

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 19 AUGUST 2020



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Punjab will burn, says Capt, urges Centre to be cautious on SYL canal



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BCCI awards Dream11 title sponsorship rights for IPL 2020



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Shabana turns producer to pay tribute to her father, Kaifi Azmi

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Chennai Super Kings skipper M.S. Dhoni during a training session in Chennai on Tuesday.

— PTI

Assam govt to gift scooties to 22,000 girl students

Guwahati: The Assam government on Tuesday announced to gift scooties to 22,000 girls who passed Class 12 examination with first division from the state boards this year under the Pragyan Bharati scheme of the state government. Announcing that each scooty will cost something in between ₹50,000 to ₹55,000, Assam education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters that they had announced this scheme in the state budget. Full report on Page 4

Visva Bharti: 12 booked for violence

Kolkata: Twelve persons, including Trinamul Congress MLA Nareish Bauri and many leaders of the ruling party, have been booked in a FIR at the Santiniketan police station in Birbhum after rampant vandalism by a violent mob at Visva Bharati (VB) campus on Monday. Full report on Page 4

GST fraud worth ₹712cr busted

Bhubaneswar: The GST Enforcement Squad in Odisha on Monday busted a racket involved in generating fake invoices worth ₹712 crore and passing bogus Input Tax Credit (ITC) of ₹129 crore. The squad arrested Kashmir Agrawal, the kingpin of the racket. Full report on Page 3

COUNTERPOINT



Stop playing games... the party has given us these phones only to spread fake news!

WEATHER

Max: 35°C
Min: 27°C
RH: 80%
Rain: 23mm

Forecast: Rainfall

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Bahula
Amavasya till 8.09 then
Bhadrapada Shuddha
Padyami till 5.18 am
Star: Magha till 2.05 am
Varjyam: 3.05 pm to 4.33 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.54 am to 12.45 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 7.22 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.32 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 11.08 PM
MOONSET TODAY 11.01 AM

Assembly bypolls due to be held in 27 seats by Sept. end 100% quota: MP govt jobs only for locals, says CM

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 18

In a major populist decision, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced Tuesday that his government will bar “outsiders” from taking up state government jobs and said that necessary legal provisions will be made to ensure that there is 100 per cent reservation in state government services for the residents of MP. In a video statement, Mr Chouhan said that necessary amendments to the relevant law would be made to implement this decision soon. “The state government has taken a major decision today. Government jobs in the state will only be open for people from the state. We are taking necessary legal steps to



The state government has taken a major decision today. Government jobs in the state will only be open for people from the state. We are taking necessary legal steps to enforce the decision. Residents of MP will have sole rights on resources of the state
— Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Madhya Pradesh government jobs used to attract candidates from Hindi-speaking states, particularly Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra. MP has so far shunned “son of the soil” policy in government jobs since the state never faced the issue of insider-outsider like Gujarat and Maharashtra.

youths on the basis of their marks in Class X and Class XII,” he had declared. The chief minister’s announcement comes ahead of by-elections to 27 Assembly constituencies, scheduled to be held by the end of September. Madhya Pradesh government jobs used to attract candidates from Hindi-speaking states, particularly Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra. MP has so far shunned “son of the soil” policy in government jobs since the state never faced issues of “insider-outsider” like Gujarat and Maharashtra. Former chief minister Kamal Nath had in July 2019 had made it mandatory for private sector companies which set up businesses in the state to reserve 70 per cent jobs for residents to qualify for government incentives.

enforce the decision. Residents of MP will have sole rights on resources of the state”, Mr Chouhan said. The announcement came three days after Mr Chouhan indicated in his Independence Day address that the people of MP would be given prefer-

ence in government jobs in the state. “Youth of the state will get priority in government jobs. It is our duty to be concerned about the youths of our state at a time when job opportunities are scarce. We are initiating steps to ensure employment to local

Shah admitted to AIIMS for post-Covid care after fatigue

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Union home minister Amit Shah was admitted to AIIMS early Tuesday morning after he complained of fatigue and body aches. The minister was recently discharged from Gurgaon’s Medanta Hospital after he had recovered from coronavirus. Home ministry officials said Mr Shah was admitted to AIIMS for “post-Covid care” and was comfortable and working from the hospital. An AIIMS statement said the home minister had been complaining of fatigue and body ache for the past 3-4 days and was in hospital for post-corona care. Full report on Page 2



Shah

Air ‘bubbles’ with 13 more nations likely

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Minister of state for civil aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said Tuesday the government was negotiating with 13 more countries to establish such arrangements. The ongoing negotiations will benefit stranded Indians and the nationals of these countries,” Mr Puri said. “Air bubbles have also been proposed with our neighbours Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan. “We continue to further strengthen the reach and scope of Vande Bharat Mission. Air travel arrangements are already in place with the United States, UK,

France, Germany, UAE, Qatar and Maldives. We are now taking these efforts forward and are negotiating with 13 more countries to establish such arrangements. The ongoing negotiations will benefit stranded Indians and the nationals of these countries,” Mr Puri said. “Air bubbles have also been proposed with our neighbours Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal & Bhutan. Going forward, we will consider such arrangements with other countries also. It is always our endeavour to reach out to every stranded citizen. No Indian will be left behind,” he added. Scheduled international passenger flights remain suspended in India since March 23.

Cong writes to Zuckerberg for probe into FB India ops

‘Can’t allow manipulation of democracy through fake news’

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Accusing Facebook India of “interfering” with the country’s electoral democracy, the Congress Party on Tuesday wrote to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, seeking a time-bound high-level inquiry into the conduct of their leadership team and their operations. In a letter to Mr Zuckerberg, Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal also demanded that pending the internal probe and submission of the report, the company should look for a new team to lead Facebook India operations so as to not influ-

RAHUL GANDHI shared the letter on his Twitter handle and said Facebook needs to be questioned by all Indians

ence the probe. “Set up a high-level inquiry by Facebook headquarters into the Facebook India leadership team and their operations and submit a report to the Board of Facebook within one or two months. The report should also be made public,” Mr Venugopal said in the letter. The Congress and other Opposition parties have attacked the social media giant after a Wall Street Journal report alleged that Facebook’s top public

policy executive in India didn’t apply “hate-speech rules” to at least four individuals and groups linked with the BJP who were “flagged internally for promoting or participating in violence”. The WSJ had reported that Facebook India’s public policy director Ankhi Das told staff members that “punishing violations” by BJP politicians “would damage the company’s business prospects in the country, Facebook’s biggest global market by number of users”. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi shared the letter on his Twitter handle and said Facebook needs to be questioned by all Indians.

J&K clash ends: 3 cops, 2 jawans, 3 ultras killed

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 18

The encounter in Kreeri, 38 km north of Srinagar, ended Tuesday after the security forces bombed the edifice where one of three militants behind a deadly sneak attack on a police party a day ago were holed up. However, the search operation in the area was still going on. “The joint operation is still on. So far, two AK assault rifles and three pistols have been recovered,” said defence spokesman Col. Rajsh Kalia. Officials confirmed that

the remaining Lashkar-e-Tayyaba militant, probably a Pakistan, was also killed in the security forces’ final assault, ending the 30-hour gunfight. Two other militants were killed on Monday within hours of their targeting a joint police-CRPF party manning a makeshift checkpoint on a road running parallel to a shallow stream in Kreeri’s Watragam hamlet with rifle and pistol fire. A J&K special police officer and two CRPF jawans were killed in the attack. In the operation that resumed at first light on Tuesday, two Army soldiers were also killed.



Sikh devotees pay their respects on the eve of the 416th anniversary of the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib at the illuminated Golden Temple in Amritsar on Tuesday.

— AFP

HC rejects Vedanta plea to reopen Sterlite plant

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The Madras high court on Tuesday rejected mining giant Vedanta’s plea to be allowed to reopen its Sterlite copper plant in Tamil Nadu’s Thoothukudi, which was closed since May 2018 over pollution fears and after 13 people were killed in police firing against protesters. The company called it a “temporary setback” and said it would explore all legal options, but it was widely

hailed by state politicians and activists in Thoothukudi, who burst crackers and distributed sweets. A division bench of Justices T.S. Sivagnanam and V. Bhavani Subbarayan upheld the orders of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board directing the closure of the unit. Vedanta had filed the high court petition as suggested by the Supreme Court, which on February 18, 2019 set aside the National Green Tribunal order allowing reopening of the plant.

Trump lashes out at former First Lady, says, ‘Sit back & watch’ Michelle makes a moral case against Trump

Milwaukee (United States), Aug. 18: US Democrats opened their nominating convention Monday with a show of unity behind Joe Biden and former First Lady Michelle Obama delivering a scathing rebuke of Donald Trump as she urged voters to reject his politics of “division”. “Donald Trump is the wrong President for our country,” Barack Obama’s wife said in a speech on the first night of a convention. “Whenever we look to this White House for some



Donald Trump is the wrong President for our country. He has had more than enough time to prove that he can do the job, but he is clearly in over his head. He simply cannot be who we need him to be for us
— Michelle Obama

leadership, or consolation, or any semblance of steadiness, what we get instead is chaos, division and a total and utter lack of empathy,” she said in an emotional recorded

message to the Democratic convention. Her speech was not just a powerful condemnation of Mr Trump’s record and handling of the pandemic, it was an appeal aimed at

the heart and conscience of every American. “If you take one thing from my words tonight, it is this: if you think things cannot possibly get worse, trust me, they can; and they will if we don’t make a change in this election.” Mr Trump reacted sharply to the remarks. “My Administration and I built the greatest economy in history, saved millions of lives, and now am building an even greater economy than it was before. Sit back & watch!” — Agencies
Full report on Page 6

Covid: EC to frame poll guidelines within 3 days

New Delhi, Aug. 18: The Election Commission (EC) would come up with “broad” guidelines within three days for holding elections during the Covid-19 pandemic. An EC statement said the matter of issuing broad guidelines for elections and by-elections during “Covid-19 period” was discussed at the commission meeting on Tuesday. The commission considered the views and suggestions given by the political parties. It also considered the suggestions and recommendations made by chief electoral officers of states and Union Territories. “After considering all these, the commission directed to frame broad guidelines within three days,” it said. The commission also directed that on the basis of these guidelines, chief electoral officers of election-going states should also prepare a comprehensive plan for state or district concerned for Covid-19 related measures, taking into account the local conditions, while holding elections. — PTI

Lavasa quits, to join ADB as vice-prez

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Ashok Lavasa, who was next in line to head the poll panel, on Tuesday resigned as Election Commissioner and would soon be joining the Asian Development Bank as vice-president, sources said. Mr Lavasa, the sources said, has sent his resignation to Rashtrapati Bhavan and has requested to be relieved on August 31. He would be joining the Philippines-based ADB sometime in September, they added. He was named the bank’s vice president last month. Mr Lavasa would have retired in October 2022 had he become the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). — PTI



Lavasa

IN BRIEF

9 arrested over horse-cart race

New Delhi: Nine people were detained on Tuesday for allegedly organising and participating in a horse-cart race on a national highway in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, the police said. At least three motor vehicles have also been impounded in connection with the race on National Highway 91 which saw participation of several two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and four-wheelers as well. The detained people have been booked under the Epidemic Diseases Act, among others, in view of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic, additional deputy commissioner of police (Greater Noida) Vishal Pandey said. Information was received at the Dadri police station on Tuesday morning that some people were holding a horse-cart race. The local police immediately reached the spot. The accused said they had come to watch the race, the officer said. Other people involved have been identified and they will be held soon. The local police station in-charge has also been instructed to ensure no repetition of such acts in the area, the additional DCP said.

4 held for robbing man of over ₹3 lakh

New Delhi: Four persons have been arrested for allegedly robbing a manager of a gas agency on his way to a bank in Dwarka, police said on Monday. The arrests were made on Saturday and three firearms and ₹3.28 lakh cash recovered, they said. On August 12, Bhamaraj Jena, who works as a cash manager in a gas agency, complained to police that he was robbed of ₹3.79 lakh at gunpoint on the staircase of a bank when he had gone there to deposit the amount. "On receiving information about the whereabouts of the four accused, a trap was laid and they were arrested from Ganda Nala Road near Sector-16A," DCP (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said. The accused have been identified as Samrat, Shekhar, Puneet Tanwar and Sadiq, police said. During interrogation, the accused revealed that a former employee of the gas agency had informed them that the manager usually goes to deposit cash in a bank in Dwarka Sector-7 in the afternoon and he can be an easy target, the DCP said.

2 held for killing property agent

New Delhi: Two men have been arrested for allegedly killing a 37-year-old property agent in outer Delhi's Bawana area, police said on Tuesday. Deen Dayal (35) and his accomplice Mohit (23), both residents of Bawana, have been arrested for killing the victim identified as Rajeev. Rajeev and Dayal used to work together, police said. According to the police, Dayal was in an illicit relationship with his own aunt. However when she saw Rajeev earning more money, she got involved with him. She also started ignoring Dayal. This annoyed Dayal and he decided to take revenge from Rajeev with the help of his two friends — Rohit and Mohit, police said. The three hatched a conspiracy to kill Rajeev. They first reced the adjoining area of the victim's house on the evening of August 10, a senior police officer said. On the same day, they entered his house from back entrance, overpowered Rajeev, hit him on his head with sticks and killed him, he said. Deputy commissioner of police (Outer North) Gaurav Sharma said. "We have recovered the sticks used to kill the victim. Efforts are on to nab the third accused — Rohit, who is still at large."

48-year-old found hanging in Palam

New Delhi: A 48-year-old man was found hanging from a ceiling fan at his rented accommodation in south-west Delhi's Palam village on Monday, police said. The deceased was identified as Shivan Bansal. He published a fortnightly paper, "Rajdhani Aap Tak", they said. The incident was reported at 5.36 pm, police said. On reaching the spot, the man was found hanging from a ceiling fan with a bed sheet and the body was first seen by his cousin brother, said a senior police officer. No suicide note was found, police said, adding the inquiry is on.



Guest workers wait to get tested for Covid as they arrive at Anand Vihar during unlock 3.0 in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI

Hold meet to solve crisis in MCDs: HC to Delhi, Centre

New Delhi, Aug. 18 (PTI)

The Delhi High Court Tuesday directed that a meeting be held between the Centre, the AAP government and representatives of the municipal corporations here to find a solution to the financial difficulties being faced by the three MCDs.

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan said the committee so constituted can look into the financial aspects of the corporations as well as the Delhi government which claimed it has not received from the Centre over Rs 10,000 crore as its share of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection.

"We expect that this meeting shall be convened at the earliest," the bench said and listed the matter for further hearing on September 8.

▶ **THE ORDER** came on an application moved by the NrDMC which has alleged that ₹90.60 crore payable as grant-in-aid under the sanitation/urban development head, for the first quarter ending June 30, has not been released yet and ₹181 crore under the same head for the second quarter is also due

The order came on an application moved by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NrDMC) which has alleged that ₹90.60 crore payable as grant-in-aid under the sanitation/urban development head, for the first quarter ending June 30, has not been released yet and ₹181 crore under the same head for the second quarter is also due.

North Delhi Municipal Corporation has said that the funding was meant for payment of salaries of "safai karamchaaris" and sanitation activities.

The application has been filed in a pending writ petition by one Rahul Birla seeking directions to the Delhi government and the municipal corporations to pay the salaries with arrears of sanitation workers employed by them.

In its application, NrDMC has said that expenditure towards the salary till May 2020, sanitation services and providing PPE kits, gloves, masks, sanitizers to the workers has been incurred by the corporation from its own internal resources, in the absence of any amount being released by the Delhi government. — PTI

Traffic cop, 51, in coma after being hit by mini-truck

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

A 51-year-old Assistant Sub-Inspector of Delhi Traffic Police was hit allegedly by a car when he signalled the vehicle to halt for checking near a police picket in Raghunagar in west Delhi's Khyala, police said on Tuesday.

Assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Mahavir in a coma and is undergoing treatment at Shri Balaji Action Hospital, Punjabi Bagh, they said.

Soon after the incident, the driver of the offending vehicle managed to flee the spot, they added.

The incident took place on August 17, when ASI Mahavir along with other staff from traffic police were checking suspected vehicles near police picket, police said.

Around 5.30 pm, when ASI signalled a white i20 car to halt for checking, the driver instead of stopping his vehicle, sped up and hit the ASI. He immediately managed escape from the spot, a senior police officer said.

He suffered severe injuries and is in a coma. ASI's son is posted as a Sub-Inspector with the Special Staff of West district, police said.

On the evening of July 25, a 58-year-old Assistant Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Sanket Kumar Kaushik died in an accident on NH-8 near Rajokari flyover after he was hit by a mini-truck while he was on-duty.

Later, a 28-year-old driver of a mini-truck identified as Amit Pulami was arrested in connection with the accident.

He is currently under treatment at Shri Balaji Action Hospital here in Punjabi Bagh, said Deepak Purohit, deputy commissioner of police (West).

"We scanning through CCTV cameras and we are working on some vital leads," he said.

A case under section 307 (Attempt to murder) and 186 (Obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions) of Indian Penal Code has been registered at Khyala police station and an investigation is in progress, the deputy commissioner of police said.

ASI's son is posted as a Sub-Inspector with the Special Staff of West district, police said.

On the evening of July 25, a 58-year-old Assistant Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Sanket Kumar Kaushik died in an accident on NH-8 near Rajokari flyover after he was hit by a mini-truck while he was on-duty.

Later, a 28-year-old driver of a mini-truck identified as Amit Pulami was arrested in connection with the accident.

3 held from Bihar, UP for running fake scheme for children in the name of PM

New Delhi, Aug. 18: The Delhi Police has arrested three people for allegedly running fake websites in the name of Pradhan Mantri Shishu Vikas Yojana' and registering over 15,000 people through a large network of agents running up to panchayat level.

Police said the accused have been identified as Neeraj Pandey, Suvender Yadav, both residents of Patna in Bihar, and Adarsh Yadav from Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

According to police, a case was registered on the complaint of the director of National Health Authority who alleged that a fake website — www.pmsvy-cloud.in — has floated a forged

▶ **DURING INVESTIGATION**, the police arrested Neeraj and Adarsh from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They have enrolled over 15,000 people under this fake scheme

scheme Pradhan Mantri Shishu Vikas Yojana' and was taking money from people in the name of registration and children insurance etc.

During investigation, the police arrested Neeraj and Adarsh from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They have enrolled over 15,000 people under this fake scheme, said Anyesh Roy, the cyber crime department's DCP. Neeraj revealed that

another website was being run by Suvender Yadav of Patna in the name of PM Shishu Vikas Yojana'.

On Neeraj's instance, the police conducted a raid in Patna and arrested Suvender, the DCP said.

These website operators had formulated a scheme in the name of PM Shishu Vikas Yojana and offered what they called were health insurance cover and financial support for education, Roy said.

For getting maximum number of children enrolled, they appointed state heads across the country India and each state head further employed district heads in their respective states.

These district heads appointed ground level agents who worked at

■ 'Allowing anti-CAA protesters will upset core vote bank'

Resentment in BJP over protesters joining party

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

There is a strong resentment within the Delhi BJP for allowing over 50 Muslims from Shaheen Bagh to join the party. Many within the party feel that the move by BJP national vice president Shyam Jaju, party's state unit president Adesh Gupta, and some leaders to allow the anti-CAA protesters to join BJP has not only damaged the party's image but has also upset its core vote bank.

The development holds immense political significance as it comes at a time when the party is in the process of restructuring its state organisation.

On Sunday, secretary of Rashtriya Ulama Council's city unit and social worker from Shaheen Bagh Shahzad

▶ **On Sunday**, secretary of Rashtriya Ulama Council's city unit and social worker from Shaheen Bagh Shahzad Ali, gynaecologist Dr Mehreen, interior decorator and former AAP worker Tabassum Hussain, and others joined BJP

Ali, gynaecologist Dr Mehreen, interior decorator and former AAP worker Tabassum Hussain, and others joined BJP

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleged that the Shaheen Bagh agitation was "scripted" by the saffron party for electoral gains in the Delhi Assembly polls.

AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj demanded that all the people who were organisers of the Shaheen Bagh

protest and recently joined the BJP's Delhi unit should be investigated. Majority of party leaders, which include former state unit presidents and current and former office bearers, questioned the move to allow joining of these people in the party. It is learnt that the central leadership is also not happy with the development which causes embarrassment to the party.

"The central leadership is not pleased with the recent development over joining of members from minority communities and conveyed its displeasure to the state unit," said a senior party member.

Party leaders pointed out that the controversy created over their joining is bigger than the stature of the leaders or activists

who joined.

"They are not known faces in the locality or the Okhla Assembly constituency," said a party leader. A senior Delhi BJP office bearer questioned why everyone had not been consulted with before the joining of these activists.

"The decision was taken and implemented by Mr Jaju and Mr Gupta. Even the president of the minority morcha was informed before the event. The state leadership did not try to check the credentials of these leaders from the ground," he added.

Another section feels that the move will also put a dent in its traditional Hindu vote bank. Some pointed out that as there are no immediate polls in the city this could have been avoided.

Delhi Police: Inspector succumbs to Covid, is force's 16th victim

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

A 51-year-old Delhi Police Inspector died due to coronavirus at a city hospital on Tuesday morning, officials said. He is the 16th Delhi Police personnel to succumb to the disease.

Sanjay Sharma, a 1997 batch officer, was posted at the Police Control Room (PCR) department in south zone, they said.

He was was suffering from pneumonia and was admitted in the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre in Vasant Kunj on Saturday. Later, he was found Covid positive, a senior police officer said.

The inspector lost the battle and died on Tuesday morning at the hospital, the officer said.

"Our Covid-19 recovered staff donated plasma, assisted the family in whatever way required,

but still couldn't save him," deputy commissioner of police (PCR) Sharat Kumar Sinha said. He is survived by his wife and a son who is studying in IIT Delhi.

More than 2,500 Delhi Police personnel have been infected with Covid-19 so far. Of these, more than 2,100 have recovered and resumed duties, while over a dozen have succumbed to the disease.

Shah taken to AIIMS for post-Covid care

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Union home minister Amit Shah was admitted to All India Institute Of Medical Science early Tuesday morning after he complained of fatigue and body ache. He was recently discharged from Medanta hospital in Gurgaon following recovery from corona.

The home ministry officials claimed that Mr Shah has been admitted to All India Institute Of



Amit shah

Medical Science for post Covid care and was comfortable and continuing his work from the hospi-

tal. A statement issued by All India Institute Of Medical Science said that the home minister had been complaining of fatigue and body ache for the past few days and was now in hospital for post-corona care

Earlier, the home minister had been admitted to Medanta hospital in Gurgaon after he had tested positive for corona. He had also attended a small ceremony to mark Independence Day on August 15 at his residence

but did not attend the function at Red Fort.

The home minister had also tweeted to inform that he would remain in home isolation for a few more days following his recovery from corona.

Ministry officials claimed that the home minister was continuing to function from the hospital. He was keeping a close watch on all the activities of the home ministry and attending to all important pending work.

Unattended bag triggers security scares at IGI, returned to owner

New Delhi, Aug. 18: There was a brief security scare at the Delhi international airport after an unattended bag was noticed inside the terminal. It later turned out to be the lost bag of a passenger returning from the US and was returned to him, officials said on Tuesday.

The bomb disposal squad was called to check the bag but no traces of explosives were found. A CISF personnel then opened it and found \$9,900 (about ₹7.40 lakh), credit cards and travel documents in the name of an Australian national who had arrived from San Francisco by Air India flight AI-174.

The bag was spotted by a

▶ **The bomb disposal squad** was called to check the bag but no traces of explosives were found

CISF personnel on security duty in the area and no one claimed it.

The incident took place at around 6.30 PM on Monday at the Indigo airlines counter at Terminal-3 of the IGI Airport here. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) team scanned the CCTV footage and found that the passenger was about to take a flight to Hyderabad. He was intercepted and handed over his lost bag, they said.

— PTI

BJP: Allow Ramlila in Delhi with Covid norms

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Delhi BJP, on Tuesday, said that Ramlila should be allowed in the city in accordance with all the Covid-19 related guidelines and precautionary measures.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said that many suggestions have been received from the people regarding Ramlila and the feeling is that it should be staged this year in spite of the pandemic.

"Ramlila could be staged with smaller gatherings and shorter time duration besides following the guidelines and other precautionary measures," he said.

The traditional Ramlila, depicting the Ramayana stories associated with Lord Rama, is an annual affair during the Dussehra and is hugely popular. Dignitaries like the Prime Minister, Union ministers, and prominent politicians have attended these Ramlilas in the past.

With the pandemic casting a shadow over the staging of Ramlila this year, Mr Gupta discussed the issue with Delhi Prant Sangchalak of RSS Kulbhushan Ahuja.

Mr Gupta suggested, in view of maintaining proper social distancing, the Ramlila could be streamed online.

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)	
NIT No.	116-S/2/Vehicle-7/Contract/(2020)/ML-IV
Name of work and its location	Hiring of Two multi-utility Road vehicle i.e. Innova/Scorpio/Mahindra Bolero, Marazzo (Five Door-Seven Seater) for the period of two years round the clock under Sr. Crew Controller, SSB from the date of execution of work as per scope of work.
Approx Cost of work	Rs. 27,07,200/- (Twenty seven lakh Seven thousand two hundred only) plus GST as applicable
Earnest Money	Rs. 54100/- (Note: It should be in the form of net banking or gateway only. Note : FDR not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Board letter no 2015/CR-IC/5/1 dated 31.08.2016)
Completion period of work	Two years i.e. 24 months from the date of execution of work
Cost of tender document on cash/by post	Rs. 3540/- with GST @18%
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 15.00 hrs on 15-09-2020 Opening of Tender at 15.00 hrs
Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
116-S/2/Vehicle-7/Contract/(2020)/ML-IV Dated: 18-08-2020 1793/2020	

HARYANA STAFF SELECTION COMMISSION				
BAYS NO. 67-70, SECTOR-2, PANCHKULA - 134151				
Website www.hssc.gov.in				
Corrigendum				
Reference Haryana Staff Selection Commission's Advt. No. 12/2019, dated 20.07.2019 & others connected corrigendum / notices, which were published in the various newspapers and also available on HSSC Website i.e. www.hssc.gov.in , vide which online application forms were invited for various posts of Skill Development and Industrial Training Department, through the URL address i.e. http://adv122019.hryssc.in/ / Static Pages / HomePage.aspx.				
It is notified for the information of candidates regarding Advt. No. 12/2019, as per clarification given by the Skill Development & Industrial Training Department vide memo No. TE/99/176-Part XIII/ Steno English /Admin-4/9094 Dated 08.07.2020, the break-up of the posts has been changed and the same may be read as under:-				
Cat. No. 51, Craft Stenography English (Theory) (Re-Advertised)				
Category	Total	Non-ESM/ESP	ESM	ESP
General	9	7	2	-
SC	5	3	1	1
BCA	5	3	2	-
BCB	2	2	-	-
EWS	3	3	-	-
Total	24	-	-	-
Place: Panchkula Dated, the 18th August, 2020 RO No. 1159/13/113/2021/82330				
-sd- Under Secretary, for Secretary, Haryana Staff Selection Commission, Panchkula				

SHORT TAKES

Assam Cong seeks tieup for 2021 polls

Guwahati: The Opposition Congress in Assam on Tuesday called for a “Grand Alliance” of all non-BJP parties, including the AIUDF, to oust the Sarbananda Sonowal-led government in next year’s Assembly elections. A decision in this regard was taken at a meeting of the state Congress’ core committee, former chief minister Tarun Gogoi told reporters. “We will reach out to other parties, including the AIUDF and the Left, to ensure the defeat of the BJP-led government in the state,” he said. Mr Gogoi said the people of the state want a change and so the core committee in its meeting decided that all parties will be consulted in this regard. AIUDF has already expressed willingness to consider and discuss the matter. — PTI

Himachal CM’s 13 staff test Covid +ve

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh on Tuesday reported 56 fresh Covid-19 cases, including 12 security personnel and a driver of chief minister Jai Ram Thakur. They were in institutional quarantine after a security guard and a driver of Mr Thakur had contracted the infection a few days ago. With this, the state’s Covid-19 tally has reached 4,231, while the death toll is 18. Shimla and Mandi reported 14 fresh cases each, Una and Kullu 11 each, Kangra four and Chamba two, additional chief secretary (health) R.D. Dhiman said. Seventeen patients recovered from the disease on Tuesday. Kangra and Chamba saw eight recoveries each, while one patient recovered from the infection in Shimla. So far, 2,851 people have been cured of the disease. — PTI

Jeweller set on fire by relatives in UP

Firozabad, UP: A Jeweller in Uttar Pradesh’s Firozabad sustained severe burn injuries after he was set on fire allegedly by one of his relatives, the police said. The incident took place on Tuesday afternoon and the victim was seen caught in flames in a market area with some people trying to help him, according to a purported video of the shocking incident that surfaced on social media. He has been admitted to a hospital for treatment, the police said. Superintendent of police Sachindra Patel said the victim, Rakesh Varma, and the accused are maternal cousins and the cause of the incident seemed to be some personal issue. Four police teams have been formed to arrest the accused, who is absconding. — PTI

Doc. kills husband, 2 kids, hangs self

Nagpur: A 41-year-old doctor allegedly committed suicide after killing her husband and two minor children in Maharashtra’s Nagpur city on Tuesday, the police said. According to the police, Dr Shushma Rane, her husband Dhiraj (42), a professor at an engineering college, and their children aged 11 and five were found dead at their home in Om Nagar in Koradi area. Bodies of Dhiraj and the children were found on the bed in the master bedroom, while the doctor was found hanging from a ceiling fan, a police official said. The deaths came to light when the deceased’s 60-year-old aunt, who lived with them, knocked on the bedroom door and did not receive any response, the police official added. — PTI

Constable killed in TN bomb attack

Tuticorin, TN: A constable was killed when a history-sheeter allegedly hurled country bombs at a special police team that came to nab him here on Tuesday, the police said. Chief minister K. Palaniswami condoled his death and announced a relief of ₹50 lakh to the deceased policeman’s family. Constable Subramanian died on the spot while the history-sheeter Durai Muthu suffered injuries in hand while throwing the bombs in the incident at Manakkarai area here, a senior official said. Two murder cases among others were pending against Muthu and the special team reached the area following information, he said. — PTI

Malik named Meghalaya gov, Opp. slams move

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Satya Pal Malik was on Tuesday transferred as governor of Meghalaya, replacing Tathagata Roy, who completed his five-year tenure on the gubernatorial post. A Rashtrapati Bhavan communique said Mr Malik, governor of Goa, is transferred and appointed as governor of Meghalaya.

Governor of Maharashtra Bhagat Singh Koshyari has been asked to discharge the functions of Goa governor in addition to his own duties, the communique said. Mr Malik takes over from Mr Roy, who completed his five-year tenure by serving as governor of Tripura for three years and the remaining in Meghalaya.

Meanwhile attacking the ruling BJP over the transfer of Mr Malik, the Opposition parties on Tuesday said he was shifted for speaking “truth” and taking a strong stand on core issues like the Covid-19 pandemic, environment and the Mahadayi river water dispute.

Congress leader Digambar Kamat said Mr Malik was transferred because he spoke truth.

“The governor stood by truth, emotions and sentiments of every Goan on the core issues like Mahadayi water diversion by Karnataka, economic revival and austerity measures, besides the government’s handling and management of the Covid-19 pandemic,” the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly said in a statement. — PTI

Man involved in generation of massive fake invoices held ₹712cr GST fraud busted in Odisha

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 18

The GST enforcement squad in Odisha on Monday evening busted a racket involved in generating fake invoices worth ₹712 crore and passing bogus input tax credit (ITC) of ₹129 crore over multiple transactions routed through different chains. The squad arrested the kingpin of the racket, Kashmir Kumar Agrawal, director of Mad-humita Steels Industries Private Limited, from Sambalpur. Sources said Agarwal was under the scanner of the state GST enforcement squad since long but he used to change his address frequently from Rourkela to Haryana to Sambalpur, said a release.

Some of the accused involved in the racket were arrested earlier. Subsequently, by tracking the chain of fraudulent transactions followed by the scrutiny of suspected e-bill transactions and collection of intelligence, physical inspections, the squad arrested Agrawal. During interrogation, proprietors of these fake firms admitted that they were neither doing any business nor making any

Former mayor, corporator grilled over B’luru violence

Bengaluru, Aug. 18: Former Bengaluru mayor R. Sampath Raj and Pulakeshinagar ward corporator Abdul Rakeeb Zakir were on Tuesday summoned for questioning by the Central crime branch in connection with the violence in parts of the city, Bengaluru police commissioner Kamal Pant said. “Yes,” Mr Pant told PTI in a reply to a query whether Mr Sampath Raj and Mr Zakir, both Congress functionaries, were summoned for ques-



An inundated village in flood-affected East Godavari district on Tuesday. Tens of villages in West and East Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh continue to remain marooned while some were cut off from the outside world though the flood flow in the Godavari river started dwindling on Tuesday.

Army begins probe in J&K ‘fake’ encounter

Assures transparency, due legal process

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 18

The Army on Tuesday said that the inquiry into the alleged killing of three labourers in purported fake encounter in J&K’s Shopian district is underway and assured that due legal process would be followed in an impartial and transparent way.

“As intimated on August 11, a high-level Court of Inquiry into the July 18, 2020 Operation at Amshipora in Shopian is under progress. Statements of key witnesses are being recorded and progress is being monitored closely,” a statement issued by the Army said.

It said that additional civil witnesses are being asked to depose before the Court of Inquiry.

“Concurrently, the DNA samples have been collected from Rajouri under the aegis of J&K police and sent for matching with the terrorists killed on July

18,” it added. The Army added that it is “committed to ethical conduct of all counter-terrorist operations” and that cases where doubts are raised “are investigated under due process as per the law of the land”

Inspector general of police (Kashmir range) Vijay Kumar, had last week after the blood samples of the relatives of three labourers from frontier district of Rajouri who went missing in Shopian district last

month were collected for DNA testing also assured that no stone will be left unturned in the police’s pursuit of the truth. According to the families of three labourers Muhammad Imtiaz, Abrar Ahmed Khan and Abrar Yusuf they might have been killed in a fake encounter by the troops at Amshipora area on July 18, a day after the trio had arrived there from Rajouri to work in an apple orchard to earn their livelihood and then passed off as terrorists by the Army.

The IGP had said that the DNA samples were collected in a government-run hospital of Rajouri in presence of a police team sent from Srinagar.

The families of the missing persons had earlier requested the authorities that they be allowed to visit Shopian where a local resident had rented a room out to the trio soon after their arrival there.

Before Putin visit, Russia backs India on Kashmir

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Two months ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to India for the annual bilateral summit between the two countries, Russia has strongly backed India by reiterating its opposition to any discussion on the Kashmir issue at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and has again supported the Shimla Agreement of 1972 that calls for the Kashmir issue to be discussed bilaterally between India and Pakistan. India has enjoyed time-tested strategic ties with Russia and the erstwhile Soviet Union before that, spanning decades especially in the defence sector.

Speaking at a seminar in virtual format organised recently by the Russian Centre of Science and Culture (RCSC) on the subject of “Russia and India: Major Milestones in the History of Relations”, Russian deputy chief of mission (DCM) in New Delhi Roman Babushkin said, “The Shimla Agreement of 1972 (between India and Pakistan) is the basic legal guidance Russia is following almost for 50 years already, which clearly should prevent any discussion of the Kashmir issue in the UNSC and other platforms ... That’s why we are of the principled position that that no one should interfere in bilateral issues between the two countries (India and Pakistan) unless both of them jointly ask for it”.

Mr Babushkin added, “Today we also see that our positions (Indian and Russian) on major global and regional issues are similar and coinciding.”

BJP takes a swipe at Rahul over FB row

‘Facebook will decide what to do with WSJ report’

Act against those spreading hatred on social media: Sena

New Delhi, Aug. 18: In a swipe at its critics over the Facebook row, the BJP said on Tuesday that people whose political base has “shrunk like anything” seek to dominate discourse on these platforms and asserted that everybody regardless of his ideology has got the right to air his views there.

Senior party leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said former Congress president Rahul Gandhi believes that any organisation that does not work to his liking is acting under the pressure of the BJP and the RSS.

A bitter war of words has erupted between the Congress and the BJP following a report in the *Wall Street Journal* claiming that Facebook ignored applying its hate speech rules to politicians of the ruling party in India.

Mr Gandhi has accused the BJP and RSS of spreading “fake news” using Facebook and WhatsApp to influence the electorate, inviting sharp

Mumbai, Aug. 18: The Shiv Sena on Tuesday sought action “irrespective of party affiliations” against those who spread hatred and talk of disintegrating the country on social media platforms like Facebook. Companies like Facebook can’t ignore someone spreading hatred because the persons belongs to the ruling party, the Sena said and asked the social media platform to observe rules and ethics of business. The party’s com-

ments come a day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the BJP and RSS of spreading fake news using Facebook and WhatsApp to influence the electorate.

“There is no objection to debates on a medium like Facebook. But action should be taken irrespective of party affiliation if hatred is spread and language of disintegrating the country and communities is used,” the Sena said in an editorial of its mouthpiece *Saamana*. — PTI

He said that hundreds of pages of BJP supporters were also removed by Facebook. “If the platform is public, then every Indian regardless of his ideology and commitment has got the right to convey his view,” the Union law and IT minister said. — PTI

55,000 new Covid cases, mortality rate reducing

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

With little over 55,000 fresh cases on Tuesday, the total number of novel coronavirus cases in India zoomed past 27 lakhs. In the last 24 hours, 886 new deaths were recorded taking the country’s total fatalities to 51,797 as per union health ministry. However, according to COVID19India.org, the death figures were over 52,000 by Tuesday evening and overall cases over 27.3 lakh.

Despite such high numbers being recorded daily, Niti Aayog member V.K. Paul said there are reassuring signals too as the number recoveries are up and the mortality rate is reducing. “We are really

happy with the daily testing numbers which is absolutely remarkable. We are in control of the pandemic,” he said. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said a decline in daily new cases has been noticed from August 13 as new detections have come down from 64,000 plus to 55,000 now. He underlined that the number of deaths too are also declining but “there is no room for laxity on containment, testing and surveillance.” “There is a reducing

trend. But five days is a short span in a pandemic. Yet there are satisfying results that are seen of the work states doing under the guidance of the Centre,” he said adding in spite of a sustained level of 7 lakh to 8 lakh test a day, the positivity figure has come down from 10.03 per cent to 7.72 per cent.

India has so far conducted 3,09,41,264 tests for detection of Covid-19 with a record 8,99,864 tests done in a single day. The total number of recoveries crossed 19 lakhs with 57,937 patients being cured in the last 24 hours — the highest recorded in a day so far. Active cases stand at 6.73 lakh. The recovery rate is 73.18 per cent and case fatality rate has come to 1.92 per cent.

Amid LAC row, top Navy brass to meet today

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Amid the India-China border tensions, Indian Navy’s top commanders will be meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday for the three-day Naval Commanders’ Conference.

The Indian Navy is already at a high alert due to the India-China military stand-off in the Ladakh sector and has deployed all its assets in the sea.

Last month, the Indian Navy had carried out an extensive exercise in Andaman and Nicobar islands which dominate major sea trade route for the Chinese ships.

Indian Navy’s P-8I surveillance aircraft are deployed in Ladakh to carry out surveillance and reconnaissance on the Chinese Army.

“The conference assumes greater significance in the backdrop of recent events on our northern borders, coupled with the unprecedented challenges posed by Covid-19 and would provide the higher naval leadership a forum to discuss conduct of operations, sustenance and maintenance of assets, and procurement issues,” said a senior official.

The Naval Commanders’ Conference is the apex level forum for interaction between commanders. The Chief of the Naval Staff, with the Commanders-in-Chief, will review major operational, material, logistics, training and administrative activities undertaken during the year and deliberate upon the course to be steered in the future.

Commanders would also undertake deliberations upon the larger security imperatives in the Indo-Pacific. Defence minister

RAJNATH SINGH is scheduled to address the naval commanders on the opening day and interact with them

Rajnath Singh is scheduled to address the naval commanders on the opening day and interact with them. The conference is also the forum for interaction of naval commanders with other senior government officials.

This is the first Naval Commanders’ Conference since the institution of Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and CDS. The conference would discuss upon the ways to optimise joint planning structures, Tri-Service Synergy, and operational readiness, as also functional reorganisation within the Indian Navy to improve efficiency.

Last month, Indian Navy’s carrier strike group, led by nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, *USS Nimitz* carried out passage exercise (PASSEX) in the Indian Ocean Region (ICR) to send out a signal to China.

The Indian Navy and Japanese Navy (Japan Maritime Self Defense Force) had also conducted a similar exercise in June.

India is also looking at inviting Australia to join the annual Malabar naval exercise which includes Japan and the US. If the proposal is approved, all members of Quad will be carrying out military exercises in the Bay of Bengal in a signal to China that its aggression in sea will not go unchallenged.

FIR against FB staff, 2 others over posts

Raipur, Aug. 18: An FIR has been filed against a senior Facebook executive and two users of the social media platform for allegedly hurting religious sentiments, the police said on Tuesday.

The case was lodged at Kabir Nagar police station late Monday night based on the complaint of Awesh Tiwari, a Raipur-based journalist, SSP Ajay Yadav told PTI.

Three persons, identified as Ankit Das from New Delhi, Ram Sahu from Mungeli (Chhattisgarh) and Vivek Sinha from Indore (MP), were booked. An investigation is underway the official said.

The three have been booked under IPC Sections 295(a) (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings), 505(1)(c) (with intent to incite, or which is likely to incite, any class or community of

persons to commit offence against any other class or community), 506 (criminal intimidation), 500 (defamation) and 34 (common intention), he said.

Ms Das is Facebook’s director, Public Policy, India, South and Central Asia. Mr Tiwari lodged the case after he was named in a complaint by Ms Das to the Delhi police, alleging that she had been receiving threats to her life through online posts.

According to the FIR, Mr Tiwari in his complaint said that on August 16, he put up a post on his Facebook account related to an article published in the *Wall Street Journal*.

The *WSJ* reported that Facebook refused to apply hate speech rules to certain BJP politicians, while the social media giant has asserted that its policies are enforced globally without regard to political affiliation. — PTI

IIT Madras, Bombay, Delhi bag top positions

NEW DELHI, Aug. 18: Madras, Bombay, Delhi IITs have bagged the top three positions among centrally-funded institutes of national importance in the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovations Achievements (ARIIA), announced on Tuesday.

ARIIA is an initiative of the ministry of education to systematically rank higher education institutions and universities on indicators related to innovation. The ranking is done in six categories — Centrally-funded institutes of national importance, state-funded universities, state-funded autonomous institutions, deemed universities, private institutions,

and women only higher educational institutions.

In the first category, IISc Bangalore and Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur have bagged the fourth and fifth ranks respectively. Seven IITs have figured in the top 10 list under the category.

Institute of Chemical Technology, Maharashtra, has been ranked at the top among state-funded universities, followed by Panjab University and Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University. — PTI



SHORT TAKES

PM to declare result of cleanliness survey

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will announce the results of the fifth edition of the nationwide annual cleanliness survey, "Swachh Survekshan 2020", on Thursday, the Union housing and urban affairs ministry has said. Ministry spokesperson Rajeev Jain said on Tuesday that 1.87 crore citizens participated in the survey of 4,242 cities, 62 cantonment boards and 92 towns along the Ganga river. Mr Jain said that a total of 129 awards will be handed over to the top performing cities and states at the "Swachh Mahotsav" event. The Union housing and urban affairs ministry, which is organising the event, said that the Prime Minister will also interact with select beneficiaries of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) — "swachhagrahis" (people adopting cleanliness). — *PTI*

Drugs worth ₹1.3cr seized in Odisha

Balasore (Odisha): The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Crime Branch has seized brown sugar worth over ₹1.30 crore from a management student in Balasore district, police said on Tuesday. The MBA student has been arrested, a police officer said. Acting on a tip-off, a six-member STF team carried out a raid in Sahadevkhunta bus stand area here on Monday and seized the contraband item, weighing 1.325 kg, the officer said. The accused has been identified as Sheikh Riazuddin, he said. "Preliminary investigation suggests that the accused is a third year student in a management college in Bhubaneswar. The arrested person will be interrogated to identify and nab the others involved in the racket," STF SP P.K. Bhoi said. — *PTI*

R. Asthana takes charge as BSF DG

New Delhi: IPS officer Rakesh Asthana on Tuesday took charge as the new Director General (DG) of the Border Security Force that guards India's fronts with Pakistan and Bangladesh. A 1984-batch Indian Police Service officer of Gujarat cadre, Asthana (59) was handed over the baton of the about 2.65 lakh personnel-strong force by ITBP DG S.S. Deswal in the morning at the BSF headquarters at Lodhi Road, a force spokesperson said. Mr Deswal, his batchmate from the Haryana cadre, has been heading the BSF in an additional capacity since March 11 after the then DG Vivek Johri was transferred to head the Madhya Pradesh Police. The new DG was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour. — *PTI*

Akshay donates ₹1cr for Assam flood relief

Guwahati: Actor Akshay Kumar donated ₹1 crore for flood relief in Assam, said an official statement on Tuesday. Chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal acknowledged the generosity of the actor and thanked him, it stated. "The actor has always been a friend of the people of Assam and his help would go a long way in easing the ordeal of the people facing the flood," the chief minister said. The Bollywood superstar had last year donated Rs 2 crore towards flood relief, the statement said. Assam faced a devastating flood this year. Total 138 people lost their lives, while several lakh people were affected across 28 districts. — *PTI*

Man hurls stones at Covid hospital, held

Pune: A 34-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly hurling stones at a Covid hospital here in Maharashtra which damaged a portion of its glass facade, police said on Tuesday. The accused Ganesh Ware committed the act on Monday as he was enraged by the noise being caused due to moving of oxygen cylinders at the hospital, located near his apartment in Kharadi area, a Chandannagar police station officer said. The accused works in night shifts, he said. A complaint has been registered and the person arrested, said the officer. — *PTI*

SC to hear plea challenging Central Vista plan tomorrow

Project challenged due to change in land use, municipal laws, ecological balance

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

The Supreme Court will examine the validity of change in land use for Modi government's ambitious ₹20,000 crore Central Vista redevelopment project that includes construction of a new Parliament building.

A three judge bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar said that the hearing that will commence from August 20 will be focused on the change in land use and the other issues relating to the alleged violation of municipal laws and environment clearance will follow it.

Other judges on the bench are Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Sanjiv Khanna.

Pointing to a number of petitions that have been filed challenging different aspects of the project, which

■ **A 3-JUDGE** bench said that the hearing that will commence from August 20 will be focused on the change in land use and the other issues relating to the alleged violation of municipal laws.

has been questioned by many, Justice Khanwilkar asked the lawyers to cull out important issues and compile them in a note with bullet points.

The court was on Tuesday told by the original petitioner Rajeev Suri that he has filed another application bringing out the violation of unified building rules.

Senior counsel Shyam Divan appearing for a group of former bureaucrats said that the issues raised by him were distinct and needed to be addressed besides the issues before the court.

SC reserves UGC order on UG exams

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

The Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved its order on a batch of petitions including by Maharashtra and Odisha challenging the University Grant Commission's guidelines asking universities to conclude the final year examinations by September 30, 2020.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan reserved the order after a near day-long hearing which saw a battery of senior lawyers including Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Arvind Datar, K.V. Vishwanathan, Shyam Divan assailing the guidelines contending that it could not be imposed without consulting the states, including Maharashtra, that are in the grip of Covid pandemic.

■ Opp. party trying to weaken fight against Covid, says BJP 'SC rejected Cong conspiracy'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

With the Supreme Court rejecting the petition which stated that Covid-19 relief fund PM-CARES violates the provision of disaster management and demanded that the fund should be transferred to the National Disaster Response Fund, the BJP on Tuesday said that the apex court rejected the "sponsored conspiracy" by the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi and alleged that the Opposition party spared no opportunity from day one to weaken India's fight against Covid-19. On the ongoing controversy regarding alleged bias by Facebook, the BJP claimed that it's a hard fact that those whose political base has shrunk are seeking to dominate the public discourse and insisted that every Indian has a right to express his/her opinion on a public platform regardless of

A body blow to transparency: Cong

New Delhi, Aug. 18: The Congress on Tuesday said the Supreme Court's judgement on the PM CARES Fund is a "body blow to transparency and accountability" of the government to the people.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the Apex Court let go an opportunity to bring in transparency in the fund which has "its own opaque and murky rules" and, thereby, deviated from the belief that "sunlight is the best disinfectant".

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to direct the Centre to transfer the

contributions made to the PM CARES Fund for battling the Covid-19 pandemic to the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said that voluntary contribution can always be made to the NDRF as there is no statutory bar under the Disaster Management Act.

Reacting to the verdict, Surjewala said, "The SC judgment is a body blow to transparency & accountability of Govt to people. It marks a sad letter day for responsibility & answerability of rulers to the electorate and remind them

that they are not 'Monarchs' but 'servants of the people'."

"SC scrupulously believed that 'sunlight is the best disinfectant'. Today the Court, in a departure from that tradition, passed up an opportunity to demand answers on the #PMCAresFund that seeks public money but plays by its own opaque & murky rules," he said in another tweet.

In March, the Centre set up the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund. — *PTI*

ideology or commitment. Asserting that "transparency is writ large in PM-CARES fund both in terms of legal requirement and transparent management of funds received on a voluntary basis, the ruling party

said the petitioners and the counsels in the case were same people who keep criticising the Modi government.

While reacting on the apex court's verdict on the PM-CARES fund issue, Union law and IT minister

and senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad also attacked the Opposition parties over the Facebook's alleged bias, saying it is a "hard fact that those whose political base has shrunk are seeking to dominate the public discourse."

MLA, 11 others booked for vandalism at Visva Bharati

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, AUG. 18

Twelve persons including Trinamul Congress MLA of Dubrajpur Naresh Bauri and many leaders of the ruling party have been booked in an FIR at the Santiniketan police station in Birbhum of West Bengal into the rampant vandalism by a violent mob in large numbers at Visva Bharati (VB) on Monday to protest the central university's recent decision to abolish Poush Mela on its campus and erection of a boundary wall surrounding the fair venue on a ground against encroachment.

Mr Bauri, who allegedly led the mob, tops the list of the accused. Among others are TMC leader Gagan Sarkar, president of VB employees' forum, two former councillors of Bolpur Municipality: Sukanta Hazra and Omar Sheikh and Shailen Mishra, Sunil Singh, Subrata Bhakat, Aminul Hoda and Chandan Samanta of the Bolpur Byabsayee Samity that has been opposing the

Visva Bharati to write to PM Modi, seek central forces after violence

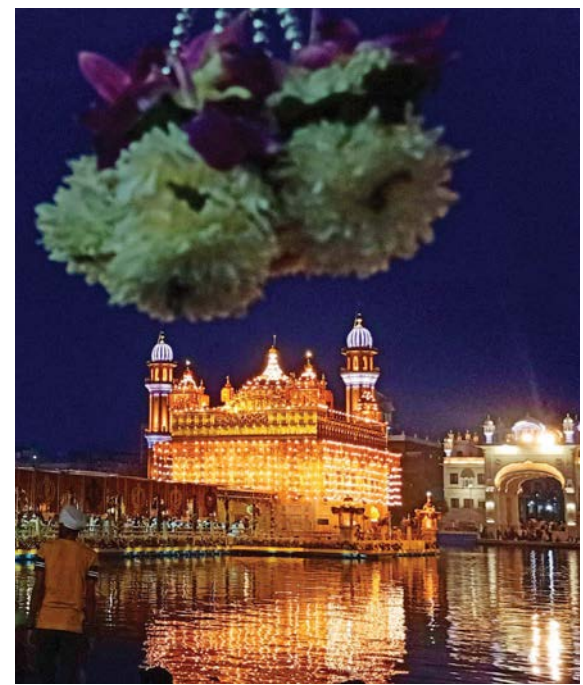
Bolpur (WB), Aug. 18: Visva Bharati authorities have decided to seek Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention for deployment of central security forces on its premises, a day after vandalism forced its closure, a top official of the prestigious institution said on Tuesday. The heritage university founded by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore was shut down indefinitely on Monday following violent

protests against Visva Bharati's decision to construct a boundary wall around the venue of Poush Mela, a prestigious annual cultural event started more than a century ago.

"The executive council (of the university) has unanimously decided to write to the honourable chancellor (the prime minister) for deployment of any of the central security forces to deal with security issues on the campus," one of its members said. — *PTI*

VB's step. The FIR was filed under sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 447 (criminal trespass), 427 (damage by mischief), 379 (theft), 504 (provocation), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code by the police after the VB registrar's complaint on

Monday night. Mr Bauri has not only defended himself but also gave himself a clean chit as many of his party leaders including a state minister rallied support b e h i n d him on Tuesday. This prompted the BJP to accuse the TMC of its direct role in the rampage.



Harmandir Sahib, also known as Golden Temple, illuminated on the eve of 416th Prakash Utsav of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Amritsar on Tuesday. — *PTI*

FS on 2-day visit to B'desh, meets Hasina in Dhaka

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

In a major step towards further strengthening India's ties with eastern neighbour and close friend Bangladesh, sources confirmed late on Tuesday evening that India's foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka on Tuesday in an "excellent meeting", with both countries moving towards convening in virtual format a Joint Consultative Commission at the foreign ministerial level to oversee the bilateral relationship, especially projects being carried out for the welfare of Bangladesh with Indian assistance. The foreign secretary had begun a two-day visit on Tuesday "to discuss and take forward cooperation on matters of mutual interest".

Sources said the fact that Mr Shringla was granted a meeting with Sheikh Hasina was extremely significant since the Bangladesh Prime Minister — amid the Covid Pandemic — has reportedly not met anyone from abroad and very few in the country in the past few months. Sources added that Sheikh Hasina "greatly appreciated" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "gesture in sending someone to touch base, convey message and see how the two sides could take relationship forward".

Journalist Kanojia held over 'Ram Temple post'

Cops allege he shared morphed poster of Hindu Army

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Freelance journalist Prashant Kanojia was on Tuesday arrested by the Uttar Pradesh police, who have alleged that he had posted a morphed tweet against a right-wing leader over the Ram temple in Ayodhya. They claiming the tweet allegedly posted by him had "disrupted communal harmony".

Mr Kanojia was taken to the Vasant Vihar police station in the capital and is likely to be shifted to Lucknow later, his wife was quoted as saying.

A first information report was registered against the journalist at the Hazratganj police station on Monday by one Dinesh Kumar Shukla. According to the FIR released by the police, Mr Kanojia's had tweeted a morphed image of a poster with the name of Sushil Tiwari, a member



Prashant Kanojia

of the right-wing group called the Hindu Army, on it, and showed him as saying the Ram temple in Ayodhya should not allow the entry of Dalits, STs and OBCs.

The journalist has been charged with IPC sections which carry a jail term of up to seven years. This is the second time the UP police has arrested Mr Kanojia. In 2019, the Supreme Court ordered his immediate release.

However, Mr Kanojia's

wife, Jagisha Arora, denied the charges and said the journalist did not post the tweet for which he has been arrested. Ms Arora said an edited screenshot with morphed photographs is doing the rounds under his name. "You can check his Twitter, you will not find the tweet anywhere," she told was quoted as sating in reports.

The Hindu Army on Monday shared a photograph on Facebook which purportedly showed the original poster by Mr Tiwari and the morphed version allegedly shared by Mr Kanojia. According to the post, the poster shared by Mr Tiwari demanded that Vedic studies should immediately replace Islamic studies in the Union Public Service Commission examinations. — *Agencies*

Railway platform ticket goes up from ₹3 to ₹50

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

The Railways on Tuesday tried to justify a hike in platform ticket rates by saying this move is to control crowd at the stations in view of Covid-19 pandemic and the hike will be reviewed post pandemic.

"Instructions have been issued to divisional Railway managers to take local decision to increase platform ticket fare to desist non serious persons from entering stations and maintain social distancing at the stations during Covid-19 pandemic. This decision will be reviewed post the pandemic," said a Railway official adding this move has helped control crowding at the stations. The justification came

following a tweet by Congress leader Digvijay Singh in which he posted photographs of two platform tickets — one during 2011 when the Congress-led UPA government was in power, and another of this month. "The cost of platform ticket that was ₹3 in Congress regime has now become ₹50. During Congress Railway was under government while now under BJP it is privatised," Digvijay Singh tweeted, along with photos of two platform tickets with emphasis on their cost.

While the first ticket, dated December 14, 2011, showed a value of ₹3, the second one issued at Pune junction, Maharashtra in August 2020 had a price of ₹50.

■ Punjab is reluctant to share Sutlej water with Haryana 'Punjab will burn': Capt. opposes SYL canal

Chandigarh, Aug. 18: Opposing the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal at a meeting with his Haryana counterpart, chief minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday warned that it is an emotive issue in his state and Punjab will burn if asked to share water.

Meeting Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar and Union jal shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat through a video link, the Punjab CM argued that the SYL canal issue could disturb national security.

Both states stuck to their stands at the meeting convened on the directions of the Supreme Court, which asked the Centre on July 28 to mediate between them on the decades-old issue. But the two CMs



If you decide to go ahead with SYL, Punjab will burn and it will become a national problem, with Haryana and Rajasthan also suffering the impact. You have to look at the issue from the national security perspective.
— **Capt. A. Singh, Punjab CM**

described the interaction the first such meeting between them on the SYL project as cordial and agreed to talk again.

Punjab is reluctant to share water with Haryana through the SYL canal project, saying it has nothing to spare. Amarinder Singh reiterated the need for a tribunal for a time-bound assessment of river water availability. You have to look at the

issue from the national security perspective, he told Shekhawat, according to a Punjab government statement.

If you decide to go ahead with SYL, Punjab will burn and it will become a national problem, with Haryana and Rajasthan also suffering the impact, he added. Shekhawat and Khattar joined the video conference from Delhi. Linking the SYL debate with national

security, Singh said Punjab remained at risk from all quarters.

He said Pakistan was continuing with attempts to foment trouble and was trying to revive the separatist movement through the banned Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) organisation. The water issue could further destabilise the state, he warned, according to the statement.

Mr Singh described the meeting as amicable and cordial.

Haryana CM Khattar hoped for an amicable solution to the dispute.

We maintained our stand that the SYL should be constructed. The Supreme Court too has said that, he told reporters after the meeting. — *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

19 AUGUST 2020

Let them skip JEE, for their own good

With the Supreme Court's indiscriminate status quo on the JEE and NEET entrances taking effect, a logistical nightmare stares at the authorities. Parents are happy that their children will not "lose" a year and will be availing of the best opportunities. They forget that the rules of both the NEET and JEE allow students to take it multiple times and it is commonplace for many to give up a year anyway in order to take it twice. In these unprecedented circumstances of a Covid year, should not the health of their children have been the parents' priority? But then, the deadly virus has so far only been known to hit other people. Denial is comforting.

So the governments at the Centre and in the states must now be seen working to ensure that the examinations do not become another source of the spread. For this, they have to plumb the best practices from around the world and then adapt them here. Sadly, given our high population and low per capita income leading to anxiety for our children's future financial

'These students are all 21-22-year-olds. Can you believe they will not be going out,' solicitor general Tushar Mehta submitted before the court. The government had also cited, not so accurately, that the entire country is 'working'.

security, the emphasis on a job-oriented STEM education is paramount leading to a manic make-or-break college entrance system unparalleled in the world. Hence not many examples of these practices exist. While 17 lakh students have registered for NEET, 11 lakh youngsters will be writing the JEE. Only a limited number of exam centres are present in a state. Not every district has an exam centre. The students will be accompanied by their parents on these outstation trips where they will arrange for overnight stays in hotels and at relatives' residences, raising infection chances.

As far as holding of exams is concerned, so far it has been seen that the level of precautions taken and screening done at centres are dismal. The World Health Organisation now holds that the coronavirus is airborne. Patients, too, may be asymptomatic. Asymptomatic patients will inevitably be seated in the exam hall next to uninfected for three hours. More alarmingly, there will be cases of students coming to take the exam with a light fever, sparked by stress or common cold, and they will be made to take the exam in isolation alongside those who may be having the virus. An online exam would have solved this crisis, but neither the government nor the court displayed the requisite proactivity. The only option that remains now is for parents, themselves, to let their child skip the exam. The government, which can still step in, is unlikely to, seeing as it has consistently opposed the entrance postponements.

So that relief is available to all, 11 students from various parts of the country had moved a petition in the Supreme Court. But god forbid, if the student "wastes" their year frivolously, studying science or engineering/medicine in less prestigious colleges and institutes or, in the worst case scenario, in pursuits other than the most heavy-duty academics. "These students are all 21-22-year-olds. Can you believe they will not be going out," solicitor general Tushar Mehta submitted before the court. The government had also cited, not so accurately, that the entire country is "working".

The court, therefore, in its uncontested wisdom, declined the students' prayer. After all, is there a precedent that the esteemed Indian judiciary took into account a child's argument? Even if, in the process, it has jeopardised the child's right to health and their right to life. For their own good.

Flashpoint in Belarus

Over three decades after the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated shortly afterwards, Belarus' embattled President Alexander Lukashenko, who ruled his country — once part of the Soviet empire — with an iron hand for over a quarter century, is being taught a lesson on the meaning of "people power". After claiming victory in the August 9 election, he faced nine days of continuous protests demanding he leave for rigging the results, with even some police and intelligence personnel deserting him. Mr Lukashenko, described by many as "Europe's last dictator", stood firm at the outset, but after open heckling by factory workers in Minsk on Monday, who demanded he "step down", seemed to indicate he might be open to sharing power. He suggested a referendum be held to change constitutional provisions so that a fresh election could take place, but this concession seems to have come too late, with the demonstrators demanding that he just go. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the Opposition leader who fled into exile in neighbouring Lithuania two days after the election, claims that she won by a 60-70 per cent margin, and said she is ready to take over and lead the country, but Mr Lukashenko vowed he won't quit "under pressure". He even said: "Until you kill me, there will be no other elections." One hopes he hasn't forgotten the fate of Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena.

The embattled leader may have hoped Russia, Belarus' powerful eastern neighbour, might come to his rescue and he spoke to President Vladimir Putin several times, but Moscow's intervention seems unlikely. President Putin promised help in case Belarus faces an external threat, but the threats Mr Lukashenko faces are internal. There is little anti-Russian sentiment in Belarus, and most people speak Russian, so rather than prop up the unpopular President, Mr Putin might try to "manage" the transition. An invasion, like in Ukraine some years ago, would also trigger fresh Western sanctions, something Russia might wish to avoid. The European Union has called an emergency virtual summit on Wednesday, as it explores how to help Belarus in its hour of need.

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



India builds UN team ahead of 2021-22 stint at Security Council

India will take over as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in January 2021. The government has begun preparations by deciding to upgrade India's diplomatic presence at the UN. The Indian delegation is being strengthened with the appointment of an additional deputy permanent representative and a counsellor to solely handle Security Council matters.

According to sources, 1999-batch Indian Foreign Service officer R. Ravindran, who is joint secretary (Central and West Africa) will join the Indian Permanent Mission in New York in the rank of additional deputy representative. He served in the office earlier under Hardeep Singh Puri, who is now minister for civil aviation, urban development and commerce, but who headed the mission when India was a non-permanent mem-

ber in 2011-2012.

Ravindran's colleague Pratik Mathur, who is from the 2007 batch, and is deputy secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), will be a counsellor. Both IFS officers will join the mission before the 75th UN General Assembly opens next month. The India mission is currently headed by T.S. Tirumurthi, with Nagaraj Naidu as deputy permanent representative. It is also said that external affairs minister S. Jaishankar will be keenly following India's stint at the Security Council with regular monthly reviews.

DISCRIMINATORY RETIREMENT PRACTICES?

At a time when the Covid pandemic has forced states to tighten their finances, the Tamil Nadu government has decided to increase

retirement benefits for retired senior officials. Citing petitions from the IAS Officers' Association and senior bureaucrats, it has permitted an additional ₹10,000 monthly servant allowance to all retired chief secretaries and additional chief secretaries.

The move is bound to raise eyebrows since many other states with strained finances have been forced to hold back the dearness allowance of government officials and pushed back pension grants. Barely two months ago, the government had increased the retirement age of babus from 58 to 59 years, ostensibly to postpone the huge pension burden it would face. More recently, the government has given retiring chief secretary K. Shanmugam a three-month extension.

According to sources, the state government has based the order on

a similar order by neighbouring Karnataka, in 2015. Then Karnataka had allowed chief secretaries and additional chief secretaries a servant allowance of ₹6,000 plus telephone and medical allowances over and above the pension and other benefits of the retired babus.

BITTER MEDICINE

Manipur has a qualified doctor as the state's new chief secretary. Senior IAS officer of the Manipur cadre, Rajesh Kumar who was additional chief secretary, has succeeded J. Suresh Babu who superannuated from government service. Incidentally, Babu was also a doctor who became a civil servant.

Mr Kumar's appointment comes in the backdrop of a demand from several student organisations in

the state to appoint a "qualified state native" to the post of chief secretary. Kumar, who is an IAS officer of the 1988 batch, is not. Once Mr Kumar's appointment was announced, some organizations are now demanding that the decision be reviewed. The state government, however, has shown no sign of acknowledging this demand.

With the students upset over what they term as "denial of rights of the native communities" by the state government, Mr Kumar as the new chief secretary may have to apply a healing balm to the "hurt" sentiments of the student community first, besides getting down to discharging his own considerable administrative duties.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter. Let's multiply the effect.



Subhani

Polls at 73: More women voters, 'criminal' leaders



Sanjay Kumar

The seven-decade-long journey of electoral politics in India has both sweet and sour memories. The sweet memories of India's electoral journey could be documented as the increasing participation of Indian voters in the numerous elections held so far to form governments at three levels — central, municipal/panchayat and state. The sweet memories could also be remembered as an upsurge in electoral participation of the marginalised. It can also manifest as a reasonably high degree of trust shown by Indians in institutions vital for the functioning of the government. But in this journey of sweet memories have also existed some bitter experiences — elections being violent at times, an expanding role of muscle (dabang) and the role of money power. Though trust in institutions remains high, the trust in elected representatives (MPs, MLAs and sarpanchs) has declined over the last few decades. This is largely due to frequent defections of leaders from one party to another, signalling the declining role of ideology in Indian politics.

Since Independence, Indians have exercised their franchise 17 times to elect the national government. These elections over the years have witnessed increasing participation of voters. The first Lok Sabha elections witnessed a high turnout of 61.1 per cent and the second in 1952 witnessed a higher turnout of 62.2 per cent. But after that, for a very long time, the turnout at Lok Sabha elections remained below 60 per cent, barring exceptions. It increased to 66 per cent during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and touched 67 per cent during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The state Assembly election witnessed a much higher

turnout compared to the Lok Sabha election and the last few decades witnessed a significant increase in this parameter. Due to constituencies being much smaller and campaigns being personalised, local body elections have witnessed a much higher turnout compared to the other two levels of elections.

Although women got their voting rights along with men, they lagged far behind men in exercising it. Earlier, many of them did not come out to vote resulting in a big gender gap in turnout. But turnout amongst women has increased significantly during the last few Lok Sabha elections. The gap between male and female turnout that used to be 9-10 per cent got narrowed down to 1.6 per cent during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and during the 2019 Lok Sabha election men and women voted in equal proportions — shoulder to shoulder — the biggest story of the Indian elections so far. Youth, too, have begun to participate much more actively in elections now. Dalit and adivasi voters, who were earlier missing from the long queues on the voting day up until the mid-1990s, have also started voting in much bigger numbers.

The beauty of Indian elections has been that all its verdicts have been acceptable to both the winner and the loser. Some elections resulted in the incumbent getting re-elected, while there have been other instances when the ruling party lost

Based on their own declaration of pending cases, 43 per cent of the current Parliament has criminal cases pending against them. In the previous Parliament, this number was 34 per cent.

The gap between male and female turnout that used to be 9-10 per cent got narrowed down to 1.6 per cent in the 2014 elections and in the 2019 elections men and women voted in equal proportions

badly. This trend has been visible in all the three types of elections. There have been contestations and counter-contestations about how free and fair the elections were, especially in the 1990s when elections, including many state Assembly elections, were marred by violence, but in spite of all that, results were accepted gracefully. There has been discomfort about the use of the electronic voting machine (EVM). Political parties suspected these machines could be tinkered with, but all these issues come to a rest once results are declared. Unlike in many countries where there are major disputes around election results, in India we never had any similar dispute and government formation has never been held up due to controversy over election results. Political parties have shown a great deal of maturity in this respect, but the credit should also go to the Election Commission of India.

Question have been asked about the EVMS, but results have gone in favour of and against all political parties at some point of time — no party can complain of being at the receiving end all the time. In election after election, both at the national and state levels, Indian voters have shown a great deal of maturity, voting back only the government that worked for the people. Were it not the case, the government would not have changed eight times at the national level. Between 1952 and 2019, of the 363 Assembly elections held, the ruling party got re-elected 188 times and was defeated 175 times.

But unfortunately, this is not the whole story of the Indian elections.

The aim of being in politics has almost entirely shifted from serving the people (seva bhaav) to be in power to make money by using political position and political pressure. Elections have become far more expensive now compared to the past. An ordinary man has no place in present-day politics. Not that one can win election only by using money power, but the importance of money for contesting an election has increased enormously. A very large number (almost 30 per cent) of all contestants during the 2019 Lok Sabha election owned property worth more than ₹1 crore. It is important to note that 86 per cent of elected MPs have assets worth more than ₹1 crore. The story remains the same for the state Assembly elections.

Even more disturbing to note is that a large number of elected representatives both in Parliament and the state Assemblies have criminal cases pending against them. Based on their own declaration of pending cases, 43 per cent of the current Parliament has criminal cases pending against them. This is not unique of the current Parliament, 34 per cent MPs of the earlier Parliament had criminal cases pending against them, too. This number stood at 24 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively, for the Lok Sabhas of 2004 and 2009. If women's turnout is the biggest success story of the Indian elections, criminalisation of politics is its darkest.

The writer is a professor at Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and a political analyst. Views expressed are personal.

Unlike in many countries where there are major disputes around election results, in India we never had any similar dispute and government formation has never been held up due to controversy

LETTERS

IT'S A GAMBLE

Fantasy sports platform — a start-up pioneered by two Indian entrepreneurs — Dream 11 have made a three-year winning bid of ₹230 crores to bag the IPL title rights subject to Vivo's return next year. However, if Vivo does not return as title sponsors, Dream 11 will continue with the title rights for the next three years starting with the 2020 edition. Will this boost fantasy sports betting in cricket?

Sanjay Paul
Chakdah, West Bengal

NO TO CASTE DATA

THE CONSTANT DEMAND from political parties of several hues to release the data of Census 2011 on the basis of caste is a sign that some parties are hoping to rejuvenate themselves following debacle after debacle. Political outfits are aiming for the populist approach and, once the data is out, will start pampering big caste groups. This will have a catastrophic impact on smaller groups. There is no need to disclose the data of population in the basis of caste.

Rahul Chouhan
Ujjain

LAST OF ROMANS

LEGENDARY HINDUSTANI classical vocalist Pandit Jasraj has died at the age of 90 of cardiac arrest. He was the last of the Romans. He belonged to the Mewati gharana. He was a recipient of various prestigious honours, including the Padmashri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan. During the pandemic lockdown, Pandit Jasraj dedicated his life to the one thing that he loved most — music. His death is an irreparable loss.

C.K. Ramani
Navi Mumbai

OUT OF THE WOODS

NEWS OF THE DISCHARGE of six Indian hockey players who were hospitalised earlier this month after testing positive for Covid-19 must cheer lovers of the sport. The six players — Manpreet Singh, Surender Kumar, Jaskaran Singh, Varun Kumar, Krishan B Pathak and Mandeep Singh — are now under quarantine at the SAI South Centre in Bengaluru. The authorities have done well to ensure zero contact between the six and the other campers over the next ten days. With sports camps and competitions set to resume, the authorities must spare no effort to make sure that the players are healthy and full of beans.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

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

IN BRIEF

457 cases linked to church: S. Korea

Seoul: South Korean health officials said Tuesday that they have found 457 Coronavirus cases linked to a huge Seoul church led by a bitter critic of the country's president, driving an alarming surge of infections in the greater capital area. Kwon Jun-wook, director of South Korea's National Health Institute, said outbreaks at the Sarang Jeil Church and elsewhere have pushed the country into the biggest crisis yet since the emergence of Covid-19. He said a failure to slow transmissions in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, home to nearly 26 million people, could create a situation comparable to the "miserable scenes of the United States or European countries."

2 existing drugs can prevent virus: Study

Boston: Two existing drugs inhibit SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, from infecting human cells in the lab, a study has found. According to the study, published in the journal PNAS, both drugs, vacuolin-1 and apilimod, originally developed years ago, target a large enzyme called PIKfyve kinase. Before this study, little was known about this enzyme's role in Covid-19 infection, the researchers said. The work, which will need to be replicated in human trials, suggests a potential new target for Covid-19 therapies, they said. "Our findings show that targeting this kinase through a small-molecule antiviral against SARS-CoV-2 may be an effective strategy to lessen the progression or seriousness of Covid-19," said study co-senior author Tomas Kirchhausen, a professor at the Harvard Medical School (HMS) in the US. Kirchhausen said he discovered vacuolin-1 16 years ago, while apilimod was developed by a company called LAM Therapeutics.

Chocolate firm glitch dusts Swiss town

Berlin: Residents of a Swiss town got a bit of a shock when it started snowing particles of a fine cocoa powder after the ventilation system at a chocolate factory malfunctioned. The Lindt & Sprüngli company confirmed local reports Tuesday that there was a minor defect in the cooling ventilation for a line for roasted "cocoa nibs" in its factory in Olten, between Zurich and Basel. The nibs, fragments of crushed cocoa beans, are the basis of chocolate. Combined with strong winds on Friday morning, the powder spread around the immediate vicinity of the factory, leaving a fine cocoa dusting. The company says one car was lightly coated, and that it has offered to pay for any cleaning needed — but hasn't yet been taken up on the offer. Factory production was able to continue as normal and the company says the particles were completely harmless to people or the environment.

CHINA CONSIDERS IMPOSING TARIFFS ON OZZIE WINE

Canberra, Aug. 18: China on Tuesday began investigating whether Australia is dumping wine in a trade dispute that further strains relations between the countries and could shut the biggest export market for Australian wine.

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce said the anti-dumping investigation involved wine in containers of 2 liters (68 fluid ounces) or smaller imported from Australia from Tuesday.

The Australian government denied subsidizing exporters. "We do find this deeply troubling, concerning and perplexing given Australia's wine industry is not subsidized to export and it's certainly not dumping product on the world market," Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said. "Now it's for China and Beijing to explain the rationale behind these actions and why they have moved to that stage of an investigation."

China's only other anti-dumping investigation of Australian products effectively closed the China market to Australian barley in May through crippling tariffs. Australia is appealing that decision.

The investigation of Australian wine exports, which made 1.1 billion Australian dollars (\$795 million) from the Chinese market last year, could take between a year and 18 months.

Trump govt imposes new Huawei limits

Washington, Aug. 18: The Trump administration is further tightening restrictions on China's Huawei, seeking to starve it of crucial components by cutting off all access to US technology.

"We don't want their equipment in the United States because they spy on us," Trump said. "And any country that uses it, we're not going to do anything in terms of sharing intelligence."

The Commerce Department's new rules, rolled out Monday, will further block Huawei from accessing chip technology. Washington cut off Huawei's access to US components and technology, including Google's music and other smartphone services, last year.

Those penalties were tightened in May when the White House barred vendors worldwide from using US technology to produce components for Huawei.

A Huawei executive said this month that the company has started running out of processor chips to make smartphones as a result of those sanctions, and may have to stop production of its own advanced chips. But the Commerce Department said Monday that more restrictions were needed because Huawei has "continuously tried to evade" the earlier sanctions by using technology supplied by third parties.

The new rule is designed to block Huawei's access to commercially available chips made with tools acquired from the US "The new

SENATE CONDEMNS CHINA'S HOSTILITY TOWARDS INDIA

Washington, Aug. 18: A bipartisan US Senate resolution has condemned China's use of military force to change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India and called for a diplomatic solution to the issue.

Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter standoff in several areas along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh since May 5. The situation deteriorated after the June 15 Galwan Valley clashes in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed.

The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. The resolution, introduced by senators John Cornyn and Mark Warner, commended India for taking steps to secure its telecommunications infrastructure from Chinese security threats and also supported bilateral and multilateral partnerships, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), to promote a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

— PTI

rule makes it clear than any use of American software or American fabrication equipment to produce things through Huawei is banned, and requires a license," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said.

— PTI

#MilkTeaAlliance to aid Thai protest

Bangkok/Hong Kong, Aug. 18: As Hong Kong pro-democracy advocates voiced support for Thai anti-government protests at the weekend, they used the hashtag #MilkTeaAlliance.

In Bangkok, flags representing Hong Kong and independence for Taiwan appeared on a sign bearing the tag at the biggest demonstrations in years.

And in Taipei, dozens of people gathered to back the Thai protests and give weight to a nascent community of cross-border youth movements pushing for democracy at home and uneasy with China's growing regional power.

"This is the first physical expression of the Milk

Tea Alliance," said Thai student Akrawat Siripatanachok, 27, who helped organise the show of solidarity in Taipei joined by Hong Kong activists, a Chinese dissident and Taiwan students.

"We don't want to just talk about it online. We want a pan-Asian alliance for democracy." A hashtag that began in April as a backlash to Chinese nationalist attacks on a Thai celebrity for a perceived slight to China shows signs of turning into a bigger movement uniting like-minded activists.

Why milk tea? The light-hearted name represents a shared passion for sweet tea drinks in Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

— Agencies

China's swollen river triggers flood alert

Shanghai, Aug. 18: China's biggest river, the Yangtze, and several of its tributaries have risen to dangerous levels after days of heavy rain, forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes and triggering an unprecedented emergency response alert.

China has seen unusually high levels of rain this flood season, with south-west and central regions in the Yangtze river basin bearing the brunt of flooding.

The Ministry of Water Resources said on Monday that 38 tributaries on the upper reaches of the Yangtze were now higher

than their warning levels, 19 dangerously so.

The southwestern province of Sichuan, which includes a major upstream section of the Yangtze, has raised its flood emergency response to its highest level, the first time it has ever done so, with its rivers overflowing and villages and farmland inundated.

The Qingyi river, an upper Yangtze tributary, had seen its worst flooding in a century. Sichuan's flood control authority said, with the city of Yaan forced to evacuate more than 36,000 people as the river burst its banks on Monday.

— PTI

ANIMAL | SHELTER

20-year-old apes Samson and Bobby in Java suffer from malnutrition

2 captive orangutans rescued in Indonesia

Jakarta, Aug. 18: Two critically endangered orangutans have been rescued from captivity on Indonesia's Java island and sent to a rehabilitation centre on Borneo to assess whether they can be released back into the wild, a conservation group said.

"Samson" and "Bobby", both male and estimated to be around 20 years old, were suffering from malnutrition when they were removed from an amuse-

ment park and a private family home, according to a statement from International Animal Rescue (IAR).

The two Bornean orangutans had been identified as being illegally held in captivity in October last year before a rescue was arranged, said Darmanto, the head of Indonesia's nature conservation agency in Central Java.

The orangutans, who had been held in cages, have

Lukashenko must go



Belarusian opposition supporters gather for a protest rally in Minsk, Belarus. More workers in Belarus joined a widening strike on Tuesday as they press for the resignation of authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has extended his 26-year rule in an election the opposition says was rigged. — AP

Democratic Convention kicks off with a call to defeat Trump

Michelle Obama scorches Don, says 'vote for Biden like our lives depend on it'

Washington, Aug. 18: The Democratic National Convention kicked off with a call to unite the US — in the wake of widespread nationwide protests against racism and the deadly coronavirus that has taken a toll on the country's economy — by defeating President Donald Trump in the November 3 elections.

Leading the charge was the former first lady Michelle Obama, who described the nation as "deeply divided". "We live in a nation that is deeply divided... If we have any hope of ending this chaos, we have got to vote for Joe Biden like our lives depend on it," Obama said in her video address as she concluded the first day's proceedings of the convention whose theme was 'We the People.'

The four-day convention is being held virtually in view of the Coronavirus that has so far killed over 1,70,000 people and infected 5.4 million in the US. The convention would formally nominate Biden, 77, as the party's presidential candidate and Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris, 55, as his running mate. Harris, the first-ever woman of colour and first-ever American of Indian and African descent to be nominated as a vice-presidential candidate by a major political party, made a few brief appearances during the first night as part of the former presidential candidates' address.



● **IF TRUMP** is reelected, "all the progress we have made will be in jeopardy", former presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders said as he accused the president of being negligent to the pandemic which has resulted in job losses of 30 million people.

Harris was a presidential aspirant until last year before she dropped out of the race because of lack of popular support. "We all ran for president motivated by the same reasons," said Harris who is scheduled to address the convention on Wednesday. "Donald Trump does not understand who we are as Americans. He really doesn't," she said in another brief remarks as speakers after speakers at the convention slammed the president for his policies, which they alleged has divided the country.

If Trump is reelected,

"all the progress we have made will be in jeopardy", former presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders said as he accused the president of being negligent to the pandemic which has resulted in job losses of 30 million people. According to Senator Cory Booker, who was also a presidential aspirant, "We've got one shot to make Donald Trump a one-term president, and that shot is right now." Another former presidential candidate Senator Amy Klobuchar alleged that Trump is trying to divide people and is also not responding to the coronavirus pandemic and the significant needs of the US economy.

Indian-origin Democratic politician Sara Gideo, who is running for US Senate seat from Maine, said with Biden in the White House and a Democratic Senate, the US can build back its economy and its communities even stronger.

— PTI

Don retweets Biden's disputed audio call

Washington, Aug. 18: President Donald Trump has retweeted an audio recording that US intelligence officials have described as being part of a Russian campaign to denigrate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

The leaked conversation, purportedly between Biden and former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, dates from Feb. 18, 2016. The excerpt of it retweeted by Trump centers on the ouster of Ukraine's chief prosecutor, who had previously investigated the owner of a Ukraine energy company where Biden's son, Hunter,

once held a board seat.

By amplifying the recording to his more than 85 million Twitter followers, Trump underscored the ease with which pro-Russian narratives can seep into American public discourse ahead of the 2020 election even after being flagged by intelligence officials as the product of a concerted Russian effort.

US President Donald Trump's election campaign has described the Democratic National Convention as a Hollywood-produced infomercial which fails to hide the radical-leftist takeover of presumptive nominee Joe Biden.

— AP

US PRESIDENT TO PARDON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE LEADER SUSAN ANTHONY

Washington, Aug. 18: President Donald Trump said Tuesday he will pardon Susan B. Anthony, a leader in the women's suffrage movement, who was arrested for voting in 1872 in violation of laws permitting only men to vote.

Anthony is best known for her role in the movement to secure voting rights for women, but she also was a strong anti-slavery and voting rights pioneer. Trump's pardon,

which he said he'll issue later on Tuesday, comes 100 years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which ensured women the right to vote. It's also known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. His move also comes amid an outcry over Postal Service disruptions that Democrats say endanger the voting rights of millions of Americans who would vote by mail in November amid the pandemic.

— AP

ACCURACY ISSUE WITH COVID-19 TESTS, SAYS FDA

Washington, Aug. 18: Potential accuracy issues with a widely used Coronavirus test could lead to false results for patients, US health officials warned. The Food and Drug Administration issued the alert Monday to doctors and laboratory technicians using Thermo Fisher's TaqPath genetic test. Regulators said issues related to laboratory equipment and software used to run the test could lead to inaccuracies. The agency advised technicians to follow updated instructions and software developed by the company to ensure accurate results.

The warning comes nearly a month after Connecticut public health officials first reported that at least 90 people had received false positive results for the Coronavirus. Most of those receiving the false results were residents of nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

A spokeswoman for Thermo Fisher said the company was working with FDA to make sure that laboratory personnel understand the need for strict adherence to the instructions for use.

— AP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,528.32	1.26
Nifty 50	11,385.35	1.23
S&P 500*	3,391.16	0.27
Dollar (₹)	74.76	0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.40	-0.44
Euro (₹)	88.95	-0.37
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,856▲1,182	2.15
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.36	-0.01
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.011
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.669	-0.014

Govt may give MSME status to dealers: Gadkari

The government is considering according MSME status to dealers, as this will enable them to avail of benefits offered to micro, small and medium enterprises, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said. "Regarding MSME, we are thinking now of giving MSME status to dealers," Gadkari said. The minister also reiterated his appeal to major industries to clear the outstanding dues to MSMEs in a timely manner.

Porsche drives in 718 Spyder, 718 Cayman GT4



The German luxury sports car-maker Porsche said it has launched new 718 Spyder and the 718 Cayman GT4 models in India with a starting price of Rs 1.59 crore and 1.63 crore, respectively. The two super cars get six-speed manual transmission options to retain the genuine flavour of managing shifts. Both cars hit 100-kmph mark in just 4.4 seconds and while its top speeds are hardly road legal, they can hit 301 kmph.

Data, AI can add up to \$500 bn to GDP: Nasscom

Data and AI could add \$450-500 billion to the GDP by 2025 and drive India's vision of inclusive development, a Nasscom report said. If India acts quickly, it can be a leader in building a holistic data utilisation and AI effort. A coordinated programme across all five building blocks—strategy, data, technology stack, talent and execution—is required to capture the opportunity, the report said.

Axis Sec. floats platform to trade in US stocks

Axis Securities announced the launch of a platform -- Global Investing -- that will provide an opportunity to its customers to invest in the US stock markets. For this, Axis Securities has partnered with Vested Finance, an online investment platform, the brokerage house said. Investors can buy or sell shares of companies like Facebook, Apple, Netflix and Google or invest in theme-based baskets or ETFs, it added.

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Job gains in June look like a blip Five million more lose jobs in July

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 18

An additional five million salaried jobs were lost in July, taking the total job losses for the salaried class since the lockdown that began in late-March to 18.9 million. The job losses among the middle-class would make recovery of the economy harder.

An estimated 17.7 million salaried jobs were lost in April 2020. An additional one lakh jobs were lost in May. However, in June, 3.9 million jobs were re-gained, taking the total job loss to 13.9 at the end of June. But, the recovery was short-lived and another 5 million jobs were lost in July, finds a CMIE report.

On a net basis, the plight of salaried employees has worsened since the lockdown began. By July, their job losses rose to 18.9 million, making the salaried segment the worst affected by the lockdown.

"While salaried jobs are not lost easily, once lost they are also far more difficult to retrieve. Therefore, their ballooning numbers are a source of worry. Salaried jobs were nearly 19 million short of their average in 2019-20. They were 22 per cent lower than their level in the last fiscal year," said Mahesh Vyas, managing director of CMIE.

Aditya Narayan Mishra, director and CEO of CIEL HR Services, said, "Businesses have suffered



losses due to a decline in consumer demand. In order to stay afloat, they have tried to adjust their costs to match the decline. As a result, people in permanent as well as contractual roles have lost jobs. In the current scenario, it is not easy to get the jobs back."

According to Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, the job losses among the salaried class will make recovery of private consumption and the economic recovery tougher.

"Services had come to a standstill in the three months of lockdown. Though companies have restarted thereafter, MSME and logistics still remain disrupted," she said. According to Mishra, sectors like tourism, hospitality, entertainment and retail are yet to recover and the recovery will take time and the job losses will take many months

to get back to normalcy. The salary growth among listed companies was in low single digits in the past two years. The job losses will further hit urban consumption.

"The premiumisation that has been happening in consumption will come off. Further, the middle-class is the largest consumer of electronic items and appliances and their demand will take a hit," said Shah.

Currently, the impact is not visible due to the pent up demand in the market. But the real impact on private consumption will be visible by December-January when the pent-up demand exhausts. "External demand or foreign direct investment or even government stimulus can ease things. Else, a recovery of consumption to its earlier 5 to 6 per cent levels will take another three to four years," said Shah.

HC restrains Emami from using Glow & Handsome

Mumbai, Aug. 18: The Bombay High Court, in a temporary order, has restrained FMCG firm Emami from selling any skincare product under the brandname containing the words "Glow and Handsome", saying that prima facie Hindustan Unilever (HUL) has used them first in its brands. Justice S. C. Gupta passed the order on Monday on an application filed by HUL under the Trade Marks Act, seeking an injunction against Emami from using the trademark Glow & Handsome.

HUL recently dropped the word Fair from its skin creams and renamed the men's skin cream as Glow & Handsome. Emami claimed that it was the proprietor of this trademark, and was going to launch a skincare cream for men under the same name.

"... plaintiff (HUL) prime facie appears to be a prior adopter and user of the mark 'Glow & Handsome,'" the high court said in its order.

HUL had already launched its goods in the market with this trademark while Emami was still at the stage of adopting a process of launching its goods, the court noted. "Its (Emami) application for registration of that mark is also of a subsequent date," the order said.

Further, HUL had sufficiently advertised its new brand Glow & Handsome, said the court. —PTI

Auto firms asked to cut royalties to foreign parents

ADITI SHAH NEW DELHI, AUG. 18



The Union commerce minister has asked automakers to find ways to reduce royalty payments to foreign parent companies for use of technology or brand names in an effort to boost local investment and reduce outflows, two sources told Reuters.

In the country's competitive auto market, top-selling carmakers Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor's local unit pay millions of dollars in royalties to parent companies in Japan and South Korea for using their technology and brand to build and sell cars.

The minister, Piyush Goyal, in a meeting last week asked officials from groups representing carmakers and auto parts manufacturers to review such payments with a view to reducing the outgo, said people with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"The concern raised during the meeting was that the outflow is high, even for old technologies, and something should be done about it," said one of the sources.

The sources declined to be named as the talks are private. The ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

India, for years, has debated imposing stricter caps on royalty payments, which spiked after 2009 when foreign investment rules were eased and restrictions on such payments were removed.

The country's markets regulator last year sug-

gested imposing curbs on payments exceeding 2 per cent of revenue. The limit was finally set at 5 per cent after complaints from some sectors and fears it may dissuade foreign firms from investing or sharing technology.

Recently, however, the government has made a renewed push to make the country a major manufacturing hub by encouraging domestic production and curbing imports. It also wants to increase local investment and reduce foreign outflows.

While India does not restrict the amount that can be paid as royalty, any payment by a locally listed company exceeding 5 per cent of revenues needs shareholder approval.

Listed companies such as Maruti Suzuki and parts makers including Bosch, Schaeffler India and Wabco India typically pay royalties of 1-5 per cent to their foreign owners.

Maruti Suzuki paid Rs 3,820 crore (\$510 million) as royalty to its Japanese parent Suzuki Motor in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, amounting to 5 per cent of its revenue,

according to its annual report.

Privately owned companies such as Hyundai's local unit paid \$150 million or 2.6 per cent of revenue as royalties to its South Korean parent in fiscal 2019 and Toyota Motor's India arm paid \$88 million or 3.4 per cent of revenue to its Japanese parent, government data shows.

Royalty provision has been important in attracting foreign investments into various sectors in India, especially autos, said Vaibhav Gupta, partner at tax firm, Dhruva Advisors.

"Depending on the form in which the government brings back such caps ... it may impact the ability of auto companies to benefit from the use of foreign brands and technical know-how," said Gupta.

A February report by proxy firm Institutional Investor Advisory Services showed royalty paid by 31 leading Indian companies with foreign parents, including Maruti and Bosch, grew 9 per cent in fiscal year 2019 to total \$1.11 billion. —Reuters

Stock market at 5-month high on FPI buying

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 18

Sensex and Nifty-50 closed at fresh five-month highs after trading in narrow range for a month. Continued and higher foreign investor buying seemed to have helped boost sentiments.

A fall in fresh Covid-19 cases, further improvement in the recovery rate of infected persons, good monsoon rains and fresh government measures to support the economy were the triggers for the market gain, analysts said.

The Sensex gained 477.54 points or 1.26 per cent, closing at 38,528.32 and the Nifty-50 closed at 11,385.35, up 1.23 per cent or 138.25 points. The Nifty Midcap-50 Index closed 1.43 per cent up, outperforming the benchmark.

All sectoral indices on BSE and NSE registered gains, led by Realty index, which gained over 4 per cent and the Nifty Bank gained 2.16 per cent.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,134.57 crore.

Permanently seal Vedanta unit: HC

SUDARSHAN VARADHAN CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The high court on Tuesday refused to allow the re-opening of Vedanta's copper smelter in Thoothukudi, more than two years after it was closed because of pollution concerns that triggered violent protests.

The Tamil Nadu government ordered the smelter to be closed a week after 13 people died when anti-pollution demonstrations turned violent and police fired at protesters.

The Madras High Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea by the company seeking the smelter's reopening. "The doctrine of sustainable development, precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle needs to be applied," the court said.

"If applied, facts speak for themselves, petitioner needs to be closed and permanently sealed."

Tens of thousands of locals stormed the streets of Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu on May 22, 2018, accusing Vedanta of polluting the environment.

Police said they opened

fire as they were overwhelmed. The subsequent violence claimed 13 lives and injured over a hundred people. No policeman has been charged so far.

Vedanta has denied accusations of pollution, and called the decision to shut its plant a political response to the outrage over the police firing.

But the Madras High Court said in its 815-page judgment on Tuesday the shutdown "cannot be treated as knee-jerk reaction". The judgment is the latest challenge confronting Vedanta, which has also faced legal action over its operations in Zambia.

C. Aryama Sundaram, a lawyer for Vedanta, said the company plans to challenge the judgment in the Supreme Court, adding the judgment would raise India's copper imports.

The court downplayed this argument. "The petitioner has been consistently stating... requirement of copper in India cannot be met... The courts have held that when it comes to economy pitted against environment, environment will reign supreme," it said. —Reuters

Gulf to be focus region for India's food exports

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The government has identified the Gulf region as a focus area to increase food exports. It will also set up export promotion forums for eight agricultural products, including rice, banana and mango.

As part of the agri-export strategy, the government will focus on development of "Brand India" to help penetration into new foreign markets as well as export of new products which translates into higher value realisation. The government has made a product market matrix containing a list of products which could be expanded in new geographies and a list of known markets which can be introduced with newer products.

The Gulf region has been identified as a focus destination to increase the market share. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are among the top 10 export destinations for India's farm produce. The Gulf countries are highly dependent on food



imports and imports make up about 80 to 90 per cent of their total demand. Though the Gulf region is a strong market for India, India caters to only 10-12 per cent of their total imports.

Further, the government has created export promotion forums (EPFs) to improve exports of eight products, including grapes, mango, banana, onion, rice, nutri-cereals, pomegranate and floriculture under the aegis of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda). India exports fruit worth Rs

5,638 crore and vegetables worth Rs 5,679 crore annually. However, its share in the \$208-billion world trade of fruit and vegetables is miniscule.

Each EPF will have exporters of the related commodity as its members along with official members representing ministries/departments of the central and state governments.

Apeda chairman shall be the chairman of each of these forums. The forums will meet at least once in every two months to discuss/ make recommendations on related issues.

Got proposals worth ₹12 L cr under PLI scheme: Prasad



New Delhi, Aug. 18: Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Tuesday said proposals worth Rs 12 lakh crore have been received under the new PLI scheme to boost electronics manufacturing, and some manufacturing lines have moved from China to India during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The minister for IT and communications, while speaking at an industry event, said, "... All the top mobile manufacturers and their contract manufacturers have applied in that (PLI) scheme, including five global champions and five national champions and collectively, they have promised to make mobile phone and components worth Rs 12 lakh crore in the coming five years, out of which they're going to export Rs 7 lakh crore (worth of items) and give direct and indirect job to 12 lakh," Prasad said.

He added that about right-nine manufacturing lines have also shifted from China to India.

The government notified three schemes on April 1 for the promotion of electronics. These were schemes for manufacturing of electronic components and semiconductors, modified electronics manufacturing clusters (EMC 2.0) scheme, and production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for large scale electronics manufacturing.

These schemes jointly offer incentives of around Rs 50,000 crore over the period of next five years. —PTI

CCI may sell cotton to B'desh to trim stock

PRATIK PARIJA AUG. 18

India plans to sell cotton to Bangladesh to trim its bulging reserves following a slump in demand from textile mills in the top grower.

State-owned Cotton Corporation of India may export 1.5 million to 2 million bales of the fibre to the neighbouring nation to help reduce India's record surplus before the new crop begins arriving in October, said Pradeep Kumar Agarwal, chairman of the corporation. It generally sells cotton to local mills and traders at market prices, after buying from farmers at government-set minimum rates.

Higher sales from India may potentially increase reserves in top exporters like the US and Brazil and further lower global



prices that have fallen about 8 per cent this year as the coronavirus erodes demand for clothing. Global cotton consumption is set to drop about 15 per cent from a year earlier to 22.29 million tons in 2019-20, according to the USDA estimates.

Export prices will be decided by the two governments using the Cotlook index, Agarwal said. Industry researcher Cotlook Ltd's benchmark is a daily average of the five cheapest cash prices

in the world.

"In any case, I can assure that it won't be lower than domestic prices," which have fallen about 20 per cent since the outbreak of the coronavirus, he said.

Cotton Corp plans to sell 500,000 to 700,000 bales of 170 kg each to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh in the marketing year ending on September 30. The rest of the quantity will be shipped in 2020-21, Agarwal said in a phone interview. Bangladesh vies with China as the world's biggest buyer of cotton.

India is likely to have a record closing stockpile of 10.25 million bales by September 30, according to the Cotton Association of India, as domestic consumption may drop more than 20 per cent from a year earlier to 25 million bales in 2019-20, it said.

Cotton Corp. bought 10.5 million bales this year, the highest-ever procurement. It included 2 million bales purchased during a nationwide lockdown to prevent distress selling by local growers, Agarwal said. The company is carrying about 8.4 million bales at present and its ending reserves may not exceed 3 million bales on September 30, he said.

Cotton Corp. spent about Rs 5,500 (\$74) per 100 kg to purchase cotton from farmers, compared with the market rate of Rs 4,800 to Rs 5,000, he said. Indian farmers have planted cotton in 12.55 million hectares (31 million acres) as of August 14 compared with 12.16 million hectares a year earlier, according to the farm ministry. The crop will be harvested from October.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Barcelona sack coach Setien

Madrid: Barcelona have sacked Quique Setien as coach, the club confirmed on Monday, with Ronald Koeman the frontrunner to be his replacement.

"The new coach will be announced in the coming days as part of a wide ranging restructuring of the first team," Barca said on Twitter.

Setien was only appointed in January but has paid the price for Barca surrendering the La Liga title to Real Madrid and then being humiliated by Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

His exit was finalised during an emergency board meeting at Camp Nou, which lasted almost six hours and saw Koeman emerge as the favoured choice to take charge.

The club also announced next year's presidential elections, scheduled for June, will be brought forward to March 15. Angry supporters had hoped they would be held immediately but that possibility was ruled out, meaning under-fire president Josep Maria Bartomeu will continue.

Koeman has been in charge of the Dutch national team since 2018 and is due to lead them at the postponed European Championship next year and the World Cup in 2022. — *AFP*

Historic first as 3 Indians at Major

Royal Troon: Indian women's trio of Aditi Ashok, Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik will look to write a new chapter in Indian golf when they tee off at the prestigious Women's British Open on Thursday. This will be the first time that three Indians, men or women, teed up at the same Major. The young threesome will have family and friends with them at the famed Royal Troon golf course, even though there will be no spectators.

The 22-year-old Aditi, who often has her father on the bag, has her mother, Maheshwari, this time — she was also there at Scottish Open — while 19-year-old Diksha's father, Col Narendra Dagar will as usual do the duty of a caddie. Tvesa, 24, has a friend and experienced European Tour pro, Kiran Matharu, as her caddie. "I have some experience of playing with the European players, especially at home at the Hero Indian Open, where I had my first Top-10 last year, but a Major in Scotland is a different thing altogether," said Tvesa, who will be making her Major debut here.

When she tees up on Thursday, Aditi will come one step closer to becoming the Indian with most Major starts. — *PTI*

Nuggets edge Jazz in overtime

Los Angeles: Jamal Murray scored 36 points, including 10 in overtime, as the Denver Nuggets overcame a 57-point performance from Donovan Mitchell to defeat the Utah Jazz 135-125 in a playoff game on Monday. Nikola Jokic finished with 29 points and 10 rebounds for Denver, who were taken to overtime by the Jazz for the second-straight contest. "I'm smiling because those are the games you want to be in," Murray said. "Those are the games that are the most fun and most competitive." Jokic had a chance to ice the victory in regulation, but his hook shot at the buzzer over Utah's Rudy Gobert failed to drop. Murray seized command in overtime, clinching the outcome with a three-point dagger with 46 seconds on the clock to give the Nuggets a 1-0 lead in their first round NBA playoff series. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Jamaica Tallawahs vs St Lucia Zouks from 7.30 pm (Guyana Amazon Warriors vs St Kitts & Nevis Patriots at 3 am (Thursday). Both matches on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

NBA PLAYOFFS

Toronto Raptors vs Brooklyn Nets from 11 pm; Boston Celtics vs Philadelphia 76ers from 4 am (Thursday); Los Angeles Clippers vs Dallas Mavericks from 6.30 am (Thursday). All matches on Sony Six, HD

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL

Bayern Munich vs Lyon from 12.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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RoHIT for Khel Ratna

Vinesh, Rani among 5 recommended for top sports award

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Star cricketer Rohit Sharma, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, and women's hockey captain Rani Rampal were among an unprecedented five picked for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, while another unparalleled 29 were recommended for the Arjuna award by the sports ministry's selection committee here on Tuesday.

Paddler Manika Batra and Rio Paralympic gold-winning high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu were the other two recommended for the country's highest sporting honour by a 12-member selection committee. Rampal was a late addition to the initial list of four.

For the Arjuna, India pacer Ishant Sharma, recurve archer Atanu Das, women's hockey team player Deepika Thakur, kabaddi player Deepak Hooda, and tennis player Divij Sharan were among the 29 short-listed, an official source said after the selection committee's meeting here.

The 31-year-old Ishant has played 97 Tests and 80 ODIs for India, grabbing over 400 international wickets.

This is the first time in the history of awards that five athletes have been recommended for the top sporting accolade with the final decision resting on sports minister Kiren Rijiju.

In 2016, four athletes — star shuttler P. V. Sindhu, gymnast Dipa Karmakar, shooter Jitai Rai, and wrestler Sakshi Malik — were collectively given this award.

The 33-year-old Rohit will only be the fourth cricketer after Sachin Tendulkar, just-retired Mahendra Singh Dhoni and current skipper Virat Kohli to be conferred with the Khel Ratna.

The committee, comprising the likes of Virender Sehwag and former hockey captain Sardar Singh, met at the Sports Authority of India headquarters here and finalised the names after deliberations that took up the first half of the day.

While Rohit has been recognised for his ever-rising accomplishments with the bat, Vinesh has been rewarded for her gold medals in the 2018 Commonwealth and Asian Games besides a bronze in the 2019 Asian



Rohit Sharma

LIST OF AWARDEES

● **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award:** Rohit Sharma (cricket), Vinesh Phogat (wrestling), Manika Batra (table tennis), Rani Rampal (hockey), Mariyappan Thangavelu (para high-jumper).

● **Arjuna Award:** Atanu Das (archery), Shiva Keshavan (luge), Dutee Chand (athletics), Satwik Sairaj Ranki Reddy and Chirag Shetty (badminton), Vishesh Bhargavanshi (basketball), Manish Kaushik and Lovlina Borgohain (boxing), Ishant Sharma and Deepti Sharma (cricket), Ajay Sawant (tent pegging), Sandesh Jhinghan (football), Aditi Ashok (golf), Aakashdeep Singh and Deepika Kumari (hockey), Deepak Hooda (kabaddi), Kale Sarika (kho kho), Dattu Bhokanal (rowing), Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary (shooting), Madhurika Patkar (table tennis), Divij Sharan (tennis), Divya Kakran, Rahul Aware and Sakshi Malik (wrestling), Mirabai Chanu (weightlifting), Suyesh Jadhav (para athletics), Sandeep (para athletics) and Manish Narwal (Para shooting).



Vinesh Phogat



Manika Batra



Rani Rampal

● **This is the first time in the history of awards that five athletes have been recommended for the top sporting accolade with the final decision resting on sports minister.**

up to the reputation associated with this award," Vinesh said.

Star paddler Manika was recommended for her remarkable performance in 2018, a year during which she won the Commonwealth Games gold medal and Asian Games bronze in women's singles. — *PTI*

SPORTS AWARDS LIKELY TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY

New Delhi, Aug. 18: In a first, this year's National Sports Awards ceremony is likely to be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with all the winners logging in from their respective places to hear their names being announced on August 29.

The National Sports Day is celebrated on August 29, the birth anniversary of hockey wizard Dhyan Chand.

"The sports awards function this year is like-

ly to be an online function. As per the Government of India instructions, the awardees will also be announced on the morning of the day of the function," a sports ministry source said on Monday.

It also allowed athletes to self-nominate in view of the "difficulties" being faced by them in finding people who can recommend their names amid the lockdown. — *PTI*



Inter Milan's Romelu Lukaku celebrates with team-mate Lautaro Martinez after scoring against Shakhtar Donetsk in their Europa League semi-final in Duesseldorf, western Germany, on Monday.

— *AFP*

Lukaku, Martinez send five-star Inter into final

Düsseldorf (Germany), Aug. 18: Inter Milan are destined for "great things" under Antonio Conte, according to Lautaro Martinez after the Argentine and Romelu Lukaku both scored twice to thrash Shakhtar Donetsk 5-0 in Dusseldorf and reach the Europa League final.

Daniilo D'Ambrosio was also on target for the Italian giants, who will face Sevilla in Friday's final in Cologne.

Inter have endured a lean decade since winning the Champions

League in 2010, but closed the gap on Juventus at the top of Serie A to just one point in Conte's first season in charge and are now one win away from a first trophy in nine years.

LYON FACE BAYERN IN CL SEMIS

In Houssem Aouar, Lyon have a player who is both a symbol of their success at bringing through gifted young talent and a reason why the French side can hope to pull off another Champions League sensation when

they meet Bayern Munich in the semi-finals in Lisbon on Wednesday.

Moussa Dembele stole the headlines by scoring the late goals which gave Lyon a shock 3-1 win over Manchester City in the quarter-finals, but Aouar was at the origin of both. The 22-year-old playmaker supplied the pass for Dembele to put Lyon 2-1 up in the 79th minute. Then it was Aouar's shot which Ederson parried out for Dembele to wrap up the victory. — *AFP*

Mari inspired to win more medals

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR CHENNAI, AUG. 18

Mariyappan Thangavelu's life has been a rollercoaster ride. After a road accident stunted growth in his right leg at a young age, sports came to the rescue and added a new dimension to his life. The gold medal (high jump, T42 category) he bagged at the Paralympics in 2016 turned his life upside down as awards and cash incentives (in crores) poured in.

The meteoric rise of an ordinary guy from rural Tamil Nadu makes for a perfect movie script. A biopic on Mariyappan's rags-to-riches story is now being made by filmmaker Aishwaryaa Dhanush, daughter of Rajinikanth.

However, the drama in his life refuses to end. In 2017, a family from Salem had alleged that Mariyappan was behind the demise of a 19-year-old who was found dead on a railway track. A petition to implead Mariappan was filed in the Madras High Court. The charges were subsequently withdrawn.

After a quiet couple of years, Mariyappan is now back in the spotlight. The 25-year-old will be only the second sports person from Tamil Nadu, after Viswanathan Anand, to get the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award, if the sports ministry approves the recommendation.

"I can't express my feelings in words. It's a huge honour," Mariyappan told this newspaper from his hometown in Salem.

Queried about the murder charges, Mariyappan said they had been withdrawn. "There is no case or charge pending against me. I have submitted all the documents to the awards committee. And the sports ministry also

It will surely inspire me to go for another medal at the Paralympics to be held in Tokyo next year.

— **MARIYAPPAN THANGAVELU** PARALYMPIAN

conducted an enquiry," he added.

The award announcement, Mariyappan said, has come at a crucial time. "It will surely inspire me to go for another medal at the Paralympics to be held in Tokyo next year. I have been training hard for the Games. My target is to break the 2-metre barrier and I am confident of accomplishing it," he added.

Mariyappan's coach Satyanarayana said his training schedule had been reworked and would resume in September. "Even during the lockdown he was training at SAI centre, Bengaluru. After spending a few weeks at home, Mariyappan will be back to training soon," he added.

At the 2018 Asian Paralympic Games, Mariyappan could only finish third behind compatriots Sharad Kumar and Varun Bhati.

Coach Satyanarayana said Mariyappan had participated at the Asiad despite undergoing an ankle surgery two months before the event.

"He couldn't push hard. In fact, doctors had told him not to compete for six months," he said.

Satyanarayana said Mariyappan getting the highest sporting honour would inspire a lot of youngsters, especially those from rural areas. "His grit and determination are inspiring. Hope he continues to achieve more representing the country," he added.



Mariyappan Thangavelu

Vinesh pulls out of national camp

COVID | SCARE

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Vinesh Phogat, the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for Tokyo Olympics, has pulled out of the national camp citing health safety concerns amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a decision which has irked the national federation.

The rescheduled national camp for Olympic weight category wrestlers is set to begin from September 1 in Lucknow (women) and Sonapat (men).

However, Vinesh is not comfortable travelling to Lucknow as she is fearful of her health amid the raging pandemic.

"I am not going to attend the camp. I am training everyday with coach Om Parkash, who follows the plan which my personal

coach Woller Akos sends me every week. The situation is not good to travel to Lucknow," Vinesh said.

The 2019 World Championship bronze-medallist said she "falls sick very easily" so she does not want to take a chance with her health.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is not impressed with reasons given by the Asian Games gold-medallist.

"The selection committee will decide if Vinesh will get exemption or not. The camp is for players. We want preparation to kick off now for Olympics," said a WFI Assistant secretary Vinod Tomar.

— *PTI*

ENGLAND, PAKISTAN DRAW RAIN-HIT SECOND TEST

Southampton, Aug. 18: Pakistan's Mohammad Abbas took two wickets on Monday as a weather-interrupted second Test against England at Southampton ended in a predictable draw.

England were 110-4 in reply to Pakistan's first innings 236 when home captain Joe Root (nine not out) declared to hasten the end of a match ahead of what would have been the statutory last hour.

Root's move ended the shortest Test in England, in terms of balls bowled, since a rain-affected draw between England and Pakistan at Lord's in 1987.

Abbas, who took 2-28 from 14 overs, removed Zak Crawley (53) and Dom Sibley (32). England, who enjoyed a three-wicket win in the first Test at Old Trafford earlier this month, remain 1-0 up in a three-match series ahead of Friday's finale. — *AFP*