

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SUNDAY 16 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 26°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 32
Tithi: Dwadashi/Thrayodashi
Star: Punarpusam
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.43 am
Zohar: 12.19 pm
Asar: 3.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.30 pm
Isha: 7.44 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.30 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.57 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.59 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.15 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+62,929)	(+951)
25,88,151	50,084

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,860)
TN: 3,32,105 | 5,641

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,14,96,769

DEATHS

7,66,198

213

worldometers.info

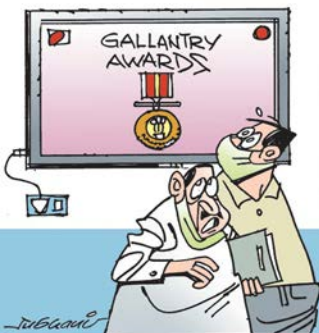
Testing times for Indian democracy: Sonia Gandhi

New Delhi: In her Independence Day message, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday said these were ‘testing times’ for Indian democracy and people need to introspect if there is freedom in the country to ask questions, disagree or seek accountability. Since independence, India has tested its democratic values from time to time and constantly developed them, Sonia said.

Biden promises to reform H-1B visa system

Washington: If voted to power in the November general elections, a Biden administration will reform the H-1B visa system and work towards eliminating the country-quota for Green Cards, his campaign said on Saturday, in a move to woo the influential Indian-American community.

COUNTER POINT



They should also confer these awards on the frontline warriors of Covid-19!

Fans pray for singer SPB who is still on life support

Chennai, Aug 15: Renowned playback singer S. P. Balasubrahmanyam continues to be on life support and stable, a private hospital treating him said here on Saturday. The veteran singer's son SP Charan said there is a good response to the use of ventilator and Balasubrahmanyam's lungs are functioning better. Health minister C. Vijayabaskar, meanwhile, visited the hospital, had a discussion with doctors



treating the singer and on his twitter handle, wished Balasubrahmanyam a speedy recovery. In a video message, Charan said “there

is a very good response from ventilator, his lungs are functioning better than they were yesterday. The doctors are very confident that he will pull through. It is a time consuming process. We, though, expect a recovery, it is going to be a slow recovery.” Thanking the star singer's fans and well-wishers for their love for his father, he said, “your prayers are definitely helping,” and requested them to continue doing it. —PTI

CITY | 3

WHO chief scientist honoured with CM's special award



Digital banners wish victory for Kamala in her ancestral village

STATE | 4

NATION | 5

Pranab continues to be on ventilator



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NCC cadets participate in the 74th Independence Day function at the Red Fort in New Delhi, on Saturday. — PTI

On I-Day, PM Modi has veiled message for China and Pakistan

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 15

“From LoC to LAC,” India’s soldiers have given a fitting reply to all those who have challenged the country’s sovereignty. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort, in what was a clear reference to China and Pakistan.

“From LoC (Line of Control) to LAC (Line of Actual Control), whenever India’s sovereignty has been challenged, our soldiers have answered them in their own language,” he said in his address to the nation on its 74th Independence Day. He did not name either China or Pakistan.

Referring to the clash with China in June at Galwan Valley in Ladakh, Mr Modi said, “India’s integrity is supreme for us. What our jawans can do, what the country can do, the world saw that in Ladakh. Today, I salute all those brave soldiers from the Red Fort.”

Twenty soldiers had died for the country in the clash with Chinese troops on June 15. With talks on de-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation during the 74th Independence Day celebrations, at Red Fort in New Delhi, on Saturday. — PTI

● **Mass production of vaccine for Covid-19 will begin in India once scientists give their nod and a roadmap was ready to ensure it reaches everyone in the country in the shortest possible time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said**

In his almost 90 minute speech, he also spoke of “Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)”, “Vocal for local” and “Make in India to Make for World”.

While paying tribute to those on the front-lines of the fight against coronavirus, he said as the nation fights the Covid-19 pandemic, Aatma Nirbhar Bharat has captured people’s imagination and should be the mantra for everyone.

“The mindset of free India should be ‘vocal for local’. We should appreciate our local products, if we don’t do this then our products will not get the opportunity to do better and will not get encouraged,” he said.

Self reliance must be achieved by 2022: Vice Prez

New Delhi, Aug. 15: On this Independence Day, every Indian, especially the youth, must resolve to be at the forefront to fight attempts by forces that try to create dissensions among the people, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said on Saturday.

In a Facebook post to mark the 74th Independence Day, he said for India to achieve new heights of development and prosperity, every citizen, including people in public life, must perform their duty. “As we approach the 75th anniversary of Independence, it is time for an objective introspection. At this juncture, we must ask ourselves what we aspire to achieve as a nation by 2022,” Venkaiah Naidu observed. “By 2022, India must be aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) in every sense of the word. We all must work with renewed vigour,” he said. —PTI



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami inspects the Guard of Honour during the 74th Independence Day celebrations in Chennai on Saturday. — DC

CM, OPS scramble to contain party poll issue

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

Quick action and a series of parleys by a group of top leaders in the AIADMK averted a major crisis that erupted all of a sudden on Saturday morning, turning Independence Day into a day of hectic intra-party interactions that finally led to a truce between Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam.

Though there had been indications of simmering differences in the party over the question of the next Chief Ministerial candidate for past few days with a few leaders expressing contradictory views, it was the appearance of a few wall posters in Pann-erselvam’s Theni district that triggered Saturday’s events in Chennai.

The wall posters proclaiming Panneerselvam as the “only Chief Minister to have enjoyed the blessings of J. Jayalalithaa”, “simple CM for the poor and common people”, “Jayalalithaa’s political heir” and “permanent Chief Minister” came with a hashtag - #2021 CM for OPS.

Apparently put up by the people of Kenjampatti village in Bodinayakannur taluk of Theni district, the posters ignited a discussion soon after Palaniswami concluded his Independence Day speech from the ramparts of Fort St George, declaring that he had “the love and support of the people”

The wall posters proclaiming Panneerselvam as the **“only Chief Minister to have enjoyed the blessings of J. Jayalalithaa”, “simple CM for the poor and common people”, “Jayalalithaa’s political heir” and “permanent Chief Minister”** came with a hashtag - #2021 CM for OPS.



Fisheries minister D. Jayakumar arrives at Deputy Chief Minister Panneerselvam’s house on Saturday. — DC

Images of Chief Minister K. Palaniswami, party icons, Jayalalithaa and AIADMK founder MG Ramachandran were displayed in the posters.

- **The statement warned party functionaries and cadre of severe action if they expressed their views on party matters without forethought and without the approval of party high command**
- **The party high command would discuss all key policy issues and stand on alliance democratically and take decisions that would reflect the sentiments of the cadre, the statement said**

and that he would continue to work for them with their well-being as his only goal.

Sensing trouble brewing within the party, the group of senior leaders went into a huddle for less than an hours at the chambers of fisheries minister D. Jayakumar after both Palaniswami and Panneerselvam had left for the day.

Among them were ministers Thangamani, SP Velumani, C Vijayabaskar, Dindigul Srinivasan,

Kamaraj, CV Shanmugham, Kadambur Raju, Udhayakumar and KA Sengottaiyan, Deputy Speaker Pollachi Jayaraman and Natham Viswanathan.

The leaders first drove to Panneerselvam’s house as an entourage and had discussions with him for one and a half hours. While they were there, Panneerselvam called up his people back in Theni asked them to remove the posters that were causing the stir. ■ **P4**

Record 127 Covid-19 deaths in TN in a day

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 15:

Fatalities due to coronavirus continued to go up with 127 persons succumbing to the disease on Saturday, taking the total toll so far to 5,641 in the entire State.

Fresh infections too were unabated as the state recorded 5,860 cases with 1,179 of them in Chennai, where the death toll was at 26.

The numbers in the neighbouring districts of Chennai were high — Chengalpattu 376, Kanchipuram 184 and Thiruvallur 422 — while the others district with high level of infection were Coimbatore 290, Cuddalore 340, Ranipet 260, Salem 200 and Theni 213.

Meanwhile, a new 50-bedded Covid Care Centre was opened inside the Puzhal prison premises by the Law Minister C V Shanmugham and Health Minister C Vijayabaskar.

Total fresh cases on Saturday 5,860

Chennai 1,179

Number of active cases 54,213

● **Tamil Nadu has a total of 1,643 care Centres and 54 of them are in Chennai**

Of the 2,014 prisoners housed in the three jails inside the Puzhal complex, 114 of them tested positive.

They were treated at the Stanley or at the hospital inside the jail. Now the Care Centre with four wards — one for women and three for men — has been set up to take care of prisoners.

Tamil Nadu has a total of 1,643 care Centres and 54 of them are in Chennai.

National virus count crosses 25 lakh

New Delhi, Aug. 15: With 65,002 cases in the last 24 hours, India’s Covid-19 tally went past 25 lakh on Saturday — co-incidentally also India’s Independence Day. It just took little less than 48 hours for the virus to add one lakh cases and reach the mark.

Over 18 lakh people have so far recuperated from the disease, pushing the recovery rate to 71.61 per cent.

India has been reporting over 60,000 cases daily since August 7, barring August 11 when the country registered 53,601 new instances of the infection. India’s Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7.

The total number of Covid-19 now stands at 25,26,192, while the death-toll is now 49,036 with 996 people succumbing to the disease in 24 hours. Looking at the rate at which the death toll has been rising, India’s death toll may breach the 50,000-mark by Sunday morning. — Agencies

Dhoni, Raina retire from international cricket

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

It came like a bolt from the blue. M.S. Dhoni who remains an enigma in Indian cricket announced his retirement on Saturday, precisely at 7:29 pm on Instagram, and caught the sporting world by surprise.

Dhoni, who helped the country win three major ICC tournaments including the 50-over World Cup, will go down in history as the greatest Indian captain.

Along with Dhoni, his

Chennai Super Kings teammate Suresh Raina, too, ended his international career the same day. The duo, however, will continue to play for CSK.

Dhoni couldn’t have picked a better city than Chennai — his adopted home — to announce his retirement. He borrowed lines from a Hindi song — Main Pal Do Pal Ka Shayar Hoon (I’m a poet only for a moment or two), crooned by Mukesh and featuring Amitabh Bachchan — to express his thoughts.

India’s semifinal defeat against New Zealand in the 2019 World Cup was

Dhoni’s last appearance in blue jersey.

He has represented India in 350 ODIs, 90 Tests and 98 T20 Internationals.

“Thanks a lot for ur love and support throughout. from 1929hrs consider me as Retired,” Dhoni posted on his instagram handle along with a montage of photos and the song.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly paid rich tributes to Dhoni.

“It is the end of an era. What a player he has been for the country and world cricket...He will finish with no regrets on the field,” said Ganguly. ■ **P8**





Cakes, compassion and good commerce during Corona!

AS INCOMES DROP AND FAMILIES RETHINK THEIR SPENDING PATTERNS, HOME CHEFS ADD SPARKLE TO OUR DINING TABLES, WITH A WHOLE LOT OF COMPASSION



Apsara Reddy

And the point is..

At a time that is frankly frustrating and uncertain, a sugar rush seems to be the perfect panacea for the glum. From talking to their pet poodles to starting a collection of embroidered scarves or doing face yoga, starting their own insta chat show, teaching neighbours tacky dance moves, drunk reading novels in the bath to growing 'herbs' in the kitchen garden and my favourite 'joining the campaign for justice' by a television anchor! people have been going all kinds of nuts!

During this time the home chefs have made a deep dive into commerce with compassion. Pooja Nichani Mehra who took to baking as a hobby shares, "I started the business back in 2015 with a meagre investment of a few lakhs. Slowly my business did grow but there has been a staggering growth in 2020 since Covid-19 struck. I receive anywhere between 20 to 30 orders per day for simple Sindhi classics like Dal Pakwaan to moist Banana bread and Decadent Chocolate Cake. My sales have gone up by nearly 100% from March - June 2020."

Most bakers start their baking journey because believe it or not, it's out of sheer enthusiasm or guilt that we choose to bake a cake for someone we love. Nadeeha who now is famous for her pandan cakes and chicken crusted pizzas, talks of a time when there were no takers. "Lots of options were available in Chennai and people preferred the

fancy options. Home bakers could only showcase at specialist exhibitions or sell to their friends who often felt bad for us. Covid has changed everything. With people staying at home and large hotels and bakeries being shut, home bakers are being given an opportunity and those initial orders have turned to regular business. I used to bake for an hour or two a week earlier. For the past few months I am baking at least for 5-6 hours per day."

A study by Nielsen, a market research company, France reported a spike in the sale of flour upto 160% in March, ranking it on top of the essentials list alongside rice (160%), pasta (200%) and soap (220%). A quick check of grocery stores around Chennai too reveals that sugar, flour, jaggery, unsalted butter, cocoa powder and yeast are fast going off the shelves. Samia Sait, of the famed Nilgiris chain in Neelankarai, says, "With families staying in, people are taking turns to whip up a fancy meal. Lots of home chefs are using this time to find a market for their signature dishes. We have some regulars who shop with us

and some of the items like condensed milk, unsalted butter, cookie dough and cocoa are ranked as top essentials and there is a regular demand for them in the past few months."

The company Tata Consumer Products that manufactures baking soda, and Cadbury, who make cocoa have seen a near 60 per cent rise as compared to last year. And a simple analysis of Google search trends reveal that since the end of March (Lockdown 1), there has been a significant spike in searches for recipes of confectionery and bread.

Usha Shridhar, a homemaker who lost all her revenue streams and was grappling with rigid quarantine laws took to making what she knew best - thokku.

Indian sweets made from crushed herbal powders and fresh ghee. Usha emotionally shares, "All my doors were shut and I was helpless. I said a prayer and began by marketing my home made snacks and sweets on Facebook. With limited knowledge of social media and shooting videos I managed to show people how hygienically I cook and all of the ingredients are natural. Past two months, orders have picked up and many people traveling to the USA on special flights have bulk ordered from me. I am able to reap in a good amount to run my family."

Lost without a regular work life and challenged with the many upheavals of Coronavirus, Naina Shah resorted to serving up delectable Gujarati khaana. "I was aghast at the way in which jobs were being lost and salaries were being cut. Many around me were downsizing their lifestyles and cutting down on their lunch and dinner menus. I felt the need to cook exquisite food at an affordable price. With the help of my family I started making simple Gujarati dishes and there's not been a day that I haven't received orders. The most satisfying thing is that people who are on small household budgets are able to order and enjoy a good family meal."

Unlike Usha or Naina, there are some youngsters like Lakshmi Pillai who is a trained confectionary expert and during



Lakshmi Pillai's creation

know of families who were struggling to keep up with online class fees, job cuts, medical expenses and their basic lifestyles. Giving away free food is not an option as I didn't want to make them feel small or insulted. Instead I started baking and pricing my goods very reasonably, often much lower than the market price. This way it was a good penetration tactic for me and also a more comfortable way for people to order without feeling the pinch."

And the point is, no matter how tough the road ahead may seem and despite those trying to keep their homes happy, there are talents we must tap into to ride this wave. Support a family member or a friend grappling with their new business idea albeit even tossing up a dish or two from home. And trust me, they can't do it themselves for long. Your support would mean employment generation in the local community, a fresh bunch of talents entering the industry and the most important of all; ensuring food on their table and yours. Great economies are sooner built with compassion and a commitment to lift each other up.

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Usha's kadalai urundai



Pickles

Engaging thriller

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

Lock Up from debutant S.G. Charles is yet another film which has skipped a theatrical release to be streamed on OTT platform - on Zee 5.

A whodunit thriller, the entire story of Lock Up unfolds in a day's time. The best part is that the director wastes no time in establishing his settings and narration starts rolling from the very first scene.

The film opens with inspector Ilavarasi (Eswari Rao) receiving a call from her higher-up asking her to investigate the murder of cop Sampath (Mime Gopi) at a plush ECR bungalow. Just as she summons the area inspector Moorthy (Venkat Prabhu) who was in the vicinity of the murder spot, enters a seemingly docile Vasanthi (Vaibhav), a constable attached to the station awaiting a promotion with yet another case. Mallika (Poorna) commits suicide reportedly by jumping off the Neelangarai Bridge.

Moorthy informs Ilavarasi that a local thug had confessed that he committed the murder of Sampath. As she starts investigating the cases, skeptical about the proceedings, she finds something fishy with Moorthy. Does she solve the case? Are the two murders connected to each other?



Lock Up

CAST: Vaibhav Reddy, Venkat Prabhu, Easwari Rao, Poorna, Vani Bhojan
DIRECTOR: S.G. Charles
RATING: ★★★

Vaibhav though initially appears as a timid cop, shines post interval when his true colors are revealed. He has done a pretty good job. Venkat Prabhu who returns to acting after a gap steals the show with his realistic performance. With his casual demeanor, he adds a new flavor to his character. Seasoned actress Eswari Rao gets a plum role and she proves her versatility shining every bit. Poorna as a maid is adequate. Vani Bhojan as Vaibhav's romantic interest hardly has any screen space.

Though the back and forth narration is interesting, at times it is a bit confusing. But the director makes it up with his fitting non-linear pattern of narration packed with ample twists and turns every alternate scene. Thankfully, there are no romantic (!) songs and the short runtime also comes to the film's advantage. But the fight sequence towards the end merely to show Vaibhav's heroism is unwarranted.

The film tries to impart a message as to how vulnerable common people get affected and become unvoiced in front of police conspiracy.

Cinematography by Santhanam Sekhar and music by Arrol Correlli go well with the mood of the genre.

Though there are minor flaws here and there, on the whole the film is an engaging thriller worth a watch at the comfort of your home.



Screenplay lacks depth

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

Going with the trend, OKS was released on OTT platform on Regal Talkies.

The movie begins with Sampath working as a centering labourer at a factory and travels back to his village after two years with sizable money to get married to his lover Vasanthi (Nikila Vimal).

In the flashback, set in a remote village near Trichy in the mid 2000, we see Sampath as an idler indulging in onbathu kuzhii (marble) game, boozing, doping and entering into unnecessary conflicts with the villagers. Now enters Vasanthi in his life. Vasanthi and her family who once were rich and flourishing now live in penury. Vasanthi never talks to anyone in the neighborhood. However, a chance conversation with Sampath lands Vasanthi in trouble. Yes, Sampath

falls in love with Vasanthi and starts stalking her. But she does not reciprocate. Sampath even goes to the extent of going to Vasanthi's house and asks for her hand. Miffed by his act, Vasanthi's family who live in the past glory and pride, suspects her and in order to prove that she is not party to this, they ask her to insult Sampath in the public view.

Meanwhile, Vasanthi regrets her act and slowly develops a liking for Sampath. The duo starts meeting without their families' knowledge. Sampath, who wants to turn a new leaf, leaves for the city promising her to return after two years.

Cut to present, when Sampath returns home, a major twist takes place, which leads to a startling climax.

Balaji looks perfect for the role of a ruffian, but needs to hone his acting skills. Nikila does not

ONBATHU KUZHII

SAMPATH
CAST: Balaji Maharaja, Nikila, Appu Kutty
DIRECTOR: Ja. Raghupathy
RATING: ★★

have much scope and is just about adequate. The versatile Appu Kutty who appears throughout the movie as Balaji's close friend plays his part well. While the first half moves in a mundane manner, post interval the film picks up momentum.

Though the director has made an honest attempt to narrate the rustic romantic drama in a realistic manner, the screenplay lacks depth. Music by Ilayaraja's.

Politics in the time of pandemic



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

The Coronavirus outbreak paralysed most activities in the State other than that of a few essential services, forcing people who were otherwise active in their own calling to go into hibernation. Of course, there were those who worked from home. But one vocation whose practitioners would not take a break even during the lockdown was politics that is neither essential nor a service.

All through the pandemic, when people's concerns shifted to issues like personal safety, health, education, livelihood, business, trade and so on, the political juggernaut continued to roll through the State with the gusto expected of it in an election year, providing the usual entertainment and mirth to those watching it.

Vignettes of men and women hobnobbing in facemasks, the definitive sign of the times, continued to pour in from all political quar-

ters, making many wonder if those meetings, get-togethers and tete-a-tetes could not have been put off to a later date after the fear of coronavirus clears off. Well, it is not like postponing a wedding or a celebration or a trip. Politics requires quick responses and immediate actions and there is no room for procrastination or waiting for the sunny day.

So, despite the restrictions on travel and looming threats of quarantine, Ku Ka Selvam, who won the Thousand Lights Assembly Constituency as a DMK candidate, took a flight to New Delhi and even drove down to the house of J P Nadda, the chief of the BJP, causing expectations on another political defection, which, by the way, has become the flavor of the season.

After taking all the trouble of rolling out a potentially explosive political firework, Selvam lighted a damp squib, saying his sojourn to the national capital was just to ask for the installation of a lift in the Nungambakkam suburban railway station, which came into international media limelight way back in 2016 when a young woman techie was killed on one of its platforms.

Selvam, who may now function as an unattached member of the Assembly as the DMK has expelled him and his officially enrolling as a BJP member could lead to his losing the MLA seat, was disgruntled like V P Duraisamy, who too visited the BJP State headquarters first during the lockdown just to greet the State President L Murugan. That Duraisamy subsequently

joined the BJP and became an office bearer is, of course, now history.

But why were these two long-time members of the DMK disgruntled? The reason cited is the sweeping changes happening within the party in the form of the next generation slowly taking charge. To put it curly, the rise of Udhayanidhi Stalin in the DMK horizon is being resented by many leaders of the grand old party. That not all those who begrudge the shifting power centres are out to jump ship is something the other political parties now hate to know.

So, there are bids to lure such leaders through the dubious method of creating rumours about their possible defection. This of course has a 'work from home' element in it that memes are

created to spread the rumours and news stories are planted secretly in newspapers. Two leaders 'Anita' Radhakrishnan and Durai Murugan had to come out with open averments reaffirming their faith in the party just to quell such speculations.

But V P Duraisamy, the trend setter, is still exuding confidence on more ejections from the DMK, though it is not clear as to what makes him believe that all would land in the lotus pond. For, the AIADMK, too, is keen on luring the angry men. Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar has openly thrown the bait to Durai Murugan, whose angst seems to arise over the delay in his elevation as general secretary of the DMK from treasurer.

That delay can be easily

blamed on the pandemic since the general council meeting called to hold the mandatory election for the post was fixed and then postponed in view of the lockdown that banned political gatherings too. But when the rest of the discussions in the party continued through video conference, the elections alone could not be held, apparently turning Durai Murugan restive.

Restive politicians are, however, not confined to the DMK alone. The DMK itself identified two of them in the BJP and brought them over to its camp. One of them was three-time MLA from Vedaranyam, S K Vedarathinam, who was earlier with the party. Of course, he returned home with a band of supporters at the local level.

Well, if these defections and enticements are like work from home political machinations, happening at the creamy layer of politics, poaching at the grassroots level is akin to the work of the frontline Covid-19 warriors. It has reportedly happened in Ariyalur district, where the BJP foot soldiers have led erstwhile PMK supporters in flocks to its camp.

Well, that is just a sampling of the goings on at the grassroots level across the State, where the pandemic or the lockdown had not prevented politicians from getting down to the ground and doing business. They have to. For, if they wait for the pandemic to be over or the lockdown lifted, 2021 elections could well be upon them and they could be late for the moment.

SHORT TAKES



Inspector B. Maheswari leading guard of honour.

Duty first, says bereaved cop

ARULOLI M. | DC
TIRUNELVELI, AUG. 15

Being dutiful is respecting the nation, proved woman inspector Maheswari, who led the guard of honour during the flag hoisting ceremony here on the 74th Independence day celebrations. Her aged father passed away around midnight, the previous day (Friday).

Inspector of the Armed reserve police force here, Maheswari did not even inform her higher ups about the demise of her 83-year-old father at her native village, Vadamadurai in Dindigul district.

Had she informed the higher authorities about her personal loss, she would have definitely been given leave, but Maheswari chose to disclose her father's demise only after the flag hoisting ceremony was over, and subsequently, based on instructions of Tirunelveli Collector Shilpa Prabakar Satish, the lady inspector was provided a vehicle to go to Dindigul, to perform her father obsequies.

The inspector's husband is also a police personnel on special duty at the Tirunelveli Medical College Hospital for the last three months, who just got cured of corona infection, and joined duty only last Thursday.

Low-key affair in Thanjavur dt

SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, AUG. 15

The 74th Independence day celebrations here on Saturday was a low-key affair. District collector M Govinda Rao hoisted the national flag and took the salute at the ceremonial police parade. With restrictions due to the pandemic, cultural events by students, which normally forms part of the Independence day celebrations, were cancelled. Masks were used by all officials and visitors and sanitizers used to clean hands. The Collector honoured 149 corona warriors from 29 departments by giving them certificates for their excellent work in preventing corona spread and taking care of the infected. The collector also honoured freedom fighters. Rubesh Kumar Meena, DIG of Police, Thanjavur range, Deshmukh Sekar Sanjay, SP, Thanjavur district, Palani, project director, DRDA, and DRO, Thanjavur, Aravindan participated in the celebrations.

In Salem, woman DSP leads rally

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC
SALEM AUG. 15

The Independence Day celebrations here were held at the Gandhi stadium, in which for the first time, a woman trainee DSP Krithika, presided and led the rally on behalf of the district police.

Leading the march-past, DSP Krithika saluted the national flag. District Collector C A Raman accepted the parade honour.

Usually, during the Independence day celebrations, Inspector of the armed reserve police would lead the parade. The Collector also gave away certificates to the best performing civil servants.

Special honour for frontline warriors in Krishnagiri

SANJEVI ANANDAN
KRISHNAGIRI, AUG. 15

Krishnagiri collector Dr S.Prabhakar after hoisting the tricolour handed over 'certificate of appreciation' to those who worked as the frontline warriors in anti-corona works. The collector after the flag hoisting thanked all those working against the spread of the deadly coronavirus in Krishnagiri. He also handed over the certificate of appreciation to over 1,800 staff in various government departments. Similar event was conducted in Dharmapuri and in which the district collector S.Malarvizhi hoisted the national flag at the district sports stadium.



Southern Railway celebrates the I-Day at Railway Stadium, Perambur, on Saturday. John Thomas, General Manager, Southern Railway, hoisted the national flag in the presence of Birendra Kumar, principal chief security commissioner, principal heads of departments and other staff. — DC



District Collector T.G. Vinay hands over an award at I-Day celebrations at AR Ground in Madurai on Saturday. — K. Manikandan



Coimbatore corporation commissioner Sravan Kumar garlands the Mahatma Gandhi statue on corporation office premises to mark 74th Independence Day on Saturday. — Vignesh B

Early footprints of freedom struggle in Ooty

NCC students greet freedom fighter

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG. 15

While the nation celebrated Independence day on Saturday with a spirit of patriotism, Director of Nilgiri Documentation Centre, D Venugopal, recalled how Ooty got entangled in a revolutionary plot for independence in the early 1930s.

Elaborating, Venugopal said, it is well-known that despite its long association with the freedom movement, protests in Ooty were mainly peaceful. There was, however, one exception when the revolutionary fervour of the Indian freedom movement of the 1920s and 1930s found its echo in Ooty.

The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army was formed in 1928 by young freedom fighters from several north Indian states under a seven-member committee. Revolutionaries Chandra Shekhar Azad and Kundan Lal were made the head of the military department. Bhagat Singh and B K Singh were to act as links. The party adopted terrorism as its policy to overthrow the British. Their declared method was by committing robberies and using the loot to purchase firearms to kill the British and other government officers, he noted.

"In March 1933, a group of Hindustan Socialist Republican Army volunteers arrived in Madras led by Sithanath Dey of Amritsar, and five of them proceeded to Ooty. On April 26 that year, they looted the Ooty branch of the Travancore National Bank. Armed with revolvers and a syringe of sulphuric acid, they entered the bank at gunpoint during business hours and forced the cashier to empty the cash box which contained Rs 3,20,606, most of which were recovered later. The men had hired the cab of a Ooty man for the job and when he objected to carrying five men, they forced

The 93-year-old freedom fighter J Hallie Gowder, a Badaga man, (Badagas constitute for the single largest ethnic community in the Nilgiris), and the lone surviving freedom fighter in the Nilgiris now, who is now confined to his house at Nanjanad village due to advancing age, received gifts from students on Saturday, as two NCC woman cadets from the Government Higher Secondary School at Nanjanand (GHSS-Nanjanad), visited him and greeted him on the Independence day, and sought his blessings, on the auspicious day.

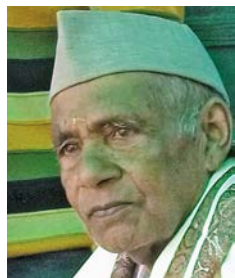
Dhanya and Kavya, both representing their school NCC unit, visited the nonagenarian freedom fighter on the advice of Subramanian, NCC officer, GHSS, Nanjanand, to make a mark this Independence day, and cheer Hallie Gowder, who is almost bedridden these days.

Dhanya said that it was a great day and occasion to meet the freedom fighter, though he could not

him out at gunpoint, bound his hand and foot and drove away with his vehicle," he added.

Four of them were intercepted the same night near Erode railway station and two of them were captured after a struggle. The other two who escaped were caught by villagers, where they tried to hide and were handed over to the police. Shortly afterwards, a case of an accidental bomb explosion in Madras led to the arrest of the other members of the gang, he added.

The accused, Shambunath, Prem Prakash and Hiralal, were charged



talk much on freedom struggle due to his fading memory. But, he was all smiles and blessed us, she added.

"It may be recalled that Hallie Gowder, during an interview to Deccan Chronicle on August 14, 2016, recalled the freedom movement in the Nilgiris during the British era, and how he joined the freedom movement at the age 14 years, and his being sentenced in a prison in Bengaluru for taking part in an agitation in the Nilgiris then. In that interview, he had also recalled the tips offered by Mahatma Gandhi on how to draft good yarn from spinning wheels, when he met the father of the nation in Chennai once during the days of freedom struggle."

under the Indian Explosive Act and other Acts. The jury then inquiring the case found the accused guilty and awarded them life imprisonment.

Hazara Singh, one of the two Punjabis accused in the bank case, was jailed in Bellary and later in Rajahmundry from where he escaped in October 1933 with the help of jail warders, but was re-arrested in 36 hours. He was deported to Andaman in 1934 along with Khushi Ram Mehta, another accused, and was released in 1939. The Bombay Chronicle reported the news on May 1, 1933, Venugopal concluded.



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami hands over Kalpana Chawla award to Senthamizh Selvi, Muthuthamal and Anandhavalli for their bravery at 74th I-Day celebrations, at Fort St George, Chennai on Saturday. — DC

WHO chief scientist honoured with CM's special award

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

Chief scientist of World Health Organisation, Soumya Swaminathan was on Saturday conferred with the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's special award, in recognition of her advisory role in combating the Covid-19 pandemic in the state.

Sowmya Swaminathan received the award from Chief Minister K Palaniswami on the 74th Independence Day celebration at Fort St George here.

The WHO representative has been offering suggestions to the state health department to step up measures in fighting the pandemic.

Later, speaking to reporters, she thanked the state government for selecting her and advised people to follow the pandemic protocols while venturing out.

"Maintain a six feet social distance, do not go out without wearing masks and be careful while venturing out", she said.

According to the World Health Organisation, Swaminathan has 30 years of experience in clinical care and research and has worked throughout her career to translate her research into impactful programmes.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister's Best Practices award was bagged by the department of treasuries, while the Greater Chennai Corporation received the second prize for conducting fever clinics across the city to break the transmis-



CM: 7.5% reservation for govt students in medical college

From P1

The Chief Minister also said that his government would provide for 7.5 per cent reservation for students who studied in government schools in medical colleges.

Listing out the measures taken for the development of agriculture in the State, he said his was a farmer friendly government.

He explained all that he had done for the development of education, for minorities and for

women.

Reminding people of his laying the foundation for the world class museum proposed to be set up in Keeladi with the artefacts unearthed during the excavations, he said a memorial would soon be inaugurated at the Marina beach here, where late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa was interred in 2016.

The memorial, shaped like a Phoenix bird, is being set up at a cost of ₹50.8 crore behind the

memorial of AIADMK founder and the late chief minister M G Ramachandran.

Hoping that the world would soon be freed from the Coronavirus crisis, Palaniswamy said that he had taken efforts to bring in new industries to the State even during the pandemic. He also referred to the committee that had set up under former RBI governor Rangarajan to pull the state out of the economic crisis brought about by the lockdown.

sion chain of Covid-19. Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation

received the certificate of appreciation for various steps undertaken to

ensure uninterrupted availability of drugs for combating coronavirus.



The 74th Independence Day celebrations in Tiruvannamalai district were held at the Armed Reserve Police grounds located in the office of the Superintendent of Police, Vengikkal, on Saturday. Collector K. S. Kandasamy hoisted the tricolour and accepted the police guard of honour, led by SP S. Aravind. In a manner of advocating social peace and harmony, the collector also released white doves and colour balloons in the air. The collector also honoured freedom fighters and disbursed welfare measures worth ₹1.95 crore to 574 beneficiaries.

— K. Senthil Nathan

Freedom fighters, corona warriors honoured

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, AUG. 15

The 74th Independence day was celebrated in the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvallur and Nagapattinam on Saturday on a dull note, since there was no public participation, no students, no march past ceremony, no mass feasting in temples and no grama sabha meetings.

In Tiruchy, Collector S Sivasubramanian, also hoisted the national flag at the Armed Reserve Police grounds and distributed certificates to 98 persons

including doctors, staff nurses, medical staff and 108 ambulance drivers, sanitary workers and others, for their dedicated service in Covid-19 prevention efforts, as well as providing medical support to the affected.

Besides placing a wreath on the war memorial at Gandhi market to mark the occasion, Sivasubramanian also visited the houses of 10 freedom fighters and honoured them at their doorsteps.

Tiruchy city corporation commissioner, S Sivasubramanian, also hoisted the national flag in the office premises, while Director, NIT-

Tiruchy, Prof Mini S Thomas, hoisted the Tricolour at NIT-T, executive director, BHEL, Tiruchy, R Padmanabhan, hoisted the national flag at BHEL premises, Divisional railway manager, Tiruchy, Ajay Kumar, hoisted the national flag at his office premises. In Karur, Collector T Anbazhagan, in Perambalur, Collector V Shantha, in Ariyalur, Collector T Rathina, in Pudukkottai, Collector B Uma Maheswari, in Tiruvallur, Collector T Anand and in Nagapattinam, Collector Praveen P Nair, hoisted the national flags in their respective districts.



MRF SCRAP SALES

MRF, a leading tyre manufacturing company is interested in disposal of process scraps generated at its plants located at Chennai, Arakonam, Perambalur (All Tamil Nadu), Pondicherry, Kottayam (Kerala), Medak, Ankenpally (Telangana), Goa and Dahej (Gujarat).

Reputed scrap contractors may respond confirming their interest in participating in an E-Auction to:

Vice President - Materials
MRF LIMITED

114, Greens Road, Chennai - 600 006.
Email: santhoshkumar.r@mrfmail.com

SHORT TAKES

Elephant ransacks house near Marudhamalai

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG. 15

A single male elephant ransacked a house near Marudhamalai triggering panic among residents in the early hours of Saturday.

According to forest sources, the elephant aged around 15 years frequently enters the residential area at the foothills of Marudhamalai close to Western Ghats triggering panic for the past couple of months.

Meanwhile, the elephant early on Saturday entered Kumaran Nagar and came near the house of one Senthil Kumar. The pachyderm knocked the kitchen window of Senthil's house while he was sleeping along with his family. It gobbled the rice, dhal and salt kept in the kitchen. On hearing the huge sound Senthil woke up and raised an alarm.

On hearing the cry of Senthil and family members, neighbours tried to scare the elephant with fire torches. The alerted forest department staff rushed to the spot, burst-crackers and chased the elephant into the nearby woods.

The residents have demanded the officials to deploy a team of forest staff at the spot to avoid the elephant from entering the area in future.

Girl commits suicide unable to pay school fee

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG. 15

A 14-year-old class 10 girl student of a private school here committed suicide after she couldn't pay her school fee.

According to police, the girl Snegamai had requested her father Muruganandam, a resident of Udayampalayam, Thirumalai Nagar, to pay the school fee many times. Following the lockdown her father had remained without sufficient income. However, he had promised to pay fee by the end of the month.

Meanwhile, the school administration allegedly asked her for fee.

A grieved Snegamai remained inside her room while her parents went to a nearby temple on Friday evening and hanged herself in the ceiling fan inside her room.

On receiving the information from the neighbours, Saravanampatti police rushed to the spot and sent the body to Coimbatore Medical College Hospital for postmortem.

Further investigation has begun.

319 Indians return from Saudi

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

As many as 319 Indian employees, who were stranded in Saudi Arabia due to the Coronavirus-induced restrictions, landed in Chennai by a private flight on Saturday.

The workers' employers arranged a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight from Jeddah to bring them to Chennai. On arrival, the passengers were provided with smooth customs and immigration clearance. As per the Health Ministry guidelines for international arrivals, the employees will undergo a mandatory quarantine for 14 days at a facility at their own cost, followed by 7 days home quarantine at their own cost or the cost of the employer.

Four Air India repatriation flights from the USA, the UK, Kuwait and Qatar brought around 562 Indians home.

Two flights with 79 onboard from the USA and 124 from the UK landed here on Friday night. Two more flights arrived here on Saturday from Kuwait and Qatar with 208 and 161 passengers respectively.

TN SOP for quarantine makes negative flyers pay heavy price

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

The new Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) introduced by the state government making self-paid quarantine facilities mandatory for Covid-19 negative passengers who are flying into the state from abroad has become an additional burden despite the central government relaxing norms allowing the negative flyers to seek exemption from institution-alised quarantine.

Based on the new SOP which came into force a couple of days ago, as many as 30 passengers, who were flown in from the UK on Saturday morning in an Air India flight, have been sent for seven-day quarantine by the authorities despite they producing a negative test report. The government

vehicle picked them from the airport and took them to a hotel in OMR, Chennai, with room rent of Rs 2,500 per day.

Rajam Nallamuthu, 63, a retired LIC employee from Adambakkam here who arrived in Chennai airport from London after a visit to her son's house, had produced a Covid-19 negative certificate issued by London Medical Laboratory on August 12 arrival. But she was sent along with other passengers to the hotel for quarantine.

Ms Nallamuthu told DC that the authorities at the airport did not take the negative report from London laboratory seriously and took her along with other passengers to the hotel. She had to pay Rs 5,000 at the hotel as entry fee.

"When I said I had a negative report, the officials

told me that I would be released after a couple of days. I am a diabetic patient. I don't know what is happening. We were brought in early in the morning. They gave two chapatis and vegetable curry as breakfast and lunch reached at only 3pm. If I require a coffee, I have to pay additional for it," she said.

She also pointed out that all the rooms in the hotel are filled with the passengers who were flown in along with her. "I don't know how much they have paid. But I had to pay Rs 5,000," she said.

According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)'s new guidelines issued on August 3, people flying into India can seek exemption from institutional quarantine if they produce a corona-negative report of the test

conducted within 96 hours of undertaking the journey.

Meanwhile, Meghanath Reddy, deputy commissioner (revenue), Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), who deals with quarantine-related matters, said the state government had adopted different guidelines despite the central government relaxing the quarantine norms. "It's the prerogative of the state government to tweak the central government's guidelines. We have adopted an 8-day mandatory quarantine. Those who produce the negative certificate will be discharged after the first test result," he said. When asked about the huge amount one has to shell out for accommodation, he said that they were planning to give three options to the passengers to address the issue.

Pondy reports 369 more corona cases

Puducherry, Aug. 15: Puducherry's Covid-19 caseload climbed to 7,355 on Saturday with 369 more people testing positive to the virus while the toll stood at 106.

Puducherry region accounted for a big chunk of cases in the Union Territory during last 24 hours ending 10 am on Saturday registering 317 fresh infections on a single day.

Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release that 369 new cases were identified after examination of 1,089 samples during last 24 hours.

He said that 3025 cases were active, while 4,224 patients recovered and were discharged so far.

However, no deaths were reported during the last 24 hours, he added.

The identification of 369 cases projected the rate of positivity here at 33.88 percent while fatality and recovery rates were 1.44 percent and 57.43 percent respectively.

The health department has tested so far 53,503 samples and found 44,714 to be negative. Results of examination of remaining samples were awaited, the Director said.

— PTI



One of the wall posters put up in Theni district.

— DC

AIADMK functionaries warned of airing their views on party matters

From P1

Then they went to meet Palaniswami and were closeted with him for 40 minutes before returning to Pannersevelam's house again. After their second visit to Palaniswami's house, it was decided that the two leaders would bury the hatchet and issue a joint statement which had been the norm in the party ever since the two factions came together earlier.

The statement warned party functionaries and cadre of severe action if they expressed their

views on party matters without forethought and without the approval of party high command. 'By exchanging views we are not going to achieve anything,' the statement said urging those taking part in media debates to highlight the achievements of the AIADMK government.

The party high command would discuss all key policy issues and stand on alliance democratically and take decisions that would reflect the sentiments of the cadre, the statement said.

So, there was no need for

causing any flutter and give opportunities for those who want to vanquish the party, it said.

In the past few days party functionaries with no background had been expressing their views and it had become a debating issue for others, it said and added that it should not happen again. Everyone would be bound by the decisions of the high command and the party would maintain a military like discipline on that as it had been the wont during the late J Jayalalithaa's regime.

Lankan don case: CB-CID denied more time to quiz accused

Coimbatore, Aug. 15: The Chief Judicial Magistrate Court here on Saturday turned down the CB-CID plea to extend the custody of the three accused in the mysterious death of Sri Lankan don Angoda Lokka on July 3. The court had already given three days' custody to the CB-CID for interrogation of the accused. The accused were produced before the Magistrate P Sri Kumar (in-charge) this afternoon and the investigating agency sought extension of the custody by another three days, which was rejected by court. — PTI

Digital banners wish victory for Kamala in her ancestral village

Nagapattinam, Aug. 15: A remote village in Tamil Nadu has shot to fame following the nomination of US senator Kamala Harris as the vice-presidential candidate by the Democratic Party for the American Presidential elections 2020. Harris' maternal grandparents belong to this village and it is gaining attention ever since the announcement. The agrarian village of Painganadu is located near Mannargudi in Tiruvavur district near here in the Cauvery delta. Harris' mother, Shyamala,

Kamala's maternal grandparents belong to Painganadu and it is gaining attention ever since the announcement

was the daughter of PV Gopalan a high-ranking civil servant who fought against corruption.

Her grandmother Rajam belonged to the nearby Thulasenthirapuram village. Though Kamala Harris' ancestors left the village, they had kept their connection with the village temple intact.

Gopalan and other members of his family have made donations for temple renovation during various periods. As recent as 2014, a donation was made in the name of Kamala Harris, says the temple trustee Ramani. Digital banners have been put up in the village wishing her victory. People of the area have been sharing photographs of the village, temple, her ancestral home and plaque in the temple carrying information about the donations made by the family members on social media. — PTI



<<<< (Above and left) Fire and rescue personnel demonstrate monsoon preparedness in the presence of Priya Ravichandran, Deputy Director, Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services, at fire service quarters, in Mint on Saturday. — DC



Indian Coast Guard commences joint coastal patrol (JCP) by embarking marine police personnel onboard ICG ships to develop synergy and provide sea training to marine police personnel for enhanced coastal security. JCP is being instituted to enable implementation of Coastal Security Scheme through capacity building of marine police in the overall coastal security construct. — DC

Over 2K year old inscriptions found near Vandavasi

AUSPIN BAYLIS & K. SENTHIL NATHAN
TIRUVANNAMALAI, AUG. 15

The remains and traces of human settlers of the ancient neolithic period stone tablets were allegedly found in Keezh Namandi village near Vandavasi in Tiruvannamalai district. Based on information provided by M Palani, a staff working in the electricity board, secretary, Historical Research Center, S. Balamurugan, research-cum-historians led by Prof A Sudhakar, Palanichamy and A Venkatesh examined the place and conducted research there.

On inspection of the place located south of Keezh Namadi, the research team found large pits that were used for burial of ancient humans, dating roughly to 2000 years back.

This cemetery like area contains roughly over 300 stone tablets containing some inscriptions. Inside the pits, covered under the stone tablets, the team found the skeletal

remains of humans who died long back, the materials they used, their earthenware, iron weapons, pots, and also learnt about their burial customs.

The stone tablets in circular shapes measured between three metres to five metres. It is also customary to bury small boulders in a circle around the burial site in half to make them recognisable.

Besides these, the research team also found ancient 'Cub Marks Stones' in four places. Other such places where such stones could be found are Karnataka in South India, and in Pudukottai, Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu.

The research team also found two sharp rocks about two meters high, called 'Nedungal' or 'K u t h u k k a l'. Archaeologists are yet to make final conclusions regarding the studies about the location of the tombstone, the pillar, the black and red pottery, the iron weapons, and the use of iron weapons.

Cops launch hunt for gang who robbed man

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

The police are looking for a gang of robbers who attacked and robbed a 36-year-old man in Chengalpattu district on Friday night.

The victim has been identified as Isaki Selvam (36), a resident of Vallanchery near Guduvanchery.

He runs a hotel near his house.

The incident happened on Friday night when Isaki was returning home in his four-wheeler after meeting a friend in Maraimalai Nagar.

At around 9 pm, while he was on the Maraimalai Nagar-Vallanchery high road, a gang of four robbers waylaid his car. Police said they allegedly broke the vehicle glass and threatened him to part with a gold chain he was wearing. When Isaki refused, they stabbed him with a knife and fled the spot with the gold chain.

The victim was spotted by a passerby, who alerted the ambulance and the police.

He was rushed to a private hospital in Guduvanchery, where he is undergoing treatment.

The Maraimalai Nagar police have registered a case and begun an investigation.

At around 9 pm, while he was on the Maraimalai Nagar-Vallanchery high road, a gang of four robbers waylaid his car. Police said they allegedly broke the vehicle glass and threatened him to part with a gold chain he was wearing. When Isaki refused, they stabbed him with a knife and fled the spot with the gold chain.



SHORT TAKES

PRANAB CONTINUES TO BE ON VENTILATOR

New Delhi, Aug. 15: The condition of former president Pranab Mukherjee remained unchanged on Saturday and he continued to be on ventilator support, doctors attending on him said.

They said his vital and clinical parameters are stable and are being closely monitored by a team of specialists.

The 84-year-old former president was admitted to the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi Cantonment on Monday and was operated upon for the removal of a clot in the brain. He had also tested positive for Covid-19.

Mukherjee's office also posted pictures of the former president unfurling the national flag on Independence Day in the past and wishing fellow citizens on the day.

"On behalf of #CitizenMukherjee, his office recalls some of the recent Independence Day celebrations, he so enthusiastically participated in and would have never missed. Today also the Tricolor flies high.

"As he recuperates, let us repledge ourselves to a free, democratic and plural India that he stands for and hope that he is back to celebrate these core values of our nationhood at the earliest," his office tweeted on his behalf.

PILGRIMAGE TO VAISHNO DEVI TO RESUME TODAY

Jammu, Aug. 15: Pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Vaishno Devi in the Trikuta Hills of Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district will resume from Sunday after remaining suspended for nearly five months in view of the coronavirus pandemic, officials said on Saturday. The yatra was suspended on March 18.

Ramesh Kumar, the Chief Executive Officer of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board said the pilgrimage will resume from Sunday, and in the first week there shall be a cap of 2,000 pilgrims each day of which 1,900 would be from Jammu and Kashmir and the remaining 100 from outside.

The situation will be reviewed thereafter and decisions will be taken accordingly, he said.

"People will be allowed to undertake the pilgrimage after registration only through online in order to avoid any assembly at the yatra registration counter."

The pilgrims will be required to install Aarogya Setu App on their mobile phones. Wearing face masks and face cover is mandatory and they will have to undergo thermal scanning at yatra entry points, the SMVSB CEO said.

Children below 10 years, pregnant women, persons with comorbidities and those above 60 years have been advised to avoid the pilgrimage, he said, adding the advisory for this group will be revisited when the situation normalises.

RAINS INUNDATE SEVERAL PARTS OF HYDERABAD

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 15

Several areas in the city, including Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills, were inundated following two days of rain. The inundation was intense in Panjagutta, Ameerpet, Khairatabad, Basheerbagh, Hyderguda, Koti, Begum Bazaar, Abids, Nampally, Himayathnagar, SR Nagar, Madhapur, Gachibowli, Raidurg, Kukatpally and Lakdikapul. Not only low-lying areas but even those on higher ground came under water.

Indian Meteorological Department-Hyderabad has predicted that incessant rains would continue for the next three days and the city seems set for a long haul.

While this is so, this correspondent saw only a few officials out on the field to address public grievances and resolve the inundation problem.

There is also another matter of concern. The GHMC asked officials to vacate dilapidated structures, especially on hilly terrain like Jubilee Hills and Banjara Hills. Soaked with two days of rain, and the prospect of more to come, there is a fear that some of these buildings could collapse. Officials were asked to keep an eye on cellar excavation at construction and seize the properties if work was going on.



ITBP personnel celebrate the 74th Independence Day on the banks of Pangong Tso, in Ladakh. Senior army commanders of India and China on Saturday held extensive talks in taking forward the disengagement process along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at a number of friction points including in Pangong Tso and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, people familiar with the developments said.

CJAR: Convicting Bhushan is stifling right to free speech

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 15

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) on Saturday "strongly" condemned the top court verdict holding lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt of court for his two tweets and asserted that it amounts to stifling the right to free speech and expression.

Bhushan is convener of CJAR.

Bhushan was convicted for criminal contempt of court for his two tweets that had criticized the role of the Supreme Court in the destruction of democracy by the executive since 2014 and the role of past four Chief Justices including incumbent CJI Sharad A. Bobde and suspending physical court hearing in the wake of Covid pandemic.

"We feel that Mr Bhushan's two tweets being expressions of his anguish and a bonafide criticism of the court and the Chief Justice of India, are fully protected under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India and cannot be stifled by a such a conviction", said the statement by CJAR.

While the important cases concerning the

● **THE SUPREME COURT** on Friday held activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his two derogatory tweets against the judiciary saying they cannot be said to be a fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary made in the public interest.

● **POINTING OUT** that the judiciary commands respect through its impartial and effective decisions and interpretation of law, the CJAR said that respect and dignity cannot be demanded from citizens on the threat of contempt.

rights of millions are being adjourned for weeks and months, the CJAR in its statement has said, "The haste with which the Court has proceeded to hear and convict Mr Bhushan is unseemly and sends a message of stern consequence to those who choose to express themselves in manners that are not palatable to Judges."

Pointing out that the judiciary commands respect through its impartial and effective deci-

sions and interpretation of law, the CJAR said that respect and dignity cannot be demanded from citizens on the threat of contempt.

The criminal contempt to prop up the court's dignity is an archaic, obsolete law, in long disuse in its country of origin, and abolished in several other countries, says the statement.

The Supreme Court, the statement says has enjoyed a "hallowed status" due to the work of progressive and thoughtful judges who have expanded human rights and defended liberty.

Seeking to erase the stifling law from statute book, the CJAR says it has to be ensured that it is not used to "silence opinions that seek accountability and reforms in the functioning of the judiciary".

Urging all the judges of the top court to reconsider decision to convict Bhushan of criminal contempt, as it has hurt the "prestige and dignity" of the court, the CJAR has said, "Once hailed as one of the "most powerful Constitutional courts" in the world, it is unfortunate that the court is intolerant of even the most temperate and well intentioned criticism."

Cong: Why was China not named?

Modi neither mentioned China nor Pak

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 15

The Congress again trained its guns on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not naming China in the Independence Day speech.

Speaking to reporters after Prime Minister's address on the Independence Day, Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said all Indians should ask the government this Independence Day what it was doing to protect the country and push China back.

He said, "Each and every Congress worker and all 130 crore Indians are proud of our armed forces and have full faith in them. We salute the armed forces for giving China an apt reply every time there has been an attack. But what about those who are sitting in power. Why are they scared of mentioning China's name."

In his Independence Day speech from the ramparts of Red Fort, the Prime Minister delivered a sharp message to China and Pakistan, declaring that the armed forces

WILL NOT OPEN SCHOOLS IN DELHI UNLESS FULLY CONVINCED, SAYS AK

New Delhi, Aug. 15: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said that the Delhi government will not open schools unless it is "fully convinced" about the improved Covid-19 situation in the city.

Delivering his Independence Day speech, Kejriwal said the Covid-19 situation in the

city is "quite under control" as compared to what it was two months back.

"I meet people and get messages from them asking not to open schools. I want to assure them that we care about their children as much as they do. Unless fully convinced, we are not going to open the schools," he said.

- PTI

deployed along the borders with the two countries have given a fitting reply to those who sought to challenge India's sovereignty.

However, he did not take the names of the two countries.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi also released an Independence Day message.

She said, "It has been 60 days since Col. Santosh Babu and 20 soldiers have been martyred. Our biggest tribute to their supreme sacrifice would be to end Chinese occupation of Indian territory."

In the last couple of weeks the Congress has been demanding that the central government comes clean on the 'infiltration by Chinese army' in eastern Ladakh.

The opposition party also criticised the government for its *atmanirbhar* (self reliant) slogan and questioned how it will keep the country's freedom when it has sold 32 public sector undertakings, handed over the railways and airports to private hands and attacked Life Insurance Corporation of India and Food Corporation of India.

Work on 3 Covid vaccines on, says Modi

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 15

The coronavirus cases in India on Saturday officially went past 25.26 lakh with 65,002 fresh detections.

In one day, as many as 996 deaths were reported taking India's total fatalities to 49,036 as per union health ministry's bulletin.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said three vaccines of coronavirus are at different stages of testing in India and the

government has a plan to ensure that a vaccine, when approved, reaches every Indian in the least amount of time.

India also touched another peak of posting the highest recoveries of Covid-19 cases in a single day after 57,381 patients were discharged in the past 24 hours.

The health ministry officials said with such a high level of recoveries, India's Recovery Rate has soared past 71.17 per cent.

Officials added 32

States/UTs have exceeded the 50 per cent RR mark and 12 States/UTs have exceeded the national Recovery Rate.

"With more patients recovering and being discharged from hospitals and home isolation, the total recoveries have crossed the 18 lakh mark on Saturday. The gap between recovered patients and active Covid-19 cases has increased and crossed 11 lakh," officials said "The current active cases (6,68,220) compose of

the actual case load of the country. It is 26.45% of the total positive cases on Saturday, registering further drop in the last 24 hours," officials added.

India's Case Fatality Rate is 1.94 per cent at present. According to health economist Rijo M. John, 58% of cases and 72% of deaths come from 50 districts.

"The virus has indeed spread far and wide. States with increasing test positive rates should also be increasing tests per mil-

lion per day significantly. States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Delhi are doing close to 40 to 70% of their daily tests using Rapid Antigen kits and many are not using their full capacity of RT-PCR," Mr John said.

He added that while few of the big burden states seem to have either reduced the daily new cases or plateaued for now, most are seeing new daily highs and 35 States/UTs now have at least a 1000 plus cases.

FIGHTING | COVID Health minister says upto 20,000 daily cases likely in Aug-Sept

Kerala readies an army of volunteers

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 15

With Kerala health minister K. K. Shailaja predicting a daily spike of 15,000 to 20,000 cases in the state in August-September period, the state government is mobilizing all possible resources including an army of volunteers to fight the situation.

From 5,623 cases on July 6, the cases went up to 41,277 cases on August 14, registering a growth rate of more than 5.5.

In fact Kerala stood fourth in terms of growth rate during this period after Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar.

While the state recorded 1000-plus cases on five days in July, barring August 3 Kerala has

reported more than 1,000 cases on all days till August 14.

With the cases growing at a much higher rate than expected, the high level expert group on Covid-19 constituted by the state government believes that Kerala would peak by mid-September and a slide can be expected only after October.

Keeping in mind the projected spike, the state government has appealed to volunteers in the age group of 18-50 to join the Covid Brigade.

These volunteers would be trained and equipped to meet any emergency situation arising in the state.

The government has requested doctors both from modern medicine and Indian system of medicine, non-medical profes-

● **KERALA ON SATURDAY** recorded the biggest single day spike in Covid-19 with 1,608 cases even as 803 people recovered from the disease.

● **AS MANY** as seven deaths were reported taking the toll to 146.

● **FROM 5,623 CASES** on July 6, the cases went up to 41,277 cases on August 14, registering a growth rate of more than 5.5.

sionals whose services can be used for Covid centre management and data entry and a group of people who will be ready to take up any task.

The volunteers have been asked to register their names and other

details on the following website - covid19.jagratha.kerala.nic.in

The government has set a target of 2.36 lakh volunteers drawn from 941 panchayats, 87 municipalities, six corporations. It has also planned to give remuneration for such work permissible under the existing rules.

Earlier, the government had approached 1,640 doctors who retired from service since 2012 to enlist their services for Covid-19 management.

About 14,000 pain and palliative care workers are being deployed effectively in the state.

The list of students who are in the final year of nursing course in the state has also been prepared. They will be enlisted for appropriate tasks in the

coming days.

Meanwhile, Kerala on Saturday recorded the biggest single day spike in Covid-19 with 1,608 cases even as 803 people recovered from the disease.

The active cases in the state at the moment are 14,891.

Malappuram district recorded the highest cases with 362, followed by Thiruvananthapuram 321, Kozhikode 151, Alappuzha 118 and Ernakulam 106.

As many as seven deaths were reported taking the toll to 146. Of the new cases 1,409 contracted the infection through contact, 74 came from abroad, 90 from other states, the source of infection among 112 is yet to be ascertained and 31 health workers also got infected.

Telangana crosses 90,000-mark with 1,863 new cases

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 15

Telangana state has crossed the 90,000 mark in the number of Covid-19 cases, with health authorities reporting 1,863 more cases as on Friday evening. They said that 10 people died from Covid-19 disease in the 24-hour period between Thursday and Friday evening.

If the trend of more than 1,500 cases a day continues, the state is expected to hit the one lakh mark by the end of the next week.

In its Covid-19 bulletin for August 14, released on Saturday morning, the health department said that of the 1,863 new cases, 394 were from the GHMC area while the rest were from the 32 districts.

As has been its practice with respect to the release of Covid-19 data, the health department has not revealed from where the 10 deaths occurred, or if they occurred in government hospitals or private hospitals.

AP has 8,732 new cases, 87 deaths

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh registered 8,732 new Covid-19 cases, scaling up the tally to 2,81,817 and recorded 87 deaths taking the toll to 2,562 in the last 24 hours.

The state health depart-

ODISHA BEATS LOCKDOWN, GETS ₹20,000CR INVESTMENTS

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 15

Despite Covid-19 crisis, prospective investors are coming to Odisha and have invested in the mineral rich coastal state. During this pandemic, the state has received investments to the tune of ₹20,000 crore.

In an exclusive interview with this newspaper on Saturday, Dr Nitin B. Jawale, Managing Director of Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha, said the state had emerged as the top most investment destination among all other Indian states last year.

The fresh investments to the tune of ₹20,000 cr received during lockdown period will create employment opportunities for 16,504 people, he said.

"Odisha is one of the fastest growing states and is a land of several opportunities. The state has performed well in the past few years and has marked itself as one of the most attractive investment destinations. Odisha has caught the attention of many companies which has led them to invest into various sectors in the state. These sectors include food processing, chemicals and petrochemicals, metal and steel, textile and garment, tourism and information technology and IT-enabled services (IT & ITes)," he said.

The Odisha government, in order to overcome the challenge of direct and physical interactions with the prospective investors, adopted tech-options, including video-conferencing and virtual meetings.

"Attracting investments is a continuous process. Apart from our rich natural resources like minerals, water and land, skilled human resources and good physical infrastructure, we have political stability in our state. These positive aspects have always helped us woo the investors, very successfully," said Mr Jawale.

He said that several foreign firms, including American companies, have expressed their interest for investment in Odisha.

ment in its Covid-19 bulletin released on Saturday out of a overall total of 28,12,197 samples tested so far in the state, 1,91,117 infected patients have been discharged while 88,138 patients are taking treatment in various hospitals.

Among new confirmed infections, East Godavari has topped with 1,126 followed by 959 in Chittoor, 894 in Visakhapatnam, 851 in Anantapur, 734 in Kurnool, 638 in Srikakulam, 612 in West Godavari, 609 in Guntur, 572 in Nellore, 561 in Vizianagaram, 489 in Prakasam, 389 in Kadapa and 298 in Krishna.

Biggest hike of 8,800 cases in Karnataka

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Saturday reported the biggest single-day spike of over 8,800 new cases of COVID-19 and 114 related fatalities. With this, the total number of infections rose to 2,19,926 and death toll to 3,831 in the state, the health department said.

The day also saw 6,629 patients getting discharged after recovery.

Out of 8,818 fresh cases, 3,495 of them were from Bengaluru urban alone, it said.

The previous biggest single-day spike was recorded on Friday with 7,908 cases.

DECCAN Chronicle

16 AUGUST 2020



Krishna Shastri
Devulapalli

Off the beaten track

Who will I be when I look at Souza?

A couple of years ago, at an out-of-town gig I was bafflingly offered (and unwisely accepted), I had to spend time in a space that had a lot of Art. Art with an 'A'. In fact, the space was so filled with Art that, had I needed to thumb my idiot head to a bloody puree, an urge I felt almost immediately after setting foot at said venue, there was no wall remaining to do it on.

All valuable, super-tasteful, painfully curated art, I was told. By everyone who had been there before me. Which was a rare privilege in itself, apparently, if one went by the paeans written about the place and its equally artistic owner almost like it was a rite of passage. (Not too many write-ups about his unyielding fist – judging by how much I had been paid, though – I noticed.)

So formidable was the arty reputation of the person, so admiring the intakes of breath at his mere mention that one couldn't be faulted for thinking his early morning efforts produced delicate art installations worthy of Sotheby's.

After about half-an-hour of inescapable, overpowering art inhalation, I excused myself for a minute, rushed out into the anything but artistic street on which the establishment was ironically located and took deep, life-affirming whiffs of the overflowing garbage bin nearby. So many artists, so much imagination, so much time, so much love, so much sacrifice. Nailed to those four walls. With apologies to Winston Churchill, never, I felt, had so much been created by so many for so few.

Call me middle-class, but I've always had a deep suspicion of art



So who are you, my dear art collector, when you look at the Souza? Or the Husain? Or the Sher-Gil?

collectors.

At a very basic level, it is because I am yet to meet a man or woman (I include the tasteful, if 'careful', owner of the aforementioned establishment) who possesses valuable art who has struck me as, how do I put it, warm. And I have met many.

That got me thinking. Could it be because warmth (which is basically about giving) and a mindset that encourages hoarding (which is what collecting really is) rarely go together?

Because there is something cold, calculated and cynical about the collector's process: totally ignoring Saraswati in early life — for how else can one ingratiate oneself to Lakshmi — and using the ruthlessly acquired, jealously guarded, disposable Lakshmi later to slide up to Saraswati, feigning affection, appreciation, understanding... only to grab her in a headlock and nail her to a wall.

The collector, as has recently come to light yet again (via Messrs Mehul Choksey and Nirav Modi, among others), is someone who equates art with imprisonment.

Art is to be possessed, he thinks. Maniacally. And held hostage in his many homes. Art is to be shown-off, to philistine buddies who know even less about it than he does, at exclusive cocktail dos. Art is a boast. Art is libido. Art is a side-dish. Art is a framed cheque. Art is a concubine in his harem. To be swapped perhaps for more attractive models. And in extreme cases, when space has run out, but the money hasn't, art is a sex slave, procured by whatever means, to be stuffed away remorselessly into secret basements, lockers and pits dug in the garden.

Whereas what else is art but the opposite: freedom.

Let's speak of Al Pacino for a bit. Because it's always good to speak of Al Pacino. In the 1970s, when a young Pacino was preparing to play the role of Frank Serpico, the New York cop who blew the whistle on a corrupt NYPD, he apparently met the man and asked him what he thought was a pretty straightforward question.

"Why didn't you just take the money, the bribes that were offered to you, for a while," the actor reportedly said, "and give it to charity?"

Story goes that the real-life Frank Serpico fixed his soon-to-be celluloid counterpart with a gimlet eye and said "Hell, if I did that, who would I be when I listened to Beethoven?"

So who are you, my dear art collector, when you look at the Souza? Or the Husain? Or the Sher-Gil?

Krishna Shastri Devulapalli is a humour writer, novelist, columnist and screenwriter

Subhani



PM's 'shopping list' had no substance, only words



Aakar Patel

Last week, Amit Shah's police in Delhi filed an FIR against the Asha workers for protesting. Perhaps Mr Modi does not know. TV channels do not report such things as much...

natural wealth but didn't say why his new environmental policy was eroding safeguards to protect this wealth. He spoke about India importing wheat in the past, which had changed. Perhaps he did not know that this was because of an American scientist, Norman Borlaug, and his work on dwarf wheat which led to the Green Revolution here.

He said that we would win against the coronavirus. But how would this victory be achieved and what would it look like? What happened to the 21-day Mahabharat he said we would need to fight? We are still fighting 130 days later, and in fact we have raced almost to the top of the global infected chart. Victory seems to be a hollow word.

At some point, I switched off because he was rambling about unconnected things — ports, airports, Jan Dhan accounts, highways, EMIs, RBI, middle class, GST, the MSME sector, carbon neutral model, national education policy, dolphins of two types, innovation, optical fibre, sanitary pads, gas pipelines, the Covid vaccine, houses for migrant labour — and it was hard to focus.

He said many times that this thing or that thing could never have been imagined by anyone in the past. Perhaps he should have said it could not be imagined by him.

There was something about another ID card to add to our Aadhaar, PAN, Voter ID — that would bring better health. He raised Kashmir but didn't speak about its people. He

said some delimitation work was on there and that it would benefit Kashmir's chief minister and MLAs, but it may have slipped his mind that it doesn't have either MLAs or a chief minister or statehood. He said not one word about the Kashmiris he has locked up and denied connectivity.

He was evasive about China. He raised his voice even louder and began screaming about India's unity and sovereignty. He spoke about 20 jawans in Ladakh but he couldn't even name China. He said the world had seen what had been achieved, though even we Indians don't know because Mr Modi has himself said nothing had happened and nobody had come.

All in all, it was like reading a laundry list or shopping list. There was no substance and no focus on a subject that could have been spoken about at length. How will we manage the recession in which millions of us currently on the cusp are likely to slip back into poverty? How will migrants get back to cities when rather than 16,000 daily trains only 260 special ones are running? What will happen to middle class urban individuals who have to pay rent and school fees and have lost their jobs?

It may have been a lot better for him to spend time on that rather than just reel off a list. Perhaps he has left that for his next speech, though I don't really plan on listening to it.

Aakar Patel is a writer and columnist

The Prime Minister said we were blessed with natural wealth but didn't say why his new environmental policy was eroding safeguards to protect this wealth

LETTERS

WELCOME JUDGMENT

The judgment pronounced against Mr Prashant Bhushan is very apt and correct. The freedom given for speech and writing saw many people misusing it in excessive doses, often bordering on libel, vulgarity wanton defamation and accusation of those not in their good books. Many Indians, who anoint themselves as all-knowing 'intellectuals', misuse this freedom to the detriment of others. It is good that those who harbour excessive estimation of their own smartness and intelligence should understand that there can be nothing called "unfettered freedom".

B.S. Jayaraman
via email

HISTORIC BATTLES

THIS REFERS TO the article Why Ayodhya was not like battle for freedom, by Anand K. Sahay (Aug. 14). As we are completing 73 years of India's independence it seems to be an exceptional year in various fields marking the downfall in the economy due to pandemic outbreak, which later resulted in several deaths due to acute poverty, jobs being laid off, closure of all religious places and educational institutions. While these were the negative aspects, on the other hand we had the long awaited bhoomi puja of Ram temple at Ayodhya which has a significance in the country's history. While we as citizens have been witnessing the scenario of bad and good, it was inappropriate for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in commemorating the day of bhoomi puja (Aug. 5) at Ayodhya with that of India's independence. They are in fact two separate events that mark their own history. Return of Ram Lalla to his birth place is significantly observed as a sacred and joyful occasion while Indian independence denotes struggles, deaths and sacrifices.

Jacqueline Netto
Chennai

BENGALURU VIOLENCE

LARGE SCALE VIOLENCE nd arson let loose by the mobs belonging to radical Muslim outfits following a derogatory post in Facebook about the Prophet in Bengaluru deserves strongest condemnation from all conscientious and law abiding citizens of the country. Even if the Facebook post is offensive, denigrating and hurting the religious sentiments, due legal process needs to be followed. The hooligans who had attacked the symbols of the state, caused the destruction of public and private properties which eventually led to the loss of three human lives and scores injured must be brought to justice and punished in accordance with due process of law.

M. Jeyaram
Sholavandan

HOW MUCH LONGER?

SOCIAL DISTANCING is a public health practice that aims to prevent sick people from coming in contact with healthy people. It can include large-scale measures like cancelling group events or closing public spaces, as well as individual decisions such as avoiding crowds. The goal of social distancing is to slow down the outbreak and reduce the burden on the health infrastructure. Experts describe this as flattening the curve. With Covid-19 touching 150 days of spread, we are caught up in this stigma. How long will this continue?

C.K. Subramaniam
Navi Mumbai

It's official: Equal credit must go to all for Rajasthan patch-up

Eggshell walk

The truce in Rajasthan has posed a piquant situation for Congress Party spokespersons. There were three Gandhis who were to be credited. In addition, Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot were both to be praised. Randeep Singh Surjewala led by example. Acknowledging Sonia Gandhi's leadership, the AICC head of media and communication attributed the resolution of the Rajasthan political crisis to Rahul Gandhi and thanked Priyanka Gandhi for her role in it. In one single line. Next he went on to admire both Gehlot's large-heartedness and Sachin Pilot's prudence. A template was set. Many Congress leaders, particularly in-house TV talking heads, are worried these days as fulsome praise for Priyanka Gandhi has the potential of upsetting Team Rahul, as her brother is all set to return as the 87th president of the Congress Party.

Restless Scindia

Jyotiraditya Scindia seems to be getting restless over the delay in his induction as a Union Cabinet minister. The Scindia camp is now mounting pressure in the guise of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly bypolls, arguing that the former Maharaja of Gwalior's induction in the Narendra Modi government would enhance the BJP's prospects in 27 Assembly seats. Some overenthusiastic supporters are even sending messages that Mr Scindia would get the railways portfolio.

An internal BJP survey has reportedly given the ruling BJP a mere 50 per cent chance of success in the Madhya Pradesh bypolls.

Overdue bypolls

The future seems tense for some BJP ministers in Madhya Pradesh. There is no sign of the bypolls in the state even as the clock is ticking. There are 14 ministers in the Shviraj Singh Chouhan cabinet who are



By WAQYANAWIS

not members of the Assembly. If the polls are held by September-end or early October, senior ministers belonging to the Scindia

camp, Govind Singh Rajput and Tulsi Selawat, may lose their ministerial berths.

Mahesh's 'grouse'

Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt is an unhappy man these days. More than the controversy over Sushant Singh Rajput's death or various nepotism allegations, Bhatt is upset over the news of Sanjay Dutt's lung cancer. For him, Sanju has been like a son. What offends Bhatt the most is the venom and organised hate spewed against the trailer of *Sadak 2* in which Sanjay Dutt is playing a lead role. Why can't Sanjay Dutt be spared in his vulnerable state?

Father figure

Pranab Mukherjee's serious illness has been become a cause of concern for many, cutting across party lines. He has been a towering figure in national politics from the days of Indira Gandhi to the Narendra Modi era. As former president, Bharat Ratna and a

Union minister for decades, Mukherjee had a unique position to talk to Modi, Rajnath Singh, Sonia Gandhi, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Nitish Kumar, Sitaram Yechury, K Chandrasekhar Rao, Chandrababu Naidu, and Mamata Banerjee with equal ease. For the Congress, Mukherjee remained a father-figure even after becoming 'apolitical'. His daily appointments used to have a heavy dose of visitors from the grand old party seeking his informal advice.

Sanjay Jha's prospects

Sanjay Jha is a worried man. Suspended from the Congress party for speaking and writing out of turn, he was repeatedly counting a lot on Sachin Pilot and other dissidents. With Pilot's *ghar wapsi*, Jha's hopes are now with Shashi Tharoor and Manish Tiwari battling for internal party democracy.

The writer is a keen observer of the goings-on in backrooms of power

IN BRIEF

Fish kills angler in Australia

Sydney: A 56-year-old fisherman has died in Australia after being hit by a fish which jumped into his boat, police said on Saturday. "The man had been fishing with family and friends on Darwin Harbour when he was struck in his chest by a large fish," Northern Territory police said. The party returned the man to shore, where paramedics administered CPR. "Sadly, the man passed away," police said. "This appears to be a freak incident which is hugely distressing for the people in the boat and other family and friends of the man." It was not immediately clear what type of fish was involved. In a similar incident nearby in 2018, a woman narrowly survived when she was fishing and her throat was slashed by a mackerel.

Fire engulfs Athens recycling plant

Athens: A large fire engulfed a plastics recycling plant in the north of Athens on Saturday, sending up large clouds of toxic thick smoke that led to the partial closure of the national highway. More than 49 firefighters and two helicopters are battling the blaze that broke out in the suburb of Metamorfosi, the Athens News Agency reported. The northern national highway from the Greek capital to the central city of Lamia was closed because of poor visibility but was later partially opened. The authorities have urged people living nearby to keep their doors and windows closed and avoid walking outside because of the toxic smoke. For now the fire has been contained inside the factory but because of the plastics that are burning, it is difficult to put out the flames, according to firefighters.

Josephine Storm churns closer to US

Miami: Tropical Storm Kyle was moving away from the mid-Atlantic coast of the United States early on Saturday as Tropical Storm Josephine continued its crawl toward islands in the Caribbean. Threats to land appeared to be minimal from both storms, according to the US National Hurricane Center's 5 am advisories. Kyle was centered 280 miles (450 kilometers) southeast of Providence, Rhode Island, while Josephine was 310 miles (500 kilometers) east of the northern Leeward Islands. Both storms had maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph), forecasters said. Josephine was tracking west-northwest at 15 mph (24 kph), while Kyle was churning east-northeast at 21 mph (33 kph). No coastal watches or warnings were in effect for either storm. Josephine was forecast to bring 1 to 3 inches (3 to 8 centimeters) of rain to parts of the northern Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

SURFER SAVED AFTER FRIEND PUNCHES SHARK

Sydney, Aug. 15: A woman has survived a great white shark attack on Australia's east coast after her surfing companion repeatedly punched it until it let her go. Paramedics were called to Shelly Beach at Port Macquarie, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of Sydney, on Saturday morning after the 35-year-old woman was attacked while surfing. She was taken to a local hospital with serious leg injuries, but has since been flown to a nearby bigger hospital where she will undergo surgery. New South Wales state police said the woman and a man were surfing when she was bitten on the right calf and the back of her thigh. Her companion then punched the estimated 3-meter (10-foot) shark until it let her go. "We've had some really serious and tragic shark encounters over the past couple of months along the coastline, so to paddle out of your own safety zone, into an area where you know there is a large shark, I think is amazing ... a tremendous act of bravery," state Surf Life Saving chief executive Steven Pearce said. Beaches in Port Macquarie have been closed for 24 hours as authorities attempt to track the shark. There have been five fatal shark attacks in Australian waters in 2020, higher than the country's average of three deadly attacks a year.

Chilling out in hot Dubai

Employees of an Emirati Ice company drop blocks of ice in a swimming pool amid soaring summer temperatures in the Gulf emirate of Dubai on Saturday. — AFP



Robert Trump

TRUMP VISITS BROTHER ROBERT TRUMP IN HOSPITAL

Washington, Aug. 15: President Donald Trump on Friday visited his brother Robert who has been hospitalised in New York and who the president described as "having a hard time." The details of Robert Trump's illness were not immediately clear. "I have a wonderful brother. We've had a great relationship for a long time," Trump told reporters on Friday. "He's in the hospital right now. He's having a hard time." The president, who is expected to spend the weekend at his New Jersey golf resort, arrived at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan on Friday afternoon. Speaking about his brother in Washington earlier in the day, Trump did not answer why his brother had been hospitalised. — AP

Trump orders Chinese owner of TikTok to sell US assets

Washington, Aug. 16: President Donald Trump on Friday gave the Chinese company ByteDance 90 days to divest itself of any assets used to support the popular TikTok app in the United States. Trump's executive order said there is "credible evidence that leads me to believe that ByteDance ... might take action that threatens to impair the national security of the United States." Trump last week ordered sweeping but vague bans on dealings with the Chinese owners of TikTok and the messaging app WeChat, saying they are a threat to US national security, foreign policy and the economy. It remains unclear what the TikTok orders mean for the app's 100 million

U.S. users, many of them teenagers or young adults who use it to post and watch short-form videos. Trump on Friday also ordered ByteDance to divest itself of "any data obtained or derived" from TikTok users in the US. Microsoft is in talks to

buy parts of TikTok.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany defended Trump's earlier TikTok and WeChat orders Thursday, telling reporters he was exercising his emergency authority under a 1977 law enabling the president to regulate international commerce to address unusual threats.

"The administration is committed to protecting the American people from all cyber threats and these apps collect significant amounts of private data on users," said McEnany, adding that the Chinese government can access and use such data. TikTok said it spent nearly a year trying to engage in "good faith" with the U.S. government to address these concerns. — AP

3,00,000 held in S. Africa for violating lockdown laws

Johannesburg, Aug. 15: Nearly 3,00,000 people have been arrested in South Africa for violating the lockdown laws that were introduced at the end of March to combat the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, according to the figures released here. Minister of Police Bheki

Cele announced the quarterly crime statistics on Friday.

At the start of the lockdown, Cele had warned that people contravening the regulations would end up with a criminal record which would impact on issues such as their future job prospects. But at the

statistics announcement, he said his colleague in the Ministry of Justice was looking at ways to avoid this. "Unfortunately, most of the people arrested will come out with criminal records and it is not our aim to criminalise South Africans. — PTI

Returning Brits begin quarantine while Russia rolls out virus vaccine

London, Aug. 15: British travellers returning home from parts of Europe and beyond began having to quarantine on Saturday under new restrictions, while Russia said it has produced the first batch of its controversial Coronavirus vaccine. The UK opted to remove France, the Netherlands, Malta and three other countries from its list of places exempt from self-isolation rules, as a second wave of virus infections threatens more disruption and economic chaos on the continent.

The move announced on late Thursday sparked a 36-hour scramble for plane, train and ferry tickets among some Britons desperate to get back before the 4 am (0300 GMT) change. All arrivals from the blacklisted states after the deadline must quarantine for 14 days, with the measure already in place for people coming from several other countries including Spain and Belgium.

French student Antoine, 23, cut short his holiday to rush back to Bristol, in southwestern England, where he is at university. "I'm a waiter in a small cafe near college, I can't afford to spend 14 days in the house," he said at London's St Pancras railway station after arriving on a Eurostar train. France is facing a resurgence of the disease that emerged in China late last year and has so far infected over 21 million people globally and killed more than 7,60,000. French authorities have reported more than 2,500 new cases on each of the past three days — levels not seen since May when

the country emerged from lockdown.

With cases still rising around the world, Moscow said the first consignments of its "Sputnik" vaccine had been produced, just four days after President Vladimir Putin announced Russia had won the global race to approve a vaccine. It has drawn a sceptical response from Western scientists and the World Health Organization, which have said the vaccine still needed a rigorous safety review. — AFP

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It has drawn a sceptical response from Western scientists and the World Health Organization, which have said the vaccine still needed a rigorous safety review. — AFP

Biden promises to reform H-1B visa**Joe to eliminate country quota for Green Cards**

Washington, Aug. 15: If voted to power in the November general elections, a Biden administration will reform the H-1B visa system and work towards eliminating the country-quota for Green Cards, his campaign said on Saturday, in a move to woo the influential Indian-American community.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

In a major policy document for Indian-Americans released on the occasion of India's 74th Independence Day, the Biden Campaign also emphasised its support to family-based immigration system and streamlining processing for religious worker visas. The administration will also take steps to stem the rising tide of hate and bigotry, address the security needs of house of worship, eliminate language barriers and honour the diversity and contributions of Indian-Americans, it said. This is for the first time

● **IN A MAJOR** policy document for Indian-Americans released on the occasion of India's 74th Independence Day, the Biden Campaign also emphasised its support to family-based immigration system and streamlining processing for religious worker visas.

that a Democratic presidential candidate has come out with an exclusive policy document for Indian-Americans. There are 1.3 million eligible Indian-American voters across eight battleground states. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is scheduled to address the Indian-American community in a video message later in the day.

Biden will support family-based immigration and preserve family unification as a core principle of our immigration system, which includes reducing the family visa backlog, his campaign said.

"He will increase the number of visas offered for permanent, work-based immigration based on macroeconomic conditions and exempt from any cap recent graduates of PhD programmes in STEM fields," the cam-

paign said. "And, he will support first reforming the temporary visa system for high-skill, specialty jobs to protect wages and workers, then expanding the number of visas offered and eliminating the limits on employment-based Green Cards by country, which have kept so many Indian families in waiting for too long," it said.

According to the policy document, Biden will restore and defend the naturalisation process for Green Card holders. A Green Card allows a non-US citizen to live and work permanently in America. "He will increase the number of refugees we welcome into this country by setting the annual global refugee admissions target to 1,25,000 and seek to raise it over time to commensurate with our responsibility, our values, and the unprecedented global need," it said.

"He will also work with Congress to establish a minimum admissions number of 95,000 refugees annually. Biden will remove the uncertainty for Dreamers by reinstating the DACA programme and explore all legal options to protect their families from inhumane separation," the campaign said. — PTI



Hassan Rouhani

EMIRATES MADE 'HUGE MISTAKE' WITH ISRAEL DEAL: IRAN PREZ

Tehran, Aug. 15: The United Arab Emirates has made a "huge mistake" in reaching a deal towards normalising ties with Israel, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech on Saturday.

He warned the Gulf state against allowing Israel to have a "foothold in the region".

"They (the UAE) better be mindful. They have committed a huge mistake, a treacherous act. We hope they will realise this and abandon this wrong path," Rouhani said without elaborating.

The agreement, which is set to make the UAE only the third Arab state after Egypt and Jordan to make peace with Israel, calls for a temporary suspension of Israel's planned annexation of occupied West Bank territory, but not withdrawal.

The deal-brokered by US President Donald Trump with support from senior adviser Jared Kushner — is seen as a strategic boost for the UAE's regional and global standing.

Rouhani said the deal seemed aimed at ensuring that Trump wins another term in the US presidential election in November and referred to the fact that it was announced in Washington. — Agencies

Belarus leader seeks Putin's aid as pressure builds

Minsk, Aug. 15: The opposition in Belarus kept up the pressure on President Alexander Lukashenko with a new demonstration in Minsk on Saturday, while the strongman sought the support of his main ally, Russia's Vladimir Putin.

Thousands of opposition supporters gathered near a metro station in the capital where a demonstrator died during this week's police crackdown on protests against Lukashenko's claim to have won re-election on last Sunday.

With the opposition gaining momentum after days of demonstrations, Lukashenko's main election challenger Svetlana Tikhanovskaya had called on supporters to rally again over the weekend.

Demonstrators heaped flowers at the spot where Alexander Taraikovsky, 34, died on Monday. The crowd chanted "Thank you!" and raised victory signs while police kept a low profile.

Many held up photographs of protesters beaten during the crackdown while one man stood in

his underwear revealing the purple bruises on his thighs, buttocks and back.

Hundreds of mourners also attended the dead protester's funeral, including poet and former opposition candidate for president Vladimir Neklyayev said: "This cannot be forgiven".

Facing the biggest challenge to his rule since taking power in 1994, Lukashenko called in Moscow's help and spoke on the phone with Putin, after warning there was "a threat not only to Belarus".

The Kremlin said the leaders concluded the "problems" in Belarus would be "resolved soon" and the countries' ties strengthened.

While Lukashenko periodically plays Moscow off against the neighbouring EU, Russia is Belarus's closest ally and the countries have formed a "union state" linking their economies and militaries. Opposition protesters criticised Lukashenko for seeking Moscow's aid and said they feared a Russian intervention. — AFP

AFGHAN WOMEN'S TRAILBLAZER CAMPAIGNER SURVIVES GUN ATTACK

Kabul, Aug. 15: Trailblazing Afghan women's rights campaigner Fawzia Koofi, a member of the negotiating team that will hold peace talks with the Taliban, has been wounded in a gun attack near Kabul, officials said on Saturday.

Gunmen opened fire on Koofi, 45, and her sister on Friday when they were returning from a meeting

in the province of Parwan near the capital, interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said.

Koofi, a former member of parliament and strong critic of the Taliban, was shot in her right hand, he said, adding that she was in a stable condition.

The Taliban denied they were involved in the attack on Koofi. — AFP

WORLD | WAR II

Emperor Naruhito expresses 'deep remorse' over his country's wartime actions**Japan marks 75th anniversary of surrender**

Tokyo, Aug. 15: Japan on Saturday marked the 75th anniversary of its surrender in World War II, with Emperor Naruhito expressing "deep remorse" over his country's wartime actions at a somber annual ceremony curtailed by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Naruhito pledged to reflect on the war's events and expressed hope that the tragedy would never be repeated. There was no word of apology from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who gave thanks for the sacrifices of the

Japanese war dead but had nothing to say about the suffering of Japan's neighbours.

"Reflecting on our past and bearing in mind the feelings of deep remorse, I earnestly hope that the ravages of war will never be repeated," Naruhito said in a short speech at the event in Tokyo marking the 75th anniversary of Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945.

Amid virus fears and worries about the fading memories of the fast-aging war generation, about 500

participants, reduced from 6,200 last year, mourned the dead with a minute of silence. Masks were required, and there was no singing of the "Kimigayo" national anthem.

Naruhito has promised to follow in the footsteps of his father, who devoted his 30-year career to making amends for a war fought in the name of Hirohito, the current emperor's grandfather. Abe has increasingly sought to whitewash Japan's brutal past since taking office in December 2012. He hasn't acknowl-

edged Japan's wartime hostilities during August 15 speeches, which had previously been a nearly 20-year tradition that began with the 1995 apology of Socialist leader Tomiichi Murayama.

Abe, in a largely domestic-focused speech, said the peace that Japan enjoys today is built on the sacrifices of those who died in the war. He pledged that Japan will reflect on lessons from history and will not repeat the war devastation. He listed damage inflicted on Japan and its

people, including the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, massive firebombings of Tokyo and the fierce battle of Okinawa.

Abe pledged to play a greater role in tackling global problems. Under his goal of turning Japan into a "beautiful" and "normal" nation, Abe has steadily pushed to cleanse Japan of its embarrassing wartime history and build up its military by stretching the interpretation of Japan's war-renouncing constitution. — AP



Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako bow as they attend a memorial service marking the 75th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II at the Nippon Budokan hall in Tokyo on Saturday. — AP

SHORT TAKES

Serena loses to player No.116

Lexington: Serena Williams has played 967 tour-level singles matches as a professional, with just four losses against opponents ranked outside the top-100 and none in eight years. Well, it's time to add to that list: Williams was beaten by No. 116 Shelby Rogers 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) in the Top Seed Open quarterfinals.

Rogers, who is from South Carolina, took six of the last eight points Friday after trailing 3-1 in the tiebreaker to collect only her third career victory over a top-10 opponent.

She also reached her first WTA semifinal since 2016. Need to go even further back in the record books to find this sort of tournament exit for former No. 1 Williams: The owner of 23 Grand Slam singles titles hadn't bowed out against someone so low in the rankings since No. 111 Virginie Razzano stunned her at the 2012 French Open.

Later on Friday, Coco Gauff reached her second WTA semifinal with quite a comeback. Gauff won 10 of the last 11 games to eliminate No. 8 seed Ons Jabeur 4-6, 6-4, 6-1. — AP

Sikki, physio test Covid negative

New Delhi: Shuttler N. Sikki Reddy and physiotherapist Kiran Challagundla on Saturday returned negative for Covid-19 in a second round of tests, clearing the decks for resumption of the national badminton camp in Hyderabad from Monday.

The 26-year-old Sikki, a Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist, and Kiran had, on Thursday, tested positive for the highly contagious disease at the SAI Pullela Gopichand academy, which was immediately closed down for sanitisation and the camp suspended for a few days.

However, the duo on Friday decided to get themselves tested again in a private hospital. The reports showed that Sikki and Kiran are both negative.

"Shuttler Sikki Reddy and Physiotherapist Kiran C, who were part of the Badminton National Camp at Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad and had tested positive for Covid-19, took the RT PCR test again, and both have tested negative," SAI said in a statement. — PTI

Golfer Aman in US Amateur semis

Oregon: Indian-American golfer Aman Gupta's dream run at the 120th US Amateur continued as he beat the younger but higher-ranked Michael Thorbjornsen 1-up in the quarterfinals at Bandon Dunes here.

The 21-year-old Gupta trailed Thorbjornsen till the 13th, but tied at the 14th and went ahead on 15th. Thorbjornsen pulled level again on 16th, before Gupta won the 17th with a par and they halved the 18th and that sent Gupta into the last four.

He will now meet Tyler Strafaci, World ranked 56th from Georgia Tech. Strafaci won 1-up over 2016 US Mid-Amateur champion Stewart Hagestad. "I feel great about my game. I'm still hitting it good.

Chipping was a little bit of a struggle but I kind of found my rhythm last night after the round, and I've been putting good all week," said Gupta.

"I'm just going to go hit my game plan tomorrow and hopefully pull out a win and get to the final," he added. — PTI

HAMILTON ON POLE FOR SPANISH RACE

Barcelona: Lewis Hamilton roared to a record-increasing 92nd Formula One pole position of his career on Saturday when he outpaced Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas in a sizzling qualifying session for the Spanish Grand Prix. The championship leader and six-time world champion clocked a best lap of one minute and 15.584 seconds to take the prime starting slot.

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CITY'S ADOPTED SON
'Thala' Dhoni's love story with Chennai continues

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

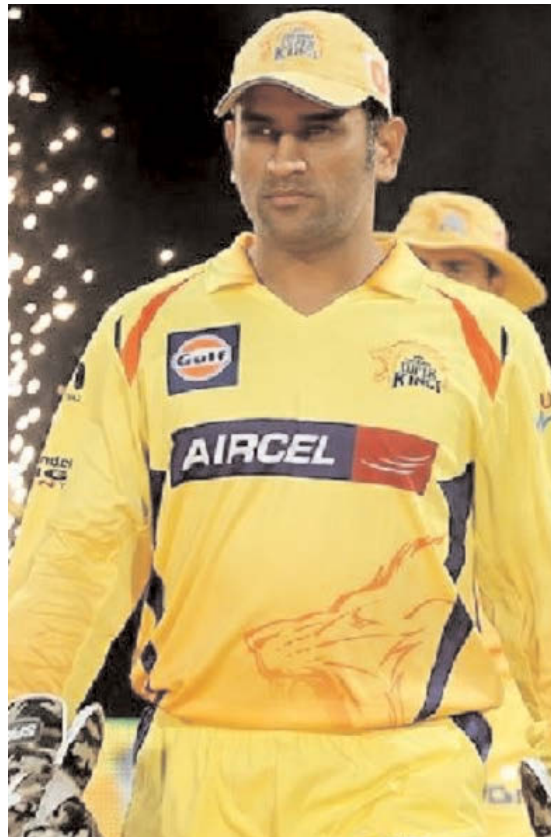
Mahendra Singh Dhoni is, in many ways, Chennai's adopted son. Though he had to work his way into the Indian team starting out as a small-town cricketer from Ranchi, his elevation to cult status ran parallel to his association with the southern city. And he couldn't have picked a better place to announce his retirement, than the city where he is fondly referred to as *Thala* — Chief.

Dhoni was quietly sweating it out at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium, away from media glare and frenzied followers, when the scheduled Instagram post took the cricketing world by surprise at 7:29 p.m. No one would have seen it coming. When Dhoni landed in Chennai on Saturday to kickstart the Super Kings' training camp ahead of IPL-13, experts were still raving about his fitness.

For IPL fans, it's difficult to imagine Chennai Super Kings without Dhoni. N. Srinivasan, MD of India Cements, has already made it clear that Dhoni will be retained even if he goes back to the auction pool.

"People keep saying when will he... how long will he play, etc. He will play. I can assure you. He will play this year. Next year he will go to the auction; he will be retained. So there is no doubt in anybody's mind," Srinivasan said.

"The legend retires in his own style as always. You have given it all for the country. @ChennaiIPL triumphs will always be etched in my memory," tweeted R. Ashwin.



Dhoni's bond with Chennai doesn't end with being the skipper of one of the most successful IPL franchises. It was here at Chepauk that his Test career took off under grey skies. He may have made only 30 in a rain-ruined match against Sri Lanka in 2005, but it was only the beginning of a great innings in India colours for the champion.

Chepauk has witnessed many a Dhoni blitzkrieg in the IPL, but the knock that stood out was the one he scored in whites.

Following the footsteps of his favourite captain and mentor Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Suresh Raina, one of India's prolific white ball players, also quit international cricket.

His 224 — Dhoni's highest in Tests — against Australia in 2013 bailed India out from a precarious position on a pitch that resembled the French Open surface.

This match-winning knock came at a time when his captaincy was under fire and his tactics ridiculed by several former cricketers. Some had even questioned his place in the Test team back then.

Following the footsteps of his favourite captain and mentor Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Suresh Raina, one of India's prolific white ball players, also quit international cricket.

WHAT MAKES MS DHONI SO SPECIAL

THE ONLY CAPTAIN TO WIN ALL THR-EE ICC LIMITED-OVERS TROPHIES



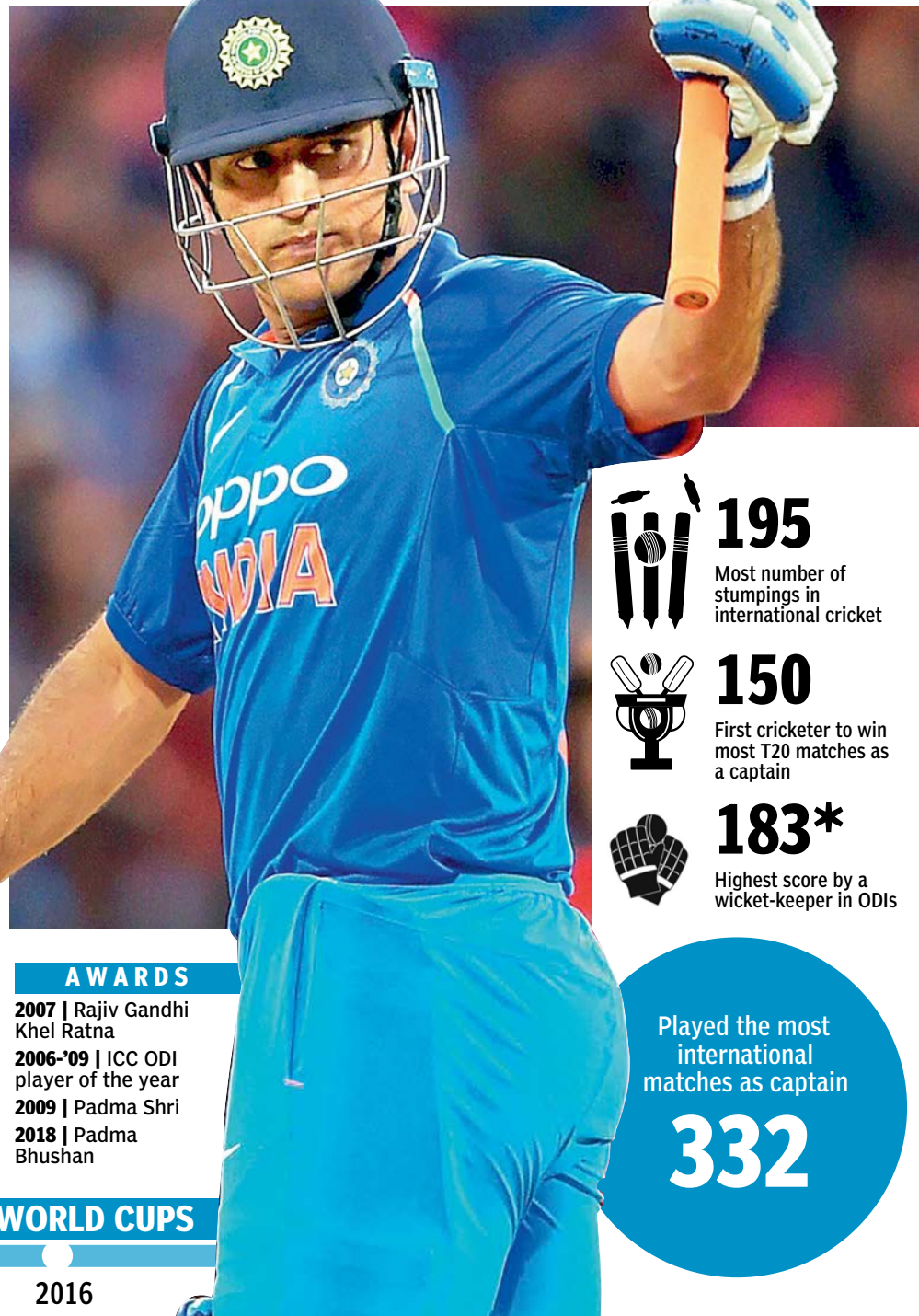
2007
T20 World Cup



2011
ODI World Cup



2013
Champions Trophy



195
Most number of stumpings in international cricket

150
First cricketer to win most T20 matches as a captain

183*
Highest score by a wicket-keeper in ODIs

Played the most international matches as captain

332

AWARDS

2007 | Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna

2006-'09 | ICC ODI player of the year

2009 | Padma Shri

2018 | Padma Bhushan

THE ONLY PLAYER TO CAPTAIN A TEAM IN MOST NUMBER OF T20 WORLD CUPS

2007

2009

2010

2012

2014

2016



Every cricketer has to end his journey one day, but still when someone you've gotten to know so closely announces that decision, you feel the emotion much more. What you've done for the country will always remain in everyone's heart. But the mutual respect and warmth I've received from you will always stay in mine. The world has seen achievements, I've seen the person. Thanks for everything skip. I tip my hat to you @msdhoni. — VIRAT KOHLI



It is the end of an era. What a player he (MS Dhoni) has been for the country & world cricket. His (MS Dhoni) batting in one-day cricket in his early stages made the world stand up and notice his flair and sheer natural brilliance. Every good thing comes to an end and this has been an absolutely brilliant one. — SOURAV GANGULY



Your contribution to Indian cricket has been immense, @msdhoni. Winning the 2011 World Cup together has been the best moment of my life. Wishing you and your family all the very best for your second innings. — SACHIN TENDULKAR



Seeing Dhoni's journey from a small town boy into a match-winner and one of the most astute leaders the world has seen was remarkable. Thank you for the wonderful memories, Mahi. It was my privilege to play alongside you and I will always cherish the memories we shared together. — VVS LAXMAN



To have a player like him, Mission Impossible. Na Koi Hai, Na Koi Tha, Na Koi Hoga MS ke jaisa. Players will come & go but there won't be a calmer man like him. Dhoni with his connect with people having aspirations was like a family member to many cricket lovers. — VIRENDER SEHWAG



Dhoni with his superfan Saravanan Hari.

'Now, MS can spend more time with Army'

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

Saravanan Hari, a.k.a. the 'Dhoni Superfan', knew it was around the corner but he was hoping and praying that his 'God', M.S. Dhoni, would continue to don the blue jersey for a while longer.

When the announcement came like a bolt from the blue on Saturday, Saravanan, for a moment, thought it was "routine rumour." "In the past, there have been many speculations. So I couldn't believe it. He has once again proved that he is different and does things in his own way. People had expected him to announce his retirement when India's campaign came to an end in the semifinal of the 2019 World Cup," said Saravanan.

Saravanan said he would continue to



Dhoni with his army friend Colonel Shankar Vembu.

paint Dhoni's name on his body whenever he watches India matches.

"I wish he played the T20 World Cup. I won't say I'll miss him. He is in my

heart. I just hope he continues to play for Chennai Super Kings or remains associated with the franchise in some capacity," added Saravanan.

Dhoni's army friend Colonel Shankar Vembu expects the honorary lieutenant colonel's involvement with the armed forces to increase in the coming days.

"Now he will have fewer restrictions minus the BCCI contract. He can take part in more activities such as parachute jumps without too many formalities. Dhoni has also been helping Army widows for a long time now and I'm sure he will dedicate more time to such commitments now," he added.

Many wonder what lies behind Dhoni's decision to announce his retirement at 7.29 p.m. this Independence Day. "It's an easy date to remember," Col. Shankar added.

TEAM MRF IN A TIGHT BATTLE AT RALLY LIEPAJA

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 15

It was a successful day of action for Team MRF Tyres on Rally Liepaja, the second round of the European Rally Championship with Craig Breen and Paul Nagle just ahead of their stablemates Emil Lindholm and Mikael Korhonen sitting in fifth and sixth.

The day saw four stages and over 88 km of competitive action near the town of Talsi in the north west of Latvia. Adding to the challenge was the fact that the crews did not return to service throughout the day, rather having a flexi-service in Talsi.

Crews faced warm conditions on faster roads. A crucial factor to the day's running was the road cleaning. The more cars went through, the faster the roads became. Breen and Nagle started eighth on the road while Lindholm and Korhonen were ninth.



Craig Breen in action.

Bayern stun Barcelona with eight goals

Lisbon, Aug. 15: A merciless Bayern Munich inflicted a humiliating, record defeat on Barcelona on Friday, recording a scarcely believable 8-2 victory in their Champions League quarterfinal in Lisbon to leave Lionel Messi forlorn and surely hastening in the end of an era in Catalonia.

Thomas Mueller scored twice either side of goals from Ivan Perisic and Serge Gnabry in a stunning opening 31 minutes at an empty Estadio da Luz, with a David Alaba own-goal having briefly brought Barcelona back level.

Luis Suarez pulled it back to 4-2 at one point in the second half, but



Barcelona's Luis Suarez (from left) and Lionel Messi react after their 2-8 loss to Bayern Munich in their UEFA Champions League quarterfinal match at the Luz stadium in Lisbon on Friday.

— AFP

Barcelona then caved in, with Joshua Kimmich getting Bayern's fifth before three more goals in the final stages, one for the

prolific Lewandowski and two for substitute Philippe Coutinho. That was the really

humiliating part for the beaten side, with Coutinho on loan in Bavaria from Barcelona, who spent 160 million

euros on signing the Brazilian but never got the best out of him. It is Barcelona's worst European defeat and the worst of Messi's career. The game was eerily reminiscent of Germany's 7-1 destruction of Brazil in the 2014 World Cup, a game in which Mueller also played and scored.

Germany went on to win that World Cup and Bayern look a good bet to win this Champions League, although they will surely face a sterner test in the semifinal regardless of facing Manchester City or Lyon.

Barca have just about been here before: They were torn apart by Bayern in the 2013 semis, losing 0-7 on aggregate. — AFP