


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
ANANTAPUR | WEDNESDAY | 12 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34°C

Min: 18°C

RH: 74%

Forecast: Mist.

Max/Min temp.

34/18°C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES

(+60,972)

23,25,026

DEATHS

(+833)

46,185

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,896)

(+8)

TS: 82,647

645

(+9,024)

(+87)

AP: 2,44,549

2,203

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,03,83,329

DEATHS

7,41,704

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Shravana Bahula Astami till 11.14 am

Star: Kritika till 3.24 am (Thursday)

Varjyam: 2.09 pm to 3.55 pm

Durmuhurtam: 11.56 am to 12.47 pm

Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Zulhijja 21,1441 AH

PRAVERS

Fajar: 5.31 am

Zohar: 12.26 pm

Asar: 4.28 pm

Maghrib: 6.05 pm

Isha: 7.21 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.52 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 12.16 PM

MOONSET TODAY 11.51 AM

COUNTER POINT



He is unable to understand online classes... let's arrange online tuitions!

IN BRIEF

EX-PREZ HEALTH WORSENS, STILL ON VENTILATOR

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

Former president Pranab Mukherjee's health worsened on Tuesday and he continues to be critical, on ventilatory support, at the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi. Hospital officials said Mr Mukherjee had not shown any improvement since Monday, when he was operated upon for a clot in the brain.

"The former president, who underwent life-saving emergency surgery for brain clot on 10 August 2020, has not shown any improvement and his health status worsened. He remains on ventilatory support," the hospital said in an evening bulletin.

Mr Mukherjee was President from 2012 to 2017. The 84-year-old was detected with Covid-19 on Monday when he was tested prior to his surgery. The hospital said in a Tuesday morning bulletin that the former President was admitted to the hospital at Monday noon in a critical condition. "Workup at the hospital revealed a large brain clot for which he underwent emergency life-saving surgery," it said.



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US to reduce troops in Afghanistan by Nov.



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Industrial activity sees slight improvement

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Referee Broad fines son Stuart for bad language



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Russia claims it developed Covid vaccine

Putin says his daughter too was vaccinated and is safe

Moscow, Aug. 11: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday announced that his country has developed the world's first vaccine against Covid-19 that works "quite effectively" and forms a "stable immunity" against the deadly disease as he disclosed that one of his daughters has already been vaccinated.

"A vaccine against Coronavirus has been registered for the first time in the world this morning," Putin said during a meeting with members of his government.

"I know that it works quite effectively, it forms a stable immunity," the official *Tass* news agency quoted Putin as saying.

Putin's claim has come amidst concerns raised by experts about the speed of Russia's work, suggesting that researchers might be cutting corners.

Reacting to Putin's announcement, US health secretary Alex Azar said the goal of developing a Coronavirus vaccine is not to be first, but to have one that is safe and effective. "The point is not to be first with a vaccine — the point is to have a vaccine that is safe and effective for the American people and the people of the world," Azar said told *ABC News*.

"We need transparent data, and it's got to be Phase-3 data that shows that a vaccine is safe and effective," Azar, currently on a historic visit to Taiwan, said.

Danny Altmann, Professor of Immunology at Imperial College London, told the *Science Media Centre* that there were concerns about releasing a vaccine before it was fully tested.

Amid fears that safety could have been compromised, the World Health Organisation (WHO) urged Russia last week to follow international guidelines for producing a vaccine against Covid-19, the *BBC* reported.

Putin said that one of his daughters had tested a Russian COVID-19 vaccine on herself and that she is feeling well.

"I know this very well, because one of my daughters got vaccinated, so in this sense, she took part in testing," Putin said.

The vaccine has been named Sputnik-V. The name is a reference to the surprise 1957 launch of

DOUBTS LINGER ABOUT EFFICACY OF VACCINE

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

There is no data available on pre-clinical trials and no scientific input in peer-reviewed journals about the development of the vaccine by Russia, which is creating doubt about its development.

An indigenous vaccine development will require at least eight to 12 months and there must be some trial results on animals and humans available for assessment to understand its efficacy.

None of these has been provided by Russia which has only said that the vaccine was tested on 38 people and they have completely recovered.

CCMB director Dr Rakesh Mishra said, "It is a very unreliable vaccine as there is no data available on how and in what manner trials have been carried out. For any vaccine development, apart from time, there are thousands of people who have to be tested. How have they tested the number that they have provided to the world without a cure? When we inject a virus in the body, there has to also be a cure available. But there is no definite cure for Covid-19 yet. There is no clarity on this. Till these questions are answered, no country will be willing to take the vaccine from Russia."

■ **Page 3: Some experts remain optimistic**

the world's first satellite by the Soviet Union. The treatment is yet to go through crucial Phase 3 trials where it would be administered to thousands of people. President Putin noted that after the first vaccine shot, his daughter had a 38°C fever, and on the next day, a fever slightly higher than 37°C. "And then, after the second shot, she had a slight fever again, and then everything was fine, she is feeling well and has a high [antibody] count," he said.

Russian health minister Mikhail Murashko said medical workers and teachers will be the first to get the vaccine. — *PTI*

SC upholds daughters' rights

Rules that they will have rights over parental property even if father is not alive

New Delhi, Aug. 11: In a significant judgment, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that daughters have equal right in parental property as sons even if their father died before the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 came into force, and observed that "a daughter always remains a loving daughter".

The top court, while overruling its earlier decision, held that "rights under the amendment are applicable to living daughters of living coparceners as on 9-9-2005, irrespective of when such daughters are born".

A three-judge bench, headed by Justice Arun Kumar Mishra, said, "Once a daughter, always a daughter... a son is a son till he is married... until he gets a wife. The daughter shall remain a coparcener (one who shares equally with others in inheritance of an undivided joint family property) throughout life, irrespective of whether her

father is alive or not... Daughters must be given equal rights as sons... daughter remains a loving daughter throughout life."

The question that urged the top court to make the remarks today was, "Does the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, which gave equal right to daughters in ancestral property, have a retrospective effect."

The verdict makes it clear the amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, granting equal rights

to daughters to inherit ancestral property would have retrospective effect.

The bench, which also included S. Nazeer and M.R. Shah, said on Tuesday the provisions contained in substituted Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, confer the status of coparcener on the daughter born before or after amendment in the same manner as a son with the same rights and liabilities.

The court said Tuesday, "The rights can be claimed

by the daughter born earlier with effect from September 9, 2005, with savings as provided in Section 6(1) as to the disposition or alienation, partition or testamentary disposition which had taken place before December 20, 2004. Since the right in coparcenary is by birth, it is not necessary that father coparcener should be living as on September 9, 2005."

The bench said the pending matters on this issue be decided within six months.

— *PTI*

Nod not required for RLIS: Panel

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC
KURNOOL, AUG. 11

The Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (RLIS), caught in a controversy with Telangana state, has received a breather. The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change (MoEFCC) said that the prima facie requirement of prior environment clearance is not applicable for the project.

The issue has now gone to the National Green Tribunal for determining the rights of AP in pumping Krishna water from the 800 feet level of the Srisaillam reservoir instead of 854 feet to the RLIS.

Telangana state has moved the Supreme Court against the project, and Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat last week asked AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy not to go ahead with the RLIS.

The minutes of the first meeting of the reconstituted EAC for river valley and hydroelectric projects, held on July 29 through video conference, observed that RLIS does not attract the provisions of the Notification of 2006 and hence does not require environmental clearance.

The committee said that as long as AP restricts itself to drawing its allocated share of water, environmental impact of the availability of water on

CM ASKS CENTRE TO LIFT EMBARGO ON RLIS PROJECT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG 11

Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, wrote a letter to minister for Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, objecting to the embargo on the Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme and He argued that AP should be allowed to use Krishna water as RLIS is an old scheme and not a new project.

■ **Full report on Page 2**

other users are not in its ambit.

Further, AP in order to ensure that only allocated water of 3 tmc ft per day is drawn, must instal pumps capable of pumping only that quantity excluding the safety margins.

The committee noted that the RLIS is not a new project and does not fall under any of the categories listed in the schedule of the Notification of 2006, if there is no variation in the project and if the power generation component is not involved.

The committee observed that RLIS comes under the clause of 'expansion and modernisation of existing project'.

10 held for illegal sanitiser racket

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 11

The Prakasam police cracked the mystery behind the death of 16 persons due to consumption of hand sanitisers and arrested 10 persons including a Hyderabad-based illegal manufacturer of 'Perfect Gold' hand sanitisers adn four others for distributing it.

Five of the arrested were proprietors of medical shops who sold the sanitiser repeatedly to the same persons, knowing fully well that they were consuming it, at Kurichedu in Prakasam district. The victims mostly included beggars, workers and rickshaw-pullers.

The police authorities appointed an SIT headed by Markapuram officer on special duty K. Chowdeshwari to probe the incident along with the Special Investigation Bureau.

According to Prakasam SP Siddharth Kaushal, the SIT collected 69 bottles from different places and concluded that the victims had consumed eight brands of sanitisers and began tracking down the manufacturers.

● The address of the manufacturer turned out to be fake, but the investigators traced a distributor at Prashasnagar in Hyderabad on the internet. When grilled, the distributor said that one Sale Srinivas of Subhashnagar in Jeedimetla was supplying him the sanitisers.

The SIT grew suspicious of Perfect Gold sanitisers produced by Vandana Pharma and deputed two officers to Bengaluru and Hyderabad, based on the address on the labels, to check the units. The bottles did not have a batch number.

The address of the firm turned out to be fake, but the investigators traced a distributor at Prashasnagar in Hyderabad on the internet. When grilled, the distributor said that one Sale Srinivas of Subhashnagar in Jeedimetla was supplying him the sanitisers. The SIT found large stocks of sanitisers in the premises of the distributor.

■ **Page 3: Methanol was used to make sanitiser**

Last respects



Wife Sushma Sathe pay homage to the mortal remains of Wing Commander Deepak Sathe (Retd), pilot-in-command of the Air India Express plane that crashed in Kerala last week, during the state funeral at Tagore Nagar crematorium in Mumbai on Tuesday.

— **RAJESH JADHAV**

Jagan seeks PM's help to improve health facilities

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

Dwelling about the measures initiated by the government to contain Covid-19, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday stated that they had conducted an overwhelming 25 lakh Corona tests till date.

Participating in the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference with Chief Ministers on Tuesday, Mr Reddy sought the cooperation of the Central government in its efforts to boost medical facilities in the state.

He pointed out that unlike the neighbouring states, Andhra Pradesh neither had any metropolitan areas nor did it boast of hospitals with huge infrastructure. This could be improved substantially

● **THE CHIEF Minister assured to keep the Covid mortality rate low with aggressive testing, contact tracing besides timely treatment, particularly if the Centre helps in ramping up medical infrastructure.**

if the Centre extends assistance, he said.

The Chief Minister assured to keep the Covid mortality rate low with aggressive testing, contact tracing besides timely treatment, particularly if the Centre helps in ramping up medical infrastructure.

He explained, "The state could maintain a low-mortality rate of 0.89 per cent as we have been adopting the strategy of aggressive testing in containment

clusters, identifying positive cases and providing instant treatment besides removing the social stigma attached to patients. We are spreading awareness with the involvement of over two lakh people in various capacities."

Mr Reddy said, "So far we have conducted 25, 34, 304 tests of which 2.35 lakh were positive. Tests per million in our State have logged 47, 459. When the first case was reported in March, we had no virology lab and had to send the samples to Pune and from that stage we have progressively improved infrastructure and now all the 13 districts have testing labs and hospitals for Covid and they are self-reliant."

■ **Page 2: AP tests 70,000 people every day; Jagan**

FIRE | MISHAP

Special teams formed to arrest him; 3 officials sent to remand

Ramesh Hospitals MD is on the lam

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

The police have formed special teams to nab the founder of Ramesh hospitals, Dr Pothineni Ramesh Babu, who is on the run to avoid arrest following the fire at a Covid-19 care centre (CCC) being run by him at Swarna palace hotel, killing 10 patients and injuring several others on August 9.

The police say that his arrest is vital to get more information about Ramesh hospitals is admitting patients infected with Covid-19 and providing health care to them at the main hospital and at other branches and also at other CCCs accommodated in

Fire mishap in Vizag commercial complex

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 11

Due to a short circuit in the power supply, a major fire broke out in the city at KSR complex in the city late last night. However, no casualties were reported in the incident as it happened in the cellar of the complex and no one sleeping there at the time.

The short circuit occurred due to the poor maintenance and age-old wiring of the power supply.

Due to the short circuit, the flames touched some of the cushion material stored in the cellar which spurred the fire. There are several furniture showrooms in the complex and the managements have stored unsold furniture and other waste wood material in the cellar, said district fire officer, B.V.S. Ramprakash.

private hotels. Police arrested three officials from Ramesh hospitals on Monday, who were

IN BRIEF

HC: Clear salary, pension arrears

Vijayawada: The AP High Court directed the state government to pay within two months salary and pension arrears along with 12 per cent interest to its employees and pensioners for March and April. The state government issued a GO earlier imposing 50 per cent cut in salaries and pensions of its employees and pensioners for March and April following financial difficulties due to prevalence of Covid-19.

Based on a petition from a retired judge Kameswari from Visakhapatnam, the court held hearing on Tuesday and issued an order directing the state government to clear arrears with 12 per cent interest.

JANA SENA IS NOT A STABLE PARTY, SAYS ITS LONE MLA

VADREUV SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, AUG. 11

Lone Jana Sena MLA from Razole constituency Rapaka Vara Prasad on Tuesday declared his loyalty to the ruling YSR Congress.

Speaking at a meeting here, he said that he felt more at home in the YSRC than Jana Sena of Pawan Kalyan. "I have always been with YSRC and I will continue to be in the same party," he said.

He felt that Jana Sena was not a stable party. He claimed that before the elections, he had met Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Rajya Sabha member Vijaysai Reddy and they promised him to give Razole MLA ticket. But, at the last minute, they could not. At that time, hundreds of Jana Sena workers met him in his house and invited him into the party, he claimed.

"Mr Jagan is helping me a lot to develop his constituency."

Meanwhile, Jana Sena leaders expressed anger over the comments of the MLA and demanded that he tender resignation and win the election on behalf of the party of his choice.

Jana Sena leader Athili Raju denied inviting Rapaka into the party and said he himself met Mr Pawan Kalyan at a meeting at Polavaram and joined the party. He said that if Mr Vara Prasad had any respect for the Constitution, he should resign and seek reelection.

HEAVY FLOWS INTO TUNGABHADRA RESERVOIR

NAGABHUSHANAM HOSKOTE | DC ANANTAPUR, AUG. 11

Constant inflows from upstream filled the Tungabhadra reservoir just as the dam gets ready for the traditional Independence Day celebrations. The Tungabhadra reservoir had 80.17 TMC ft on Tuesday as against the total capacity of 100 TMC ft.

About 98,916 cusecs of inflows were received and there was an outflow of 9,415 cusecs into the river and for power generation. With the water level having reached 1627.23 ft, Tungabhadra Board authorities hope that the dam may achieve full capacity if incessant rains continue upstream by August 15, a day that is marked with the opening of all crest gates.

The High Level Main Canal and Low Level Canal, both cover AP and en-route areas of Karnataka are expected to receive their quota. Further, irrigation authorities of HNSS (Handri Neeva Sujala Shrivanthi) project are releasing water towards reservoirs and tanks under both phase-I and phase-II and GNSS (Galeru Nagari Sujala Shrivanthi) in Rayalaseema region.

Meanwhile, Almati reservoir in Karnataka touched 104.80 TMC ft along with 1.74 lakh cusecs of inflows and 79734 outflows towards downstream areas of Krishna River.

Srisaillam reservoir reported 114.74 TMC ft of water following 1.93 lakh cusecs of inflows from upstream parts of Krishna basin. About 45539 cusecs outflows are being released downstream after power generation. The water level on Tuesday stood at 862.80 ft. Chitravati Balancing Reservoir has 4.48 TMC ft as against the total capacity of 10 TMC ft.

Irrigation authorities hope that the tail-end reservoirs and tanks will get maximum water following timely rainfall during the present rainy season.

"This is for the first time in four years that there were heavy rains during July in Anantapur district", irrigation expert Sharma observed and hoped all major tanks would get water through Krishna and Tungabhadra sources along with rains.

Jagan seeks lift on embargo on Rayalaseema LI scheme

CM writes letter to minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, wrote a letter to minister for Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, objecting to the embargo on the Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme and He argued that AP should be allowed to use Krishna water as RLIS is an old scheme and not a new project.

He said that AP has the right to take water, according to AP Reorganisation Act. Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy lamented that due to embargo, AP drawl would be restricted to the allocated share in Krishna, as agreed in a meeting with state of Telangana in June

2015 and which is still being implemented by KRMB which puts no adverse impact on Telangana's share in Krishna river waters.

Stating that Rayalaseema LIS would only be supplementing existing projects through the existing canal system without adding any additional ayacut or canal or storage only to ensure AP's legitimate share of water, Jagan reiterated that therefore it should not be called a new project, following the AP Reorganisation Act only from where the definition of new projects can be derived.

Pointing out that the state of Telangana is constructing four new irrigation schemes with a with-

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drawal capacity of about 3 TMC /day at a sill level of 800 feet to utilise about 200 TMC from the foreshore of Srisaillam reservoir, Jagan said that besides these projects, there is a facility for power on the left side of the Srisaillam reservoir from a level of 796 feet it-

self with a discharge capacity of 42,000 cusecs on the Telangana side which they often operate unilaterally, ignoring the directions of KRMB, depriving Rayalaseema, Nellore and Prakasam districts of both the drinking and irrigation-related water.

Given that the existing projects of Telangana i.e. Bheema, Kolsagar and Nettekpadu draw water from upstream Jurala project before realisation into Srisaillam and Kalvakurthy LIS draws water 800 level from the foreshore of Srisaillam, Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy wrote, "If all Telangana projects are at 800 feet level itself and yet they say that they would con-

fine themselves to what is allocated to them and will not draw anything more, then how is it fair that Andhra projects continue to operate only at above 854 feet and that's too drawing only a meagre discharge at 854 level."

"In the prevailing conditions, the state of Andhra Pradesh was left with no other option, except to take up the Rayalaseema lift scheme to lift 3 TMC /day from Srisaillam reservoir when its level falls below 854 feet to facilitate drawl of drinking and irrigation needs of the critically and chronically drought-prone areas of Rayalaseema, Nellore and Prakasam districts," Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy wrote.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy greets and interacts with Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the camp office on Tuesday.

AP tests 70,000 people every day, says Jagan

From Page 1

"Together with the Rapid Antigen tests, the number of tests has crossed the 70,000-mark and the average is at 60,000 tests per day. Samples are also being taken through 100 mobile labs in at least 1500 areas and we could penetrate into the remote areas," Mr Reddy said.

The Chief Minister explaining about treatment said, "After the testing is done, depending on the severity, we have been sending them to home isolation, or to Covid Care Centre or Covid hospitals. We have also increased the strength of

ambulance vehicles to 1088 and the vehicle is available at mandal level to ensure that everyone derives advantage of the facility."

Explaining about the hospitals and beds, he said, "The State has 138 Covid Care Hospitals with 37, 189 beds and for people with mild symptoms we have identified 109 Covid Care Centres with a bed capacity of over 56,000. We have increased the bed strength with oxygen facility from 4,286 to over 11,000 in the last three months. About 32,000 medical personnel, including doctors, nurses, technicians and other staff are

working in 138 Covid Care hospitals. We have also started helpdesks to guide the people on how to go about when they notice symptoms."

Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy urged Mr Modi, "As ours is a newly formed State with no Tier I cities, we look forward to your help in ramping up medical infrastructure in Tier II cities."

Deputy Chief Minister Alla Nani, Home Minister M. Sucharita, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, Medical and Health Special Chief Secretary K.S. Jawahar Reddy were among those who were present.

New industrial policy is a sham, says Yanamala

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

Opposition leader in AP Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Tuesday described the new industrial policy - 2020-23 announced by the YSRC government as a huge letdown when it comes to reviving the ailing and crisis-hit sectors. He said the Government failed to bolster the confidence levels despite the fact that its policies till now had crippled construction, manufacturing, real estate, pharma and other sectors critical to the State's economy.

Ramakrishnudu alleged that in just 14 months,

industrial growth rate was brought down to 2.2 per cent, which reflects that government's abject failure. He said the new industrial policy has nothing to boost employment opportunities. He lamented that lakhs of people lost their livelihoods because of retrogressive policies and those still working are being denied their full salaries.

The TD leader wondered if the ruling party had lost hopes of surviving beyond three years since its new industrial policy was only aimed for the 2020-23 period. He regretted removal of subsidies to industrialists belonging to weaker sections.



BJP leaders and activists felicitate party state president Somu Veerraju after he took charge in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Veerraju vows to end family rule

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

Andhra Pradesh BJP president Somu Veerraju called for promoting 'Modi-ism' and vowed to bring an end to family rule in the state.

Soon after assuming charge as the state BJP president here on Tuesday, Mr Veerraju slammed the Congress for giving birth to dynastic rule all over the country and said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not having any caste or religious beliefs but was only working for the country's overall development. He attributed credit to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for developing the country without any sectarian interests.

He laid stress on the part of both BJP and Jana Sena to play a constructive role in Andhra Pradesh politics and demanded that the state government develop all 13 districts.

He accused both YSR Congress and Telugu

● He accused both YSR Congress and Telugu Desam for misusing Central funds that were earmarked for various schemes. He vowed to develop the BJP as a potential alternative for both parties.

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Desam for misusing Central funds that were earmarked for various schemes. He vowed to develop the BJP as a potential alternative for both parties.

He slammed Telugu Desam for its failure to develop Amaravati as the capital city despite being in power for five years. He said that BJP would go by the interests of the farmers from Amaravati and added that their party would fight till the plots allotted to the farmers are developed.

Ram Madhav: Strive to come to power in 2024

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

BJP national general secretary V. Ram Madhav has set an ambitious goal for the party's state leadership-coming to power in the state after the 2024 elections.

Taking part in oath-taking ceremony of AP BJP president Somu Veerraju here on Tuesday, the senior leader asked the leaders and supporters from both parties, including Jana Sena, to reach out to the people and highlight the successful implementation of several welfare schemes and developmental programmes by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the last six years.

Maintaining that there was no strong opposition in AP, he asked the BJP to play the role of a strong opposition in the state and make all efforts to strengthen itself in the coming four years to help the party along with its ally, to get elected to power in the next polls.

Referring to the three capitals issue, Mr Ram Madhav said that the state government wanted to develop three capitals and the Centre filed an affidavit in the High Court stating that it was the prerogative of the state government. He said that when the previous TD government wanted to develop Amaravati as the capital city, the Centre did



V. Ram Madhav

not interfere and even extended financial help worth of ₹2,000 crore to build it.

Admitting that the role of the Centre in AP government's decision to develop three capitals was limited, he maintained that they would not stop questioning the rationality of YSRC government for taking such an unprecedented decision.

Referring to YSRC government's justification for setting up three capitals for administrative convenience, he asked whether governance was not good in Uttar Pradesh which has only one capital even though its geographical size was thrice that of Andhra Pradesh.

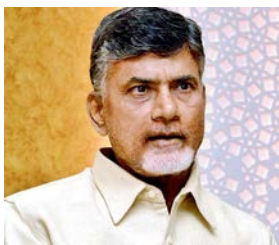
He directed the party cadre to fight with the government for getting justice for farmers from Amaravati region.

Naidu writes to DGP about 'illegal arrest' of his supporter

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

Telugu Desam chief N Chandrababu Naidu wrote a letter to DGP Goutam Sawang on Tuesday alleging that his party supporter M. Rakesh Chowdary was harassed by police at the behest of the ruling party in Chittoor district.

The former CM accused the ruling party of engineering attacks on TD activists, and demanded that the police department initiate measures for the protection of law and order in the state. He told the DGP in the letter that Rakesh Chowdary, 28, from Mamidimanugadda in B. Kongaravariipalli gram panchayat limits of Chandragiri mandal was 'unlawfully' arrested based on a false com-



N Chandrababu Naidu

plaint.

Mr Naidu alleged that a false case was filed against the youth based on a complaint from his neighbours in connection with a civil dispute pending in court. He said that on August 1, YSRC supporters posted comments targeting him and TD district president Pulivarti Nani on social media. Rakesh countered their comments through his post on August 3. YSRC

local leaders lodged a complaint with the police upon which CI Ramachandra Reddy and SI Ramakrishna summoned Rakesh and threatened him to remove the post. Police backed down when Mr Nani reasoned with them that posting on social media was not illegal.

Mr Naidu said that now the police arrested Rakesh on Monday based on a false complaint by his neighbour in connection with a land dispute between Rakesh's family and his neighbour. He alleged that when the parents of Rakesh had a dispute with the neighbour, they filed a complaint against Rakesh with the support of local YSRC leaders. He claimed Rakesh's arrest was illegal.

VIRUS | WATCH

Most of the cases were primary contacts of Covid-19 patients and mandated for tests

300 Covid +ve patients gave false info to avoid social stigma

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

To conceal their identity and to avoid facing stigma as infected with Covid-19 from neighbourhoods, people are giving wrong contact numbers to avoid detection by health authorities and spreading the virus to their contacts in several parts in the state.

Health authorities in Prakasam district have identified more than 300 patients who tested Covid-19 positive, out of 1.3 lakh samples tested for

the virus in the last four and a half months, as most have given wrong contact numbers.

When health officers tried to call the contact numbers given by the patients to inform them about their Covid-19 positive status, they failed to do so as the numbers were either wrong or fake and, in some cases, contact numbers of their friends and others were given.

As the health authorities have the patients' Aadhaar numbers and residential addresses collected at the

time of undergoing Covid-19 tests at government facilities, district health authorities alerted local health personnel to trace patients who tested Covid-19 positive. They have also alerted the local police based on residential addresses to locate them.

Health authorities explain this by saying that in most of the cases the patients were primary contacts of Covid-19 patients. As it is mandatory to conduct Covid-19 test on all primary contacts of patients, health authorities reach out to

them and bring them to government facility to collect their swabs to conduct tests.

These primary contacts out of fear that they may test Covid-19 positive and health personnel will come to their house, disinfect their house, collect details of family members, inquire for primary contacts and conduct a host of activities drawing the attention of all, are giving wrong numbers assuming that they can remain untraced.

The authorities say that some people are giving con-

tact numbers of their trusted friends so that soon after their Covid-19 positive status was intimated, they approach quacks especially in rural areas to undergo treatment secretly so that nobody in their village knows about their health status and they might avoid any discrimination from the villagers.

Prakasam district Covid-19 nodal officer, Dr John Richards, said, "As some patients are giving wrong contact numbers and old addresses mentioned in

Aadhaar cards at the time of registering for Covid-19 test for varied reasons, we are finding it difficult to trace especially those who tested Covid-19 positive, inform them and provide them health care. However, we have a task force to trace such cases and also alert the local police to help us find them. We will find at least some such patients if they stay locally and provide them health care. Otherwise, they go on infecting their family members, friends and others and

contribute to the community spread of the virus."

In Tirupati, nearly 30 such cases have been found of patients giving wrong contact numbers.

Meanwhile, health authorities say that the phenomenon is prevalent all over the state.

The chance of wrong entry of numbers at the time of registering details of patients by health personnel, not having numbers so giving others' numbers and illiteracy also contribute to the problem.

lack of scientific information being given out by Russia.

SHORT TAKES

RENOWNED URDU
POET RAHAT
INDORI NO MORE

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
with agency inputs
BHOPAL, AUG. 11

Noted Urdu poet and Bollywood lyricist Rahat Indori who used to leave his audience in splits with his humorous but biting couplets, died of cardiac arrest in a hospital in Indore on Tuesday. He was 70. He was admitted to Aurobind Hospital in Indore on Sunday after testing positive for Coronavirus.

"He suffered massive cardiac arrest on Tuesday and could not be saved. He was also suffering from pneumonia, diabetes and high blood pressure. He also suffered damages to his lungs", hospital director Vinod Bhandari said.

Indori, who had retired as professor of Urdu literature in Ahilya University in Indore a decade ago, was also a painter.

He had penned many Bollywood songs. With a 50-year career in poetry, Indori was known for the lyrics of songs like "M Bole toh..." from *Munnabhai MBBS* (2003), *Chori Chori Jab Nazrein Mili...* from *Kareeb* (1998), *Koi jaye to le aye...* from *Ghatak* (1996), and *Neend Churai Meri...* from *Ishq* (1997). Earlier this year, his poem *Bulati hai magar jane ka nahi...* went viral on social media, rendering him a sensation among the youth.

Indori did his schooling from Nutan School in Indore and his graduation from Islamia Karimia College Indore.

He passed his MA exam in Urdu literature from Barkatullah University, Bhopal in 1975 and was awarded a PhD in Urdu literature from the Bhoj University in 1985 for his thesis titled 'Urdu Main Mushaira'.

While teaching Urdu literature at IK College, he also became busy with *mushairas* and started receiving invitations from all over India and abroad. He had huge followers across India. He used to sway his audience with his hilarious but sharp couplets reflecting the current social and political situations in the country.

Before being admitted to the hospital, he had informed his followers of his contraction of Coronavirus in a twitter post and appealed to them not to call him or his home to know about his health condition.

One of his popular couplets read, "*Sabhi ka khoon hai shamil yahan ki mitti mein; kissi ke baap ka Hindustan thodi hai*" (This soil is made up of everybody's blood; The country does not belong to any one person).

PREPARATIONS
FOR BIHAR
ELECTIONS BEGIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

A day after the Election Commission rejected the demand of political parties in Bihar to postpone Assembly elections in the state and said that elections in the state will be held on time, sources said that the Union home ministry has started preparations for elections in terms of organising para-military forces and other security arrangements.

The tenure of the current Bihar Assembly will end on November 29, and polls are expected to be held in either October end or November. President's rule has to be imposed in the state if the election process is not completed by November 28.

Political parties in Bihar, including Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), had urged the poll panel to postpone elections in the state. The LJP had written a letter to the Election Commission saying it is not advisable to put the lives of lakhs of people at risk by holding elections at a time when there has been a sharp increase in coronavirus cases in the state.

But Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora reiterated on Monday that elections in Bihar will be held on time, and that the poll panel is making preparations keeping in view the Covid-19 situation.

Gearing up for Independence Day



A woman purchases flag as part of preparations for the upcoming Independence Day celebrations in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

— Satish B.

C'garh to spend ₹20L extra
to make House virus-proof

Safety measures include glass partitions for MLAs in the Assembly

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, AUG. 11

The Chhattisgarh Assembly is all geared up for its monsoon session scheduled to commence on August 25, amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

Some measures taken by the state government to protect the lawmakers during the session include glass partitions, provision of hand sanitizer bottles, and hankies on the desk of the each member of the House, a senior officer of the state Assembly secretariat said on Tuesday.

"The seats of the MLAs will be divided by glass partitions. Periodic sanitisation of the House will be done during the session to protect the members from the virus", Chhattisgarh Assembly secretary C.S. Gangrade said.

"Modalities for holding the monsoon session of the Assembly are still being worked out", sources in the Assembly secretariat told this newspaper.

There would be regulation of outsiders in the Assembly during the period. Only the Assembly staff essential for conducting the proceedings of the House would be allowed to attend office.

"The press and visitor galleries will remain closed during the session", sources said. "It is estimated that the state government would incur an additional cost of ₹20 lakh to make the House virus-proof during the session", a senior officer of the Assembly secretariat said.

Incidentally, Madhya Pradesh Assembly had to cancel its monsoon session convened on July 20 to protect the members from contracting the virus.

Meanwhile, MP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday announced that he tested negative for coronavirus.

Mr Chouhan who tested positive for the virus on July 25 and was later admitted to a hospital here, has been in self-isolation in his official residence since he was discharged from hospital on August 5.

In a twitter post, Mr Chouhan informed that his latest samples tested negative for coronavirus. He was going to end his home quarantine on Wednesday.

Earlier, MP state minister Arvind Bhadoria and state BJP president V.D. Sharma were admitted to a hospital here last fortnight after testing positive for coronavirus.

They were discharged from hospital last week and put in home quarantine for a week.

Madhya Pradesh has recorded 40,020 coronavirus positive cases and 1,015 deaths by Tuesday afternoon. As many as 29,674 Covid-19 patients in MP have so far recovered.

Indore continues to top the charts of coronavirus cases in Madhya Pradesh recording 8,724 confirmed cases. The city has recorded 333 deaths till now.

Indore is followed by Bhopal which reported 7,770 confirmed cases and 220 deaths so far.

Covid-19 -ve certificate
must for Sabarimala visit

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG.11

Pilgrims visiting Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala will have to carry Covid-19 negative certificates during the Mandala pilgrimage season beginning from November 16.

A decision to this effect was taken at a high-level meeting through a video conference, chaired by Kerala Devaswom (temple affairs) minister Kadakampally Surendran the other day. The darshan will be allowed only through a virtual queue system. Covid negative certificates will be mandatory for online registration for the virtual queue system.

The meeting observed that the pilgrimage is going to be challenging this year due Covid-19. Therefore only a limited number of pilgrims would be allowed while strictly adhering to Covid-19 protocol. Social distancing norms and safety protocols will be complied with

● THE DARSHAN will be allowed only through a virtual queue system. Covid negative certificates will be mandatory for online registration for the virtual queue system.

while allowing darshan at the sanctum sanctorum.

The state government and Devaswom Board would seek the cooperation of neighboring states from where a large number of devotees visit Sabarimala, to ensure Covid-19 protocol is implemented strictly.

The meeting convened by the devaswom minister was a preparatory one. Another high level meeting will be held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan later, which will take the final call on arrangements for the pilgrimage season.

In view of the current Covid-19 situation, the health department has decided to scale up medical facilities at Sannidhanam, Nilakkal and Pamba. The govern-

ment will explore the possibility of the taking over Amritha Hospital in the area for arranging emergency medical facilities for the devotees.

Meanwhile, Kerala on Tuesday recorded 1,417 cases of Covid-19 even as 1,426 people recovered from the infection.

The total number of cases in the state has reached 36,568 of which 12,723 are active cases. Of the new cases, 1,242 contracted the infection through contact, source of infection among 105 is not known, 62 came from abroad, 72 from other states and 36 health care workers also got infected.

At a press conference here the chief minister said that seven persons died of Covid-19 on Tuesday taking the death toll in the state to 120.

Thiruvananthapuram district recorded the highest number of cases at 291 followed by Malappuram 242, Kozhikode 158, Kasargod 147, Alappuzha 146, Palakkad 141, Ernakulam 133 respectively.

cases.

The capital city has recorded 45 deaths so far.

More than a dozen areas in Raipur city have been identified as coronavirus hotspots and declared containment zones.

‘Promises made to
people were not
being not fulfilled’

After being the cause of rebellion, former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot is back with the Congress. In an interview to *Ashhar Khan* he outlines his issues and reasons for his *ghar wapas*.

Q&A
SACHIN PILOT

What suddenly changed for you that you had to do a ghar wapas?

Well the assertion made by you is wrong. I had never left the party. I had always maintained that I am with the party. There were certain issues that were not being addressed so it was incumbent upon me to raise these issues in a proper party forum and I was just doing that. I had categorically stated that I am not joining any other party.

I have never said anything against the party or the leadership of the party. I did raise certain points that I am entitled to and I feel there is nothing wrong in it.

Then why did the party sack you from the post of Deputy Chief Minister and the state President of the party?

Let's be clear on one thing. I have never hankered for any post. Posts come and go. It's the truth and principles that are important in my scheme of things. For the last six and a half years, I was the state unit chief. Out of these five years we were in the Opposition. We protested against the then BJP government, staged dharnas, held yatras, were arrested, cases were foisted against us. It was not me alone, but the entire Congress was responsible for the ouster of the previous government.

Now when we are in power and our party workers are being ignored, how can I let that happen? They were with us when we were in the Opposition. So it was necessary that I raise their voice in the party.

There have been several allegations against you too. Infact, the Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had some very harsh words for you?

Name calling and ascribing motives is very easy in politics. Mr. Gehlot is a very seasoned leader of the party. I have

R'THAN HC TO
HEAR BSP-CONG
MERGER CASE

Jaipur, Aug 11: The Rajasthan High Court will on Thursday resume hearing the petitions filed by a BJP MLA and the Bahujan Samaj Party challenging the merger of six BSP MLAs with the Congress last year.

The hearing on Tuesday remained inconclusive and the matter was posted for the next hearing on August 13, a counsel for the Speaker said.

BJP MLA Madan Dilawar and the BSP had demanded a stay on the implementation of an order passed by the Speaker, who recognised the merger last year.

The counsel for the petitioners argued that the merger was against the provisions of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, the country's anti-defection law. — PTI

differences with him on policy issues but not personally. My issues were what we had promised before coming to power and how we were not able to do it as we were not being given the space to do it. Certainly the issues were not addressed and there was acrimony that is why we had to come to Delhi and raise these issues.

What were the issues that you were upset about?

As I said, the workers who were with us were being slighted by the government. The promises that we had made to the people were not being fulfilled and there was no course correction.

I am also sad because of the way a sedition notice was given and then withdrawn within a month. There were several other issues also like lack of communication between the organisation and the government.



Congress leader Sachin Pilot while interacting with the media at his residence in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

MAMMOTH | LOSS

While 463 elephant died from 2000 to 2010, 784 died in next 10 years

Elephant mortality rate very high in Odisha

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 11

As the people across the globe will celebrate the World Elephant Day on August 12, animal protection activists in Odisha on Tuesday feared an uncertain and dangerous future for the pachyderms.

The safety of the National Heritage Animal (NHA) in the state, also known as the land of Gajapati for its rich elephant population, is in peril.

According to state government statistics, there were 2,044 elephants in Odisha in 1979 in the dense forests of Dhenkanal, Deogarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Angul, Sundargarh and Cuttack.

Last counted in 2017, their number has reduced

to 1,976.

According to Dr Biswajit Mohanty, a leading wildlife protection activist, elephants in Odisha have been forced to leave their native forests scattering into smaller populations and spreading out to several other districts. Notably no census has been undertaken since last three years in Odisha.

"Odisha loses more elephants than other elephant-bearing Indian states which register a steady increase in their population. The state also poses all the identified threats and dangers that elephants come across in India and Asia. The devastating changes in Odisha's elephant landscape because of increasing mining and construction activities, electrocution and train accidents have virtually decimated the



Quite a few elephants have been killed in train accidents in Odisha.

elephant habitats and traditional corridors bringing them into frequent conflict with humans and the many threats in and around human habita-

tions," said Dr Mohanty. Keonjhar district which had 112 elephants in 2002, had just 40 of them in 2017, losing them to large scale mining but Dhenkanal dis-

trict which had 81 elephants in 2002, had 169 in 2017 as elephants got trapped as they could not cross over to other forests on their traditional migration routes cut off by Rengali irrigation canal network.

Today, Dhenkanal witnesses more human-elephant conflict than any other district in Odisha, added Dr Mohanty.

"Similarly, the 60-odd elephants from the Chandaka sanctuary were so affected by development activities that they have now virtually abandoned the sanctuary and migrated to Ganjam and Cuttack districts. In fact, only one elephant was counted in Chandaka sanctuary during the 2017 census," he pointed out.

The elephant mortality rate is rising alarmingly as the average death per

year which was 33 from 1990 to 2000 became 46 per year from 2000 to 2010, but since 2010, the average has become 78 per year.

While 463 elephant deaths were recorded during 2000 to 2010, the number grew sharply to 784 elephant deaths from 2010 to 2020.

"Of the 784 deaths in the last ten years, 281 (36 percent) elephants died an unnatural death and in 160 (20 percent) cases the cause of death could not be ascertained primarily due to finding of bodies in highly decomposed state.

"One could conclude that nearly 50 per cent of the elephant mortality in Odisha is unnaturally caused," said Dr Gouranga Charan Rout, a leading forest conservation activist of Rayagada in south Odisha.

DGCA TO AUDIT
AIRPORTS THAT
SEE HEAVY RAINS

New Delhi, Aug 11: The country's aviation regulator DGCA will conduct a special audit of airports that receive heavy rains, senior officials said on Tuesday, four days after a plane crashed at the Kozhikode airport amid downpour.

"The special audit will be done at airports like Mumbai and Chennai that are affected by heavy rains annually," said a senior official of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

The Airports Authority of India manages more than 100 airports in the country, including the one in Kozhikode. However, major airports like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are managed by private companies.

IN BRIEF

Millennium-old Mexico skeleton

Mexico City: A millennium-old skeleton of a pre-Hispanic man has been unearthed in northeast Mexico, archeologists said Monday, describing it as one of the first of its kind to be discovered complete.

The body of the man, believed to be between 21 and 35 years old, had been placed inside a woven mat with a small mortar as an offering, the National Anthropology and History Institute said. His remains lay untouched for more than 1,000 years and the skeleton and its position were preserved along with a ceramic relic, the institute said.

13 die in Sudan ethnic clashes

Khartoum: Sudan said Tuesday 13 people were killed and 42 injured in days of clashes between rival ethnic groups in its Red Sea port, state media reported. Violence broke out in the eastern city of Port Sudan on Sunday evening, the SUNA news agency said, quoting medics who had treated the wounded. Police sent in reinforcements and have imposed a night-time curfew, the statement added. Fighting began when protesters from the Nuba people, demonstrating against a new governor, entered a district of the Beni Amer group. There is long standing hostility between the groups. The Nuba originate from the South Kordofan region, an area that suffered from the decades of civil war. The Beni Amer people come from eastern Sudan.

Gunmen kill 13 in Nigeria

Lagos: Gunmen have killed 13 villagers in central Nigeria's Benue state following a long-running "chieftaincy" dispute, police said on Tuesday. The attack on Edikwu in the Apa district on Monday, also left several people injured and many houses burnt, said Catherine Anene, the state police spokeswoman. "About 20 armed men invaded the community and shot sporadically at members of the community," she said in a statement. "A team of police officers was deployed to the scene where 13 corpses were recovered," she said. Anene said police had launched an investigation, adding that a dispute over "chieftaincy" matters was to blame for the violence. "Edikwu... was experiencing incessant crises over chieftaincy affairs until May 25 when the Benue government convened a peace meeting, headed by the deputy governor, Mr. Benson Abouanu, to put an end to the rancour," she said. She said peace was restored until Monday when the gunmen invaded. Communal clashes over land rights, water and access to political opportunities are common in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with 200 million people.

MARYAM SUMMONED BY NAB

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUG. 11

Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Tuesday said that it had summoned the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) vice president Maryam Nawaz to hear her stance on the case registered against her.

In a statement after a violent clash between PML-N workers and police, he anti-graft watchdog alleged that PML-N workers pelted stones and were involved in hooliganism at the time of her appearance.

The Bureau also said that it will register FIRs against PML-N representatives and leaders for interfering in the legal process. Earlier, clash erupted between outraged the PML-N workers and police as party's vice-president Maryam Nawaz reached NAB office in a case pertaining to illegal transfer of 180 acres of land in Rawind.

The PML-N workers — who accompanied Maryam Nawaz from Jati Umrah to the NAB office in a convoy — pelted stones at police officials and tried to break the barriers outside the anti-corruption watchdog's office.

In retaliation, the police resorting to aerial firing, shelling and baton charge to disperse the infuriated crowd. Several protesters, including women, were arrested. PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif condemned the incident of pelting stones and teargas shelling on workers on the occasion of party vice-president Maryam Nawaz's appearance before NAB.

Belarus poll challenger safely reaches Lithuania
Protests: Poland ready to mediate

Minsk, Aug. 11: The main challenger in Belarus's disputed presidential election is "safe" in Lithuania, the Baltic state's foreign minister said, after a second night of street clashes between police and opposition supporters left a protester dead.

Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who has claimed victory over authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko in Sunday's vote, "arrived in Lithuania and is safe", Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius said. He did not provide any further details but EU and NATO member Lithuania, which like Belarus was once part of the Soviet Union, has a history of granting refuge to Belarusian and Russian opposition figures.

Tikhonovskaya's whereabouts had been unclear after campaign staff said they had lost contact with her and there had been concern for her safety. Her surfacing in Lithuania came after thousands took to the streets of the capital Minsk for a second night on Monday to contest claims by authorities that longtime ruler Lukashenko had secured a sixth term with 80 percent of the vote.

Tikhonovskaya, a political novice who has energised the opposition, came second with 10 percent and protesters are backing her claim to have won the election. For the second night in a row, police used rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas to disperse demonstrations, though protesters fought back with stones and fire-works and built makeshift barricades, reporters, protesters and witnesses said. "Too many people are against Lukashenko," Pavel, a 34-year-old protester said.

"Our goal is to depose Lukashenko. He is not worthy of being president." Dozens of people have been injured in the violence and the first fatality was confirmed on Monday when police said a man died after an explosive device went off in his hand. Olga Kovalkova, a member of Tikhonovskaya's staff, said she believed the candidate had left the country against her will after meeting with officials on Monday at the Central Election Commission.

"The Belarusian authorities took Svetlana to Lithuania. She had no choice," Kovalkova said. "Before entering the Central Election Commission, she had no plans to leave the country. It was not her decision." Her spokeswoman Anna Krasulina said the opposition movement would continue even if Tikhonovskaya was no longer in the country.

"Her departure does not change anything, she did what she could, raised and

Riga, Aug. 11: Poland is ready to mediate between Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and the opposition, the foreign minister said on Tuesday after a second night of protests following the disputed election.

"Poland is ready to act as a mediator between Belarus opposition and president Lukashenko," Jacek Czaputowicz told a joint press conference in Riga after meeting his Estonian, Finnish and Latvian counterparts. "There is still a place for dialogue but we will have a hard time trying to convince other Western countries not to impose sanctions against Belarus if the violent crackdown on protesters will continue," he said. Poland has called for an emergency European Union summit on Belarus, a former Soviet republic where strongman Lukashenko won a sixth term in office in a vote disputed by opposition challenger

Svetlana Tikhonovskaya. The candidate has now sought refuge in Lithuania. Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics said his country too would be willing to take in "political refugees from Belarus if that will be necessary". But he called for a "cautious approach" to imposing sanctions on Belarus, warning that this "will only enlarge their overall dependence on Russia". Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto also said that any sanctions "should be imposed in a way that they do not hurt regular Belarusian citizens". Estonia's Urmas Reinsal added that since the election in Belarus was not free and fair "we should not recognise the legitimacy of its outcome". The foreign ministers were meeting on the 100th anniversary of the Riga Peace Treaty, which confirmed Latvia's independence from Soviet Russia.

— AFP

Video recorded under pressure, say allies

Minsk, Aug. 11: Belarus election challenger Svetlana Tikhonovskaya appeared in a video published by state media Tuesday urging supporters not to protest, but her allies said it was recorded under pressure.

In the video published by state news agency *Belta*, Tikhonovskaya appeared to read from a prepared statement calling for "respect for the law" and for Belarusians not to take to the streets.

Her head lowered, she was shown sitting on a black sofa in front of a window with the blinds closed. Tikhonovskaya, who says she defeated longtime authoritarian ruler Alexander Lukashenko in Sunday's vote, has left the country to seek

refuge in Lithuania after two nights of clashes.

"We believe that this video was recorded under pressure from law enforcement," Maria Kolesnikova, a key Tikhonovskaya ally, told reporters.

"A person who has been receiving threats and whose husband is in prison can record any video," Tikhonovskaya decided to run for president after the authorities jailed her husband, popular blogger Sergei Tikhonovsky, and barred him from contesting.

Her campaign galvanised the opposition, presenting a historic challenge to former collective farm director Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus since 1994, brooking no dissent.

— Agencies

inspired the people," Krasulina said. "The people will act without her, they are protesting not for Tikhonovskaya but for themselves." Lukashenko's opponents have called for running protests against his regime and there were calls for a nationwide strike. The 37-year-old mother of two decided to run for president after the authorities jailed her husband, popular blogger Sergei Tikhonovsky, and barred him from contesting.

Her campaign galvanis-

ed the opposition, presenting a historic challenge to former collective farm director Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus since 1994, brooking no dissent and earning the nickname of "Europe's last dictator". Western governments have widely condemned the police crackdown, with some in the European Union suggesting it may reimpose sanctions on Lukashenko's regime that were lifted several years ago.

— AFP

China trying to turn Taiwan into HK: FM

Taipei, Aug. 11: China is trying to turn democratic Taiwan into another Hong Kong, the island's foreign minister warned Tuesday as he met with a senior US official making a historic diplomatic trip. A crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong has gathered pace since China imposed a sweeping security law on the financial hub in June, with opposition politicians disqualified and activists arrested.

That has caused alarm in

Taiwan, a self-ruled island of 23 million people that Beijing claims as its own territory and has vowed to one day seize, by force if necessary. Foreign minister Joseph Wu said Taiwan lives under the constant threat of having its freedoms taken away by China, during a rare meeting with US cabinet official Alex Azar in Taipei on Tuesday. "Our lives have become increasingly difficult as China continues to pressure Taiwan into accept-

ing its political conditions, conditions that will turn Taiwan into the next Hong Kong," he said.

"The people of Taiwan are all too familiar with dealing with threats, be it military, diplomatic or the threats of epidemics," Health Secretary Azar is in Taipei for a three-day visit billed as the highest-level visit from the United States since it switched diplomatic recognition from the island to China in 1979. Beijing has ramped up



Police cars block the entrance to Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House shortly after Secret Service guards shot a person who was apparently armed, outside the White House on Monday while US President Donald Trump was speaking to the press in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC.

— AFP

Trump evacuated after man shot outside WH

Washington, Aug. 11: US Secret Service agents shot and wounded a man who was apparently armed outside the White House on Monday, President Donald Trump said, after being briefly whisked away in the middle of a press conference. A 51-year-old male approached a Secret Service officer standing at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, one block from the White House, according to Tom Sullivan, the chief of the Secret Service Uniformed Division. The suspect told the officer he had a weapon and ran "aggressively" towards him, drawing an object out of his clothes, Sullivan said in a statement that was broadcast on Twitter. He then assumed a "shooter's stance" as if he intended to fire, whereupon the Secret Service officer shot him in the torso, Sullivan added.

Officers on the scene administered first aid, and emergency medical services were called. Both the suspect and the officer were taken to hospital. "The Secret Service Office of Professional Responsibility will be conducting an internal review of the officer's actions," Sullivan said, adding the DC Metropolitan Police Department had been contacted.

As the President was speaking to reporters in the White House briefing room, a Secret Service bodyguard abruptly approached him and interrupted, saying in a quiet voice, "Sir, could you please come with me?" Trump and staff members left. Doors to the briefing room, still filled with

Saudi arms sales: Pompeo cleared

Washington, Aug. 11: An internal probe has cleared US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of wrongdoing in a disputed arms sale to Saudi Arabia, a senior State Department official said Monday, although the report on the investigation has not yet been released.

Pompeo was accused of abuse of power after he used an obscure emergency procedure to ram through \$8.1 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other Arab allies in May of last year, despite opposition from the US Congress. The Inspector General's report on the investigation has concluded that the State Department had "acted in complete accordance with the law and found no wrongdoing in the administration exercise of the emergency authorities that are available under

the arms export control act," the senior official told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity. The official did not say when the report would be published, but the State Department released excerpts in a statement.

Congress had sought to block the arms sale in protest against the October 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which was attributed by US intelligence services to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Then-inspector general Steve Linick had been investigating Pompeo's 2019 declaration of an emergency that permitted the Trump administration to sell arms and bypass Congress, where lawmakers have voiced horror at civilian casualties in the Saudi-led offensive in Yemen.

— AFP

TRUMP MOOTS G7 MEET AFTER US ELECTION IN NOV.

Washington, Aug. 11: US President Donald Trump on Monday suggested hosting the Group of Seven summit after the November presidential election, saying he would invite countries generally excluded from the global get-togethers. "I am much more inclined to do it sometime after the election. We were going to do it in September, they'd like to do it," Trump said during his press briefing on the coronavirus pandemic.

"We could do it through teleconference, or we could do it through a meeting, but I sort of am now suggesting, I tell my people yesterday, 'Actually, why don't we do it sometime after the election when things are a bit, you have a little more time to think about it because it's very important,'" he said.

— AFP

EUROPE VISIT: POMPEO IN PRAGUE

Plzen, Czech Republic, Aug. 11: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in Prague on Tuesday, public TV footage showed, to open a five-day visit to central Europe with a hefty agenda, including China's role in 5G network construction.

Pompeo will spend two days in the Czech Republic before moving on to Slovenia, Austria and close

ally Poland, which is eager to welcome some of the US troops leaving Germany to guard against historic adversary Russia.

The focus will be on his campaign for nations to shun Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant considered a threat by Washington as it takes a lead in fifth-generation internet, and to reduce Europe's energy dependence on Russia.

— AFP

WHO to review Russian vaccine

Geneva, Aug. 11: The World Health Organisation said any WHO stamp of approval on a Covid-19 vaccine candidate would require a rigorous safety data review, after Russia announced Tuesday it had approved a vaccine.

President Vladimir Putin said Russia had become the first country to approve a vaccine offering "sustainable immunity" against Coronavirus.

"We are in close contact with the Russian health authorities and discussions are ongoing with respect to possible WHO pre-qualification of the vaccine," the United Nations health agency's spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told reporters in Geneva at an online press briefing.

"Pre-qualification of any vaccine includes the rigorous review and assessment of all the required safety and efficacy data." Russia's Sputnik V vaccine has been developed by the Gamaleya research institute in coordination with the country's defence ministry.

A total of 165 candidate vaccines are being worked on around the world, according to the latest WHO overview produced on July 31.

Of those, 139 are still in pre-clinical evaluation,

COVID-19 CASES RETURN TO NZ AFTER 102 DAYS

Wellington, Aug. 11: New Zealand's dream run of 102 days without locally transmitted Coronavirus ended Tuesday, prompting a stay-at-home lockdown order for the country's largest city.

After receiving global praise for successfully containing the virus, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said four cases had been detected in a single family in Auckland from an unknown source.

"After 102 days, we have our first cases of Covid-19 outside of managed isolation or quarantine facilities..." Ardern said.

— AFP

while the other 26 are in the various phases of being tested on humans, of which six are the furthest ahead, having reached Phase 3 of clinical evaluation.

The Gamaleya candidate being produced in Russia, which is among the 26 being tested on humans, is listed as being in Phase 1.

— AFP

GOVT | CRITIC Family not giving up hope for return of Wanchalearm Satsaksit

Missing Thai activist's kin to 'have faith'

Bangkok, Aug. 11: The family of a missing Thai pro-democracy activist celebrated his birthday Tuesday, vowing not to give up hope for his return more than two months after he was allegedly abducted in Cambodia.

The disappearance of Wanchalearm Satsaksit was one of the catalysts for a growing pro-democracy movement in Thailand, which has seen thousands turn out to protest the military-aligned administration.

Wanchalearm, a critic of the Thai government led by former army chief

Prayut Chan-O-Cha, was abducted off the streets of the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in early June, according to rights groups.

The self-exiled activist, who runs an acerbic anti-government Facebook page, is wanted by Thai authorities for allegedly breaching the Computer Crimes Act.

Both Thai and Cambodian authorities have vowed to investigate his disappearance. However, sister Sitanan said Tuesday — his 38th birthday — that she was "frustrated" — with the slow

pace the investigations have taken.

— AFP

"Our family is waiting for the truth and clarity from both countries," she said, as she lit candles on a cake in front of the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok.

"I still have faith that he's alive... We cannot give up hope if there is a small chance," she said.

Protesters in rallies across the country have held up posters with Wanchalearm's face to demand answers of his fate. Sitanan said she was "proud" that her brother has become a symbol of the movement, adding that she didn't used to under-

stand why he was so active in the pro-democracy movement.

"On the day he disappeared, that's when I realised we needed to do something about the politics of Thailand," she said. Since a coup in May 2014, Thailand has vowed to track down pro-democracy critics — especially those accused of attacking the unassailable monarchy.

At least eight prominent Thai activists who fled to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam have subsequently disappeared, according to Human Rights Watch.

— AFP



DECCAN
Chronicle
12 AUGUST 2020
Truce in Raj Cong, but
rift still needs solution

The defusing of the rebellion within the Rajasthan Congress after former deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot met Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in New Delhi Monday, days ahead of Friday's Assembly session, is welcome news for the party, which feared the loss of yet another state government due to the BJP's mischief. But while the first signs of a possible rapprochement are evident, the rift between Mr Pilot and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is far from over, and the contours of a peace deal still need to be worked out, for which Congress president Sonia Gandhi has set up a three-member committee. Mr Pilot is said to have demanded he be reinstated as state party chief and made CM in the last year of the current government's term. That is extremely unlikely, given that a large majority of MLAs want Mr Gehlot as CM. The Chief Minister, in turn, who is clearly not happy at these developments, has advised the Congress high command to accommodate Mr Pilot in a Central role in New Delhi. It was suggested he be made an AICC general secretary, but it doesn't seem this will be acceptable to Mr Pilot. Mr Gehlot, who had an abrasive relationship with his former deputy all through their government's first 18 months, said Tuesday he would listen to the grievances of all party MLAs, including the rebels, and try to address them, but was opaque about whether he would try to repair ties with Mr Pilot, against whom he had used extremely harsh language in the past few weeks, calling him a "*nikamma*", among other things. And while the younger leader can be faulted for much of the friction between the two, the senior leader too should share some of the blame. Political differences, especially in the same party, cannot be resolved by bringing in the police. That said, the CM may have been right to suspect the BJP of plotting with some Congress leaders to bring down his government, but that needed to be handled politically. For the BJP, the developments in Rajasthan are a wake-up call — that there are limits to its ability to bring down elected governments and come to power through the backdoor. After its successful dislodging of the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh earlier this year, with the help of another Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, and several other such instances in the past, the saffron party had hoped for a repeat in Rajasthan, cashing in on the rebellion by Sachin Pilot (who had always insisted, though, that he had no plans to join the BJP). But Mr Pilot, who initially claimed that 30 Congress MLAs were backing him, finally saw he had no more than 18 legislators in his camp, which was insufficient to dislodge the Gehlot government. State BJP leader and Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who was allegedly caught on tape while conspiring to wean away MLAs, ended up with egg all over his face. The role played by Rajasthan's Governor Kalraj Mishra in the whole affair — including impeding the CM's bid to hold an Assembly session to prove his majority — also clearly shows that the BJP has not given up trying to misuse the Raj Bhavans to further its political ends. The Congress and other Opposition-led state governments need to watch out in the months ahead.

How green is this valley!

With the deadline of India's first commercial coal auction affixed on September 29, the Narendra Modi government is once again well on the path of destroying its own ecological riches and jeopardising its carbon credits. The auction initially put on sale 18 coal blocks spread over Hasdeo Arand's 4.2 lakh acres in Chhattisgarh. Among bidders are the usual suspects — the Adani Group, despite stray contrarian assurances. It is as if a plutocratic insurgency is all set to stamp out the ancient forests, at incalculable human, social and environmental costs. India is the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Located in the valley of a Mahanadi tributary, Hasdeo forest sits on an estimated five billion tonnes of coal. It is also home to 86 species of trees, 51 species of medicinal plants, 34 species of mammals, 14 species of reptiles, 111 species of birds and 29 fish species. Already, mining operations are on in two coal blocks — Parsa East and Kete Basan, and Chotia — since ministry approval in 2011. Proposals concerning four other blocks are being considered. The mining has hurt livelihoods of the local population — consisting chiefly of Gondos who subsist on collection and sale of forest produce. That has depleted drastically. Processing of dirty coal, the only kind available here, causes severe air and water pollution, in the absence of regulation, leading to climate and health hazards, including lung cancer. The people now face the nightmare of displacement en masse, in lieu of a meagre, one-time compensation. The Lemru elephant reserve coming up on a small, unmined area of the forest — there have been 325 human and 70 pachyderm deaths due to conflict in the last five years — will cause more displacement. The reserve itself defeats its own purpose — it is to be located safely away from the proposed mines and will act as a veritable prison for the animals. In its eagerness to usher in private investment, the Centre has kept the revenue share of the state governments dramatically low. This was perhaps one reason why at least four states — West Bengal, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh — opposed the auction. Five coal blocks that belong to Hasdeo forest have been dropped from the auction, thanks to the effort of the Chhattisgarh government. It is a short breather.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Nilofar
Suhrawardy
Ayodhya glory
will fade amid
Covid tension
before long

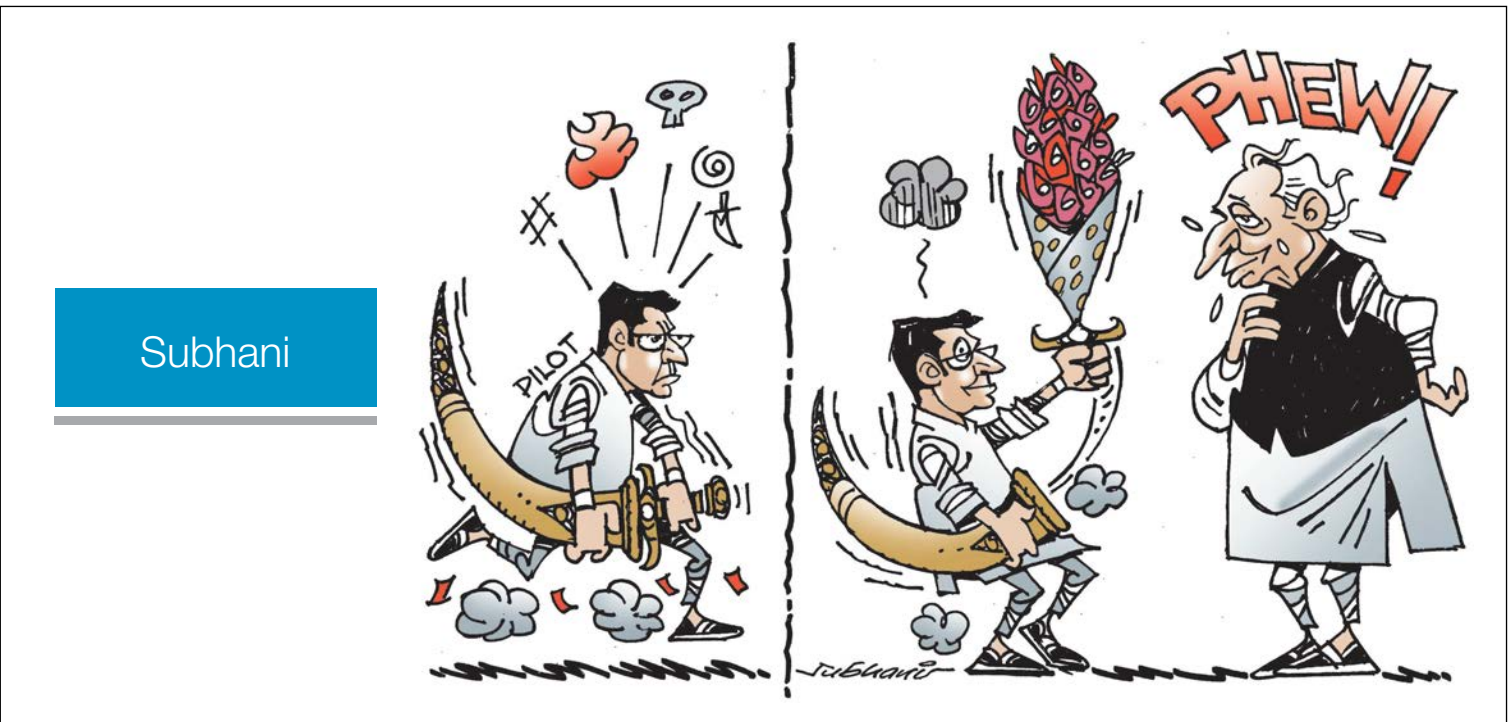
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has certainly gone overboard in making a grand show of his presence at Ayodhya. He has proved to be a master strategist, ahead of seniors in his own political camp and, of course, his political rivals. Clearly, he can claim to have achieved what apparently was not visualised and perhaps not even seriously considered by others. True, around a year ago, the apex court's verdict regarding this controversial issue had set the clock ticking speedily in this direction. Apprehension prevailed in certain quarters about the verdict and subsequent developments, including the latest ceremonies, leading to communal tension. Thankfully, Indians at large adopted a mature and secular approach then as well as now (August 5), with there being no report about any major communal disturbance from any part of the country. And this certainly proves that the Ayodhya-issue can no longer be viewed as a communal bomb that it once seemed to be. Against this back-

drop, what can Mr Modi expect to gain by the grand "religious" show displayed at Ayodhya on August 5? Of course, constitutionally, he has as much a right to be as religious he wants to be. After all, India is a multi-religious, secular country. Besides, most politicians do indulge in display of their religious as well as secular images for political gains. Almost all key leaders, including Mr Modi, flaunt their "secularism" by sending a token symbol to Ajmer Shareef every year. During electoral season, substantial importance is given by most to gain media coverage of their visiting temples and so forth. Well, this is India. Mr Modi's Ayodhya-show cannot but be viewed as a grand step taken by him in style, to enhance his image, particularly his "religious" credentials in the eyes of Indian voters. Considering that it has been taken at a time when a vicious virus is sending distress signals from all directions, Mr Modi is probably hopeful that this Ayodhya-move will be of some help in distracting the people's attention. Will it? This may be

viewed as a million dollar question. The nature of comments coming from even his key political rivals suggests that they cannot afford to criticise his Ayodhya-show. This may be viewed as a political "victory" for Mr Modi. There is nothing wrong with politicians of various parties expressing appreciation for the Ayodhya Ram temple ceremony. Indians have come a long way from December 6, 1992, when communal violence engulfed practically the entire country following the demolition of Babri Masjid, for construction of the Ram temple. Nevertheless, there lurks a fear in certain sections, whether the underlying motive of the ruling party and its leaders is to pay greater importance to their Hindutva-agenda than to the country's Constitution. It is hoped that this is not the case and substantial attention is paid not to provoke communal violence in name of religion, constitutionally. Mr Modi is apparently well aware that he cannot afford to openly use the communal card for political gains. It is not without reason that

he donned a secular mask when he first chose to come on the national stage by contesting the 2014 parliamentary elections. Also, each time communal frenzy targeting minorities of some nature, particularly Muslims, hits headlines, protests and demonstrations against it do not take long to surface. A greater number of secular non-Muslims (largely Hindus) participate in these demonstrations than Muslims. This suggests that the question of his Ayodhya-show being viewed communally by people in general is as good as non-existent. Even if this were not a Covid year, the prospects of people adding communal fervour to the Ayodhya-show would probably not have prevailed. It is possible that Mr Modi has his eye on gaining votes in the Hindi belt with the Bihar Assembly election round the corner. He has his right to make political use of religious shows, if he wants to, as long as communal violence and hatred are not provoked. In recent years, some noise has been made about certain leaders hoping for polarisation of vote banks

along religious lines. Perhaps, a motive of the Ayodhya-show is this. It may be, but with Hindus as well as Muslims divided into numerous groups, castes, sub-castes and also regional, the question of there being any Hindu or Muslim vote-bank is as good as non-existent. So Mr Modi's Ayodhya move may certainly be viewed as a master card as it has helped him gain substantially a positive image that had suffered in recent days because of crises caused by the coronavirus. He hopes to dominate headlines for some time. It cannot be ignored that the virus has left Indians a little too tense to remain distracted by his Ayodhya show for long. Nevertheless, he has once again proved to be a master strategist who knows how to steal a march on his rivals in the political race. He has, for the moment, all the reason to talk about his "56-inch" chest and feel proud! The writer is a journalist with specialisation in communication studies and nuclear diplomacy. She is also the author of several books.



Afghans face turmoil:
Back to a dark future



N.V. Subramanian

Afghanistan is becoming the Balkans of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and there is almost no one of Otto von Bismarck's sagacity and vision to prevent the place from blowing up and damaging the neighbourhood. April 2021 is the last month of the American and allied troops' occupation of Afghanistan and there is little likelihood of a change of plans regardless of whether Donald Trump or Joe Biden wins the US presidential elections in November. Countries sharing a border with Afghanistan, which include the Central Asian states, Iran, Pakistan and China, have an equal stake in keeping the situation from blowing up, as do countries and big powers that don't like the United States, Russia, India, Turkey and the Arab nations. Afghanistan has never known unbroken central rule as it is usually defined, and it doesn't have a strong centralising army, like another xenophobic state, Myanmar. Tribes and warlords determine the power structure on the ground and this phenomenon often defies the Islamic impulses. Afghanistan has an excess of local and foreign actors compounding its misery. Its chief local and foreign actors, respectively, are the Taliban and the United States. Afghanistan is America's longest war and next year will be its inglorious 20th anniversary. Although Washington's objectives of its post-9/11 intervention were met with the dislodgement of the Taliban government and the ouster of Al Qaeda from all power structures, the US returned from the distraction of the Iraq War with new nation-building pledges for Afghanistan, in which India has so far spent \$3 billion. The objectives of foreign inter-

ventions amended and enlarged mid-course usually end in stalemate. The situation with the principal actor opposed to the United States, the Taliban, is equally fraught and troublesome. Although it controls 20 per cent of Afghanistan, contests another 50 per cent with the international coalition and Afghan forces, twice has held populous Kunduz city in the north, and is close to encircling six to eight other cities whose road links it can sever at will, its future still depends on the gains from the February 2020 peace agreement with the US. The Taliban's hardliners were opposed to the peace deal, which binds it and allies like Al Qaeda, the semi-autonomous anti-India, pro-Pakistan Haqqani Taliban of Sirajuddin Haqqani, etc, from attacking the US and its allies. One of the biggest beneficiaries of disenchantment in the Taliban is the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), originally constituted from leaders of the Pakistan Taliban facing Pakistan Army persecution. In the months leading up to the peace deal, the US and Afghan forces on one side and Taliban on the other decimated IS(K), claiming no collusion. Since the Taliban must sustain violence against the US and Afghan forces and others generally considered "outsiders" to preserve its raison d'être, it has, so to speak, outsourced bloodletting and mayhem to IS(K), with the Haqqani Taliban acting as intermediary. The Jalalabad jailbreak on August 3, while attributed to IS(K), benefited Taliban inmates the most. IS(K) attacks on a Kabul gurdwara and a maternity ward were particularly gruesome but were, however, not meant to help the Taliban cause entirely. IS(K) mirrors its mother organisation, Islamic State of Iraq and Levant,

by making extreme violence an end in itself to gain influence, strength and resources. This has proved a magnet for disenchanted Taliban hardliners. The key test ahead is if the United States leaves a residual counter-terrorism force of upto 5,000 after the April 2021 withdrawal. A sort of guarantee for the peace deal, it can also increase the Taliban's problems with its hardliners to the benefit of IS(K). Between the Taliban and the IS(K), most states affected by Afghanistan's instabilities prefer the Taliban, which is an insurgent movement with no revolutionary ambitions abroad. These grudging supporters include the leading powers, the US, Russia, China, the Central Asian Republics, Iran, Pakistan, etc. Although Indian agencies have contacts with the Taliban through Iran, it doesn't translate to meaningful political traction, this being scuppered by Pakistan's closeness to the insurgent outfit, and the Taliban's own supportive role in the IC-814 hijack. The Haqqani Taliban through its violent attack on Indian interests and assets in Afghanistan guided by Pakistan's ISI also makes accommodation with the Taliban remote for now. On the other hand, India's support of the Afghan government and its training of Afghan defence forces makes it anathema to the Taliban. Nevertheless, the IS(K) represents a bigger challenge, with recruits from India and with a chapter dedicated to terrorism in India. Once the US departs, India's non-military investments of \$3 billion in Afghanistan will go up in smoke and India's security interests will come under severe strain. It is unlikely that the isolated civilian government with a depleted military can withstand Taliban pressure for long. If this is accompanied by an ascendancy of Pakistan, it can provide no comfort to New Delhi. Between a rock and a hard place is what confronts India in Afghanistan. The situation of other states is, however, only slightly better. The United States has to keep an eagle eye on Afghanistan in the foreseeable future with the possibility of repeat military deployments which are politically controversial. Russia, China and Iran have to tolerate a hardline Taliban in their backyard because the alternative of IS(K) is unacceptable. Having spearheaded the Islamic "revolution" in the 1990s, the Taliban cannot go soft and still hope to retain its radical base which is ever ready to switch to the IS(K). The last of its hardcore 400 fighters in Afghan government captivity are to be released after US threats of aid cuts and this only makes the situation more precarious. All of Afghanistan's neighbours and near-neighbours have deepened partnerships with one another to manage the new flux after the US withdrawal, except for India whose differences with Pakistan over Kashmir and now China on the border question stand in the way. Once a conduit for humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and quiet manoeuvres with the Taliban, Iran has also moved away over differences over compliances with US sanctions and internal issues related to Muslims and Kashmir. Busy retrenching, the US has nothing to offer except vague promises of protecting Indian interests. The only big player left is Russia, with which India has a defence suppliers' relationship after the United States displaced it as the most valued political partner. All at once, history is being turned back 20 years and the prospects are dark.

One of the biggest beneficiaries of disenchantment in the Taliban is the Islamic State-Khorasan, originally constituted from leaders of the Pakistan Taliban facing Pakistan Army persecution

The writer is an analyst and journalist based in New Delhi

LETTERS

PATANJALI AND IPL

It is baffling to note that yoga guru Baba Ramdev's Patanjali is eyeing IPL sponsorship (*Twist in the tale, DC, Aug. 11*). Only recently, he released 'Coronil' for Covid-19 amidst much fanfare and made a hasty retreat saying it is only an immunity booster. His meteoric rise from yoga lessons on TV to be able to bid for IPL sponsorship shows how much clout he has garnered with the powers that be.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Although Fapcci president C.V. Atchut Rao welcomed and lauded the new industrial policy of the AP government for 2020-23 for better ecosystem for attracting industries but there is no hope with this policy as long as the unfavourable political scenario continues in the state (*New industrial policy aims to achieve balanced growth, DC, Aug. 11*). Until an atmosphere of good infra, better transport and friendly government with corruption free dealings and assurance of profitability is created no investor will enter into AP.

Panchakarla Govardhana Rao
Krishna

PEACE IN RAJASTHAN

It is interesting to read that Rajasthan's former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot is making peace with the Congress ahead of the Assembly session. It is welcome that the Grand Old Party is trying hard to set its house in order and keep its flock together by hook or by crook. Hope it sails through a confidence vote as and when Assembly meets.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

More powers for Govt. to fix drug prices

NEW DELHI, Aug. 11 Dr. Triguna Sen, Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, told Parliament today that the Government was assuming "further powers" to fix the prices of drugs.

Making a statement on the working of the Drug Price Control Order, the Minister assured the House that "the Government will not hesitate to exercise these powers to the fullest extent necessary, though certainly with discretion and in overall public interest."



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,407.01	0.59
Nifty 50	11,322.50	0.46
S&P 500*	3,374.37	0.41
Dollar (₹)	74.77	0.22
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.76	0.02
Euro (₹)	87.83	0.35
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,763▼1,317	2.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.16	0.17
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.903	0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.632	0.058

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Embassy looking to monetise warehousing biz

Embassy Group is exploring various options to monetise its warehousing and industrial parks business at an enterprise value of Rs 1,700-2,000 crore, sources said. The Bengaluru-based group, which had in 2015 formed a joint venture with PE firm Warburg Pincus to build industrial parks, is in talks with few potential buyers to monetise completed and under-construction assets of the joint venture.

Medtronic to put in ₹1,200 cr in H'bad R&D centre



Global medical technology major Medtronic plc said it will invest Rs 1,200 crore to scale up and expand its current R&D facility in Hyderabad into a state-of-the-art engineering and innovation center. Medtronic Engineering and Innovation Center (MEIC) will be its largest global R&D centre outside the US. "This investment planned over five years will provide a boost to Telangana's MedTech plans," it said.

Top solar maker raises cell prices by 11%

Tongwei Solar, a unit of Tongwei Co, raised multicrystalline solar cell prices by 11 per cent to 0.6 yuan per watt, according to an Aug. 10 notice on its website. The company, the world's leading cell producer, also increased prices for three types of monocrystalline cells by 0.08 yuan per watt each, about a 9 per cent increase. The hike is the second in less than three weeks after it increased prices on July 24.

Hyundai Creta crosses 5 lakh sales milestone

Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) said its SUV Creta has crossed five lakh cumulative sales mark in India. The model also remains the best-selling SUV for three consecutive months, May-July, this year. Its new version was launched in March this year. "Creta has been the blockbuster model in the Indian automobile industry ever since its launch in 2015," HMIL director (sales, marketing and service) Tarun Garg said.



■ The worst seems behind in the long road to recovery
Stimulus slows credit downgrades of firms

ANURAG JOSHI
AUG. 11

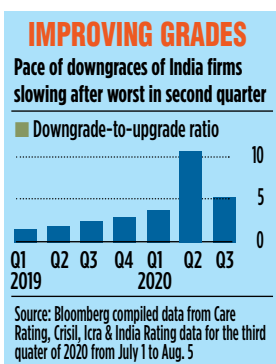
The country's unprecedented stimulus measures to fight the coronavirus crisis seem to have slowed the worsening of corporate credit quality.

There have been around five downgrades for every one upgrade of rupee debt of companies since July 1. That's a major improvement when compared with a ratio of almost 11 to one in the quarter ended June 30, a record rate, according to a review of rating moves by four main credit assess-

sors-Care Ratings, Crisil, Ica and India Ratings & Research.

"The stimulus has brought incremental relief to firms in India, helping them to stay afloat and avoid the risk of closures," said T.N. Arun Kumar, chief ratings officer at Care Ratings Ltd. "The measures have helped corporates tide over cash problems and boosted their short-term credit profiles."

Borrowing costs have declined for local companies due to a barrage of stimulus steps. The central government unveiled \$277



billion of stimulus in May, while the Reserve Bank pumped \$50 billion of cash

UTILITY VEHICLES LEAD REVIVAL

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, AUG. 11

While the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is still visible in automobile sales, there are some early green shoots.

The sales of passenger vehicles (PV) in July merely declined 3.86 per cent year-on-year at 182,779 units from 200,790 in July 2019.

The numbers hint at a good and quick recovery of the segment, even as it also creates doubts over demand sustenance in the long-term.

"After a few consecutive months of plummeted sales in a post-Covid scenario, there are signs of green shoots in PVs and two-wheelers, where the

YoY de-growth is much lesser than the previous months," Rajan Wadhwa, president at Siam, said.

The sales numbers in August would indicate if this is a sustainable demand or just a pent-up demand, he pointed out.

Similarly, Rajesh Menon, director-general at Siam, said the July sales were significantly better than the preceding months and it instilled some confidence in the industry. "Many original equipment manufacturers have registered improved sales vis-à-vis the past few months, and this brings back a sentiment of resolve to the sector," he noted.

From a month-on-month perspective July seems to

have fared much better compared to June when PV sales had dipped to 105,617 units, thus, marking a 73 per cent growth.

While the passenger vehicle segment has been in the red for all of FY2020, it is the utility vehicles within PVs that have been leading the charge for the entire class of vehicles towards recovery. With sales of 71,384 units in July, utility vehicles registered a 13.88 per cent growth, while PVs posted a 12 per cent decline, with overall sales of 102,773 units.

The two-wheeler sales were down 15.24 per cent in July to 12,81,354 units as compared with 15,11,717 units in the same month last year.

AAI puts GoAir on 'cash and carry' over dues

New Delhi, Aug. 11: The Airports Authority of India has decided to put GoAir on a "cash and carry basis" from Tuesday because of non-payment of dues, meaning the low-cost airline will have to pay charges daily at AAI airports to operating flights from there, an official said.

The official said the AAI issued an order to its regional executive directors on Monday, which said, "The competent authority has approved to put the operation of GoAir on cash and carry basis out of all AAI airports with effect from 0001 hrs of 11th August 2020".

An airline has to pay various charges—air navigation, landing, parking etc.—to the AAI, which works under the civil aviation ministry, to use facilities at any of its more than 100 airports. The airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are managed by private companies.

"GoAir is engaged in constructive discussions with AAI," the airline's spokesperson said. —PTI

Bira talking to foreign beer makers for stake sale

ADITYA KALRA, ANIRBAN SEN & RITSUKO ANDO
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU/
TOKYO, AUG. 11

B9 Beverages, maker of popular craft beer Bira, is in talks with international brewers and investors to sell a stake of up to 20 per cent in the company, its chief executive told Reuters on Tuesday.

"We've been looking for a combination: (an) international beer company as a strategic investor and a separate financial partner," CEO Ankur Jain said in a phone interview,



adding that the company was in the "intermediate stage" of raising funds.

"We've been talking to beer companies that are not competitive in India or have minimal operations in India."

Data provider PitchBook estimates New Delhi-based

into domestic banks in March and it has cut its benchmark repurchase rate to the lowest level ever. The lower funding rates are important for the corporate sector, which faces a bill of about Rs 1.5 lakh crore (\$20 billion) in bond repayments in the September quarter.

Yield premiums for AAA-ranked 10-year rupee company notes over similar-maturity sovereign debt have declined to 80 basis points from 152 at the end of May, the highest since 2009.

—Bloomberg

IIP CONTRACTS 16.6% IN JUNE

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

With gradual lifting of lockdowns, India's industrial output has seen a slight improvement. The Index of Industrial Production, or IIP, contracted by 16.6 per cent in June compared with 34 per cent in May. The contraction was mainly due to lower output in manufacturing, mining and power generation. Manufacturing sector output declined by 17.1 per cent while mining and power output fell 19.8 per cent and 10 per cent.

The IIP for June 2020 improved to 107.8 in June from 89.5 in May and 53.6 in April, but dipped below 129.3 in June 2019.

Foreign flows may dictate market momentum again

Inflows slowing for MFs, insurance firms

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, AUG. 11

The market may face rough weather again, much like in March this year, and move in the direction of foreign flows, as inflows from domestic institutions have started slowing down, especially from mutual funds and insurance companies, as indicated by June and July monthly data.

In August too domestic institutions have been booking profit and brisk inflows from the foreign portfolio investors are keeping the market momentum intact.

In August so far FPIs have invested Rs 10,420 crore, surpassing the July month investment of Rs 7,563 crore.

On Tuesday domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 1,415.54 crore while the foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 1,013.66 crore.

Whether these are sticky investments from the long only funds or short-term investments by fly by night operators, only time will tell.

India witnessed foreign portfolio investment outflow of \$16.05 billion in March 2020 and \$1.97 billion during April-May 2020, triggered by the Covid-19 fallout on domestic and global economy.

Upcoming US presidential election and continuing threat of Covid-19 are likely to drive investors away from risky asset classes.

Mutual fund flows have



fallen sharply in June and July to Rs 240.55 crore and an outflow of Rs 2,480 crore respectively compared to inflows of Rs 6,212.96 in April and Rs 5,256.52 crore in May 2020.

"Net flows in the open ended equity fund category have been on a downward spiral since April and barely positive at Rs 240 crore in June. In July, the trend continued, leading to net outflows of Rs 2,480 crore. On the positive side, flows through systematic investments plans (SIPs) have sustained around the Rs 8,000-crore mark till June (numbers for July are yet to be released), said a report by rating agency Crisil..

Private life insurance players' premium declined 7.1 per cent in July 2020, similar to the decline in June 2020 while the life insurance industry as a whole posted a decline of 0.3 per cent. The overall decline has moderated considerably from the levels seen over March-May 2020. For FY21 year to date, private players' individual premium received declined 18.1 per cent year-

on-year while for the industry, it dropped 12.6 per cent YoY, said a report by Motilal Oswal.

So far this year, the impact of foreign investors pulling their money out of India did not lead to any macroeconomic instability. Rather, foreign exchange reserves increased to \$517.64 billion (foreign currency assets: \$477.81 billion) on 17 July 2020 from \$476.88 billion (\$442.21 billion) at end-March 2020.

The rupee's strength against foreign currencies remains the key to foreign portfolio investors staying invested in India, said analysts.

"Swelling of foreign exchange reserves in combination with benign oil prices and tepid imports, leading to a current account surplus, has helped the rupee to remain broadly stable since mid-March 2020, despite deterioration in some of the other macro parameters such as retail inflation, fiscal deficits and negative GDP growth," said India Ratings & Research.

HDFC garners ₹10K cr via QIP

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, AUG. 11

Mortgage lender Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd (HDFC) on Tuesday said that it has raised Rs 14,000 crore through qualified institutional placement of equity shares and secured redeemable non-convertible debentures simultaneously with warrants.

The proceeds of the issue, it said, will be used towards general corporate purposes and financing organic and inorganic business opportunities that may arise.

The Corporation has raised Rs 10,000 crore by issuing 5.68 crore equity shares at an issue price of Rs 1,760 per share to qualified investors, including Government of Singapore and Invesco Oppenheimer Developing Markets Fund.

Besides, it raised Rs 3,693 crore through an issue of non-convertible debentures at par for a tenor of three years carrying an annualised coupon rate of 5.40 per cent per annum.

The lender also allotted 1.7 crore warrants at an issue price of Rs 180 per



warrant, aggregating to around Rs 307 crore under the QIP issue, according to a regulatory filing. The warrants entitle the warrant holder to exchange each warrant for one equity share of the corporation at any time over the next three years i.e. until August 10, 2023, at a pre-agreed price of Rs 2,165 (warrant exercise price). The warrant issue price together with the warrant exercise price represents a premium of 32 per cent to the closing price of the corporation's equity shares on the BSE/NSE prior to the launch of the Issue.

"The equity shares and warrants offered in the QIP have been subscribed to by 326 diverse marquee institutional funds," said HDFC Ltd.

Cyber threats rise with WFH trend

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

With work-from-home becoming the new normal, cyber threats have jumped manifold, as homes lack the kind of cyber-security setup a professional workplace has. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Dipesh Kaura, general manager (South Asia), Kaspersky said the idea of a workplace has changed and so has cyber threats.



Dipesh Kaura. Kaspersky

"Some employees might be having sensitive information. They have to be sure that the information

they have doesn't fall into the wrong hands," he said, adding, "Working from home has a new kind of discipline; people who are working on a computer need to draw a boundary and restrict their screen time. This kind of discipline might also prevent them falling prey to new kinds of cyber threats."

In the midst of these concerns he said that digital hygiene has become an arsenal for companies and

employees.

"In the office people are used to working in a controlled environment. But at home, you have to control the environment. I would suggest using Virtual Private Network. The adaptability to such technologies is steadily rising."

He said hackers are rather playing with the psyche of the user than using sophisticated machinery to prey on victims.

Gap between temp, perm jobs narrow as salaries de-grow

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 11

De-growth in salaries in several job profiles has led to the reduction of gap between temporary and permanent jobs in a large number of sectors, says TeamLease Services.

As per the Jobs and Salaries Primer survey, 15 out of 17 sectors have achieved near pay parity between temporary and permanent salaries. These sectors include automobile and allied sectors, BFSI, BPO, construction and real estate, education services, fast moving consumer durables, FMCG, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, IT, hospitality, industrial manufacturing and allied sectors, media and entertain-



ment, power and energy, retail and telecommunications.

Among these 15 sectors, BFSI, construction and real estate, media and entertainment as well as telecommunications have seen variance which is significantly less than 5 per cent. These sectors also fall under the category of bottom paymasters.

"The narrowing of the gap between the temporary and permanent jobs

had been happening even before the pandemic. The economic slowdown had already been affecting the salaries," said Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder and executive vice president of TeamLease Services.

According to her, if the average variance was 4.7 per cent in 2019, it came down to 4.3 per cent in 2020. "Covid-19 would have reduced the temporary gap further. Our

estimate is around 4 per cent," she said.

The pandemic has seen de-growth in salaries of several permanent job profiles in these sectors. According to Chakraborty, across sectors an estimated 79 per cent of job roles have been affected by a salary stagnation or salary de-growth.

However, the study also finds that a few select jobs are still commanding a salary growth despite the Covid-19 impact on the sectors. These include Hadoop developer in BFSI, animators working in the educational services, Collection Officer in industrial manufacturing and allied and digital marketing heads in information technology and knowledge services.

ROBERT BURNSON
AUG. 11

Some of the largest tech companies—including Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft—are the latest to join the court battle against President Donald Trump's ban on new visas for temporary foreign workers.

The group asked a court on Monday to be allowed to add the industry's voice to a lawsuit opposing the ban, saying it's causing "irreparable harm on businesses and the nation's economy."

Trump issued a proclamation on June 22 that suspends a host of non-immigrant visa programmes, including H-1B visas for high-skill specialty occupations, H-2B



visas for non-agricultural workers, and L-1 visas for intra-company transfers.

Among the other tech companies seeking to weigh into the federal court case in Oakland, California, are Adobe Inc, GitHub Inc and Intel Corp. The 52 companies separately filed a similar request in a challenge to Trump's actions pending in Washington.

"The president's suspension of non-immigrant visa programmes, supposedly to 'protect' American workers, actually harms those workers, their employers, and the economy," the group said in its friend-of-the-court filing. "Rather than shielding domestic workers from the threat of foreign competition, the proclamation all but ensures that firms will need to hire abroad to fill highly skilled positions, for which the domestic demand far exceeds the available supply of workers."

Separately, Google, Spotify USA Inc and Bloomberg LP submitted a request to add their support for a court order blocking Trump's policy.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

New logo for Hyderabad FC

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

The Hyderabad Football Club on Tuesday unveiled their new and updated crest which will be used in all forms of communication with the 2020-21 season onwards.

The club's new logo retains the primary assets of the original crest which showcases a merger between the rich legacy of Hyderabad, it's contribution to Indian football along with the city's rapidly evolving modern identity. "It's a start of the new and exciting era for all of us at Hyderabad FC, and we're happy to share the evolution of the club's logo. Our crest and brand identity has been a bold one, and we felt this upgrade really helps us venture into a lot of things," Hyderabad FC co-owner Varun Tripathi said in a statement.



Hockey camp hit by positive tests

New Delhi: The upcoming training camp for India's male hockey players in Bengaluru looks uncertain after half a dozen of them tested positive for Covid-19 but the women can resume practice after all of them tested negative for the dreaded virus. Six Indian men's team players — skipper Manpreet Singh, striker Mandeep Singh, defenders Surender Kumar, Jaskaran Singh, drag-flicker Varun Kumar and goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak — have tested positive after reaching Bengaluru for the national camp, scheduled to start on August 20. Of these, Mandeep has been hospitalised after his blood oxygen levels dropped on Monday. "The men's camp is in doubt after six positive results, more reports are still awaited from the state government," a SAI source confirmed. "But the women's camp is still on course after all the players tested negative. They are currently under 14-day quarantine period and the light intensity camp will begin once its over," the source added. — PTI

Senior scribe Menon no more

Mumbai: Veteran sports journalist G. K. Menon died in suburban Mumbai on Tuesday morning. He was 93 and is survived by his wife, son and a daughter. He worked with the *Indian Express* and *The Times of India* and ended his freelance career in the early 1990s. Menon played cricket at the club level and also was an active member of the Shivaji Park Gymkhana in Dadar, central Mumbai. He was manager of the 1952-53 Bombay University team which won the Rohinton Baria Trophy by beating Delhi in the final at Bengaluru. That side included future Test players like Chandu Patankar, Nari Contractor, Ramnath Kenny, Naren Tamhane and GR Sunderam. Menon was also instrumental in the emergence of former India pacer, late Ramakant Desai. — PTI

CHAMP TRUMP IS DUMPED AT SNOOKER SHOW

London: Judd Trump suffered a shock exit from the World Snooker Championship as the title holder crashed to a 9-13 quarterfinal defeat against Kyren Wilson on Tuesday. Trump became the last victim of the so-called 'Crucible Curse' which has seen 18 first-time winners of the world title fail to retain the crown since the event moved to the Sheffield venue in 1977. Trump trailed 6-10 from Monday's opening session and fired three breaks over 50 in the first four frames on Tuesday to reduce the deficit to just two. But eighth seed Wilson moved one frame from victory after winning the 21st frame in two visits. — AFP

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BOWL BABY BOWL
CSK, KKR to carry 10 net bowlers for IPL

New Delhi, Aug. 11: The Indian Premier League shifting its base to the United Arab Emirates for the 2020 edition may prove to be a blessing in disguise for at least 50 unheralded cricketers, who are set to travel with the eight teams as "exclusive" net bowlers.

At least three franchises, Chennai Super Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals confirmed that they are preparing a roster of net bowlers.

The list comprises mostly first-class, U-19 and U-23 state level cricketers who will get to bowl to the likes of MS Dhoni, Suresh Raina, Rishabh Pant for close to a month.

The convention all these years has been using local bowlers for nets apart from the junior fringe players but the strict bio-security measures for the tournament means that all franchise will have to arrange for quality bowlers during practice sessions.

While BCCI has capped the squad strength (players) to 24, the franchises have not been specified contingent volume which will vary from team to team.

"If all goes well, we are planning to take around 10 bowlers exclusively to UAE for the practice sessions. They will be accompanying the team and will remain till the tournament starts," Chennai Super Kings Chief Executive Officer Kashi Vishwanathan said.

The Kolkata Knight Riders also confirmed that they will also have 10 net bowlers in their roster, likely to be handpicked by former cricketer Abhishek Nayar.

"It will be a blend of players of who have played Ranji Trophy while some of have played U-23 and U-19 national level tournaments," someone who is privy to developments in the KKR camp informed.

— PTI



Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming (left) speaks with his captain M. S. Dhoni in this file photo.

Maskless Jadeja wife in row with cop

Ahmedabad, Aug. 11: Wife of cricketer Ravindra Jadeja entered into an argument with a police constable in Gujarat's Rajkot after the latter asked her the reason for not wearing a mask, police said on Tuesday.

The cricketer was driving the car at the time of the incident on Monday night. While he was wearing a mask, his wife Rivaba wasn't, a senior officer said.

The cricketer's wife had a heated argument with head constable Sonal Gosai when the latter stopped her car at Kisanpara Chowk after noticing that she was not wearing a mask, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Manoharsinh Jadeja said.

"Our primary investigation has revealed that

MUMBAI CA TO MEET ON RESUMPTION OF CRICKET

Mumbai, Aug. 11: Resumption of cricketing activities in the megalopolis will top the agenda of the Mumbai Cricket Association's (MCA) Apex Council meeting to be held here on August 14.

Cricket in the megalopolis has come to a grinding halt since mid-March due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and Mumbai is one of the worst affected cities in the country.

"We will discuss resumption of cricketing activity and also the Standard Operating Procedures sent by the BCCI to all the state associations in this regard," an Apex Council member said.

Issues related to the formation of Cricket Improvement Committee (CIC) will also be discussed.

The MCA had shortlisted three names — Lalchand Rajput, Raju Kulkarni and Samir Dighe — as members of the CIC. — PTI

Rivaba Jadeja was not wearing a mask. While it is a matter of investigation why the issue escalated, we have learnt that both the parties entered into a verbal spat," the DCP said.

● **Ravindra Jadeja's wife, Rivaba was driving a car without wearing a mask and got into an argument with a head constable at the location while being questioned for not wearing a mask.**

Following the argument, Gosai, the head constable at the location, complained of uneasiness and was taken to a nearby hospital, he said.

The wife of Chennai Super Kings allrounder was discharged after half an hour and is fine now, the officer said, adding that no FIR has been lodged as yet. — PTI

Ref-dad Broad fines son Stuart

Dubai, Aug. 11: England fast bowler Stuart Broad has been fined 15 per cent of his match earnings by referee Chris Broad, who incidentally happens to be the cricketer's father, for using "inappropriate language" after dismissing Pakistan spinner Yasir Shah in the first Test at Manchester.

"The incident occurred in the 46th over of Pakistan's second innings on Saturday, when Broad used inappropriate language after dismissing Yasir Shah," said the ICC in a statement.

According to the release, Broad was found to have breached Article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct, which relates to "using language, actions or ges-



England cricketer Stuart Broad (left) with his father Chris Broad in this file photo.

tures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during an International Match."

In addition to this, one merit point has been

added to the disciplinary record of Broad, for whom it was the third offence in a 24-month period, taking his cumulative demerit points to three.

Broad's previous breaches were on January 27 this year during the fourth Test against South Africa at the Wanderers, and on August 19, 2018, in the third Test against India at Trent Bridge.

"Broad admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Chris Broad of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees and ratified by the ICC Cricket Operations department as per the Covid-19 interim playing regulations," the release added.

On-field umpires Richard Kettleborough and Richard Illingworth, third umpire Michael Gough and fourth official Steve O'Shaughnessy levelled the charge against Broad. — PTI

DAN OUT OF SECOND TEST

Southampton, Aug. 11: Uncapped England batsman Dan Lawrence, who was one of the reserves in the ongoing Test series against Pakistan, has left the team's bio-secure bubble due to a family bereavement, the country's board said.

The 23-year-old has scored 3804 runs in 70 first class matches.

"Lawrence, is yet to make his Test debut, was named as one of the reserves in the #raisethebat Test series against Pakistan. He will not be available for selection when the second Test starts at the Ageas Bowl," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement. — PTI

Kuznetsova pulls out of US Open

New York, Aug. 11: Former US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova withdrew from this year's tournament on Monday citing concerns over the Covid-19 outbreak.

The 35-year-old Russian, who won the first of her two career Grand Slam titles at Flushing Meadows in 2004, joins a lengthening list of players from Europe who have opted to skip the event. "Due to the unfavourable situation due to Coronavirus... I made the difficult decision for myself to refuse to participate," Kuznetsova said in a post on her *Instagram* page.

The world number 32 will also miss the ATP/WTA Western and Southern Open, which is being played in New York this year instead of Cincinnati as a warm-up event for the August 31-September 13 Open.

"I'm sorry as I've been waiting for these tournaments, but the pandemic

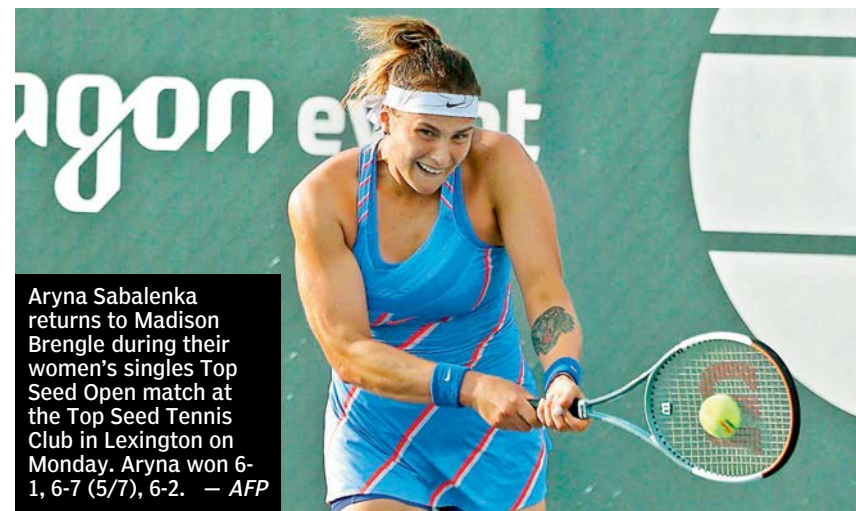
Due to the unfavourable situation due to Coronavirus... I made the difficult decision for myself to refuse to participate. I hope that the situation in the world will become more stable.

— SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA on withdrawing from the US Open

changed all plans. I hope that the situation in the world will become more stable by the next competition," Kuznetsova said.

In a separate announcement on Monday, the US Tennis Association confirmed the Czech Republic's Barbora Strycova had also withdrawn from the US Open, along with China's Wang Xiyi.

The US's Ann Li and Australia's Priscilla Hon have been elevated to the main draw as a result of the withdrawals. — AFP



Aryna Sabalenka returns to Madison Brengle during their women's singles Top Seed Open match at the Top Seed Tennis Club in Lexington on Monday. Aryna won 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2. — AFP

Gritty Konta goes down

Lexington (USA), Aug. 11: Britain's Jo Konta suffered a health scare as she crashed out of the opening round of the WTA Top Seed Open in Lexington on Monday with a straight-sets defeat to the Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova.

Third seed Konta requested medical attention just a few minutes into her 4-6, 4-6 first round loss to the unseed-

ed Bouzkova. The 29-year-old Briton looked uncomfortable and kept holding two fingers to her neck to check her pulse before eventually resuming play.

Konta later explained that she is prone to sudden palpitations that can send her heart rate soaring.

Other seeded players in action made it safely into the second round, with

Polish sixth seed Magda Linette beating the United States' Lauren Davis 6-2, 6-2, and Tunisia's Ons Jabeur, seeded eight, downing another American, Caty McNally, 6-2, 6-4.

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus was taken to three sets by Madison Brengle before claiming a 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2 win. — AFP

EUROPA | LEAGUE

Fernandes takes United to semis

Cologne (Germany), Aug. 11: Manchester United needed an extra-time penalty from Bruno Fernandes to scrape into the Europa League semifinals after beating Copenhagen 1-0.

In sweltering heat, United's young team controlled the lion's share of possession but had a hard time creating clear chances until Andreas Bjelland brought down Anthony Martial in the penalty area. Fernandes blasted the ball past the otherwise excellent goalkeeper Karl-Johan Johnsson to give United the 95th-minute lead.

Mason Greenwood and Fernandes hit the woodwork with shots during normal time and earlier video reviews cost United two of its best opportunities to score.

First, VAR scratched off a United penalty for offside in the buildup. Just before the break Greenwood put the ball in the net after a lightning break down the right flank but the replay showed he'd been just offside when Marcus Rashford's pass was played.

That decision was a par-

● **Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes scored an extra-time penalty to help his side scrap into the last-four stage of the tourney.**

ticular blow for United after the apparent breakthrough goal came just as the English team had seemed to be getting frustrated and taking increasingly speculative shots against a Danish team playing its first ever European quarterfinal.

LUKAKU STARS AS INTER ADVANCE

Romelu Lukaku scored one goal and set up another as Inter Milan defeated a tenacious Bayer Leverkusen 2-1 to reach the Europa League semifinals.

Lukaku was the driving force from the start, imposing himself on the game and disrupting the Leverkusen defense to keep Inter in the hunt for its first trophy in nine years. Inter last played a European semifinal on its way to the Champions League title in 2010.

— Agencies



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (in red) vies for the ball with FC Copenhagen's Jason Wood (left) during their UEFA Europa league quarterfinal match in Cologne, Germany, on Monday. United won 1-0.

Atalanta brace for PSG strike

Milan, Aug. 11: Atalanta take on Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League quarter-finals on Wednesday with the tournament debutants the surprise standard bearers for Italian football in Lisbon.

Serie A champions Juventus and Napoli were felled in the last 16, leaving Atalanta to carry the nation's hopes of a first major European trophy since Inter Milan's 2010 triumph.

PSG will not have superstar Kylian Mbappe available, but Atalanta look set to be without top scorer Josip Illicic, who found the net 21 times in all competitions, including five in the Champions League.

"We miss Illicic very much," said coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

The 32-year-old Slovenian was on form until the coronavirus engulfed Italy and

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Atalanta vs Paris Saint-Germain
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in particular the team's home city Bergamo, where at one point the army was called in to take away coffins because local morgues could not cope with the number of virus deaths.

Illicic was overwhelmed by personal and psychological difficulties and has been sidelined for the team's final games of the season. But Atalanta's strength has been the number of players who have contributed to their all-competitions tally of 118 goals. — AFP

DEVIN SHINES IN SUNS WIN OVER OKLAHOMA THUNDER

Orlando, Aug. 11: Devin Booker produced another 30-point scoring display as the Phoenix Suns notched six wins in a row since the NBA's restart with a blowout victory over Oklahoma City Thunder on Monday.

Booker scored 35 points with five rebounds and four assists in a 128-101 win that maintained Phoenix's improbable charge towards a place in the Western Conference play-in.

It was the fourth time in six games that Booker has scored more than 30 points in Orlando, where the Suns are a perfect 6-0 since the season resumed inside the NBA's bubble last month.

Booker's latest masterclass included an audacious three-pointer from near halfway late in the third period that extended the Suns' lead to 13 points, and underscored his status as the NBA's form player.

Booker's offensive effort was backed by double-digit scoring from five teammates. — AFP