

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 31 | JULY 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 26°C
Rainfall: 1 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 16
Tithi: Dwadashi
Star: Kettai/ Moolam
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.38 am
Jumma: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.32 pm
Maghrib: 6.37 pm
Isha: 7.52 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.55 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 3.51 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 3.30 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES

(+54,749)

16,39,349

DEATHS

(+783)

35,786

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,864)

TN: 2,39,978 3,838

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES



1,73,39,702

DEATHS



6,73,104

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info

Sonia admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, to undergo routine tests

New Delhi: Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital on Thursday for routine tests, hospital authorities said. She was admitted to the private facility here at 7 pm for "routine tests and investigations", the hospital said in a health bulletin. "Her condition is currently stable," Dr D S Rana, the chairman of the Board of Management of the hospital, was quoted as saying in the bulletin. — PTI

Earthquake shakes Los Angeles

Los Angeles: A magnitude 4.2 earthquake shook the Los Angeles region before dawn Thursday but no significant damage was reported.

The 4:29 am jolt was centered in the northern San Fernando Valley and occurred at a depth of 5.5 miles (8.9 kilometers), the US Geological Survey said.

COUNTER

POINT



Let's declare independence on 15th!

Jaya Jaitley, 2 others get 4-year jail term for corruption in defence deal

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 30

A Delhi court on Thursday sentenced former Samata Party president Jaya Jaitley and two others to four years in prison for corruption in a 2000-01 case related to a purported defence deal. Special CBI judge Virender Bhat also imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh each on all three and directed them to surrender before it till 5 pm on Thursday itself.

The Delhi high court, however, put on hold Ms Jaitley's four-year jail term.

The high court has sought the CBI's response on Ms Jaitley's appeal challenging her conviction and sentence in the case.

Ms Jaitley, her former party colleague Gopal Pachherwal and Major General (retd) S.P. Murgai were held guilty of corruption and criminal conspiracy in the purported purchase of hand-held thermal imagers. The case stemmed from "Operation Westend" sting aired by news portal Tehelka in January 2001.

While convicting the three accused, the court held that

they, along with Surender Kumar Surekha (who later turned approver), were party to a criminal conspiracy that took place between December 2000 and January 2001 at Delhi. The court observed that while Ms Jaitley accepted Rs 2 lakh illegally from Mathew Samuel, a representative of fictional company Westend International, Maj Gen Murgai received ₹20,000.

The illegal money was accepted for obtaining supply orders for hand held thermal imagers from the Army.

Washington, July 30: Fending off accusations of stifling competition, four Big Tech CEOs — Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Sundar Pichai of Google and Tim Cook of Apple — are answering for their companies' practices before Congress as a House panel caps its yearlong investigation of market dominance in the industry.

The powerful CEOs sought to defend their companies amid intense grilling by lawmakers on Wednesday. The executives provided bursts of data showing how compet-



itive their markets are, and the value of their innovation and essential services to consumers. But

they sometimes struggled to answer pointed questions about their business practices.

They also confronted a range of other concerns about alleged political bias, their effect on US democracy and their role in China.

The four CEOs were testifying remotely to lawmakers, most of whom were sitting, in masks, inside the hearing room in Washington.

Among the toughest questions for Google and Amazon involved accusations that they used their dominant platforms to scoop up data about com-

petitors in a way that gave them an unfair advantage. Bezos said in his first testimony to Congress that he couldn't guarantee that the company had not accessed seller data to make competing products, an allegation that the company and its executives have previously denied.

Regulators in the US and Europe have scrutinized Amazon's relationship with the businesses that sell on its site and whether the online shopping giant has been using data from the sellers to create its own private-label products.

"We have a policy against using seller specif-

ic data to aid our private label business," Bezos said in a response to a question from US Rep. Pramila Jayapal, a Washington Democrat.

"But I can't guarantee to you that that policy hasn't been violated," Pichai's opening remarks touted Google's value to mom-and-pop businesses in Bristol, Rhode Island and Pewaukee, Wisconsin, in the home districts of the antitrust panel's Democratic chairman, Rhode Island Rep. David Cicilline, and its ranking Republican, Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin. — AP

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Corona will be controlled soon: Minister



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Threat from CCP very real, says Pompeo

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Chennaiyin FC back in business, Jerry retained



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Vol. 16 No. 126 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES| ₹3.00

CHINA ENVOY BLAMES INDIA

India counters China's claim on disengagement

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
| DC
NEW DELHI, JULY 30

In what is being seen as a clear contradiction of Chinese claims, India on Thursday said the process of military disengagement with Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh sector had not yet been completed, even as Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong claimed disengagement had been completed in most areas.

Delivering a Virtual address organised by a thinktank in the Capital, the Chinese envoy compared India-China ties to "exquisitely crafted-glass" that should not be broken by "recklessness within seconds".

In what is also being seen as a warning against action by India on Chinese companies, the Chinese envoy said both economies are "highly complementary, interwoven and interdependent", adding that "forced decoupling is against the trend and will lead to a lose-lose outcome" for both sides.

The Chinese Ambassador also laid the blame for the "unfortunate" deadly Galwan valley clash in mid-June on Indian troops, claiming they had attacked Chinese troops first, but added that neither side wants to see such an incident. Totally at odds with



Sun Weidong

● **Delivering a virtual address organised by a thinktank in the Capital, the Chinese envoy compared India-China ties to "exquisitely crafted-glass" that should not be broken by "recklessness within seconds"**

India's stated position relating to that deadly clash in which 20 Indian soldiers were martyred, the Chinese envoy claimed Indian troops had agreed to withdraw to the "Indian side" of the LAC and dismantle infrastructure on June 6 prior to the clash.

Denying that China was expansionist, Mr. Sun—in a clear reference to New Delhi—claimed "new disputes" could arise if one side tries to unilaterally decide the alignment of the LAC. The Chinese envoy also reiterated that his country was not a strategic threat to India.

In a statement meanwhile on Thursday evening, New Delhi said, "There has been some progress made towards this objective (de-escalation) but the disengagement process has as yet not been completed. The Senior Commanders of the two sides will be meeting in the near future to work out steps in this regard. ... we expect that the Chinese side will sincerely work with us for complete disengagement

and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas at the earliest ..."

But delivering a "Special Lecture" on the subject—"India-China Relations: The Way Forward" organised by former Indian ambassador to China Ashok Kantha at the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) in the Capital a short while before that, the Chinese Ambassador said, "The border troops have disengaged in most localities. The emperature is coming down." Referring to the deadly clash between Indian and Chinese troops in mid-June at the Galwan valley in the Ladakh sector, Mr. Sun termed it an "unfortunate incident", adding, that "neither side wants to see it happen".

"Unfortunately, on the evening of June 15, the Indian frontline troops broke the consensus and went over the LAC and violently attacked Chinese soldiers. That led to the physical clashes and casualties," claimed Mr Sun.

Anna statue gets a touch of saffron

ARUL OLI M | DC
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
KANYAKUMARI, JULY 30

The statue of former chief minister C. N. Annadurai at Kulithurai bazaar in Kanyakumari district was allegedly desecrated by miscreants, as a saffron cloth was found tied to its pedestal.

Also, burnt out serial bulbs and plastic flowers along with a heap of garbage was reportedly found on the pedestal, on Thursday morning, said DMK supporters, who wanted immediate arrest of the miscreants under the Goondas Act.

Annadurai, being an icon against religious fanaticism, tying a saffron cloth on his statue, generally triggers suspicion of some hindutva elements behind the incident, but investigations by Kaliyakavilai police revealed that a mentally-imbalanced man tied the saffron cloth that he collected from a nearby temple, said a police officer.

Kaliyakavilai police have registered a case and are investigating. "I strongly condemn the



A saffron cloth tied on the pedestal of the Anna statue at Kulithurai in Kanyakumari district on Thursday. DC

insult to the statue of Anna by miscreants who had also tied a saffron cloth. The Amma government will take stringent action against those insulting leaders and affecting law and order and disrupting social harmony," Deputy CM O. Panneerselvam, said in a tweet.

Reacting strongly to the incident, DMK President M K Stalin hit out at such "repeated lowly" acts. "Since they have no individuality, they are targeting such great late leaders," he tweeted, without naming anyone and demanded arrest of the culprits.

India crosses 16 lakh Covid-19 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JULY 30

As overall cases of novel coronavirus in India crossed 16 lakh on Thursday and close to 5.5 lakh people still remain under treatment for the infection, the Union health ministry urged people to take all precautions till a vaccine is developed as the country is far from achieving herd immunity.

"Given the size of India's population, herd immunity cannot be a strategic choice or option but can only be an outcome, and that too at a very high cost as it means lakhs of people would have to be infected, get hospitalised and many would die in the process," said Rajesh Bhushan, officer on special duty in Union health ministry.

India's development cooperation does not come with any conditions: PM

'New Delhi, July 30: India's development cooperation with other nations does not come with any conditions and is not influenced by political or commercial considerations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Thursday.

He also said that India's approach to development is mainly human-centric and it wants to work for the welfare of humanity.

"Our development partnerships reflect the development priorities of our partner nations," he said. The prime minister was addressing a virtual event

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 30

Coronavirus continued to spread in the districts with the total number of new infections standing at 5,864 and fatalities at 97 on Thursday when the Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami urged the people to cooperate with the government in its efforts to curb the pandemic.

Announcing the continuation of the lockdown till August 31, the Chief Minister said whatever measures the government took to fight Coronavirus, the infections cannot be stopped without the people's cooperation.

Earlier, addressing medical specialists and health

● **Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami urged the people to cooperate with the government in its efforts to curb the pandemic**

experts, whom he consulted before taking the decision on the lockdown, Palaniswami said the government was building facilities all over the State to combat Covid-19.

Fever camps were being held in the districts and arrangements had been made for having more beds in Coronavirus treatment centres. He said the infection rate was coming

down in Chennai and also in the districts because the government was taking decisions based on the recommendations of specialists and experts.

New cases in Chennai were 1,175 and the number of deaths was 18, while some of the districts reported relatively high fatalities. Tirunelveli had 277 fresh infections and eight deaths and Thoothukudi (220) and Virudhunagar (244) had five deaths each. Chengalpattu (354), Coimbatore (303) and Theni (261) had four deaths each. Other districts with high infections were Kanyakumari 248, Madurai 220, Ranipet 272 and Thiruvallur 325.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mauritian PM Pravind Jugnauth jointly inaugurate the new Supreme Court building of Mauritius at Port Louis through video conferencing.

— ANI

of the inauguration of a new Supreme Court building of Mauritius. Modi and Mauritius

Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth jointly inaugurated the new Supreme Court building at Port

SHORT TAKES

Police launch search for rowdy

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 30

The police have launched a search for a notorious rowdy in Otteri, Chengalpet, who issued a death threat to a shop-keeper after he refused to part with money with 'mamool'.

The complainant, Vinoth Kumar (46), a resident of Mannivakkam near Vandalur, owns two pharmacies in the locality. He told police that Silambarasan alias Silambu, a rowdy, threatened him as he refused to give him Rs 50,000 as mamool. He allegedly abused him and issued a death threat.

Vandalur Otteri police booked the rowdy under sections, 294(b) (punishment for obscene acts or words in public), 506(1) (punishment for criminal intimidation) and 507 (criminal intimidation by anonymous communication). Police said Silambarasan was absconding and a manhunt has been launched.

Wheels India to explore OEMs in wind energy biz

Chennai, July 30: Steel wheels manufacturer Wheels India on Thursday said the prospects for wind energy business looked good globally and it would explore more original equipment manufacturers in the segment.

It has invested in a 'cast aluminium wheel factory' and it was expected to begin exports from September, Wheels India Managing Director Srivats Ram told the company's shareholders at the 61st annual general meeting.

"Globally, the prospects for wind energy business looked good. We have just started exports to one OEM and will explore more OEMs going forward", he said.

On the cast aluminium plant set up, company Chairman S Ram said the (current) financial year would be difficult due to declining economies in India and overseas.

"In June, our capacity utilisation was around 42 per cent. Starting Q3 and Q4, we should start seeing a pick-up in business from current levels", he said. —PTI

122 new cases: One more dies of Covid in Pondy

Puducherry, July 30: A 51-year-old man succumbed to Covid in Puducherry, while 122 fresh cases were reported on Thursday, taking the total infection in the union territory to 3,293.

Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release that 122 more people tested positive for the virus in the last 24 hours.

The total active cases were 1,292 and number of patients recovered and discharged so far stood at 1,953.

With one more death, the toll climbed to 48.

Of the fresh cases reported, Puducherry region accounts for 114 and Karaikal region eight.

The 1,292 active cases included 157 patients in home quarantine, the Director said.

The rate of positivity stood at 15.5 percent while fatality was 1.5 percent, he said.

Of the total 37,999 samples tested so far, 33,991 were found to be negative and results of screening of the remaining samples were awaited.

Eighty four patients were discharged from hospitals in Puducherry during the last 24 hours, the official said. —PTI

The total active cases were 1,292 and number of patients recovered and discharged so far stood at 1,953
With one more death, the toll climbed to 48

Pondy CM accuses Centre of continuing to remain silent on earmarking corona funds

Puducherry, July 30: Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Thursday accused the Centre of continuing to remain 'silent' on the territorial government's requests for funds to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and said the situation was being managed by using its own funds. He also said the government would decide its stand on extension of lockdown beyond July 31 or relaxation of curbs at a meeting of the cabinet slated for Friday.

"We have made repeated pleas to the Centre to earmark



Residents of Poompuhar Nagar, Kolathur, tie friendship band on wrists of corporation health workers on Thursday to mark International Friendship Day. — DC

834 stranded Indians reach Chennai by six aircraft

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 30

Six flights with around 834 Indians, stranded in various countries due to the coronavirus pandemic, flew back to the country.

Flights from the USA, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Japan and Thailand landed at the Chennai airport on Wednesday.

A flight from the Netherlands with 139 passengers landed at the airport on Wednesday evening. Another flight from the USA arrived on Wednesday night, with 56 Indians via Delhi. Passengers from both the flights were screened and then quarantined at the institutional facilities. Some of the passengers opted for a paid stay at hotels.

The crisis has motivated them to learn and expand their use of technologies. Given the uncertainty of when and how the pandemic will end, the online skills have become crucial to dealing with the "new normal"

Around 112 Indians stranded in Japan flew to the country in a special evacuation flight on the same night. The passengers were provided with smooth customs and immigration clearance and later quarantined at government facilities and Chennai hotels.

Two flights from the Middle East brought 374 Indians back. 162 persons from Saudi Arabia and 212

from Qatar landed in Chennai. After completion of Immigration and customs procedure, the passengers were classified and sent to a government facility at VIT in the city outskirts and hotels in Chennai for quarantine.

According to the airport sources, a private flight flew in around 153 Indian employees and their families stranded in Thailand. By the stranded operating protocol for movement of Indian nationals stranded outside the country, the flight arranged by the workers' employers departed from Bangkok and arrived at the Chennai airport on Thursday morning.

The passengers will undergo a medical check-up and a 14-day mandatory quarantine at their own cost or the cost of the employer.

Four arrested for smuggling tusks

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC
ERODE, JULY 30

Police have arrested four persons on charges of smuggling tusks in the T N Palayam forest area in the district.

T N Palayam Wildlife Sanctuary here is home to a large number of wildlife like elephants, Indian bison, leopards, tigers and a lot more of other animals. Outsiders have been banned from entering the forests, ever since Sathyamangalam forest was declared a sanctuary.

Recently, the forest department had received information that elephant tusks were being smuggled in the T N Palayam forest areas. Following this, a team of forest officials led by ranger Ganesh Pandian, took to intensive patrolling in Kanakampalayam sector.

While on patrol, the team came across four persons on two two-wheelers. They detained them and on grilling them, found that they had two elephant tusks with them.

Forest officials identified the accused as Palanichamy (50) of Thottakombai hill village, Angappan (54), Andavan (47) and Govindarajan (41) of Anthiyur Poonatchi village.

On subsequent interrogation, the detained persons said they saw a dead adult elephant in the forest, from which they had retrieved a pair of tusks.

Following this, forest department officials arrested the four and confiscated the two tusks and their two two-wheelers. It is mentionable that each of the tusks measured about five-feet in length.



Cops pose with the arrested persons in Salem on Thursday. — DC

Regulate online games, videos uploaded on social media

B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

A few days after the Madras high court suggested that the state government consider passing a legislation to regulate online gaming and curb illegal gambling and betting activities, a youth committed suicide,

depressed over losing money in online gaming, and an actor was arrested for gambling at his house.

The Madurai bench of Madras high court had voiced its concern that unemployed youngsters were lured and made to become addicts by portals offering online games such as Rummy. A comprehensive legal framework is necessary to regulate participation of individuals in online games and to rein in illegal activities, the bench said.

Tasmac union seeks nod to open outlets

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 30

Even as the government on Thursday announced extension of lockdown in the state till August 31 with more relaxations, including scaling up workforce in private establishments and allowing dine-in services in hotels and restaurants, the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (Tasmac) Workers Association has sought opening of its outlets in Chennai city limits in phases.

D. Dhanasekaran, general secretary, Tasmac Workers Association, told DC that the government should take steps to open the outlets at Guindy and Ambattur industrial estates in the first phase. Chennai is the only city where liquor shops remained closed ever since the lockdown was announced. On the contrary, the other Covid19-affected metros including

Chennai is the only city where liquor shops have remained closed ever since the lockdown was announced

Mumbai and Bengaluru have already opened liquor shops. "It is the government which has to answer why Chennaites are deprived of liquor for long", he said.

Tasmac continues to keep decision on opening the outlets in the city in abeyance at a time when both apex court and the high court endorsed the indirect sale of liquor during the lockdown. Tasmac, however, has started only direct sales at a few outlets in the adjoining districts such as Chengalpet, Kanchipuram and Tiruvallur.

The Supreme Court

order on June 12 allowed the state government to come up with ways to sell liquor, online or through outlets. As a result, Tasmac had agreed to file an affidavit within three weeks regarding the standard operating procedure put in place for the sale of liquor in retail shops.

The top court on May 15 had stayed the Madras high court's order on May 8 to close all state-run liquor shops in Tamil Nadu, with immediate effect to maintain social distancing norms.

Though Tasmac was asked to suspend direct sale with immediate effect, the high court had allowed the state government and Tasmac to resort to home delivery of liquor by indirect sale during this lockdown period via online booking, putting the required system in place. "As it's (Tasmac) stated there are 30,000 contractual employees available with the Tasmac. We

are of the opinion that there cannot be any difficulty in undertaking indirect sales and home delivery either through their own employees or outsourcing such supplies of liquor. While ordering so, it's made clear that the Tasmac shall ensure that the persons undertaking the delivery work have undergone necessary safety medical tests and they are complying with the protocols for the prevention of spreading Covid19", the order says.

Following the High Court order, had introduced an online app to book the liquor, it remains dysfunctional. According to the Chennai police, the illegal liquor trade has increased substantially since the liquor sale was stopped in the city.

DC made attempts to contact Kirlesh Kumar, Managing Director, Tasmac, but evinced no response.

SMART AND GREEN



Villivakkam lake being ecologically restored by the Chennai corporation under Smart City project. — DC

Greens seek closure of factories along Bhavani river

Another jumbo falls sick, placed under medical care

ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC
COIMBATORE, JULY 30

Yet another wild male elephant fell sick in Coimbatore forest division in the Mettupalayam forest range near Nellimalai, and is being treated by a veterinarian, reviving the protest by 'Greens' to close all factories functioning close to the Bhavani river, all of which invariably dispose their effluents into the river, which down the line is consumed by these wild animals.

Higher officials of the forest department, after witnessing as many as 14 elephant deaths in the last three months in Coimbatore forest division, particularly in Sirumugai and neighbouring ranges, made the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) form a committee comprising experts and biologists to conduct a detailed scientific study related to the series of elephant deaths.

In this case also, the elephant was found to be weak and sick. There are



A sick wild elephant being treated near Nellimalai in Mettupalayam forest range on Thursday. — DC

several viewpoints expressed by a few experts claiming the cause of such deaths. Some claimed that when other forage gets limited for elephants, they consume the weed 'Prosopis Juliflora' leading to sickness and death. A few others argue that wild elephants have no option than to drink the contaminated Bhavani river water to quench their thirst.

DFO Venkatesh said that following the serial deaths of elephants, special teams were deployed to monitor jumbo movement in the Coimbatore forest division. During the early hours of Wednesday, a

team of anti-poaching (AP) watchers had noticed a male elephant, one among a herd of five, near Nellimalai in Mettupalayam range, struggling to move.

While they attempted to get close, the remaining four started to chase them. But, the team had followed the herd as per instruction of the DFO, and found it near Nellimalai on Thursday noon. By then, the elephant was lying down, unable to stand on its foot.

On an alert, a team led by assistant conservator of forest and a veterinarian rushed to the spot and

provided medical care to the animal. But even then, the elephant was found sick, the DFO added.

Secretary, 'Save Bhavani trust', M Su Mani, said many factories functioning in Mettupalayam dispose of their harmful waste textile processing chemicals into the river without processing it. It is merely for industrial protocol sake that they have waste treatment plants inside the factories, but don't operate it just to save electricity and money. Despite numerous petitions given to officials, they also continue to allow effluents directly into the river.

Officials turn a blind eye to the issue. Factory owners, being close relatives and friends of politicians, allegedly use their influence and continue with the violation. Some of the erring factories are 'United Bleachers Limited', 'Saradha Terry Products' and 'ITC', at Mettupalayam. After drinking the chemical-laced water which flows in Bhavani, elephants become sick, and the chemicals act as slow poison, killing them, he said.

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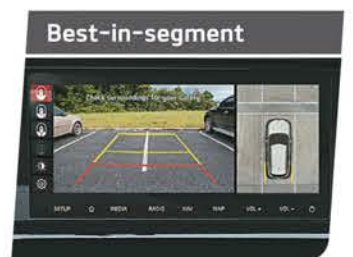
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The Power to Surprise

SHORT TAKES

Siddha drugs for coronavirus

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, JULY 30

Siddha medicines are supplied through 50 centres across the district to prevent spread of corona, said district Siddha medical officer, M. Vanaja, here on Thursday.

Participating in a discussion on corona preventive measures organised by field publicity department of the Government of India through video-conferencing, Vanaja said that under the AYUSH ministry, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy medicines are supplied through these centres. Kabasura kudineer should be taken by people, but it should be freshly prepared. Joint director, field publicity (south), J Kamaraj, district officer, ICDS, Rajkumar, also spoke.

They also stressed the need for wearing masks and maintaining social distancing.

Corona will be controlled soon: Minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUVARUR, JULY 30

The state government would shortly control Covid-19 virus all across the state, as it had attained success in and around Chennai city through its effective handling of the issue, said Food minister R Kamaraj.

Kamaraj told newsmen here on the sidelines of creating awareness among the people about the virus, by giving Kabasura kudineer, face masks and pamphlets to the public in and around Valangaiman area here on Thursday.

He also said that it was for the first time that the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation was going to cross paddy procurement target of 28 lakh metric tonnes through its direct purchase centres this year, and is expected to touch 30 lakh metric tonnes before the end of this month.

He said, the TNCSC so far procured 27,88,000 tonnes of paddy by which 4.61 lakh farmers are benefited, and they were given a sum of ₹5,272 crore as procurement costs.

Stir against EIA notification

Tiruvavur: “The district unit of the Tamil Nadu Towheed Jamath here, organised an online demonstration in many places across the Cauvery delta, protesting the draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020, as the EIA 2020 draft will have drastic adverse ecological impact and leave an irreversible damage to ecological resources, said TNTJ Tiruvavur south district president, Mohamad Miskin. He said, the online demonstrations were held at Thiruthuraipoondi, Mannargudi, Muthupettai, Needamangalam, Kovilvenni, Kattimedu, Athirengam, Veetukatti, Pamani, Nachikulam and other places, across the delta.

TN comes out with guidelines for online learning

Chennai July 30: The Tamil Nadu school education department has come out with a comprehensive set of guidelines for digital education/online classes in the state, emphasising on physical health and mental wellness of the students. Frequent breaks and keeping an eye on the wards for mental and physical health issues including depression are some of the pointers suggested by the department. The digital classes could be held by giving students a break of at least 10-15 minutes between sessions, the guidelines said.—PTI

Federation suspects motive behind unveiling of NEP now

NEP an assault on edu, says teachers' assns

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 30

The Federation of Central Universities Teachers' Associations (FEDCUTA) has opposed the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, terming it an assault on public-funded and socially-inclusive higher education.

In a statement, FEDCUTA president Rajib Ray and secretary D K Lobiya stated that teachers across the country oppose adoption of NEP.

The FEDCUTA expressed its dismay at the adoption of the NEP by the Union Cabinet. While more details are awaited on the specifics of the decision, it is clear that the substance of the Draft NEP has been retained. It makes a mockery of process of 'consultation' and public discussion as the concerns raised by a broad array of education experts and teachers and student organizations have been brushed aside. The decision was announced when the country is facing the threat of coronavirus pandemic and educational institutions remaining closed. The association suspected the motive behind the sudden move.

With regard to higher education, the policy betrays the objectives of equality of access to education, development of critical

New education policy draws flak in state

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 30

The National Education Policy has been framed with a view to ensuring that not everyone in the country has access to education and that it became the exclusive preserve of a select few, VCK leader Thol Thirumavalan said on Thursday.

Reacting strongly to the policy, MDMDK general secretary Vaiko termed the 'one nation, one education system' as an attempt by the BJP government to impose the singular Aryan culture on a country known for its diversity.

He wondered if the policy that had robbed the rights of the States and destroyed the federal spir-

it of the country should be accepted at all and said that the new policy encouraged privatization and commercialization of education, thus paving the way of higher education to become a market place.

DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi tweeted: 'The NEP 2020 is regressive, runs counter to the concept of holistic education, meddles with the federal structure of the nation and will not improve higher education.'

She added, 'When the aim is to push the RSS agenda, including Sanskrit, and deny education to the poor and the oppressed sections, improvement of the quality of education will obvi-

ously take the backseat.' The state government should throw away all those things in the policy that would be detrimental to the future of students in Tamil Nadu and implement only those aspects that would help in their intellectual growth, said AMMK leader, T T V Dinakaran.

Similarly, Dravida Kazhagam leader K Veeramani, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury and SFI opposed the legislation. K Veeramani said all state governments must oppose the policy since it was announced without consulting the states. The Central government plans to introduce Sanskrit in the name of three language formula.

commercialisation. They said NEP poses a threat to both the quality and autonomy of research through restructuring of research programmes and funding of research.

Demanding the government to withdraw the NEP 2020, the association said the NEP promises nothing

more than a continuation of the ongoing assault on publicly funded and socially inclusive higher education — a more concerted and systematic destruction of its ability to contribute to the nation's progress towards a more modern, equitable, secular and democratic society.

Expert advice



Dr Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist, WHO, meets Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami at the state secretariat on Thursday.

— DC

DMK remembers services of Karunanidhi

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 30

The DMK remembered the late Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, whose second death anniversary would fall on August 7, and recalled his services to the state at a meeting of party district secretaries, high level action committee members, MPs and MLAs on Thursday.

The meeting, through video conference, was presided over by party president M. K. Stalin. It passed four resolutions and first one on remembering Karunanidhi in the context of the impending death anniversary.

The other resolutions related to the recent Madras High Court verdict on OBC reservation,

EIA 2020 and the New Education Policy.

Demanding the shifting of education from the concurrent list to the State list, the meeting criticized the education policy and urged the state government to reject it as it ignored social justice and rights of the States.

The meeting wanted the Centre itself to repeal the policy, saying that children's education cannot be decided by the Centre. Also there could be no scope for a three-language formula in education that went against C N Annadurai's two-language formula.

Asking for the withdrawal of EIA 2020, the meeting resolved that for the Centre, India needed only the corporate houses.

The resolution spoke eloquently on why EIA 2020 was not suitable to the country. It gave examples from Tamil Nadu to prove that the draft notification went against the interest of the people, say the eight-lane highway between Salem and Chennai.

The other resolution praised Stalin for following the path of Karunanidhi in upholding social justice. It referred to the legal battle waged in the context of the Centre denying seats for OBC candidates in medical courses and appreciated Stalin for the favourable verdict from the Madras High Court, which would go a long way in helping generations of OBC students.

PATH CORRECTION



Due to heavy rain, movement of vehicles in Thirumazhisai vegetable market has not been easy. The corporation has raised the level of roads to avoid water-logging in the market area.

— DC

Sandalwood smuggling: 3 held

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JULY 30

Investigations on the recent illicit sandalwood tree felling and subsequent arrest of some culprits revealed the involvement of an inter-state sandalwood mafia that was eying the sandalwoods in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) jungles.

After a long time, sandalwood felling and attempts made to smuggle it, has come to light in the MTR woods. MTR official sources said that a team led by forest range officer at Masinagudi range, during their perambulation on Tuesday

night, spotted four persons trying to do away with a sandalwood tree at Masinagudi reserve forest limits.

As the forest team was zeroing in on the culprits, two of them escaped and vanished while the other two were nabbed. The forest team seized the cut sandalwood tree and also some logs and other materials including an axe used by the offenders.

On investigation, officials identified the arrested duo as Mahes Kumar (32) hailing from Mavanallah near Masinagudi and Kariyan (30) from Mangala area in Gundalpet in Karnataka. Another person Kethan

(48), resident of Kurumbadi in Masinagudi village, an accomplice in this case, was also arrested.

Two persons who escaped were identified as Nagendiran (25) hailing from Mangala area in Gudalpet in Karnataka and Maran (20), residing at Vazhaithottam hamlet near Masinagudi. This gang had connections with one Balan (60), hailing from Mangala area in Gudalpet in Karnataka, said to be the buyer of the illegally felled sandalwood trees.

While foresters arrested the first three accused, a hunt is on to nab the other three.

TN govt yet to decide on EWS quota in state

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu government on Thursday informed the Madras high court that no decision has been taken on extending ten per cent reservation to the economically weaker sections (EWS) in the state. The submission was made before a bench of Justices M. M. Sundresh and R. Hemalatha during the hearing of a batch of petitions challenging a recent revenue department order not to issue income or assets certificates to EWS required for availing reservation benefits for the category. Advocate General Vijay Narayan also said the state cannot clarify whether the income certificate issued by it will be accepted in other states. It was for the state concerned to take a decision on it. The court had on July 23 directed the AG to file an affidavit on the issue.

Narayan said the condition that such a certificate can be used only to avail EWS reservation in appointment to central government services and admission to central educational institutions was made only in the memorandum issued by the Centre in this regard.

On July 13, the government submitted that the state has consented to issue the certificates and appropriate instructions have been given to the tahsildars.

— PTI

Corporation official, 288 others test positive in Coimbatore

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, JULY 30

As many as 289 persons, including corporation deputy commissioner, a health inspector and a woman trainee doctor, have tested corona positive here.

According to a source, corporation deputy commissioner, Madhurandagi, along with flying squad officials were involved in inspecting safety measures carried in various corona-affected hotspots across the city, Codissia, and Covid-19 treatment

With a mild cold and fever late on Wednesday, deputy commissioner Madhurandagi, had isolated herself at home near Race Course and was taking medicines in consultation with doctors over phone. She had planned to get admitted in a hospital at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Thondamuthoor block health inspector, a 27-year-old woman trainee doctor, working in the government hospital, two cops residing at the PRS police quarters, a woman cop attached to Kovilpalayam police station, a head constable attached to Madhukkarai police station, all tested positive and were admitted to the ESI hospital, on

Race Course and was taking medicines in consultation with doctors over phone. She had planned to get admitted in a hospital at the earliest.

While the total number of Covid-19 cases so far recorded in Coimbatore is 4,344, out of which 189 were discharged on Wednesday from government and private hospitals, 1,687 are under treatment.

Thursday.

A 57-year-old woman from Ukkadam and a 65-year-old senior citizen from Kavundampalayam admitted to the ESI hospital, died late on Wednesday night, spiking the fatality count to 66, out of which 44 are men and 22 are women.

MUCH-NEEDED RELIEF



On behalf of the Red Cross unit, Vellore, Collector Shanmugasundaram hands over household articles like vessels, essentials, groceries, dresses, bedsheets and blankets to a destitute widow Kalaivani, and her daughter Kaaviya (10), whose house on Alamelurengapuram highway collapsed recently. Besides handing over ₹ 5,000 as relief, and orders relating to a monthly stipend of ₹1,000, the collector also gave orders for allotment of a house under the 'Green House' scheme.

— K. Senthil Nathan

Pvt plasma bank comes up in Tiruchy

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, JULY 30

A city-based physician, Dr A Mohamed Hakkim, has launched a convalescent plasma donation programme here in association with a blood bank, to address the need for such a facility, since there is no plasma banks in the district so far.

Dr Hakkim said one of the city's leading blood bank 'Uyir Thuli', has come forward to assist him in establishing the plasma donation facility, and their project was launched soon after a similar facility was launched at the Rajiv Gandhi

Dr Hakkim said an online portal and a website for filing applications also would be established soon, so that Covid-19 patients who have fully recovered can donate, and those in need of plasma can get in touch through the website

Government General hospital, in Chennai.

It might be recalled that Health Minister Dr C Vijaya Baskar announced that a plasma bank would be set up in Chennai, at an estimated cost of Rs 2 crore.

Soon after the launch of the facility here, Dr Hakkim said, they had received about 60 applications from individuals across the state volunteering to be potential donors. "If they are in and around Tiruchy, we arrange for their transportation and receive plasma donation at 'Uyir Thuli' itself, since this blood bank possesses a special licence to collect plasma from donors, or else, we guide them to the plasma bank in Chennai," said Dr Hakkim.

"We have received plasma from 55 donors so far, and have also directed donors to the places where needy patients were await-

ing such support, he added.

Dr Hakkim said, an online portal and a website for filing applications also would be established soon, so that Covid-19 patients who have fully recovered can donate, and those in need of plasma can get in touch through the website.

To a question, Dr Hakkim said that plasma therapy, plasma donations are taken from Covid-19 patients, who are fully recovered, and are transfused into extremely critical patients, in hope that the antibodies present in the donated plasma would help save the lives of the

recipients.

Asked about the eligibility for donating plasma, he said an individual must spend at least 14 days in home quarantine after treatment, before they are eligible to donate plasma. However, patients diagnosed with diabetes, pregnant women and those over age 55 are not eligible, and asymptomatic patients are the best candidates.

He wanted the government to offer incentives for plasma donations, besides making a real time list of available donors, so that those who need plasma can arrange it from the nearest blood banks.

— DC

SHORT TAKES

WOMAN SETS HERSELF ON FIRE IN PROTEST

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JULY 30

A woman in a Madhya Pradesh village set herself on fire in protest against the anti-encroachment drive being carried out in her farmland by the local administration.

A video showing the woman identified as Shabira Bi (45), suddenly turning her into a ball of fire after pouring kerosene on herself while protesting against the anti-encroachment drive has gone viral.

Although the incident occurred on Tuesday, it came to light on Thursday when former chief minister Kamal Nath tweeted the video demanding a probe into it.

The woman, a resident of Atwas village under Satwas police station in Dewas district, received 20 percent burns following the incident. She has been admitted to a hospital in Indore. Her condition was stated to be stable.

Her husband Ramzan Khan alleged that the authorities were destroying the soybean crop in their field. "I do not know from where Shabira brought kerosene to immolate herself. She poured kerosene and lit herself by the time we could take a note of it", he said. However, Dewas DSP Shivdayal Singh said Shabira Bi and ten others attacked the team of police and revenue officials leading to injuries to two revenue inspectors.

"There was a complaint that Shabira Bi and her family had encroached upon government land. The revenue court had settled the issue last week and the revenue team had gone there to free the land of encroachment when Shabira Bi and ten others attacked them", he said.

SOZ: WILL SUE GOVT FOR UNLAWFUL HOUSE ARREST

Srinagar, July 30: Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Saifuddin Soz on Thursday said he would sue the government for his "unlawful house arrest" since August 5 last year, when the Centre revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, and termed the government's response in the Supreme Court that he was not under detention as "falsehood".

"I take a strong exception to the government stand before the Supreme Court that I had neither been put under house arrest nor had any restrictions been imposed on me since August 5, 2019," Soz said in a statement here.



Villagers on a banana raft move to a safer place from the flooded area of Goalbil, in Baksa district on Thursday. The flood situation in Assam improved further though one more person lost his life taking the toll to 108 even as more parts of Bihar were affected by the deluge caused by rise in water levels of rivers originating in Nepal. Also, actor-producer Anushka Sharma and Indian skipper Virat Kohli announced that they have pledged their support to the people of flood ravaged Assam and Bihar.

— PTI

AP's covid tally hovers above 10K; 68 more die

Number of infections in TS is more than double that of Hyd

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 30

Andhra Pradesh recorded the highest ever single-day spike of 10,167 new Covid-19 cases and 68 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health department said the total number of people infected with Coronavirus has gone up to 1,30,557. The state government so far has carried out Covid-19 tests on 18,90,077 samples and of them 60,024 infected patients have been discharged after recovery while 69,252 are still undergoing treatment.

Among new infections, East Godavari continues to top the list by recording highest number of 1,441 cases followed by 1,252 from Kurnool and 1,223 from Visakhapatnam.

Tally in TS interiors up

One hundred and fifty days after the first Covid-19 case was reported in Telangana on March 2 this year, the total number of Coronavirus cases has gone up to 60,717. The total number of people who

Kerala govt nod for home care isolation of patients

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JULY 30

In a significant decision, the Kerala government decided to allow home care isolation for Covid-19 patients even as the state reported 506 cases on Thursday.

At a press conference, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the home care isolation system for Covid-19 patients would be implemented on an experimental basis.

Initially, healthcare workers who have tested positive will be treated at home. The health officials will conduct house-to-house visits to assess the situation once the system is put in place.

In the event of complications like respiratory distress or any other medical emergency, the person would be moved out from home and taken to hospital or CFLT whatever his condition demands. Those individuals

who prefer to have home care isolation will have to submit an affidavit to the authorities concerned about their willingness to avail the facility.

The facility will be available in Thiruvananthapuram district initially and, a decision will be taken on extending it to other districts.

Separatist camp in disarray, supporters bewildered

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JULY 30

Jammu and Kashmir's separatist camp has been in a state of stagnation since August 5 last year when the Centre cancelled the special status and downgraded the state by bifurcating it into two Union Territories.

Even the key faces in the separatist camp, who would earlier rule the roost and whose writ ran large over vast sections of Muslim population, mainly in the Valley, have miserably failed to play any predictable or even customary role in Kashmiri politics during past one year. This has pushed the entire separatist camp in disarray and its supporters in public dispirited and bewildered.

Weeks after the Centre moved harshly on J&K, it was widely rumoured in the Valley and beyond that some of the separatist

365 DAYS AFTER 370

leaders who were among those detained around August 5 signed bonds to secure their release.

As also reported by sections of the media, the detainees, mostly politicians from both mainstream and separatist camps, were offered to be released by the authorities on the condition that they sign the bond, agreeing to cease their political activities.

Even after the lapse of one year, the separatist leadership remains in the doldrums, unable to guide their supporters on the issues they would insist on being a 'matter of life and death' for Kashmir and its people.

Their issuing guarded statements occasionally is like 'one swallow does not make a spring', as was put by a supporter. He assert-

ed, "They have betrayed us."

The BJP calls the jumble and the killing of over 250 militants including a couple of dozen top commanders in security forces' operations since August 5 last year a "big achievement" of the Modi government. It also says that it has broken the Kashmir jinx.

Independent watchers, however, say the government's brutal policies towards J&K have, on one hand, only decimated pro-India constituency in the politically sensitive Valley, and, on the other, proliferated a young generation of diehard legacy and that to handle it might not be an easy task ahead.

The not-so-good human rights situation in J&K has already prompted various international organisations and, also some countries other than Pakistan and its allies, to call for corrective measures.

NO CBI PROBE INTO SUICIDE OF SUSHANT

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JULY 30

The Supreme Court on Thursday junked a public interest plea seeking transfer of investigation in late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide case from Maharashtra police to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Asking the PIL petitioner Alka Priya to go to Bombay High Court if she has anything concrete to show, a bench headed by CJI S.A. Bobde, dismissed the PIL observing "let police do its job".

PRIYANKA VACATES OFFICIAL BUNGALOW

New Delhi, July 30: Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday vacated her official bungalow at Delhi's posh Lodhi Estate area before the deadline specified in the July 1 eviction order.

The Centre had asked her

to vacate the sprawling premises by August 1 or face monetary penalty.

The Congress said Gandhi handed over the possession of her 35, Lodhi Estate bungalow, "previously allotted to her on security grounds", to the CPWD on Thursday.



भारत सरकार Government of India

परमाणु ऊर्जा विभाग Department of Atomic Energy

नाभिकीय ईंधन संमिश्र Nuclear Fuel Complex

बहिः/स्वायत्त प्रबंधन अनुभाग Effluent Management section



जन निविदा नोटिस / PUBLIC TENDER NOTICE

निम्नलिखित बहिः/स्वायत्त "जैसा है जहाँ है" की अवस्था में 24 महीने के समय में बिक्री के लिए मुहरबंद निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं Sealed tenders are invited for buying the following effluent from NFC on, "As is where is condition" for a period of 24 months.

S. No	Tender No.	Name of effluent	Total Qty. offered	E M D
1	NFC/EM/AR-NUOFP/2020/01	Acidic Raffinate from NUOFP	2400 KL	Rs. 36,000/-

Last date for sale of Tender documents 14.08.2020

Last date for receipt of filled in Tender documents 21.08.2020 up to 12.00 hrs

Date and Time of Opening of Tender documents 21.08.2020 at 14.00 hrs

अधिक जानकारी के लिए वेबसाइट पे जाएँ For further details visit our website www.nfc.gov.in

सहायक महाप्रबंधक, बहिः/स्वायत्त प्रबंधन अनुभाग AGM, EM Section

भारत के राष्ट्रपति के लिए तथा उनकी ओर से For and on behalf of the President of India

Recovery of weapons in Assam raises alarm

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JULY 30

Security agencies in the state raised concern over the presence of large number of illegal weapons with former militants in Western Assam's

Bodoland Territorial Council.

While the security agencies succeeded in recovering some weapons, they admitted that former militants are still running a private militia and may turn out to be a

serious threat to law and order situation in the area.

Though ministry of home affairs had made a major breakthrough by forcing all the factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland

(NDFB) to sign a peace accord that led to ceremonial surrender of arms before Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in January this year. The separatist groups, which announced the end of

armed struggle, however, deposited only 178 weapons, raising the eyebrows of security agencies that feared these rebel groups withheld a large number of sophisticated weapons.

EX-SAMATA PARTY CHIEF, 2 OTHERS GET 4-YEAR JAIL

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 30

A Delhi court on Thursday sentenced former Samata Party president Jaya Jaitley and two others to four years in prison for corruption in a 2000-01 case related to a purported defence deal.

Special CBI judge Virender Bhat also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh each on all three and directed them to surrender before it till 5 pm on Thursday itself.

The Delhi High Court, however, put on hold Jaitley's four-year jail term. The High Court has sought the CBI's response on Jaitley's appeal challenging her conviction and sentence in the case.

Jaitley, her former party colleague Gopal Pacharwal and Major General (retd) S.P. Murgai were held guilty of corruption and criminal conspiracy in the purported purchase of hand-held thermal imagers.

The case stemmed from 'Operation Westend' sting aired by a news portal in January 2001.

While convicting the three accused, the court held that they, along with Surrender Kumar Surekha (who later turned approver), were party to a criminal conspiracy that took place between December 2000 and January 2001 at the national capital.

INTEGRATED HEADQUARTERS OF MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (NAVY) DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF NAVAL ARMAMENT	
TENDER NOTICE NO. AS/3100/V/Fork Lift 10 Ton Capacity DATED 24 Jun 2020 PROCUREMENT OF 01 IN NUMBER FORKLIFT 10 TON CAPACITY FOR INDIAN NAVY	
1.	Sealed quotations in Two Bid system (Technical and Commercial) are invited from reputed suppliers who have established capacity to supply 01 in number cranes 18 Ton capacity and 01 in number crane 10 Ton capacity meeting the specifications.
2.	The terms and conditions and Tender Documents along with specifications can be obtained from the Directorate General of Naval Armament, Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Navy) Wing No. 7, First Floor, West Block-V, RK Puram, New Delhi - 110 066, Telephone No. 26197037 in person or by post on submission of the documents/certificates from authorized signatory of the Company confirming following:- (a) It must be noted that CONSORTIUM approach is not acceptable (b) Demand Draft of Rs. 100/- (non-refundable) in favour of Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Navy), Mumbai towards the cost of Tender Documents. (c) Willingness to accept payment through e-mechanism i.e. e-payment.
3.	The Tender documents can be obtained by hand/post on request on submission of documents as mentioned in Para 2 above. However, the responsibility of receiving/submission of the Tender Enquiry would be of the Bidder. The Tender document can also be downloaded from the site www.eprocure.gov.in (CPP-Portal) but the firm has to enclose the demand draft of Rs. 100/- along with the technical bid at the time of submission towards tender cost.
4.	Tender documents can be obtained from 1400 hrs to 1700 hrs on all working days from 24 Jun 2020 to 07 Aug 2020 .
5.	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD): All the completed tender documents (Technical as well as Commercial bids) be submitted along with earnest money of Rs. 60,000.00 (Rupees Sixty Thousand only) by way of demand draft in favour of Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Navy), Mumbai. EMD may be paid in the form of Account Payee Demand Draft, Fixed Deposit receipt, Banker's Cheque or Bank Guarantee from any of the commercial bank in acceptance form, safeguarding purchaser's interest in all respect, valid upto 45 days beyond the final bid validity. The earnest money will be refunded to all bidders except technical cleared vendors on completion of technical evaluation. On opening of commercial quotes, earnest money will be returned to all except the L1 firm (which will be arrived at by a Board of Officers by way of screening the submitted Technical & Commercial bids. The earnest money would be returned to L1 after the receipt of Bank Guarantee prescribed in the Tender Documents. No interest will be paid on the amount of Earnest Money held by Indian Navy in the context of the supply. Bidders who are registered with the Central Purchase Organization, National Small Industries Corporation or with any organization of Min of Defence are exempted from the requirement of EMD.
6.	The last date of submission of tenders will be upto 1600 hrs on 14 Aug 2020 .
7.	The Technical Bids of qualified vendors will be opened on 25 Aug 2020 at 1100 hrs the venue mentioned at para 2 above.
8.	Date of opening of Commercial Bids will be intimated to technical qualified firms only after evaluation of technical quotes.
9.	Bidders are requested to offer their best discounted prices.
10.	Purchaser reserves the right to reject any Tender Documents.
11.	Conditional Tenders will not be accepted.
(Manoj Kumar Pandey, INAS) Joint Director of Naval Armament for and on behalf of the President of India	
DAVP:10702/11/0026/2021	

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DECCAN Chronicle

31 JULY 2020

Devil in detail of new education blueprint

On the face of it, there is a lot to cheer about the new education policy. Coming as it is after a long wait of 34 years, it proposes to introduce multidisciplinary to courses, expanding their depth and scope, open the door to vocational training and options for earning livelihood by allowing students to step away from higher education and return when they can and bring much-needed relief to them from the pressures of the perform-or-perish Boards. These are commendable goals. However, read the fine print, and come away sceptical. The policy is a grand vision document indeed, but the devil lies in the detail of implementation. For this, the outlook is not hopeful.

Take the proposal regarding autonomy of institutions. The policy announces all higher education institutions are to become autonomous self-governing entities. But the record of the government in charge of implementing this recommendation repeatedly shows its supporters infiltrating boards and administrative bodies. According to the new policy, there will be a single regulator for higher education, the proposed Higher Education Commission of India, which will replace bodies such as the UGC and AICTE. This new body, as envisaged in the 2018 bill to form it, is to decide accreditation, grant of autonomy and appointment of vice-chancellors to universities, but it will be, in turn, bound by the guidance of an advisory body headed by the education minister. So once the policy is implemented, expect greater centralisation and commercialisation of education via indiscriminate entry of private parties. Next, the policy announces that the government's spends on education will be raised to six per cent of the GDP. As over the past six years of the rule of the Narendra Modi government, this figure has consistently fallen, that inspires little trust.

The language policy for primary schools is the elephant in the room. It has been proposed that English as a medium of instruction be dropped in these schools. This is even as the government has set, putatively, multilingualism as one of the cornerstones of its new learning strategy. But consider: What if the regional language where the school is located is different from the student's mother tongue? Will they be then taught in their mother tongue or the regional language? What if the student's mother speaks one language and the father a different language, in the case of children from mixed marriages? What if the parents have transferable jobs? How will they be expected to have a good learning outcome if they keep switching languages? In addition to these practical impediments, consider the fact that in a country as diverse and mobile as India, it is still English, not Hindi, that serves as a universal business language. To rob a child of their prospects of becoming a natural (as distinct from native) English speaker under these circumstances is to professionally and economically disempower them. It is all very well to bring in the study of Sanskrit and foreign languages at all levels, but at what cost? Already, there is opposition to the teaching of Arabic in Kerala from Hindutva elements.

It all points to the fact that this move has the blessings not only of the Cabinet but also the RSS. The government's ideological mentor has stated that 80 per cent of its suggestions were incorporated in the policy; thus, for it, this has been just the start it was looking for in this arena. Or else, what was the compelling reason behind steamrolling the blueprint in a pandemic year, at a time when schools and universities are nonoperational, bypassing Parliament and not taking into confidence the governments of the Union Territories and the states?

'Dangerous' for his views

The arrest and incarceration of Prof. Hany Babu Tharayil of Delhi University in the Bhima Koregaon violence case is yet another instance of how the NDA government at the Centre is using its investigating agencies to harass people who oppose its ideology. Dr Babu, a human rights activist and being vocal about it, is accused of having links with those involved in the violent incidents that took place as part of the Elgar Parishad event organised by the Kabir Kala Manch at Shaniwarwada in Pune on December 31, 2017. According to NIA, Prof. Babu propagated Naxal activities, Maoist ideologies and was being a "co-conspirator" in the case. The agency had arrested two other accused, writer and Dalit thinker Anand Teltumbde and journalist Gautam Navlakha, on April 14. The case of an event of local violence was being investigated by the Maharashtra police when the Union government took over the case in February this year and handed it over to NIA. It may be recalled that Sharad Pawar, supremo of the Nationalist Congress Party, a partner in the Maharashtra's ruling coalition, had called the takeover "unfair" and said a special investigation team must probe the case.

The draconian provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which have been slapped against the intellectuals, will ensure that they will rot behind the bars as is the case of poet Varavara Rao, who has been jailed in the same case, for a long time. And it will happen at a time when BJP leaders such as Kapil Sharma, who openly called for violent attack on people during the riots in Delhi, will roam about freely in the nation's capital with impunity. The message is clear: the ruling dispensation can put behind bars intellectuals opposed to it one after the other and allow the real trouble-makers go scot free. Not a comforting message at all.

Subhani



Sanjay Kumar

In a long political journey, political parties may win and lose elections, face ups and downs, but the crisis which the Congress Party is facing at the moment is much deeper than merely dissatisfaction, defection, disavowal and factional infighting. The way political events that have unfolded within the Congress during the last few years are clear signals of a grave crisis that the party may find it extremely hard to overcome.

The Congress has not only lost two Lok Sabha and many state Assembly elections one after another, it has also not been able to hold on to power even in the states where it managed to form a government or emerged as the single largest party in the Assembly. It remains in power only in a handful of states either on its own or in alliance with regional parties.

The Congress has been extremely marginalised in states where it has not been in power for some time, and its voteshare declined to single digits. In states where the Congress lost power in recent Assembly elections, it trailed behind the winner by a big margin of votes. What has added to the problems of the Congress is defections and desertions by some important leaders. Given these circumstances, a revival of the Congress is going to be extremely difficult as the problems are manifold.

The Congress is out of power at the Centre and will remain out of power at least till 2024. It has lost elections in many states and is currently in power only in three states — Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Rajasthan, and is a coalition partner in the gov-

ernments of Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Puducherry. While that count might suggest that the Congress is sharing power in at least six states, some of them count for very little in national politics in terms of the number of members they send to Parliament.

Not only has the Congress lost many elections, it has even failed to hold on to power in the states where it formed the government. Defections have posed a huge challenge for the Congress in recent times. After it had formed the government in Karnataka in association with the JD(U), it lost power in the state due to defections, and recently lost power in Madhya Pradesh, could not form the government in Goa even after winning more seats than the BJP, and lost power in Arunachal Pradesh due to the large-scale defection of Congress MLAs to the BJP. In Manipur, the defection of Congress MLAs enabled the BJP to form government in the state. The Congress should have been in power in these states in an ideal situation, if the party had not faced defections.

The Congress also suffered a setback as many leaders either defected to other parties or left the party. While Bhubaneswar Kalita, Sanjay Singh and Jyotiraditya Scindia left the Congress and joined the BJP, Priyanka Chaturvedi, having left the Congress, joined the Shiv Sena, and Ajay Alok joined the AAP. The young leader from Haryana, Ashok Tanwar, left the party before the Assembly election, while spokesperson Sanjay Jha was recently suspended from the party.

The recent defections

and desertion from the Congress is mainly in the states where Congress has some stakes, but that does not indicate that all is well with the party in the remaining states. The party is lying very low in many states and it would be a herculean task for it to revive again. In Bihar, the Congress has been completely marginalised and its voteshare has fallen below 10 per cent in several elections during the last couple of decades: it was 6.7 per cent during the 2015 Assembly elections. The party which ruled Delhi for 15 long years polled only 4.2 per cent votes during the 2020 Assembly election. The electoral contest in West Bengal remains restricted mainly between the BJP and the Trinamul Congress, and the Congress is completely marginalised, with only 12.2 per cent of the vote during the 2016 Assembly election. In Uttar Pradesh, the state which sends the largest number of MPs to the Lok Sabha, the Congress has been pushed to fourth position, with just 6.2 per cent votes during the 2017 election. In Jharkhand, though it is a coalition partner in the Hemant Soren-led UPA government, its voteshare is a low 13.8 per cent.

When the India Gandhi-led Congress was decisively defeated in the 1977 Lok Sabha polls, the southern states had remained with the party, but now the Congress seems to have completely collapsed in the South. The Congress has been completely marginalised in Tamil Nadu for decades — in the 2016 Assembly election it polled only 6.4 per cent

votes. Ever since Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy broke away from the Congress, the party has been completely wiped out in Andhra Pradesh, polling only 1.1 per cent votes in the 2019 Assembly elections. Though the Congress remains the single largest party in terms of voteshare in Karnataka, the BJP has made heavy inroads. In Kerala, in the sea-saw change of government, the Congress-led UDF has been alternating with the CPI(M)-led LDF every five years, but the Congress is heavily dependent on the Muslim League in the state. There are other states where the Congress still has a sizeable support base — Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Odisha — but it is far behind the winner.

The story of the Congress remains the same in the Northeast. The party was wiped out in Nagaland, where it polled 2.1 per cent votes in the last Assembly elections; in Sikkim its voteshare was less than one per cent in the 2019 Assembly elections and in Tripura it polled 1.7 per cent votes in the 2018 elections. In Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram, the Congress may have a decent voteshare, but not enough to hold power. The mass defections in Arunachal Pradesh led to it losing power to the BJP, while in Manipur the defection of one Congress MLA enabled the BJP to form the government. In Mizoram, the Congress got 29.9 per cent votes but the MNF is in power in the state. In Meghalaya, similarly, despite getting 28.5 per cent votes in the 2018 election, the Congress failed to form the government, but the NDA did. In short, any revival of the Congress seems a herculean task at this juncture.

The recent defections and desertion from the Congress is mainly in the states where Congress has some stakes, but that does not indicate that all is well with the party in the remaining states

The writer is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and a political commentator. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

RED LETTER DAY

July 29 was a red letter day for India when 5 Rafale combat (fighter) jets were inducted into India's air force giving a boost to air power. It is a matter of delight and pride that these jets are unmatched and rivals China and Pakistan would have experienced jitters down their spines. India has the best army in the world when it comes to combat and face to face close fighting. Now the Air Force also has received a fillip and the power and morale of the soldiers would have received a boost. China and Pakistan will think twice before wagging their tails and avoid unnecessary clashes with India in future.

M.C. Vijay Shankar
Chennai

NEW EDUCATION POLICY

THE REVISED pattern of educational system drafted under the (NEP), National Education Policy to be implemented by the Central government seems to be a wavering decision. While students in schools will be taught all related subjects in their own mother tongue right up to class 5, I wonder how they would skip to the regional language or English language from sixth standard onwards to higher education. This reformation or transformation brings in many chaotic factors which may not be suitable for all states and for all boards. It's an irony where the political cult themselves encourage their wards to study in English medium schools and later send them abroad for further education or jobs, are insisting on language reforms.

Jacqueline Netto
Chennai

RAHMAN ON B'WOOD

A.R. RAHMAN'S complaint that he is being ignored in Bollywood is really painful. But the recognition of artistes depends on the taste of the viewers and not on name and fame. The artistes of Hindi film world are not getting any chances here and they do not say they are being ignored.

V. Rajagopalan
Chennai

Sanju Verma



India has got a good start on path to self-reliance

Even as the coronavirus pandemic is bringing global economies to a grinding halt this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, undeterred by the enormity of the challenge, recently unleashed a ₹20.97 lakh crore mega stimulus package, equal to roughly 10.48 per cent of India's GDP. Another ₹90,000 crores is being spent for providing free foodgrain to over 80 crore people, which is more than double the population of the United States. From being an importer in March this year to becoming the world's second largest PPE kit manufacturer, producing over 4.5 lakh kits daily, Aatma Nirbhar Bharat has taken firm roots.

Reduction in corporate tax rate from 30 per cent to 22 per cent and for new companies to 15 per cent, allowing the private sector in commercial coal mining on a revenue sharing basis with no end use restrictions, 100 per cent FDI via the automatic route in defence manufacturing, single brand retail and real estate broking services and privatisation of power distribution companies in Union Territories underpin the essence of Modinomics.

In the first year of his second term,

Narendra Modi's landmark steps have been many — the decision to implement Rs 102 lakh crore worth of infrastructure projects via the national infrastructure pipeline, lowering employees' state insurance act (ESIC) contribution from 6.5 per cent to four per cent, which benefits 3.6 crore employees and 12.85 lakh employers, a monthly pension of Rs 3,000 to over 42 crore small traders and shopkeepers in the unorganised sector after they attain 60 years of age under the PM Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, passing the Code on Wages Bill 2019, which will benefit over 500 million workers across the country and, of course, the recent historic decision to defang agricultural produce marketing committees and amend the Essential Commodities Act of 1955, to enable farmers to sell their produce to whomsoever they wish to sell to without any inter-state barriers or any price or quantity related restrictions are measures that showcase how good politics and good economics can peacefully co-exist.

More recently, measures like the ₹3 lakh crore of collateral free loans to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), liquidity support of ₹6,750 crore by bringing provi-

dent fund rate down from 12 per cent to 10 per cent, reducing the benchmark repo rate to four per cent, the lowest in 20 years, ₹2 lakh crore concessional credit for farmers and fishermen via Kisan Credit cards, throwing open six new air-ports for privatisation via the public-private partnership (PPP) route, allowing private sector in space exploration and, of course, decriminalising certain offences under the Companies Act have been commendable.

The Bank Nationalisation Act of 1969, a forgettable vestige of outdated Nehruvian socialism, has been a millstone for public sector banks. By merging SBI with its five associates and the Bharatiya Mahila Bank in 2017, Mr Modi created a banking behemoth with an asset size of over ₹41 lakh crores and over 370 million customers. The decision to thereafter consolidate 10 public sector banks into four, allowing the private sector to enter into non-strategic areas and, the decision to privatise power distribution companies in Union Territories, are a reflection of how Modinomics is following the path of minimum government, maximum governance.

Be it Ayushman Bharat, the largest healthcare scheme globally,

which has given free treatment to well over one crore people since its inception, the PM-Kisan initiative which gives ₹6,000 per annum to over 14.5 crore farmers, or the PM Ujjwala Yojana that gave free gas connections last year, to over eight crore households, the Modi government has given last mile connectivity a whole new meaning.

Clearly, Mr Modi has many firsts to his credit, including PM Jan Dhan Yojana, the largest financial inclusion scheme in the world with over 38 crore account holders, the Swachh Bharat mission, the largest sanitation scheme globally, with over 11 crore toilets built and, of course, the direct benefit transfer scheme, that till date has directly transferred cash worth ₹8.91 lakh crores, to various beneficiaries. Under an inept UPA, money meant for the poor was pilfered by wily middlemen, but under the Modi government, the policy framework has been overhauled to ensure that Nehruvian-style nepotism does not stand a chance. The Manipur water supply project, meant to provide clean drinking water to Greater Imphal and 1,700 villages in Manipur, is yet another example of how Modinomics is mainstreaming the North-east, which was neglected

by the Congress for decades together.

Giving self-reliance and India's domestic civilian nuclear programme a new dimension is the Kakrapar project, the country's first 700 MWe unit and the biggest indigenously developed variant of the pressurised heavy water reactor. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Aatma Nirbhar Bharat is inclusive, pluralistic, bereft of incrementalism and seeks to be globally competitive. This is evident from tech giant Apple's decision of manufacturing one of its latest offerings — the iPhone 11, at Foxconn's Chennai plant. Be it Google's decision to invest \$10bn in the next five-seven years via a digitisation fund, Samsung's decision to manufacture smartwatches at its Noida plant, Amazon setting up its largest facility centre in Hyderabad last year, or the 750MW solar power plant coming up at Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, Mr Modi's Make in India vision is shaping up robustly. With a forex war chest of over \$517 billion, clearly, the world is India's oyster.

The writer is an economist, chief spokesperson for BJP in Mumbai and author of Truth & Dare — The Modi Dynamic

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,736.07	-0.88
Nifty 50	11,102.15	-0.90
S&P 500*	3,241.97	-0.51
Dollar (₹)	74.84	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.16	-0.20
Euro (₹)	87.95	-0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,860▲118	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.96	-0.79
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.825	-0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.543	-0.038

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Local shops to make Prime Day debut: Amazon

Over 100 small and medium businesses and start-ups on Amazon.in will be launching more than 1,000 new products across 17 categories on Prime Day this year on August 6 and 7. Thousands of local shops on Amazon sellers will be also making their Prime Day debut in India, the e-tailer said in a statement. Start-ups and small businesses from Amazons Launchpad programme will be launching unique products, it said.

Printed & Published by K Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed & Published at Deccan Chronicle Presses situated at SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Reg. No. TNENG/2008/25473 Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle © is prohibited.

Net rises to ₹13,248 cr in June quarter
Reliance posts record profit

New Delhi, July 30: Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) on Thursday reported record net profit of Rs 13,248 crore in the June quarter after one-time gain from stake sale as well as bumper telecom revenues cushioned Covid-19-hit earnings from refining, petchem and retail segments.

The net profit in April-June was 30.6 per cent higher than it was in the same period a year back, and bettered the company's previous best of Rs 11,640 crore earning in October-December 2019, the company said in a statement.

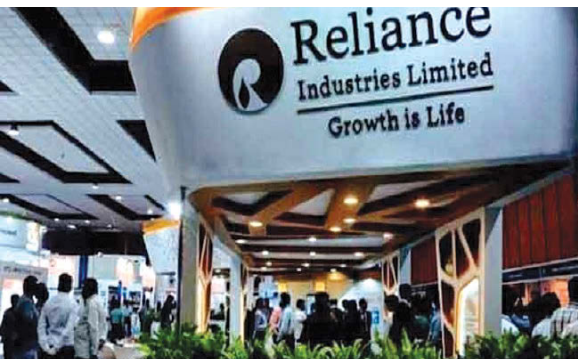
The conglomerate said it had a one-time gain of Rs 4,966 crore from sale of 49 per cent stake in fuel retailing venture to BP plc.

This together with 183 per cent jump in Reliance Jio's standalone net profit to Rs 2,520 crore covered up drop in earnings from mainstay segments.

Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) declined by 11.8 per cent to Rs 21,585 crore "due to lower contribution from oil-to-chemical (O2C) business, which was impacted by significant demand destruction and margin pressure across transportation fuels and polyester chain."

Also, lower realisation in the export market also impacted profitability.

"Closure of stores and restrictions on operations across the country due to Covid-19 contributed to a



COGNIZANT Q2 INCOME DOWN 29%, SEES STRONG GROWTH AHEAD

New Delhi, July 30: IT major Cognizant has reported a 29 per cent drop in the June quarter net income at \$361 million (around Rs 2,701 crore), but is confident of logging strong growth in the coming quarters on the back of strong bookings and demand for digital services.

The US-based company, which posted net income of \$509 million in the June 2019 quarter, said it expects its FY2020 revenue to be in the range of \$16.4-16.7 billion.

decrease in Ebitda of Retail business. This was partially offset by an increase in Ebitda of Digital services business due to improved margins and continued subscriber momentum," it said. RIL chairman Mukesh D

For the June 2020 quarter, Cognizant's revenue saw 3.4 per cent decline (2.5 per cent in constant currency) at \$4 billion from \$4.14 billion in the year-ago period.

Cognizant, which has about 2 lakh employees based in India, follows January-December as financial year.

"We delivered a solid second quarter performance whilst continuing to improve our competitiveness," Cognizant CEO Brian Humphries said. —PTI

Ambani said: "The severe demand destruction due to global lockdowns impacted our hydrocarbons business but the flexibility in our operations enabled us to operate at near normal levels and deliver industry-leading results". —PTI

J&J vaccine protects monkeys with one shot

JULIE STEENHUYSEN JULY 30

Johnson & Johnson on Thursday kicked off US human safety trials for its Covid-19 vaccine after releasing details of a study in monkeys that showed its best-performing vaccine candidate offered strong protection in a single dose.

When exposed to the virus, six out of six animals who got the vaccine candidate were completely protected from lung disease and five out of six were protected from infection as measured by the presence of virus in nasal swabs, according to the study published in the journal *Nature*.

"This gives us confidence that we can test a single-shot vaccine in this epidemic and learn whether it has a protective effect in humans," Dr. Paul Stoffels, J&J's chief scientific officer, told Reuters in a telephone interview.

The drugmaker said it had started early-stage human trials in the United States and Belgium and would test its vaccine candidate in more than 1,000 healthy adults aged 18 to 55 years, as well as adults aged 65 years and older.

The US government is backing J&J's vaccine effort with \$456 million in funding as part of a spending spree aimed at speeding production of a vaccine. —Reuters

Audit found cybersecurity lapses at NPCI last year

New Delhi, July 30: A government audit of India's flagship payments processor last year found more than 40 security vulnerabilities, including several it called "critical" and "high" risk, according to an internal government document seen by Reuters.

The audit, which took place over four months to February 2019, highlighted a lack of encryption of personal data at the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) which forms the backbone of the country's digital payments system and operates the RuPay card network championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The March 2019 government document cited the storing of 16-digit card numbers and other personal information such as customer names, account numbers and national identity numbers in "plain text" in some databases, leaving the data unprotected if the system was breached.

The NPCI said in a statement to Reuters it is regularly audited in the interests of security and senior management reviews all findings, which are then "remediated to (the) satisfaction of the auditors".

National cyber security coordinator Rajesh Pant, whose office coordinated the audit, also said in a statement to Reuters that "all observations raised in last year's report have been confirmed as resolved by the NPCI".

The audit was undertaken to provide the National Security Council with an overview of the NPCI's



defences against cyberattacks. The PMO and the finance ministry did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The audit's findings underscore the data-security challenges faced by the NPCI which processes billions of dollars daily via services that include inter-bank fund transfers, ATM transactions and digital payments.

Set up in 2008, the NPCI is a not-for-profit company, which as of March 2019, counted 56 banks as its shareholders, including the State Bank of India, Citibank and HSBC.

RuPay has grown to account for almost two-thirds of nearly 900 million debit and credit cards issued in India as of October, according to NPCI and central bank data.

The audit followed a Reserve Bank of India inspection report on the NPCI in July 2017 that found lapses in its internal auditing practices, operational risks and improper whistleblower policies.

There was "lack of awareness of risks and

risk culture in the institution," according to a mostly redacted version of the 37-page report that was obtained by Reuters via the Right to Information Act (RTI) last year.

The 2019 government document about the audit also noted: "There is a strong need for proper governance."

The RBI conducted another inspection between November and December 2019. A 33-page report on that audit included its assessment of NPCI's governance and operational and credit risks. But most of the report, also obtained by Reuters via the RTI Act, was redacted by the central bank, which cited the need to protect India's and the NPCI's economic interests.

The March 2019 government document said a variety of card numbers were unencrypted within the NPCI database for the country's network of almost 250,000 ATMs, while unencrypted RuPay card numbers could also be seen in the organisation's server logs. —Reuters

WORLD

IN BRIEF
Pak Senate nod to 2 FATF bills

Islamabad: Pakistan's Senate on Thursday unanimously approved two bills related to the tough conditions set by the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog FATF, a day after they were passed in the National Assembly amidst vociferous protest from the Opposition parties. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Amendment Bill, 2020, and the Anti-Terrorism Act Amendment Bill, 2020, were presented by Advisor to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Senator Babar Awan. The bills include measures of freezing and seizure of assets, travel ban, and arms embargo on the entities and individuals, who are designated on the sanctions list of the United Nations and impose heavy fine and long-term jails for those facilitating militancy. The two bills passed by the National Assembly on Wednesday fulfil various requirements of the Paris-based

Indictment: Plea by Zardari

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, JULY 30

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday submitted a plea in the court requesting to halt indictment proceedings against him in Thatta Water Supply reference. The accountability court has issued a notice to National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Mr Zardari's plea. The court had decided to indict Zardari in Thatta water supply reference on August 4. Earlier, NAB court had postponed indictment of Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur in mega money laundering case till August 7. In December 2019, Zardari was released on medical grounds after an accountability court in Islamabad issued separate rob-kar in the Park Lane Estate Company and the money laundering through fake bank accounts cases against him.

Trump floats poll 'delay' amid voting fraud claims

It will require an act of the Congress to change the election dates

Chinese long-range bombers join South China Sea drills

Beijing, July 30: China said on Thursday that long-range bombers were among the aircraft that took part in recent aerial drills over the South China Sea amid rising tensions between Washington and Beijing over the strategic waterway.

The exercises included nighttime takeoffs and landings and simulated long-range attacks, Defence Ministry spokesperson Ren Guoqiang said. Among the planes were H-6G and H-6K bombers, upgraded versions of planes long in use with the People's Liberation Army Air Force and the People's Liberation Army Navy Air Force, Ren said.

He said the exercises had been previously scheduled

and were aimed at boosting pilot abilities to operate under all natural conditions. It wasn't clear whether live bombs were used. Ren's statement appeared to distance the drills from recent accusations exchanged between the sides over China's claim to virtually all of the South China Sea, which it has buttressed in recent years by building man-made islands equipped with runways.

The US this month for the first time rejected China's claims outright, prompting Beijing to accuse it of seeking to create discord between China and its neighbours. Five other governments also exercise claims in the South China Sea, through which around \$5 trillion in trade is

transported annually.

Previously, US policy had been to insist that maritime disputes between China and its smaller neighbours be resolved peacefully through UN-backed arbitration. But in a statement, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the US now regards virtually all Chinese maritime claims outside its internationally recognised waters to be illegitimate.

The shift does not involve disputes over land features that are above sea level, which are considered to be "territorial" in nature. "The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire," Pompeo said. —AP

CHINA, INDIA GOT LOT RICHER BUT REFUSED TO TAKE ON ANY MORE RESPONSIBILITIES, SAYS TOP US SENATOR

Washington, July 30: Countries like China and India have got a lot richer over the last two decades but they have refused to take on any more responsibilities, a top US Senator has claimed, as he applauded President Donald Trump for taking on this "imbalance" to make the World Trade Organisation (WTO) relevant. Senator Chuck Grassley, Chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, made the comments during a Congressional hearing on

WTO on Wednesday. "No one expected the Uruguay Round to be the last global trading round. Over the last two decades, countries like China and India got a lot richer, but they've refused to take on any more responsibilities," he claimed. "In fact, they claim they are entitled to special treatment in any future negotiations because they are developing countries," he said. The Senator said that the notion that China and India should get the

same consideration as a country like Cameroon is ridiculous. "So I applaud the President for taking on this imbalance, and pushing to make the WTO relevant." As part of reforms at the WTO, the US wants formulation of some guidelines that countries with high economic growth are prevented from taking benefits of special and differential treatment (S&DT), which is meant for developing and poor nations. —PTI

US Coronavirus death toll goes past 150,000

Washington, July 30: The US has recorded over 150,000 Covid-19 deaths, another grim milestone that comes amidst warning from a top Indian-American physician that the country has failed to arrest the spread of the deadly pandemic.

America's Coronavirus death toll was 150,676 as of Wednesday — more than a fifth of the world's recorded deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The US also had over 4,426,000 confirmed cases, making it the world's worst-hit country. The first death in the US was reported on February 29. The country reached 50,000 deaths 54 days later on April 23, and 34 days later, on May 27, crossed 100,000 deaths. It has taken 63 days to add another 50,000 to reach the 150,000 mark, *CNN* reported.

"I think the fact that we as a country have not been able to get our arms around this, have not prioritised preventing those deaths is all that much more maddening," Dr Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, said. "And so, for me it's frustration, it's sadness. And a resolve to try to figure out how we prevent the next 150,000," Jha told *CNN*. "I think we can, but we're really going to have to work for it," he added.

Some states in the US are seeing their highest death tolls. California on Wednesday reported 197 Covid-related deaths in a single day, according to state Department of Public Health. That total far outpaces the previous high of 159, recorded just

last week. Florida also reported a record 216 deaths on Wednesday. Infectious disease experts say the US is at a critical juncture, as debates about how and whether to reopen schools for in-person learning are taking place across the country.

Careless youth driving some COVID-19 spikes, says WHO

Beijing, July 30: China's Geneva, July 30: The World Health Organisation on Thursday warned that spikes in Coronavirus transmission in a number of countries were being driven by young people "letting down their guard". "Young people are not invincible," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual news conference in Geneva.

While the pandemic, which has killed nearly 670,000 and infected more than 17 million people worldwide, has disproportionately impacted the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions, he stressed that "younger people are at risk too".

He lamented that a major challenge in trying to rein in the Coronavirus was "convincing younger people of this risk". He said there was evidence that "spikes of cases in some countries are being driven in part by younger people letting down their guard." WHO's technical lead for Covid-19 Maria Van Kerkhove lamented that nightclubs had become "amplifiers" of transmission. Tedros insisted that "young people must take the same precautions to protect themselves and protect others as everyone else". —AFP

