time to focus on jobs and food for all.

Syed Abdul Monim
Navi Mumbai

PARTY PREFERENCES

A SURVEY was conducted to gauge the popularity of the chief ministers of various states. Its findings revealed that the chief minister of the BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh is the most popular chief minister. However, six others who follow him in descending order are all from non-BJP-ruled states. Can this be interpreted to infer that the respondents prefer non-saffron parties at the state level, but want the BJP at the helm?

Arun Malankar
Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to R. Narayanan (Aug. 8). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup

Singhal nephew at pujaan venue; Covid reprieve for Gehlot govt?

While most invitees seated in close proximity to Prime Minister Narendra Modi around the havan kund at the ground breaking ceremony for the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya last week could be recognised, people were left guessing the identity of a couple who participated in the religious ceremony. It turned out the "unknown person" was Salil Singhal, a Udiapur-based businessman and the nephew of late Ashok Singhal, who was the international working president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for nearly two decades and a leading figure in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Salil Singhal's presence, along with his wife Madhu, led many to ask about denying the same courtesy to children of senior Bharatiya Janata Party leaders L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi who were also the architects of the movement which catapulted the saffron party to power. Party insiders pointed out it should be remembered that Ashok Singhal was the first leader from the Sangh to declare his support for Mr Modi's candidature as the BJP's prime

ministerial face. Speaking to the press at the 2013 Mahakumbh congregation in Allahabad, Mr Singhal had said that Mr Modi enjoyed the same popularity as Jawaharlal Nehru. In contrast to Mr Singhal, Mr Advani had resisted Mr Modi's move to the national political stage while Mr Joshi was also not known to be favourably disposed towards Mr Modi.

After Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra came out in support of the construction of a Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, party leaders went overboard in endorsing her stand. While most leaders put out similar tweets and statements, many party offices in the states and districts organised special prayer meetings while others even burst crackers to mark the occasion. However, this open display of religiosity at the party offices has not gone down well with a section of the Congress cadre. Questions are being raised in private conversations about organising pujas at party offices and whether similar celebrations will be held in the future to mark the festivals of other faiths. Most parti-

nently, it is being asked if any programme will be held when the construction of the mosque begins on the plot, which has been allotted to the Muslim community to compensate for giving up their claim on the disputed site of the Babri Masjid.

First home minister Amit Shah tested positive for coronavirus. Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan was next. Both are undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Gurugram. With the two leaders in quarantine, BJP insiders are wondering how their incarceration will affect the party's plans to topple the Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan. It is an acknowledged fact that it is Mr Shah who is planning and supervising the operation in the desert state while Mr Pradhan, who has now emerged as his chief lieutenant, executes the former party president's orders. So does this mean a reprieve for the Gehlot government? The more optimistic in the BJP express full faith in Mr Shah's capabilities while underlining that it is perhaps no coincidence that the two chief players are in a hospital which is in close proximity to

the resort where rebel Rajasthan Congress leaders are lodged.

Bihar's director general of police Gupteshwar Pandey, who has been extremely vocal about the ongoing investigation into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, sounds more like a politician than a high-ranking police officer. Like a politician he has been making all kinds of charges in public, acting as judge, jury and executioner. It must be recalled here that Mr Pandey nurses political ambitions and had even sought a ticket from the Bharatiya Janata Party but it never materialised. As inspector general of police, Muzaffarpur, Mr Pandey courted controversy when he was investigating an abduction case and was even examined by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with it. Mr Pandey took voluntary retirement from the service a few years ago but was subsequently reinstated by Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, a decision which raised a lot of eyebrows. This bit of background is important to understand why Mr Pandey is over-eager to please his

political bosses.

The recent decision of the textile ministry, headed by Smriti Irani, to disband the 70-year-old All-India Handloom Board, set up by Pupul Jayakar, and the All-India Handicrafts Board, has virtually gone unnoticed. The two panels, comprising craftspeople and other experts, served as a valuable forum for the government to get inputs from people working in the field. The official explanation for scrapping these boards is that it is prompted by the government's vision of "minimum government, maximum governance". However, representatives of the sector and craftspeople, are convinced the decision flows from a belief that Irani's ministry does not need to listen to voices from the ground. They feel it is a deliberate attempt to deny an opportunity to those outside the system to interact with the government. Ms Irani is particularly prickly about working with anyone who has been even remotely associated with the Congress regime.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

IN BRIEF

Hungary bus crash: 1 dead

Budapest: One man died and three people, including a young child, were seriously injured when a tourist bus crashed into a ditch on the side of a highway in Hungary, police and rescue officials said Sunday. The incident happened on the M5 highway in the city of Kiskunfelegyhaza, about 115 kilometres (71 miles) east of Budapest, the capital. Police said the vehicle was a Polish tourist bus. A spokesman for the National Rescue Service said a 35-year-old man died at the scene and 34 people were injured. Three people who suffered serious injuries, including a child about five years old. Two helicopters and 14 ambulances were taking the injured to hospitals. The bus was travelling toward Budapest and the crash happened around 6:30 a.m.

Czech apartment blaze kills 11

Prague: At least 11 people have been killed and 10 others injured in an apartment building fire in the northeastern Czech Republic, officials said Saturday, with some suggesting that the fire could be arson. Police said the fire hit the 11th floor of the 13-story building in the afternoon in the town of Bohumin. Firefighters spokesman Lukas Popp told local media that six people, three adults and three children, were killed in an 11th-floor apartment. The other five died after trying to escape from the building "in a panic" by jumping from the windows on the 12th floor, Interior Minister Jan Hamacek told Czech public radio. Hamacek and the head of the regional government, Ivo Vondrak, suggested the fire was likely intentionally set. Regional firefighter chief Vladimir Vleck said it was unusual how quickly the fire spread through the apartment.

30 perish in S. Korea floods

Seoul: Landslides and flooding triggered by days of heavy rain in South Korea have left at least 30 people dead and 12 missing, officials said Sunday, warning of more downpours. Torrential rain has wreaked havoc across the country since the beginning of the month, but nearly half of the deaths occurred in the past three days, according to the Ministry of the Interior and Safety. Since Friday more than 3,700 people have been displaced from their homes after flooding in the country's hardest-hit southern region. In all, nearly 6,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across the country this month, with about 4,600 of them staying at temporary shelters. Among the victims was a man in his 80s who was found dead after he was buried in a landslide with his tractor. A 61-year-old man and a 59-year-old woman were killed after their home was swallowed by a landslide. Authorities have issued landslide warnings for 24 regions.

3 DAYS OF RAIN KILLS 50 IN PAKISTAN

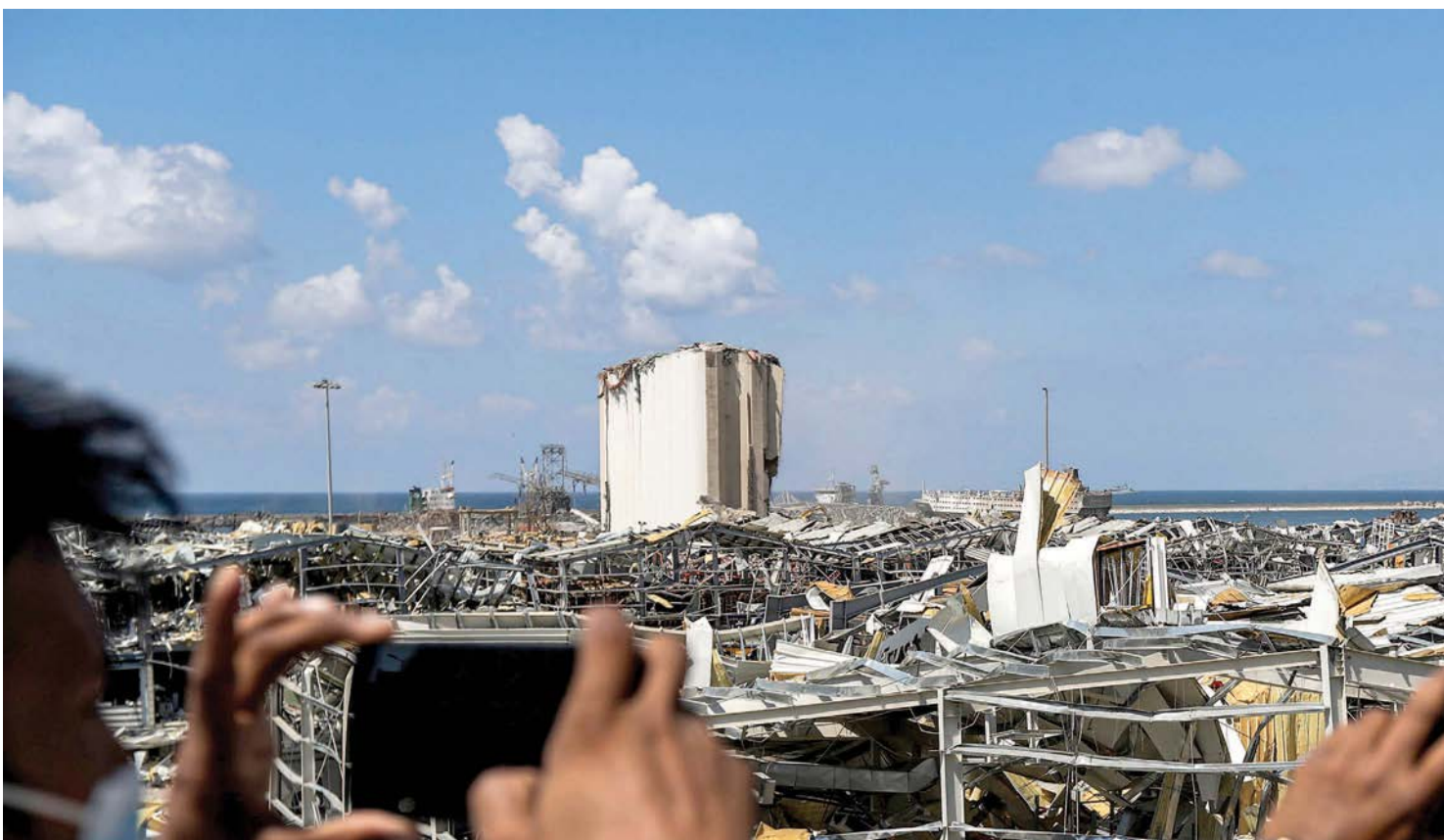
Karachi, Aug. 9: Three days of heavy monsoon rains triggering flash floods killed at least 50 people in various parts of Pakistan, as troops with boats rushed to a flood-affected district in the country's southern Sindh province Sunday to evacuate people to safer places.

Every year, many cities in Pakistan struggle to cope with the annual monsoon deluge, drawing criticism about poor planning. The monsoon season runs from July through September, during which swelling rivers cause damage to crops and infrastructure.

According to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority, 19 people were killed in rain-related incidents in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 12 in southern Sindh province, 8 in Punjab province and 10 in the country's scenic northern Gilgit Baltistan region in the past three days.

Rains also partially damaged about 100 homes and caused a breach in a main flooded canal, inundating villages in Sindh province. Troops used boats to rescue stranded people and move them to safer places.

It said a medical camp was also established and food was being provided to the rescued people. Heavy rains also lashed many districts in Baluchistan province, damaging homes. According to local media reports, at least eight people were killed in Baluchistan because of rains and flash flooding.



People take photos from atop a bridge overlooking the damaged port of Lebanon's capital Beirut and its grain silos on Sunday, in the aftermath of a colossal explosion that occurred Tuesday due to a huge pile of ammonium nitrate that had languished for years at a port warehouse. — AFP

Violence, chaos must not prevail in Lebanon: Macron

French Prez urges speedy global response after deadly Beirut port blast

Paris, Aug. 9: French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday said violence and chaos must not prevail in Lebanon as he opened a UN-backed aid conference for the country rocked by angry protests over negligence blamed for the deadly Beirut port blast.

"It is up to the authorities of the country to act so that the country does not sink, and to respond to the aspirations that the Lebanese people are expressing right now, legitimately, in the streets of Beirut," Macron said.

"We must all work together to ensure that neither violence nor chaos prevails," he added. "It is the future of Lebanon that is at stake." Macron on Sunday called for speedy international backing for disaster-struck Lebanon and urged its leaders to prevent "chaos" as he opened an emergency aid conference following Beirut's deadly port blast.

Macron hosted US President Donald Trump and other world leaders for the virtual conference to drum up aid for Lebanon, as the UN said some \$117 million will be needed over the next three months for the emergency response. "The objective today is to act quickly and effectively to coordinate our aid on the ground so that it goes as efficiently as possible to the Lebanese people," Macron told the conference also attended by

Lebanon information minister quits in first govt resignation

Beirut, Aug. 9: Lebanon's information minister Manal Abdel Samad on Sunday quit in the first government resignation since a deadly port blast killed more than 150 people and destroyed swathes of the capital. "After the enormous Beirut catastrophe, I announce my resignation from government," she said in a statement carried by local media, apologising to the Lebanese public for failing them.

The head of Lebanon's Maronite church meanwhile called on the entire government to step down over the August 4 explosion, a blast widely seen as shocking proof of the rot at the core of the state apparatus. Lebanese protest-

ers enraged by the blast vowed to rally again after a night of street clashes in which they stormed several ministries.

Maronite patriarch Beshara Rai joined the chorus of people pressing Prime

Minister Hassan Diab's cabinet to step down over a blast he said could be "described as a crime against humanity". "It is not enough for a lawmaker to resign here or a minister to resign there," Rai said in a Sunday sermon.

"It is necessary, out of sensitivity to the feelings of the Lebanese and the immense responsibility required, for the entire government to resign, because it is incapable of moving the country forward."

Rai echoed calls by Diab for early parliamentary polls — a long-standing demand of a protest movement that began in October, demanding the removal of a political class deemed inept and corrupt. — AFP

less. Lebanese people enraged by the official negligence blamed for the explosion have taken to the streets in anti-government protests that saw clashes with the army. Macron said it was "up to the authorities of the country to act so that the country does not sink, and to respond to the aspirations that the Lebanese people are expressing right now, legitimately, in the

streets of Beirut. "We must all work together to ensure that neither violence nor chaos prevails," he added. "It is the future of Lebanon that is at stake." Macron also warned that "those who have an interest in this division and chaos, it is the powers that would somehow want to put the Lebanese people at risk". He did not name names. — AFP

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Germany troop pullout: Pompeo eyes east Europe

Washington, Aug. 9: As President Donald Trump orders US troops out of Germany and faces a tough re-election battle, his top diplomat, Mike Pompeo, is heading to friendly climes in Central and Eastern Europe.

Pompeo on Tuesday opens a five-day trip that will terminate in close ally Poland, which is eager to welcome some of the US troops leaving Germany to guard against historic adversary Russia. He will also travel to the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Austria where he is expected to press his campaign for nations to shun Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant considered a threat by Washington as it takes a lead in fifth-generation internet.

In Slovenia, where he will be the first US secretary of state to visit since 2001, Pompeo will on Thursday sign an agreement on 5G, officials said without previewing details. Pompeo's trip comes weeks after the Pentagon said the United States would bring home some 6,400 military personnel from Germany and shift nearly 5,600 more to other NATO allies, including Italy and Belgium. Trump has a tense relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who declined his invitation for a Group of Seven summit in Washington in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic, and accuses Europe's largest economy of unfair trading practices.

"What is most significant about this trip is the places the secretary is not going to," said Ian Lesser, the Brussels-based vice president of the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

"If the secretary was going to address the core issues in transatlantic relations at the moment, he would be making stops in Brussels, Paris and Berlin," Lesser said that the troop repositioning out of Germany was unlikely to be a major issue for US voters. "What does have some political resonance is how a senior American official is received when he or she goes to Europe," he said. — AFP

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Mahinda Rajapaksa sworn in Lanka PM

Colombo, Aug. 9: Sri Lanka's former President Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in as the prime minister for the fourth time Sunday after his party secured a landslide victory in parliamentary elections that cemented his family's hold on power. Rajapaksa took oath before his younger brother, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, at a prominent Buddhist temple on the outskirts of the capital Colombo. Mahinda Rajapaksa served as the island nation's president from 2005 to 2015 and is highly popular among the ethnic majority Sinhalese for ending the country's 25-year civil war against Tamil rebels in 2009.

He was first elected prime minister in 2004 and again appointed for brief periods in 2018 and 2019. Sri Lanka People's Front — the party led by the Rajapaksa brothers — won 145 seats in the 225-member Parliament in the election last Wednesday. Its main opponent obtained only 54 seats.

A party representing ethnic minority Tamils won 10 seats, and 16 others were split among 12 small parties. The victory gave the Rajapaksa brothers nearly the two-third majority of seats required to make constitutional changes that could strengthen dynastic rule in the country. This time, five members of the Rajapaksa family have been elected as lawmakers — Rajapaksa, his son Namal, the eldest brother Chamal and his son Sashindra, and a nephew, Nipuna Ranawaka. The brothers need 150 seats to be able to change the constitution.

At least four small parties collaborate with the Rajapaksa's party, so they appear to have mustered that support. However, analysts say any attempt by Gotabaya Rajapaksa to push for changes that will strengthen presidential powers at the expense of the prime minister may trigger sibling rivalry. — AP

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Japanese PM Shinzo Abe lays a wreath to mark the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, at the Nagasaki Peace Park on Sunday. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,040.57	0.04
Nifty 50	1,1214	0.12
S&P 500*	3,351.28	0.09
Dollar (₹)	74.93	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.12	0.53
Euro (₹)	88.64	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	55,120₹725	1.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.40	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.886	0.025
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.566	0.00

* As of Friday/Saturday

FPIs invest over ₹7,800 crore in equities in Aug.

Overseas investors remained net buyers in Indian markets by investing a net Rs 8,327 crore in the first week of August. Foreign portfolio investors invested a net Rs 7,842 crore in equities and Rs 485 crore in the debt segment during Aug. 3-6, according to depositories data. FPIs have been net buyers in the past two months. They invested Rs 3,301 crore in July and Rs 24,053 crore in June on net basis.

Emission rules for construction, agri machinery likely



The Centre said it has issued draft notification for separate emission norms for agriculture machinery and construction equipment vehicles. MoRTH has invited suggestions on a draft notification seeking to amend Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 to separate the emission norms for agricultural machinery (agricultural tractors, power tillers and combined harvesters) and construction equipment vehicles, a release said.

Amazon Easy stores get an upgrade

Online retailer Amazon launched an upgraded 'Amazon Easy' store format that integrates its multiple services through a single touchpoint. The format would offer a touch-and-feel product experience through a physical product display, the firm said. Customers can also place an order on Amazon.in with assistance from the store staff and either pick up the order from the store or get it delivered at the doorstep.

₹68,000 cr loans released under discoms' package

As much as Rs 68,000 crore worth of loans under the Rs 90,000-crore liquidity package announced for the stressed power distribution utilities have been sanctioned so far. "State-run non-banking finance firms REC and Power Finance Corporation have sanctioned loans worth about Rs 68,000 crore so far under the Rs 90,000 crore liquidity infusion package for discoms announced in May," a source said.

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Current price is lower than 1980 high Gold has room to go beyond \$2,800

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 9

At \$2,070 an ounce, gold touched a new high last week and has moved up more than 30 per cent since the break of Covid-19 pandemic. However, when adjusted to inflation, the record price is lower than 1980 January as well as September 2011 record-high levels. This provides room for gold to move beyond \$2,800 per ounce.

"Adjusted for inflation, the gold price today is \$200 shy of the 2011 level and well below its January, 21, 1980 record high equivalent to approximately \$2,800 per ounce in today's money," says a World Gold Council report.

Gold had hit a record high of \$850 an ounce in January 1980 as investors piled up bullion to beat high inflation due to strong oil prices, the Soviet Union intervention in Afghanistan and the impact of the Iranian revolution. If adjusted to inflation, this would have translated to \$2,800 per ounce in today's scenario. Similarly, in September 2011, gold had made a high of \$1,920 per ounce and if adjusted to inflation, it would have been close to \$2,200 per ounce.

Further, the report finds that the gold price had more than doubled from about \$900 per ounce in early 2008 to its high more than three years later in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. In con-



trast, it has increased by 30-34 per cent since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The current price movement of gold has been driven by high levels of global uncertainty and very low interest rates. The Covid-19 pandemic is far from over and more importantly, its impact on the global economy is yet to be determined.

Central banks have aggressively cut interest rates, often in combination with quantitative easing and other non-traditional policy measures. Governments have also approved massive rescue packages to support their local economies. These initiatives have increased concerns that easy money, rather than fundamentals, is fuelling the stock market rally and all the extra money being pumped into the system may result in very high inflation or at the very least, currency debasements.

"The re-emergence of infections seen in Japan, Australia, South Korea and Vietnam and upturn

in infections seen in the US, Russia and India could trigger the reimplementa-tion of lockdowns and containment measures. The more delayed the complete reversal of the great lockdown, the slower the economic recovery. With this back-ground, it is hard to imagine a scenario where central banks around the world will change their accommodative stance any time soon," said Chirag Mehta, senior fund manager-alternative investments, Quantum Mutual Fund.

Further, despite record inflows into gold ETFs in 2020, gold remains an under-owned asset. The market share of Gold ETFs, compared to all ETF assets, jumped from 3 per cent to 8 per cent in the aftermath of the global financial crisis before dwindling to one per cent levels in the following years. The current figure stands at 3 per cent, indicating significant potential for Gold ETF asset expansion going forward, says Mehta.

TikTok plans to sue Trump administration

BELINDA CAO & YUEQI YANG AUG. 9

TikTok plans to file a federal lawsuit as soon as Tuesday to challenge President Donald Trump's executive order banning the video-sharing service from the US as unconstitutional, National Public Radio reported.

The lawsuit will be filed in the US District Court for the Southern District of California, where TikTok's American operations are based, NPR said, citing a person familiar with the matter whom it didn't identify. It will argue that the president's action is unconstitutional because it failed to give the company a chance to respond and that the US government's national-security justification for the order is baseless, according to the report.

Chinese-owned TikTok responded in a blog post on Friday it is "shocked" and will pursue all remedies available, including in US courts. A company spokesman reached by phone on Saturday declined to comment on the NPR report and referred to the earlier blog post.

Trump signed executive orders on Thursday prohibiting US residents and companies from doing business with TikTok and Tencent Holdings' WeChat apps, effective in 45 days, citing the national-security risk of leaving Americans' personal data exposed. A 1977 law lets the US president declare a national emergency in response to an "unusual and extraordinary threat."

— Bloomberg

Defence stocks may gain from latest import ban

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 9

Defence production related stocks like Larsen & Toubro, Bharat Forge and defence PSUs such as Bharat Electronics and HAL would be in focus on Monday as the government has fast-tracked indigenous production of many items and plans to phase out high levels of import dependence over a period of time.

The Department of Military Affairs (DMA), Ministry of Defence (MoD) has prepared a list of 101 items for which there would be an embargo on the import beyond the timeline indicated against them, said a release on Sunday.

"It is estimated that contracts worth almost Rs 4 lakh crore will be placed upon the domestic industry within the next five to seven years. Of these, items worth almost Rs 1,30,000 crore each are anticipated for the Army and the Air Force while items worth almost Rs 1,40,000 crore are anticipated by the Navy over the same period," the defence ministry said.

Bharat Forge, Bharat Electronics, Larsen & Toubro, HAL, Cochin Shipyard, Garden Reach, BHEL, Bharat Dynamics, Mishra Dhatu Nigam and BHEL may bag large contracts with their past records in defence-related production, brokers said.

Defence production related stocks have rallied post-Galwan Valley clash on June 15.

The list of 101 embargoed items comprises not

On the rise		
Defence production related stocks have rallied post-Galwan Valley clash		
Company	Current stock price	Stock price on June 15- Galwan Valley clash
HAL	947.90	657.5
Bharat Electronics	99.20	70.9
BHEL	35.25	29.1
BELM	656.35	595.7
Mishra Dhatu Nigam	204.70	195
Bharat Dynamics	419.05	235.55
Cochin Shipyard	331.65	264
Garden Reach Ship-builders & Engineers	202.40	188.55
Larsen & Toubro	915.70	899.65
Bharat Forge	408.00	340.45

Figures in ₹

Source: BSE, FIC Research

just simple parts but also some high technology weapon systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircraft, light combat helicopters (LCHs), radars and many other items.

The list also includes, wheeled armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which the Army is expected to contract almost 200 at an approximate cost of Rs 5,000 crore.

Similarly, the Navy is likely to place demands for submarines with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which it expects to contract about six at an approximate cost of Rs 42,000 crore. For the Air Force, it has been decided to enlist the light combat aircraft with an indicative embargo date of December 2020. Of these, 123 are anticipated at an approximate cost of over Rs 85,000

crore, the release said.

The embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 and 2024. The aim behind promulgation of the list is to apprise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the Armed Forces. More such equipment for import embargo would be identified in consultation with all stakeholders, the defence ministry said.

The recently published draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy, 2020 suggests a more bottom-up framework to empower system integrators to achieve greater scale by expanding the role of the private sector, especially MSMEs. Key objectives include achieving Rs 1.75 lakh crore turnover, including Rs 35,000-crore exports; cutting defence imports; entry in the global defence exports value chain, among others.

Oil giants cut value of assets by \$50 bn

DAVID GAFFEN AUG. 9

The world's five largest oil companies collectively cut the value of their assets by nearly \$50 billion in the second quarter, and slashed production rates as the coronavirus pandemic caused a drastic fall in fuel prices and demand.

The dramatic reductions in asset valuations and decline in output show the depth of the pain in the second quarter. Fuel demand at one point was down by more than 30 per cent worldwide, and still remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Several executives said they took massive write-downs because they expect demand to remain impaired for several more quarters as people travel less and use less fuel due to the ongoing global pandemic that has killed more than 700,000 people.

Of those five companies, only Exxon Mobil did not book sizeable impairments. But an ongoing re-evaluation of its plans could lead to a "significant portion" of its assets being impaired, it reported, and signal the elimination of 20 per cent or 4.4 billion barrels of its oil and gas reserves.

By contrast, BP took a \$17 billion hit. It said it plans to re-centre its spending in coming years around renewables and less on oil and natural gas.

Weak demand means oil producers must revisit business plans, said Lee Maginniss, managing director at consultants Alarez & Marsal. He said the goal should be to pump only what generates cash in excess of overhead costs. "It's low-cost production mode through the end of 2021 for sure, and to 2022 to the extent there are new development plans being contemplated," Maginniss said.

London-based BP has previously said it plans to cut its overall output by roughly 1 million barrels of oil equivalent (boepd) by the end of 2030 from its current 3.6 million boepd. Of the five, Exxon is the largest producer, with daily output of 3.64 million boepd, but its production dropped 408,000 boepd between the first and second quarters. The five majors, which include Chevron Corp, Royal Dutch Shell and Total SA, also cut capital expenditures by a combined \$25 billion between the quarters.

— Reuters

ONGC pares debt by 35%, but low oil & gas prices a concern

New Delhi, Aug 9: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has cut its debt by more than one-third but faces an uphill challenge to meeting planned expenditure during the current fiscal due to oil and gas prices falling below sub-optimal levels, according to company officials and regulatory filings.

ONGC's outstanding debt of Rs 21,593 crore as on March 31, 2019 has come down to Rs 13,949 crore as on March 31, 2020, as it used revenue from better operations to retire some of the borrowings, according to the company's regulatory filings.

Out of this debt, long-term borrowings account for Rs 2,245 crore which are due for maturity in December 2029.

The company had cash and cash equivalent (including other bank balances) of Rs 968 crore as on March 31, 2020, up from a record low of Rs 504 crore a year back.

Standalone debt-equity ratio at the end of March 31, 2020 is only 0.07, which is considered comfortable.

Company officials explained that ONGC has been working on bringing



operational efficiencies and financial discipline and used surplus revenues to repay debt.

"While we ended the 2019-20 fiscal year with a comfortable financial position, we face an uphill challenge during the current 2020-21 financial year. The pandemic has played havoc on oil prices and government mandated gas price is way below cost of production," a senior official said.

ONGC has planned a capital expenditure of over Rs 26,000 crore and meeting that target with the current oil and gas prices will be a challenge, he said.

Another official said the company had taken an impairment loss of Rs 4,899 crore in Q4 FY'20 to

factor in estimated future crude oil and natural gas prices. However, the company believes that oil and gas prices will recover in future and then this impairment loss shall be reversed as and when prices rise, he said.

ONGC once was India's most profitable company with a cash balance of over Rs 10,000 crore. But the fortunes reversed after the company bought the government's 51.11 per cent stake in oil marketing company Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and the Gujarat government's GSPC in a KG-basin gas block.

It funded the Rs 36,915 crore acquisition of 51.11 per cent equity shares in HPCL through internal

funds of Rs 12,034 crore and balance Rs 24,881 crore from borrowed money from commercial banks.

The funding requirement of Rs 7,560 crore for Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation's KG block acquisition was met by borrowing against term deposits.

Its cash and balances dipped to touch a record low of Rs 504 crore in March 2019, down from Rs 1,013 crore in March 2018 and Rs 9,511 crore in March 2017 and Rs 9,957 in March 2016.

"We live in an era of sub-optimal oil prices and government mandated natural gas prices that are way below the cost. The answer to such a scenario is to optimise cost and bring in operational efficiencies," an official said.

He said the company has sufficient lines of credit/ short term fund facilities with banks amounting to Rs 7,800 crore for meeting the working capital or deficit requirements. Further, the company has an overall limit of Rs 10,000 crore for raising funds through commercial paper.

— PTI

Shelf-life of skills now only 2-3 years, says Nasscom chief



U. B. Pravin Rao

Bengaluru, Aug. 9: Nasscom chairman U. B. Pravin Rao on Sunday said the shelf-life of skills is now only two to three years, as he called for continuous, lifelong learning.

As corporates are reinventing themselves, individuals also need to reinvent themselves to stay relevant, said the COO of Infosys.

"Shelf-life of skills is becoming short, two-three years," said Rao, who was addressing the online graduation ceremony hosted by upGrad and IIIT-B.

"People need to unlearn, learn new stuff and therefore commit to lifelong learning. This is critical to stay relevant and employable", Rao said. — PTI

BARCLAYS PROBED BY WATCHDOG FOR MONITORING STAFF

EDUARD GISMATULLIN AUG. 9

Barclays Plc is being investigated by the Information Commissioner's Office, a privacy watchdog, on allegations it spied on its workers through a computer monitoring software, the Telegraph reported. It said Barclays faces a maximum fine of 865 million pounds (\$1.1 billion) if it's found to have broken data privacy laws.

The software allowed managers to measure the length of time employees were away from their desks or how long they took to finish tasks, the paper said. —Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES

Domestic cricket likely from Nov.

New Delhi: The BCCI is mulling November 19 as tentative date for start of domestic season with Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament but Indian players in various IPL teams won't be able to play first few rounds due to quarantine protocols in place.

The delay in the beginning of the domestic season due to Covid-19 pandemic means that only Mushtaq Ali trophy and Ranji Trophy (December 13-March 10) comprising of 245 games (across the formats with 38 teams) will be played.

There will be no Vijay Hazare Trophy, Duleep Trophy or Challenger Series this year and as of now there is no provision for Irani Cup also.

"This is a tentative list that has been prepared and it has gone for approval of president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah," a BCCI official said.

While this is a draft schedule, it is being asked how the Indian players, who will return from IPL, will play since they will have to be in a 14-day quarantine as per government rules.

— PTI

Ex-Bagan captain Manitombi dead

Kolkata: Former India defender and Mohun Bagan captain Manitombi Singh died at the age of 39 at his native village near Imphal in Manipur on Sunday, club sources said.

Manitombi was suffering from prolonged illness and breathed his last in the early hours of Sunday. He is survived by his wife and an eight-year-old son. "Mohun Bagan family is deeply saddened by the untimely demise of former club captain Manitombi Singh. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time. Rest in peace, Manitombi Singh," the club posted on its Twitter handle.

Manitombi was a key member of the Stephen Constantine-coached India Under-23 side that lifted the LG Cup in 2003 by defeating Vietnam 3-2 in Ho Chi Minh City.

It was India's first international triumph since their victory at an eight-nation tournament in Singapore in 1971.

Manitombi also represented India in the 2002 Busan Asian Games. — PTI

Johnson leads at PGA tourney

San Francisco: Dustin Johnson supplied the birdies, eight of them at the PGA Championship, the most he has ever made in his 157 rounds of major championship golf for a 5-under 65 and a one-shot lead.

Brooks Koepka supplied the needle on Saturday.

Koepka recovered from three straight bogeys to salvage a 69 and stay within two shots of a leaderboard more crowded than any of San Francisco's congested highways.

At stake is a chance to become only the seventh player to win the same major three straight times. He surveyed the cast of contenders, and focused on the guy at the top.

The final round at Harding Park figures to be wide open, just like it was on a Saturday so wild that eight players had at least a share of the lead during the third round.

Johnson lost his yardage book and still found his way through an enormous crowd of contenders. — AFP

DONCIC HELPS MAVERICKS BEAT BUCKS

Lake Buena Vista, USA: Luka Doncic scored 36 points in his NBA-leading 17th triple-double and the Dallas Mavericks scored the last seven points of regulation to force overtime, going on to a 136-132 win over the Milwaukee Bucks on Saturday.

Milwaukee star Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points, 13 rebounds and five blocks before fouling out in the final seconds on the day the reigning MVP was named a finalist for the award along with LeBron James and James Harden.

Doncic's final assist was a between-the-legs pass to Maxi Kleber for a three-point play and a 133-128 lead. — AP

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EYES ON ICC CHAIR

Nomination process for top post on agenda

Dubai, Aug. 9: Finalising the nomination process to elect Shashank Manohar's successor as the next independent chairman of the world cricket body is the sole agenda for the ICC Board, which will meet virtually on Monday.

It is expected that the entire process irrespective of whether it's an election or unanimous selection will be over by four weeks.

"The meeting on Monday only has nomination process in the agenda. Normally, it is a two week window that is provided for filing nominations," a senior board member said on the condition of anonymity.

Usually in ICC, a two-third majority is required but there could be a few board members who would want it to be a case of simple majority among 17 members.

The 17 board members of ICC comprise of 12 Test playing nations, three associate nations (Malaysia, Scotland, Singapore), chairman (in this case interim) and independent director (Indra Nooyi of Pepsico).

ICC CEO Manu Sawhney is also a part of ICC Board but without voting right. A candidate can be nominated by a past or present director of ICC but it has to be seconded mandatorily by two current directors. Only then one can enter the election fray.

There have been discussions on whether the a former director nominating an incumbent should remain valid or not.

As far as the candidates are concerned, there are few names, including that of current interim chairman from Singapore Imran Khawaja, are doing rounds.

— PTI



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (left) with a Vivo representative in this file photo.

Vivo pullout no big deal: Dada

Delhi, Aug. 9: India's cricket chief Sourav Ganguly says the Indian Premier League's decision to suspend a lucrative contract with its main sponsor, the Chinese phone maker Vivo, following a deadly border clash between the two nations is "just a blip".

The IPL last week suspended the agreement with Vivo, which signed a five-year contract in 2017 worth more than \$330 million to sponsor the world's richest cricket tourney.

"I wouldn't call it a financial crisis. It is just a little bit of a blip," said Ganguly, the head of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

"BCCI, it's a very strong foundation — the game, the players, the administrators in the past have made this game so strong that BCCI is able to handle all these blips," he said at an online conference on Saturday.

"You keep your other options open. It is like Plan A and Plan B," the

BCCI president added.

The 2020 IPL tournament is due to start in the United Arab Emirates next month.

Vivo said the decision was mutually agreed.

The IPL and BCCI have tie-ups with companies including Paytm, Swiggy, Dream11 and Byju, which all have Chinese investment.

According to reports, the BCCI was in talks with Indian companies over sponsorship deals but was expected to make less

than the \$60 million it would have received from Vivo.

Each of the eight IPL teams stands to lose nearly \$4 million from the lost sponsorship, a team said.

The star-studded IPL Twenty20 league is a huge revenue earner for BCCI and is estimated to generate more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy.

The tournament normally starts in March, but was repeatedly postponed this year because of the pandemic. — AFP

UNITED, INTER BRACE FOR EUROPA TIES

Paris, Aug. 9: Manchester United, Inter Milan and Sevilla headline a quintet of former champions travelling to Germany for a remodelled eight-team straight knockout tournament that will crown the winner of a Europa League campaign heavily disrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic.

All games from the quarterfinals onwards in this season's competition will be played behind closed doors as one-off ties across four venues.

"There are rules and regulations on the bubble that's going to travel. We've got to stick together, stay together in and around the hotel and the training ground," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said. — AFP

LIVE ON TV
Europa League quarterfinals: Manchester United vs Copenhagen on Sony Ten 2; Inter Milan vs Leverkusen on Sony Ten 1. Both matches from 12.30 am (Tuesday)

— Agencies



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (centre) vies for the ball with Napoli's Mario Rui (second from left) during their UEFA Champions League Round of 16 second leg match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. Barcelona won 3-0. — AFP

Messi rises and shines

Barcelona, Aug. 9: Just when it looked like Lionel Messi had nowhere to go, the Argentine great bamboozled half of Napoli's team before scoring from an exquisite solo effort that helped Barcelona reach the Champions League quarterfinals in Portugal.

Messi netted Barcelona's second goal in the 3-1 victory that sent the Spanish side past

Napoli on a 4-2 aggregate score on Saturday.

Messi's goal in the 23rd minute was arguably the pick of the 31 he has scored this season in all competitions.

Napoli appeared to have him in check when Messi received the ball all alone outside the right corner of the area. Messi, however, dipped his head and took on the well-placed defense. He kept control of the ball despite being

knocked over while going past three Napoli players.

Meanwhile, Robert Lewandowski scored twice and set up two more goals as Bayern beat Chelsea 4-1 on Saturday for a 7-1 win on aggregate in Munich to book a ticket to Lisbon.

Bayern has won 18 straight competitive games going back to February and hasn't lost since December. — Agencies

SILVERSTONE | GRAND PRIX

Verstappen steals victory in Brit F1

Silverstone, Aug. 9: Max Verstappen delivered Red Bull's first victory at Silverstone since 2012 on Sunday when he made the most of a superior strategy in sizzling conditions to beat both Mercedes and claim victory in the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix.

It was the Dutchman's first victory of the season and the ninth of his career and the first time a race had been won by a driver who did not start on pole position in seven races since last year's Mexican Grand Prix.

Verstappen owed his victory to a team decision to start the race on hard compound tyres while his main rivals all launched from the grid on mediums, the two Mercedes men struggling to manage tyre-wear throughout the race.

During the race, Red Bull asked him to ease off, but he replied saying "I don't want to drive like a grand-ma" before the team relented.

Verstappen won by 11.326 seconds ahead of championship leader and six-time champion Lewis Hamilton

● **Max Verstappen went past the Mercedes duo of Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas to win the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone race track on Sunday.**

who passed Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas in the closing stages. The Finn finished third.

"I didn't see that coming, but after the first stint it seemed we were really good on tyres. I didn't have any tyre issues at all — a great day for us," said Verstappen.

Hamilton said: "That was a massive challenge, but congratulations to Red Bull. It was definitely unexpected to have the blistering (on tyres) as hard core as that."

Bottas, who started from pole, said: "Very frustrating for me, to start from pole and finish third. It's not ideal and I think that as a team we were sleeping." — AFP

BUTTLER & WOAKES SEE ENGLAND HOME IN TEST

Manchester, Aug. 9: Jos Buttler and Chris Woakes led a remarkable comeback for England in a three-wicket victory over Pakistan in the first test on Saturday.

The pair went on the counter-attack at the fall of the fifth wicket in England's second innings and shared a sixth-wicket stand of 139 on day 4 at Old Trafford. No fans were present for the exciting finale due to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

Buttler was out for 75 while Woakes hit the winning runs and was undefeated on 84 as England finished on 277-7 for its 10th highest successful test run chase.

Leg-spinner Yasir Shah (4-99) had put Pakistan in pole position with two wickets as the hosts got off to a shaky start in their second innings. — AFP

Brief scores: Pakistan 326 & 169 (Y. Shah 33, A. Shafiq 29, S. Broad 3/37, lost to England 219 & 277/7 in 82.1 ov (J. Buttler 75, C. Woakes 84*, J. Root 42, Y. Shah 2/74).

Root praises Jos, Chris for show

Manchester, Aug. 9: England captain Joe Root doffed his hat to Jos Buttler after his beleaguered teammate battled concerns over his father's health and fear of losing his place in the side to engineer a dramatic triumph in the first Test against Pakistan here.

After his vital 75-run knock in a partnership of 139 with Chris Woakes that rescued England from 117 for five to register a three-wicket victory, Buttler avoided any discussion on his father Johnny, who had spent the previous evening in hospital.

"It says a huge amount about him as a person to carry that and be able to either use it, or park it only he will know which way he did that and to play in that manner was exceptional. To have that external pressure as well, I'm chuffed to bits with him," Root said.

It was a welcome knock for Buttler who had been struggling with the bat.

Root was also full of praise for Woakes.

"You watch him play and know he's more than capable of three or four more Test hundreds. His game is there. He's got all the attributes, he was clear how he wanted to play Yasir Shah and managed the seamers.

STOKES SET TO MISS REST OF THE SERIES

England star Ben Stokes will miss the concluding two Tests against Pakistan for family reasons, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced Sunday.

Stokes's father Ged was admitted to hospital in Johannesburg two days before Christmas last year with a serious illness while following his son's progress with the England cricket team during their tour of South Africa.

Ged, a former Kiwi rugby league international, underwent three operations and spent 37 days in hospital. — Agencies

Dire need to keep age fraud under check



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

The lovely game of cricket has had its issues over a period of time. Fudging age, particularly in the Asian sub-continent, has been a primary one which has not got the necessary treatment it deserves from Boards that govern the game in countries therein. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced an amnesty scheme for young cricketers to own up any 'fudging' they may have committed if they want to play age-group cricket at a higher level.

The malaise of tamper-

ing with age has been going on for years in India and many 'illegals' have gone scot free, playing with cricketers much younger to them.

They have taken advantage of having strength over talent to bulldoze their way in school and age-group games creating a playing field that was completely lop sided, favouring teams that fielded older boys.

BCCI's edict of offering amnesty is welcome in the sense it will now ensure parity in age-group tournaments where offenders who continue to play ille-

gally will face a two-year ban. The ban will ensure that they will not be allowed to play in any age-group tournaments, local and national, effectively taking away the best of the formative years of their careers.

Being ineligible to play for two seasons is a harsh punishment for youngsters and the BCCI has (over the past few years) been docking the guilty for meddling with age. Last year saw them, and domestic associations, punish more than 200 cricketers including one who had represented India Under-19 in the victorious 2018 World Cup.

Tinkering with age is an old issue that has plagued Indian cricket over the years. As a 16-year old boy, playing the Cooch Behar Trophy, which was an inter-state schools tourna-

ment in those days, I was shocked to see sweets being distributed by the captain of another state school team to celebrate the birth of his son. The incident that happened 47 years ago still rankles in my mind.

Most school cricketers in Mumbai (then Bombay) were aware that they had to compete with 'almost adults' who were masquerading as kids.

While cases, in those days, happened they were not as rampant as what we have been seeing recently. Elder, ineligible, players get more opportunities to represent state age-group teams irrespective of real skills, leaving genuine cricketers in the lurch. Not being in the state squads eventually forces talented youngsters give up the game with parents insisting on spending time on

the children education.

The biggest problem faced by genuine coaches is to persuade parents to let their talented children continue to play the game. Reputed coach, Dinesh Lad, who nurtured young talent like Rohit Sharma, Shardul Thakur and his son Siddesh said that the biggest challenge in his 25-years of coaching at the school level comes from convincing parents.

"I always tell parents that talented youngsters should continue to play at the Under-14 and Under-16 levels to develop their skills for the future and not worry about state team selections. Real talent like Sachin Tendulkar and Rohit Sharma will always find their way irrespective of the inequality," he confided.

Why then has this malaise been allow to take

rampant proportions over the years? The answer lies in career prospects that cricket offers. Earlier it was jobs that talented cricketers got which ensured stability, now parents look at the prospect of a much bigger and better opportunity of their wards likely to be picked for the Indian Premier League (IPL) and get them set for life. Today, playing in the IPL is a more immediate goal set for youngsters than playing for the state or the country, unlike in the past.

BCCI's amnesty scheme is a fabulous move, one that will give errant youngsters an opportunity to get back into the scheme of things and not put obstacles for their immediate future. If one takes a holistic view of the age tampering issue the primary blame lies with

indecorous coaches who get the youngsters (and their glib parents) to agree to fake certificates that fudge the age of the cricketer.

The unequal contests eventually lead to ruin with this form of short-term cheating tearing into the fabric of the game. Along with the Board of Control for Cricket in India, many state associations have started to focus on this corruption which is as bad, if not worse, than match fixing and throwing the game.

Hopefully, the amnesty scheme will deter youngsters from taking such illegal shortcuts. To ensure a level playing field, the state associations must also censure errant coaches (the main culprits) with life time bans if any of their wards are found guilty in the future.