

OTHER STORIES

BENEFICIARIES TO GET HOUSES BY DASARA, DIWALI

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, AUG. 30

It has been six years since Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao promised double bedroom houses to poor in the state and the wait continues to this day.

However, panchayat raj minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao has asserted that there will be no further delay and the two-bedroom houses will be handed over to beneficiaries by Dasara or Diwali this year.

Dayakar Rao said all steps are being taken to meet this deadline.

Incidentally, 90 double bedroom houses have been distributed in Rayaparthi, Keshavapur and Venkateshwarapalle villages of Jangaon district during the last week.

The minister said, "Several houses are on the verge of completion. Some will be ready for occupancy within a week. The rest will be complete by Dasara and Diwali. The promise made by the Chief Minister, though a bit delayed, will finally be fulfilled. I have spoke to contractors and officials to take up works on a war footing," he stated.

Dayakar Rao maintained that any further delay in construction of houses will not be tolerated. Contractors who are negligent and do not hand over houses on time will be black-listed and their contracts will be called off.

"There is no dearth of funds for houses. Hence, there will not be any more delay," he assured.

GUTKA, PDS RICE SEIZED FROM TWO DIFFERENT PLACES

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, AUG. 30

The taskforce team lead by ACP Venkat Rao raided the house of D. Vasudeva Rao in Municipal Road in Khammam on Sunday and seized banned Amber gutka packets.

The value of the banned products is around ₹9.5 lakh and the police took Vasudeva Rao into custody. The gutka packets were found packed in 19 bags and were handed over to the I-Town police station.

In another incident, the team recovered 120 quintals of public distribution rice worth ₹3.24 lakh at Kaikondaigudem under the Khammam Urban mandal.

Three persons including Bhuvanagiri Ramakrishna, Shaik Saidulu and Vankudotlu Mohan were caught trying to shift the rice to Rajahmundry. The taskforce police also took into custody three persons including a clerk Suresh and drivers Murali and Sai. A case is filed against them.

LMD LAKE POLICE SAVE WOMAN AND INFANT

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 30

The lake police of Lower Manair Dam (LMD), saved a woman and her nine-month-old child in Karimnagar district on Sunday.

According to the police, the woman, a resident of Kisannagar was trying to die by suicide in the LMD reservoir. They said, "She alleged that her husband Raju, who is working in a private hospital was harassing her for dowry and was torturing her both physically and mentally. "He would come from work and beat her up. Unable to bear it she decided to end her life."

Police constable Maheshwar and home guard Anwar who were on duty at the LMD observed the woman heading towards the reservoir along with her baby and rushed and stopped her from taking the step. They passed the information to the sub-inspector of Police Srinath, who rushed to the spot and counselled the woman and handed her over to the III-Town police station.

Commissioner of Police V.B. Kamalasan Reddy appreciated the Lake police for saving the lives of the woman and her infant and announced rewards for them.

● **THE WOMAN** alleged that her husband Raju, who is working in a private hospital was harassing her for dowry and torturing her physically and mentally. He would come from work and beat her up. Unable to bear it she decided to end her life.



An aerial view of the 2BHK housing colony completed in Banswada in old Nizamabad district.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

2BHK houses likely to miss October deadline

Construction on at a snail's pace wherever work commenced

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 30

Timely completion of the Two-Bedroom Hall Kitchen (2BHK) houses promised to the poor by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao appears to be an uphill task in old Karimnagar district as their construction has not even started at many places.

At a recent review meeting, Karimnagar district collector K. Shashanka ordered concerned officials to speed up the construction of 2BHK houses and complete them by the end of October. But of the 6,494 double bedroom houses sanctioned, work on more than 2,000 houses is yet to commence.

Karimnagar Parliament segment president Ambati Joji Reddy after inspecting the progress of the 2BHK houses at various places in erstwhile Karimnagar district, said construction

District	Houses sanctioned	Tenders given	Works started	Completed
Karimnagar	6,494	4,907	2,741	788
Peddapalli	3,390	2,616	1,737	74
Jagtial	8,425	5,885	4,185	826
Sircilla	6,802	4,116	3,315	2,799

work at many places has not even started. Wherever work has commenced, construction is going on at a snail's pace. "It is impossible to complete them in two months," he declared.

In Rajanna Sircilla district, 224 members applied for 48 double-bedroom houses, which have been completed in Racharla Boppapur village of Yellareddypet mandal.

Officials conducted gram sabha in the village recently and announced the list of beneficiaries. Villagers contend that there are many irregularities in the allotment, as the list of benefici-

aries contains names of people who already own lands and houses. The real beneficiaries, who lost their houses in road widening works in the village, have been ignored. With the villagers rejecting the list, officials have assured that they will scrutinise it again and delete the names of ineligible persons.

In Vemulawada constituency, the promised houses in Rudrangi mandal have not been constructed. Though officials have identified 81 persons as beneficiaries, tahsildar Mohammad Tajful Hussain said the government has not issued any

guidelines for construction of 2BHK houses in the mandal. "We will start works as soon as orders are received from the government," he said.

Construction of around 1,200 units of double bedroom houses has, however, completed in Mandepalli village of Thangallapally mandal in Rajanna Sircilla district about one-and-a-half years ago. They are yet to be inaugurated. Additional collector Anjaiah said they are holding a comprehensive survey and houses will be allotted only to genuine beneficiaries through a lottery system.



2BHK houses distributed to the beneficiaries without proper roads laid in Dhurur and Narisingapur villages in Jagtial district.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Banswada hogs limelight in completion of houses in TS

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 30

Houses completed in Banswada under the prestigious double bedroom scheme, which fulfill the dream of many poor families, will be allotted free to the beneficiaries soon.

Banswada Assembly constituency in old Nizamabad district is represented by Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy. It is turning out to be a model for the 2BHK scheme in the entire Telangana state.

Of 8,226 2BHK houses sanctioned, 2,748 houses have been completed in Kamareddy district. ₹178.76 crore has been spent on completing these houses. Assembly Speaker and government whip Gampa Govardhan have

taken the initiative in completing the 2BHK works in Banswada and Kamareddy Assembly constituencies.

In Banswada segment alone, of the 3,500 2BHK houses, around 2,000 houses have been completed. Officials have already handed over these houses to the selected beneficiaries.

Mr Srinivas Reddy had taken the scheme as a prestigious issue. With full cooperation extended by officials and contractors, works got completed at the earliest. As a result, Banswada has turned a model for construction of 2BHK houses. Nizamabad district cooperative central bank chairman Pocharam Bhaskar Reddy too has been instrumental in completing this project.

A welcome arch, like those provided at private ga-

ted communities, has also been constructed at the 2BHK colony in Banswada. Further, a shopping complex with outlets of various essential commodities will be set up for convenience of beneficiaries.

However, work on the 2BHK houses has been delayed in Yellareddy and Jukkal Assembly constituencies, as contractors have not come forward to take up the works, official sources said. Nizamabad district collector C. Narayana Reddy, who visited the construction sites with local MLAs, has directed officials to speed up construction of 2BHK works. Because of rains, works in some parts of the district had got halted. The collector ordered that these too be completed at the earliest.

DISTRICT	Houses sanctioned	Tenders given	Works started	Completed
Nizamabad	10,406	6,319	-NA-	1,047
Kamareddy	8,226	5,588	2,748	-NA-



Houses under construction in Kothagudem.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Allegations of beneficiaries renting houses reported

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KOTHAGUDEM/KHAMMAM, AUG. 30

Implementation of the double bedroom (DBR) housing scheme has been flawed in Khammam and Bhadradri districts.

Considerable time had been lost in allocation, sanction and selection of beneficiaries. There is a massive gap between those eligible for houses and allotments made in the two districts.

There are several reasons for flaws in the implementation of the housing scheme. Following the outbreak of the Covid-19, construction of houses was delayed at many places due to the shortage of labour.

Many of the workers had left for their native places during the lockdown. Delay in the availability of sand was also an issue.

There are also reports of defective construction. Around 150 beneficiaries who were allotted houses under the scheme did not move in as the newly constructed houses were leaking during the monsoon.

There have been disputes in the selection of beneficiaries at grama sabhas. People are blaming officials for not selecting poorest of the poor for allotment of DBR housing. Further, beneficiaries who have got the houses are not even living in them. As per the rules of allotment, beneficiaries are the ones who should live in the houses.

However, according to one estimate, 10 per cent of the beneficiaries are renting out the houses. Such instances have been reported in Raghunathapalem and Sattupalli mandals.

Further, families that have been displaced because of road and irrigation projects are

● **THERE IS** considerable pressure on MLAs as thousands of people are approaching them for DBR houses. Owing to faulty selection of beneficiaries by revenue officials, the DBR housing scheme is also facing criticism.

demanding that they be allotted DBR houses. Same is the case with people belonging to scheduled castes and tribes, whose assigned lands have been acquired

for Vaikuntadhamam, dumping yards and Rythu Ikya Vedikas. These demands have been made in Kusumanchi, Kamepalli, Sattupalli, Enkooor, Karepalli and Tirumalayapalem in Khammam district and Julurpad, Tekulapalli, Burgumpahad, Paloncha and Mulakalapalli mandals in Bhadradri district.

There is considerable pressure on MLAs as thousands of people are approaching them for DBR houses. Owing to faulty selection of beneficiaries by revenue officials, the DBR housing scheme is also facing criticism.

N. Sanjeeva Rao, a social activist of Kusumanchi, said, "TRS government announced the programme with a lot of fanfare. In reality, very few of the eligible persons have got DBR houses. The government had been insincere in implementing the scheme," he stated.

LOW | QUALITY

Opposition says bricks used are not made of cement

Doubts over quality of materials used

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, AUG. 30

Serious doubts are being raised over the quality of materials being used in the construction of 2BHK houses sponsored by the state government in Adilabad district.

It is alleged that contractors are using poor quality sand, cement, iron and bricks in construction of the 2BHK houses, as the amount sanctioned by the state government for constructing a unit is grossly insufficient. According to sources, the state government is paying ₹5,06,000 for each 2BHK unit in rural areas and ₹5,30,000 in urban areas.

Contractors who take up construction have to also pay 12 per cent GST on each house that they construct, which amounts to around ₹60,000. As a result, many contractors did not show interest in constructing the much-hyped 2BHK houses. This resulted in huge delay



Houses under construction at KRK colony in Adilabad town.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

in implementing the scheme in erstwhile Adilabad district.

However, a few contractors with political patronage have come forward to construct 2BHK houses, but they are doing so by compromising on the quality of materials being used. Especially the bricks used in the construction of walls are allegedly of inferior quality.

Opposition party leaders say the bricks are not of cement but a mix of sub-

standard materials.

However, there is a huge demand for 2BHK houses among people. The state government has also made it a point to construct such houses in each Assembly constituency.

Congress and CPI (M) leaders visited the 2BHK houses being constructed at KRK colony and raised many doubts over the materials being used.

Congress minority wing district president Sajid Khan said there is no prop-

BUILDING REALITY

ADILABAD

4,195 Houses sanctioned

1,771 Tenders given

1,293 under construction

455 Houses completed

₹59.47 CR

Amount spent

er supervision with regard to quality check on the material being used by contractors in constructing the houses. He demanded that the officials involved in the construction ensure that the quality materials are used in building the houses. They may otherwise pose danger to beneficiaries who will end up occupying those houses.

OTHER STORIES

HEAVY VEHICLES PLY VIA VILLAGE, SHRC'S HELP SOUGHT

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, AUG. 30

The locals of Jagannathapuram have approached the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) about the plying of heavy vehicles from different quarries in Toggudem in Paloncha mandal through their village.

They appealed to the SHRC to direct the officials to divert the vehicles by laying a separate route to them.

Hundreds of 10-wheel drive, 12-wheel drive and 14-wheel drive tippers carrying concrete material ply through the village 24x7. Locals are unable to sleep due to the noise of these tippers. There was an agreement in 2012 between the locals and contractors on the transporting of material through another route, but this was not fulfilled.

The tehsildar convened a gram sabha on the issue and assured that the issue would be solved within three months. The issue has not been solved so far. N. Ramaiah, the village elder said that they complained to the tehsildar, RDO and collector and yet nothing has been done about it.

IMA WANTS SOLATIUM FOR COVID-HIT STAFF

FROM PAGE 1

The IMA demanded the creation of a dedicated system to administer the issue.

They called for an inclusive national solatium for all doctors who have laid down their lives in service during the pandemic. The IMA demanded setting up of a radical plan for the deployment of healthcare staff in light of the growing number of Covid-19 cases per day. "Districts are not sensitive to the safety angle and the concerns of stress and fatigue of the medical manpower. Deploying doctors without intermittent quarantine periods or long working hours in PPE for Covid-19 care is not the same as 24x7 Covid control from safe offices," the letter said.

They appealed to the PM to bring in appropriate reforms which are long overdue to support the medical and healthcare staff across the country, with a promise to dedicatedly stand by the nation in times of the crisis.

THAROOR DEMANDS RATNA FOR PV

IREDDY SRINIVAS
REDDY | DC

HYDERABAD, AUG. 30

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor demanded that former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao be conferred with the Bharat Ratna.

Participating in a webinar, 'Indian Foreign Policy and P.V. Narasimha Rao', under the auspices of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) as part of the centenary celebrations of Narasimha Rao, Tharoor said there was a fundamental shift and uplift of India's fortunes, thanks to the dexterity with which he implemented revolutionary policies during his tenure. Tharoor stated that under Rao's leadership, India had managed global alliances while considering the impact of various domestic factors such as separatist movements as well as economic reforms on the foreign policy.

"A reformist at heart and one of the towering South Indians in Indian political history, Narasimha Rao embodied various qualities that truly made the country proud. His grasp of languages, skillful management of alliances and courage to introduce bold economic reforms with the then finance minister Dr. Manmohan Singh fundamentally changed India," he said.

He said that the humble and but persuasive approach while managing affairs of the state throughout his long and distinguished career at various levels of government warrant the hallowed Bharat Ratna to be awarded to him posthumously. TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said the country transformed into a powerful nation during the tenure of Narasimha Rao.

State party affairs in-charge Dr. R.C. Khuntia, AICC secretaries Bosu Raju, Srinivas Krishnan, Celebration Committee chairperson Geetha Reddy, vice chairman D. Sridhar Babu and senior leaders V. Hanumantha Rao and others participated in the programme.



A private building that had encroached into the nala at Nayeemnagar being demolished on Sunday in Warangal.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Demolition of structures on nalas picks up pace

450 illegal buildings found along the 3 main nalas in Warangal

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, AUG. 30

The demolition of illegal structures along the nalas in Warangal city has gained pace. After municipal administration and urban development minister K.T. Rama Rao visited Warangal during the recent flash floods and directed officials to demolish the illegal structures.

The task force team formed under the leadership of the district collector is busy surveying the original course of the nala and the encroachments on them. Along with the encroachments, the officials are also demolishing buildings that are in dilapidated condition.

Heavy rains this year flooded the city like never before and the lack of

Apart from the encroachments, we have also demolished 281 dilapidated buildings in the city

— NARASHIMHA RAMULU
In-charge city planner

proper monitoring over the encroachments was blamed for the situation.

Warangal urban district collector Rajeev Gandhi Hanumanthu said four teams each from the town planning wing, revenue police, survey and land records departments are on the field surveying and demarcating the nala areas in the city.

"As per demarcation the encroachments are being demolished on a war footing and at the same time a retaining wall will be built along the nalas. We intend

to complete all this work within a month," he said.

Structures belonging to petrol pumps, shops and temporary sheds were already demolished.

Warangal mayor Gunda Prakash Rao said 450 illegal structures were found along the three main nalas in the city. He said that the situation of the nalas would be completely changed by Dasara.

In-charge city planner Narashimha Ramulu said they have begun marking the 100 feet Nayeemnagar nala and have demolished

33 structures till date. "Apart from the encroachments, we have also demolished 281 dilapidated buildings in the city," he said.

Meanwhile, the camp office of Wardhannapet MLA Aroori Ramesh at Hunter Road came under the scanner for allegedly being built illegally. However, the MLA said that the structure has all the permissions.

He however added that he would not object to its demolition if the officials think it is obstructing the flow of the flood water.

Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar said that MA&UD minister K.T. Rama Rao has directed the removal of all the illegal structures irrespective of which party leader it belongs to.

Big cat back in Warangal? Pug mark of tigress found

ANUDEEP
CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, AUG. 30

The tiger, it appears, may have returned to the former unified Warangal district. The finding of pug marks of a tiger, believed to be a female, in the Nimmagudem forest in Mahamutharam mandal of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district, marks the return of the big cat to the forests in the former Warangal district after more than a decade.

The pug marks were found after villagers informed forest department officials about the carcass of a cow in the forest.

According to district forest officer (DFO) K. Purushotham, the evidence from the pug marks pointed to the presence of a tigress in the area. The officials also found signs – pug marks of the tiger and hoof marks of a calf and a cow – that indicated

that while the calf managed to escape, the cow fell prey to the tiger.

With the presence of a tiger in the area causing some alarm among local villagers, forest department officials have alerted people to be careful and not venture into the forest.

Forest Section Officer Veeranna said announcements were made in the villages around the area where the tiger's pug marks were found asking people not to take their cattle into the forest for grazing.

Residents of villages in the area, who were apprehensive about their safety after the appearance of a tiger in the forest, have not had to contend with a tiger for more than a decade now.

The last time a tiger was seen in former Warangal district was in Kothaguda forest area of Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary in



Pug marks of the tigress found at Nimmagudem

2009, Purushotham said. And the last time a tiger was seen in Karimnagar district, in the Mahadevpur forest area was in 2002, he said.

"The tigress moving in Nimmagudem could have come from the Indravati tiger reserve in Chhattisgarh or from the Tadoba tiger reserve in Maharashtra. It might have got held up in Nimmaguda forests due to floods," Purushotham said.

Overburdened PR secretaries fume at new MNREG duties

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, AUG. 30

The state government decision of removing field assistants from MNREGS works and handing over the job to the panchayat secretaries is not received well by many.

The panchayat secretaries are overburdened and have more than 20 duties including raising of nursery, sanitation, drinking water, garbage shifting, collecting of house taxes, fogging and spraying of bleach to check dengue, malaria and Covid-19. In addition to all these duties, they now have to look into MNREGS works.

About 3,000 to 6,000 persons in 584 gram panchay-

ats in the district are involved in MNREGS works. Works under MNREGS are done from January to June and above 15 lakh mandays are provided to 2.83 lakh workers.

Selecting works, allocating them and sending details to the higher officials is a lot of work.

So far, 400 field assistants used to look after the employment guarantee scheme works.

N. Rambabu, a social worker in Chintakani said, "The government's decision is not a good one. Both the gram panchayat works and EGS works will get affected. The GP secretaries are already overburdened. Harith Haram and sanita-

tion works are a major responsibility on them. Any issues they are being held responsible."

Even the sanitation in schools is entrusted to them. The EGS scheme is key in providing employment and such jobs should be continued under a separate umbrella.

N. Sekhar, (name changed) panchayat secretary in Khammam district said, "We are being paid meager salaries.

"With so many duties, we are unable to fulfill the targets set by the government under various departments. The EGS work is massive and difficult to maintain by a panchayat secretary."

SADGURU PULAJI BABA'S MUSEUM TO COME UP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KUMARAMBHEEM
ASIFABAD, AUG.30

Late Sadguru Pulaji baba's museum and a new 'dhyana mandir' will come up at the estimated cost of ₹4 crore by the next year at the Siddeshwara Samstan at Patnapur in Jainoor mandal in the Kumarambheem Asifabad district.

This was announced on the occasion of the baba's 96th birth anniversary celebrations held in Patnapur on Sunday.

Rich tributes were paid and a special puja was performed.

It is said that the museum will be spread across five floors and will reflect baba's philosophy and thought. Baba strongly believed in 'Panchabhutha Thathvam' (water, fire, earth, sky, and air). On the top floor baba's statue in dhyana mudra will be installed.

Baba's body has been laid to rest in the 'Jeeva Samadhi' in the premises of the ashram.

Baba's life in phases will be displayed in three floors, along with his speeches in such a manner as if he is preaching live.

This will be done in 3D with the help of projection mapping and holographic mapping.

The museum works will be in place as per the directions given by baba when he was alive.

Saved in the nick of time



A car with five persons fell into the NSP left canal at Yadavalli Laxmipuram in Mudigonda mandal on Sunday. Locals rushed to the spot and rescued the five persons.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Toymaker to set up training unit

FROM PAGE 1

"I have a proposal to start a knowledge transfer centre for training future generation artisans in making Etikoppaka toys. The government should come forward and help us in conserving this art," the now-famous toymaker stated.

The toys are made in Etikoppaka, a tiny village near Yelamanchili in Visakhapatnam district. Before the introduction of mechanical and electronic toys, Etikoppaka wood toys had wide recognition.



After advanced toys, mostly from China, came into the market, Etikoppaka toys slowly lost ground. Earlier, over 500 families used to make these toys. Their number has now come down to 138 families.

● EARLIER, OVER 500 families used to make these toys. Their number has now come down to 138 families.

made of Ankudu karra (tree), which is soft. But this tiny scale toys' industry also suffered after Forest Department prevented toy makers from collecting Ankudu wood from forests. There are several families, which

have been making these toys down since generations, including that of Pedapati Chinna-yachari, who even received a national award from then President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Chinnayachari's son P. Anandachari bagged two national awards, one of them presented by Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Sharat, the latest generation toymaker from the Pedapati family, says the industry has suffered severely following the outbreak of Covid-19 and requires help.

COVID-19 | FEAR Many ignore physical distancing, pay little heed to police warnings

Youth playing games at risk of getting infected

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, AUG. 30

Youth playing 'Ludo', 'Pugb' and other online games in groups and seated close by are more prone to getting infected to Coronavirus is a new fear that has emerged. Even a single positive person can adversely impact the others in the group.

As many as 112 positive

cases were reported on Saturday in Adilabad district, which for the last one week has been reporting at least 100 Covid-19 cases everyday with the maximum coming from the slums in Adilabad municipality.

Youth in groups play these online games with enthusiasm and ignore physical distance norms, particularly in the slum areas.

The possibility of family

members getting infected and spreading it will be higher due to congested in the colonies, poor sanitation and lack of individual toilets in the slums when compared to other areas.

A police officer from Adilabad Town said that it was unfortunate that some youth in large numbers are gathering without wearing masks and not maintaining physical distance.

He said even colony members are neglecting their warnings against such gatherings and are using filthy language against people expressing concern about the surroundings and gatherings. This could lead to community spread of Covid. He said parents should not allow their children to sit with their friends without following the Covid protocol.

● AS MANY as 112 positive cases were reported on Saturday in Adilabad district, which for the last one week has been reporting at least 100 Covid-19 cases everyday with the maximum coming from the slums in Adilabad municipality.

SHORT TAKES

411 VILLAGES MAROONED IN MP, 5 LAKH AFFECTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, AUG. 30

Nearly five lakh people in 411 villages under 12 districts in Madhya Pradesh have been affected by flashfloods in various rivers in the state caused by torrential rains in the last 72 hours.

At least seven persons were killed in rain-related incidents in the state in the last 24 hours.

Four children were killed when a mud wall of a house collapsed on them while they were playing on a road in Banhara village under Umariapan police limits in Katni district on Saturday evening.

“As many as 411 villages in 12 districts have been affected. Army and State Disaster Response Force have been deployed in rescue and relief operations,” Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan who conducted aerial survey of the flood-hit areas in the state for the second day on Sunday said.

Mr Chouhan briefed prime minister Narendra Modi on the flood situation in the state.

Reports said the torrential rains have caused damage to properties and standing crops.

ODISHA SEES 32 RIVER BREACHES DUE TO FLOODS

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 30

The apprehension of high floods in different rivers of Odisha proved authentic on Sunday as at least 32 breaches occurred in major river systems in the state. Majority of the breaches were reported in the Brahmani river system in Jajpur district.

The high flood in Odisha, according to official sources, had by Sunday evening destroyed at least eight lakh hectares of farmland and left as many as 16 people dead.

According to Jyotirmaya Rath, the chief engineer of the state water resources department, as many as 24 breaches happened in the Brahmani river system, while Mahanadi system reported two. The remaining breaches occurred in Kharasrota, Jalaka and Baitarani river systems.

According to state Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Kumar Jena, Bari and Dasarath block areas in Jajpur district were severely hit with thousands of hectares of standing crop getting washed away in the gushing floods of Brahmani, Baitarani and Kharasrota rivers. Rhea SRC said the flood situation in three rivers- Subarnarekha, Budhabalanga and Baitarini is improving.



RARE BUTTERFLY SIGHTED IN CHHATTISGARH

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY I DC
BHOPAL, AUG. 30

A rare species of butterfly has been sighted in a reserve forest in Chhattisgarh. The spotted angle butterfly, caprona agama in zoological terms, has been spotted in the Bharamdeo reserve forest in Kawardha district by a survey team of the Chhattisgarh forest department.

“The rare butterfly species has been sighted in Bharamdeo reserve forest,” local divisional forest officer (DFO), Dilraj Prabhakar, said.

In fact, this was the first time the species has been found in Central India.

“Based on published research, the species is reported for the first time in central India in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The species of butterfly is rarely sighted rarely in India,” researcher Dr Rajendra Gupta told this newspaper on Sunday.

The species is found in south India, Maharashtra, Uttaranchal, and Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, southern China, and Java.

“The species is migratory in nature. It may have migrated from north-east to Chhattisgarh through south Bastar via the eastern state of Odisha,” Dr Sheila Dubey, who has done her PhD on butterfly species in Central India, told Deccan Chronicle.

All set for Onam



A family makes a *pookalam*, an intricate and colourful arrangement of flowers, a quintessential element of Onam, on the eve of the festival at Kizhakkum Muri in Kozhikode, Kerala, on Sunday.

— PTI

INDIA JAILS ARE OVERCROWDED, UNDERSTAFFED, FINDS NCRB

New Delhi, Aug. 30
Jails across India remained overcrowded in 2019 with these facilities lodging 4.78 lakh prisoners against the actual capacity of 4.03 lakh, reveals the latest data by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

On the other hand, the prisons were understaffed with a sanctioned strength of 87,599, while the actual strength was 60,787 as on December 31, 2019, the data showed.

The actual capacity of prisons has increased to 4.03 lakh in 2019 from 3.91 lakh in 2017 and 3.96 lakh in 2018 (as on December 31 of these respective years), it said.

The number of prisoners lodged in various jails increased to 4.78 lakh in 2019 from 4.50 lakh in 2017 and 4.66 lakh in 2018 (as on December 31 of each year).

The total number of prisons in the country were 1,361, 1,339 and 1,350 at the end of 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. The occupancy rates during the period rose steadily at 115.1 per cent, 117.6 per cent and 118.5 per cent, respectively, according to the data.

Out of the 4.78 lakh prisoners in 2019, 4.58 lakh were men and 19,913 women, the NCRB, under the Union home ministry, stated.

The total 1,350 prisons in the country in 2019 consisted of 617 sub jails, 410 district jails, 144 Central jails, 86 open jails, 41 special jails, 31 women jails, 19 Borstal School and two other jails, it added. The Central jails had the highest capacity of inmates (1.77 lakh) followed by district jails (1.58 lakh) and sub jails (45,071) last year.

Indian Navy warship enters South China Sea stealthily

Warship was deployed after June 15 clash with Chinese PLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 30

The Indian Navy reportedly deployed one of its frontline warships in the South China Sea much to the displeasure of the Chinese who raised objections over the move during diplomatic talks between the two countries.

The warship was reported to have been deployed in the South China Sea after the June 15 clash with Chinese soldiers in the Galwan Valley in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed.

China objected to the

presence of Indian Navy in the South China Sea where the PLA navy has been trying to consolidate its position. The US navy has been conducting exercises in the South China Sea to challenge the dominance that the Chinese navy is trying to establish in the region. US aircraft carriers *USS Ronald* and *USS Nimitz*, along with their escorting cruisers and destroyers have conducted exercises in the South China Sea to challenge the Chinese navy's hegemony in the region which has been threatening its neighbours.

According to reports, the

Indian warship was continuously maintaining contact with their US counterparts deployed in the region over secure communication systems. As part of the routine drills, the Indian warship was being constantly updated about the status of the movement of military vessels of other countries there. The entire mission was carried out in a very hush-hush manner to avoid any public glare on the navy's activities.

The Indian Navy had also deployed its frontline vessels along the Malacca Straits, near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and

the route from where the Chinese navy enters the Indian Ocean Region (ICR), to keep a check on any activity of the Chinese navy. It is a crucial sea trade route for China.

The Indian Navy also conducted exercises on the Andaman and Nicobar islands and has also deployed MiG-29K fighter aircraft on the islands.

Last month, Indian Navy warships and the US Navy's carrier strike group led by nuclear powered aircraft carrier, *USS Nimitz*, on Monday carried out a passage exercise (PASSEX) in the ICR.

CPM leaders decline Kishor-led I-PAC bid

RAJIB CHOWDHURI I DC
KOLKATA, AUG. 30

For the first time, election strategist Prashant Kishor and his political consultancy firm, Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), hired by the Trinamul to brighten its prospect for the third consecutive term in power, have received a setback in West Bengal in the run up to the assembly election next year.

Eying the Communists with a clean image, I-PAC last week contacted former state information technology (IT) minister, Debesh Das, in a bid to rope him in. The attempt failed as the former CPM MLA of Entally in central Kolkata outright rejected the offer.

CPM Kolkata district secretary Kallol Majumdar said, “On Friday, Kishor’s team

called up Das and wanted to know how he performed as an MLA in his constituency. They also sought a meeting with him for discussion.” Das said, “As soon as I heard the call was from Kishor’s team, I rejected the offer”.

According to the CPM sources, two leaders of the party in North Bengal were approached before Das by I-PAC. They were two-time former MLA of Dhupguri, Lakshmikanta Roy, and ex-Jalpaiguri MP, Mahendra Kumar Roy. Both, however, rejected the offers. The three refusals left the ruling party in a spot. Neither I-PAC nor the TMC were available for comments.

Das, erstwhile professor of Jadavpur University, was not only a three-time MLA during the Left rule in the state but also served as the IT minister in CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee’s Cabinet.

Rally in Srinagar teargassed

YUSUF JAMEEL I DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 30

Shia mourners in large numbers on Sunday defied curfew-like restrictions at several places across the Kashmir valley, including the central towns of Budgam and Magam and Srinagar’s Zadibal area by taking out tazia and zuljanah processions to commemorate Muharram.

Except at Zadibal, where 16 persons were injured in police action, these events passed off peacefully after the mourners, including women, marched along the streets and alleys beating their chests, reciting elegies and chanting slogans and some of them also self-flagellating.

In Budgam, a predominantly Shia town located 27 km west of Srinagar, thousands of mourners participated in the Zuljanah procession. Zuljanah, bought and raised by Prophet Muhammad, was the horse of Imam Hussain and a very impor-

tant character in the battle of Karbala. The Zuljanah procession is taken out by Shia Muslims only on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of Islamic calendar, when Imam Hussain was martyred at Karbala.

Similar processions were taken out also in some other parts of Kashmir whereas elsewhere in the valley only tazia, or mourning processions and rallies, without the participation of Zuljanah replicas were organised by the mourners.

At Zadibal in the heart of Srinagar, the police fired pellet shotguns and also lobbed teargas to disperse the mourners who took to the streets in a tazia procession and clashed with the former. Reports said that 16 persons were injured, most of them receiving multiple pellet wounds. The police detained about 20 people for violating the restrictions in force.

78,487 Covid cases see India cross the 36-lakh mark

SANJAY KAW I DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 30

With a record surge of 78,487 fresh Coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours, India’s Covid-19 tally zoomed past 36 lakh on Sunday, just a week after it crossed the 30-lakh mark. India saw one of the highest single-day jumps in Coronavirus infections reported by any country in the world since the start of the pandemic. The United States set the previous record on July 17, with 77,638 cases in one day. In the past 24 hours, 906 deaths linked to the highly contagious disease were reported, taking the overall number of fatalities to 64,547.

The country further strengthened its diagnostic capacity by performing a record number of 10.5 lakh-plus tests in a day to detect Covid-19. The total tests done in the country has crossed 4.14 crores.

The exponential jump in testing capacity has led to an upsurge in the tests per million to 30,044 as of date.

India continued to be the third worst-hit country by the deadly infection in the world after the

United States and Brazil, by recording the highest single-day surge since August 4. The country has recorded over 75,000 cases daily for the past four days.

It took India 213 days to reach 35 lakh cases. The nation’s infections rose from 20 lakhs to 30 lakhs in 16 days, 10 lakhs to 20 lakhs in 21 days and it had taken 59 days for the cases to cross the 10 lakh-mark.

It took 110 days for Covid-19 cases in India to reach one lakh and just 59 days more to go past the 10-lakh mark.

The country has registered over five lakh cases in the last one week. In the last 24 hours, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of fresh cases.

These five states also recorded the highest number of deaths

With the total Coronavirus cases going up to 35.44 lakhs, the recovery rate has also increased to 76.61 per cent.

The country’s positivity rate now stands at 7.46 per cent.

CBI grills Rhea, brother for 9 hours

AISHWARYA KHOKLE I DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 30

The CBI on Sunday grilled Rhea Chakraborty for the third consecutive day for nine hours in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide. Her brother Showik was also grilled by teams of the Central agency with the process starting at 10.30 am at the DRDO guest house, Santacruz.

Sushant’s house help Keshav and house manager Samuel Miranda were also questioned by the CBI on Sunday. The investigators are coordinating

with the ED and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) who are also probing the suicide case.

The officials are looking into the alleged transfer of funds from the actor’s account and use of his debit and credit cards to make payments. The CBI is also verifying if the money was transferred from the deceased actor’s account to either Rhea or her family members.

The ED has, meanwhile, summoned businessman Gaurav Arya for questioning after some text messages between him and Rhea surfaced.

We are not anyone’s puppets, says Farooq

New Delhi, Aug. 30:

Reacting sharply to Pakistan hailing the recent Gupkar Declaration in which six political parties of Jammu and Kashmir vowed to fight collectively against the abrogation of Article 370, National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Sunday asserted that “we are not anyone’s puppets”.

“Pakistan has always abused mainstream political parties of Jammu and Kashmir but now suddenly they like us”, the former chief minister said when asked about Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi’s statement that the declaration issued by the NC, PDP, Congress and three other parties was “not an

ordinary occurrence but an important development”.

“Let me make it clear that we are not anyone’s puppets, neither New Delhi’s nor of anyone across the border. We are answerable to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and will work for them,” he said from Srinagar.

In response to a question on cross-border terrorism, Abdullah said, “I would urge Pakistan to stop sending armed men into Kashmir. We want an end to the bloodshed in our state. All political parties in Jammu and Kashmir are committed to fight for our rights peacefully, including for what was unconstitutionally snatched away from us on August 5 last year.” — PTI

RADIO WAVES

Rahul slams broadcast, says PM is talking of toys when students are worried about exams

Etikoppaka toymaker’s effort is Modi’s Mann Ki Baat

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, AUG. 30

In his *Mann ki Baat* radio address on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India could become a big hub of toy production and that “it is the time to get vocal for local toys”. Hailing efforts by wooden toymaker C.V. Raju from Visakhapatnam, and the Etikoppakaa toys from his village that were once very popular, Modi noted while “the global toy industry is of more than seven lakh crore rupees, NCRB’s share is very little in this”.

The Prime Minister said it was time for start-ups to be “vocal for local toys” and urged them to develop

computer games in and based on India, citing the nation’s rich heritage and traditions that can drive innovations in the toy and gaming industry.

“Our country has so many ideas, so many concepts, our history has been very rich. Can we make games based on that? I call upon the young talent of the country — make games in India and make games based on India too. It is said... let the game begin! So, let us start the game,” he said.

He touched on a number of issues in the broadcast, and lauded people for showing restraint while celebrating festivals during the pandemic.

Mr Modi also urged people to raise dogs of Indian

breeds at their homes if they wanted to keep a pet dog.

Modi touched on a number of issues in the radio broadcast as he lauded people for maintaining unprecedented restraint and simplicity in celebrating festivals during the Covid-19 pandemic and praised farmers for an increase in the sowing area for crops.

Underscoring a deep connection between Indian festivals and environment, he noted that eco-friendly Ganesha idols were installed at most places recently.

Ganeshotsav was also celebrated at certain places, he said, praising people’s discipline. Lauding farmers, Modi

said they have proven their mettle during the pandemic.

He said the area for the sowing of kharif crops increased by seven per cent compared to last year, paddy by nearly 10 per cent, pulses close to five per cent, oilseeds around 13 per cent and cotton by about three per cent.

He said September will be observed as ‘Nutrition Month’ and added that the need for having a good nutrition is being converted into a “mass movement”, especially in villages.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on said that the students wanted the Prime Minister to address the issue of NEET and JEE

exams in his monthly radio programme, but he spoke on toys.

His remark came after Modi address said that the country has the talent and ability to become a hub for the toy industry and called upon startups and entrepreneurs to “team up for toys”.

Using the hashtag “Mann Ki Nahi Students ‘Ki Baat”, Gandhi tweeted, “JEE-NEET aspirants wanted the PM to do ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’ but the PM did ‘Khilone Pe Charcha’.” Gandhi and his Congress party have supported a demand by a section to postpone the NEET and JEE examinations, which are starting from September 1, in view of the pandemic.

Indian Army dogs earn PM’s praise

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 30

Indian Army dogs are playing a crucial role in many operations and are force multipliers. In the last one year, Indian Army dogs have helped in detection of 30 IEDs and in five operations they tracked down terrorists which led to their elimination, said senior officials. They have also helped in 14 operations which led to recovery of arms and ammunition in the last one year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday in his *Mann Ki Baat* address talked about Indian army dogs “Sophie” and “Vida” who have been awarded the Chief of Army Staff ‘Commendation Cards’.

Vida, a Labrador is from the Army Dog Unit located in Northern Command (J&K).

Sophie, a Cocker Spaniel is with special forces ‘Special Frontier Force’ and is an explosive detection dog.

IN BRIEF

Israeli tanks hit Hamas targets

Jerusalem: Israeli tanks hit Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, the army said, as Palestinian balloon attacks across the border continued despite international truce efforts. An early-morning military statement said there had been airborne explosive and incendiary attacks into southern Israel on Saturday. "In response to the ongoing events, a short while ago... tanks struck military posts belonging to the Hamas terror organization in the southern Gaza Strip," the English-language statement said. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Death toll in China mishap rises to 29

Beijing: The number of people killed when a restaurant in northern China collapsed has climbed to 29, state media said on Sunday, with efforts to find survivors brought to a close. The two-storey building in Xiangfen county, Shanxi province, came down on Saturday morning during an 80th birthday party, according to official news agency Xinhua. A total of 57 people have been pulled from the debris of the Juxian restaurant, with dozens injured. Seven people are seriously hurt, although Xinhua said the injuries were "not life-threatening". State broadcaster CGTN said the rescue operation ended in the early hours of Sunday morning. The cause of the collapse is unknown and the central government's State Council said it would supervise an investigation by provincial authorities.

Top French military officer arrested

Paris: A senior French military officer based abroad is under investigation for "serious security breaches," the defense minister said on Sunday. Europe-1 radio reported that the officer served on a NATO base in Italy and is accused of treason for passing "ultra-sensitive" information to Russian secret services. The French Defense Ministry would not provide details about the officer. Speaking on Europe-1 on Sunday, Defense Minister Florence Parly said only that a judicial procedure is underway and the French military has taken "necessary protective measures" after the breaches. The Paris prosecutor's office, which is handling the case, would not comment. NATO did not immediately respond to requests for information. Parly also said on Sunday that France is putting "massive investment" into military activities in space — notably after a 2018 incident in which a Russian satellite coaxed up to a French one in an apparent effort to eavesdrop on secure military communications.

HEZBOLLAH CHIEF SAYS OPEN TO NEW LEBANON PACT

Beirut, Aug. 30: Hezbollah chief Hasan Nasrallah on Sunday said that his Shiite movement is "open" to a French proposal for a new political pact for Lebanon as long as there is national consensus. "On his latest visit to Lebanon, we heard a call from the French president for a new political pact in Lebanon... today we are open to a constructive discussion in this regard," Nasrallah said in a speech. "But we have one condition: this discussion should be carried out... with the will and consent of the various Lebanese factions." Nasrallah did not elaborate on what kind of changes his movement was willing to consider but cited criticism from "official French sources" over Lebanon's "sect-based political system and its inability to solve Lebanon's problems and respond to its needs." Lebanon recognises 18 official religious sects and its 128 parliamentary seats are divided equally between Muslims and Christians, an arrangement unique in the region. However, governments born out of this system have been prone to deadlock and have failed to meet popular demands for better living conditions. Macron, the first world leader to visit Lebanon after the devastating August 4 Beirut port blast, will return on Monday to press for reform and reconstruction. On his earlier visit days after the blast, the French president said Lebanese leaders had a "huge" responsibility: "that of a revamped pact with the Lebanese people in the coming weeks, that of deep change."

Trump supporters, protesters clash in Portland, 1 killed

San Francisco, Aug. 30: A person was shot dead on Saturday in Portland following clashes between Black Lives Matter protesters and supporters of US President Donald Trump, police said.

The Oregon city has been an epicenter of BLM protests since the police killing of unarmed black man George Floyd in Minnesota in late May, and according to local media a "caravan of hundreds of cars" of Trump supporters also converged there on Saturday. Portland Police tweeted a political rally was "caravanning" throughout downtown Portland, adding: "There have been some instances of violence between demonstrators and counter demonstrators. Officers have intervened and in some cases made arrests." OregonLive reported "clashes" and "tense moments" between the groups, although police did not say whether the shooting was related to the demonstrations.

The shooting occurred at around 8:45pm downtown, police said later in a statement, adding a homicide investigation was under way. "Portland Police officers heard sounds of gunfire from the area of Southeast 3rd Avenue and Southwest Alder Street," the statement said. — AFP

TRUMP TO VISIT KENOSHA IN WAKE OF RACIAL UNREST

Washington, Aug. 30: President Donald Trump will travel next week to the Midwestern city where African American Jacob Blake was shot multiple times in the back by a white policeman, sparking a nationwide wave of protest, the White House said. Trump will meet police in Kenosha, Wisconsin on Tuesday and "survey damage from recent riots" triggered by Blake's shooting last weekend, administration spokesman Judd Deere said. Blake took at least half a dozen shots in the back in front of his small children as he tried to get into a car, in an incident that triggered an outpouring of anger over yet another shooting of a black man by white police.

Deere did not say if Trump would meet the family of Blake, who was left paralyzed from the waist down. Protesters have taken to the streets nationwide this summer over the killing of black men by police, including George Floyd in Minneapolis in May. Trump has characterised the mostly-peaceful activists as vicious rioters as he presses a law and order message while fighting an uphill battle for re-election in November. — AFP

BEN CRUMP, ADVOCATE FOR VICTIMS

Washington, Aug. 30: When angry protesters shout the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor or Jacob Blake — Ben Crump is listening. He is the seemingly omnipresent black attorney representing the families of all those emblematic victims of US police violence, and others too.

On Friday, he joined thousands of protesters in Washington at a rally denouncing discriminatory policing and demanding fairness in the justice system.

It is a cause Crump has ardently embraced, whether in courtrooms or before television cameras. Crump has repeatedly found himself in the spotlight following high-profile cases of violence against African Americans: the vigilante killing of jogger Ahmaud Arbery, the death of George Floyd under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer and now the grievous wounding of Jacob Blake by a policeman in Wisconsin who repeatedly shot him in the back. — AFP



Ashraf Ghani

AFGHAN PREZ NAMES COUNCIL FOR PEACE DEAL

Kabul, Aug. 30: Afghanistan's president has appointed a council for national reconciliation, which will have final say on whether the government will sign a peace deal with the Taliban after what are expected to be protracted and uncertain negotiations with the insurgents.

The negotiations were envisaged under a US - Taliban peace agreement signed in February as intra-Afghan talks to decide the war-torn country's future. However, their start has been hampered by a series of delays that have frustrated Washington. Some had expected the negotiations to begin earlier this month.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani issued a decree late Saturday establishing the 46-member council, led by his former rival in last year's presidential election, Abdullah Abdullah, who is now in the government.

The council is separate from a 21-member negotiating team, which Ghani appointed in March and which is expected to travel to the Gulf Arab state of Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office, for intra-Afghan talks.

The council will have the final say and will ultimately decide on the points that the negotiating team takes up with the Taliban. — AP

Protesters storm Reichstag during mass Covid protest

Around 300 people were arrested in scuffles with police

Berlin, Aug. 30: German leaders on Sunday condemned the "unacceptable" attempt by protesters to storm the Reichstag parliament building during a mass rally against coronavirus restrictions.

Some of the protesters on Saturday carried the flag of the former German Reich which was used up until the end of the First World War.

"Flags from the Reich and far-right profanity in front of the German parliament are an unacceptable attack on the heart of our democracy," President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Instagram. "We will never accept this".

Police said some 38,000 people, double the number expected, had gathered in Berlin on Saturday to protest restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus, such as the wearing of masks and social distancing.

Late Saturday, several hundred broke through barriers and a police cordon to climb the steps leading to the entrance to the Reichstag.

About 300 people were arrested in front of the Reichstag and following an incident at the Russian embassy, according to



Police officers remove a large portrait of Indian political ethicist and civil disobedience advocate Mahatma Gandhi at an unregistered demonstration against government Coronavirus regulations held next to the Siegessäule, or Victory Column, in Berlin, Germany on Sunday.

— AFP

police.

They were narrowly prevented from entering the building by police, who used pepper spray and arrested several people.

Police initially appeared overwhelmed, as only a

handful of officers were there to block the crowd.

"We cannot be present everywhere and it is precisely these weaknesses in the deployment that were exploited, in this case to cross the security barriers

in order to reach the steps of the Reichstag," said local police spokesman Thilo Cablitz.

The Reichstag, where German deputies meet, has a powerful symbolic role in the country. The

building, with its famous dome, was burnt down by the Nazis in 1933 in an act aimed at destroying what remained of German democracy between the two world wars.

— AFP

Zuckerberg: Facebook erred in not removing militia page's post

Washington, Aug. 30: Facebook made a mistake in not removing a militia group's page earlier this week that called for armed civilians to enter Kenosha, Wisconsin, amid violent protests after police shot Jacob Blake, CEO Mark Zuckerberg said.

The page for the Kenosha Guard violated Facebook's policies and had been flagged by a bunch of people, Zuckerberg said in a video posted on Friday on Facebook. The social media giant has in recent

weeks adopted new guidelines removing or restricting posts from groups that pose a threat to public safety.

Facebook took down the page Wednesday, after an armed civilian allegedly killed two people and wounded a third Tuesday night amid protests in Kenosha that followed the shooting of Blake, who man of colour.

It was largely an operational mistake, Zuckerberg said. The contractors, the reviewers, who the initial complaints were fun-

neled to, didn't, basically didn't pick this up.

Zuckerberg did not apologize for the error and said that so far, Facebook hasn't found any evidence that Rittenhouse was aware of the Kenosha Guard page or the invitation it posted for armed militia members to go to Kenosha.

Facebook is now taking down posts that praise the shooting or shooter, Zuckerberg said. Yet a report on Thursday by The Guardian newspaper found examples of sup-

port and even fundraising messages still being shared on Facebook and its photo-sharing service, Instagram.

Zuckerberg also contrasted the treatment of Blake, who was shot in the back by Kenosha police, and the white 17-year-old now charged in Tuesday's slayings, Kyle Rittenhouse, who carried an AR-15-style rifle near police without being challenged. Zuckerberg also acknowledged the civil rights demonstration on Friday in Washington, D.C. — AP



Joe Biden

BIDEN: WON'T USE MILITARY AS 'PROP'

Washington, Aug. 30: Joe Biden said on Saturday that as president, he would never use the military "as a prop or private militia" and accused President Donald Trump of employing US forces to settle "personal vendettas" and violate citizens' rights.

The Democratic presidential nominee, in a virtual address to the National Guard Association of the United States' general conference, said Trump recommended "that you should be deployed to quote, 'dominate,' your fellow citizens for exercising their right to peacefully protest."

"We're so much better than this," Biden said. "You deserve so much better." His comments came a day after Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress that the armed forces will have no role in carrying out the election process or resolving a disputed vote.

It was a sign of rising tensions on both sides as the president has declared without evidence that the expected surge in mail-in ballots during the coronavirus pandemic will make the vote "inaccurate and fraudulent." Trump has also suggested he might not accept the election results if he loses.

Biden has said he's "absolutely convinced" the military would escort Trump from the White House if the incumbent lost but refused to leave. — AP

Mass rally against Belarus leader

Minsk, Aug. 30: Tens of thousands of opposition supporters marched through the Belarusian capital of Minsk on Sunday calling for an end to strongman Alexander Lukashenko's rule, despite heavily armed police and troops blocking streets and detaining dozens of demonstrators.

Protests have now entered a third week since the disputed presidential election on August 9 in which Lukashenko claimed victory, while opposition rival Svetlana Tikhanovskaya said she was the true winner.

An AFP journalist and local media estimated that more than 1,00,000 people came to Sunday's protest, equalling the scale of the rallies on previous weekends, the largest demonstrations the country has seen since independence from the USSR.

Some protesters gathered around Lukashenko's official residence in the centre of Minsk, the Palace of Independence, which was guarded by a cordon of

riot police and special forces with helmets and anti-riot shields, equipped with water cannons. Sunday's rally fell on Lukashenko's 66th birthday and online opposition messages urged people to bring flowers and "creative" handmade gifts reflecting their attitude to the authoritarian leader.

Some chanted "Get out! We're coming for you on your birthday!" Others held quirky items aloft including a cardboard model toilet with a sign urging Lukashenko to "flush" himself away. Others carried a model coffin with "Dictatorship" written on the side and a picture of a giant cockroach, the nickname used by the opposition for Lukashenko. — AFP

Global virus cases top 25 mn, Brazil's toll crosses 1,20,000

New Delhi, Aug. 30: Global Coronavirus infections soared past 25 million on Sunday, as countries around the world further tightened restrictions to try to stop the rampaging pandemic.

A million additional cases have been detected globally roughly every four days since mid-July, with India on Sunday setting the record for the highest single-day rise in cases with 78,761.

The surge in India, home to 1.3 billion people, came as the government further eased lockdown restrictions on the weekend to help ease pressure on the reeling economy.

Even nations such as New Zealand and South Korea, which had previously brought their outbreaks largely under control, are now battling new clusters of infections.

On the other side of the world, Latin America — the worst-hit region — was still struggling with its first wave, with Covid-19 deaths in Brazil crossing 1,20,000, second only to the United States.

Brazil's curve "has sta-

Shias mark Ashura in Iraq's amid virus

Karbala, Aug. 30: Thousands of tearful Shias Muslim pilgrims wearing gloves and masks flooded Iraq's holy city of Karbala on Sunday to mark Ashura, in one of the largest religious gatherings of the Coronavirus era.

Ashura, on the 10th day of the mourning month of Muharram, commemorates the killing of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson Hussein at the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD — the defining moment of Islam's confessional schism.

Typically, millions of

Shiites from around the world flock to the city's golden-domed shrine where Hussein's remains are buried, to pray and cry, shoulder-to-shoulder.

But with Coronavirus numbers spiking across the globe, this year's commemoration has been subdued.

"Honestly, this year is nothing like the millions-strong commemorations of other years," said Fadel Hakim, who was out early in the streets around the shrine, a blue medical mask cupping his chin. — AFP

8,43,000 people have died of Covid-19 globally, and with no vaccine or effective treatment available yet, governments have been forced to resort to some form of social distancing and lockdowns to stop the spread of the virus. — AFP

SAD | DEMISE

Writer's stories explored the experience of being a man of colour and gay life in prose

Famous author Randall Kenan dies at 57



Randall Kenan

would visit the couple. Kenan grew up in North

● **EARLIER THIS month,** Kenan wrote an open letter reflecting on his experience as a Black student at UNC in the '80s, and the changes prompted by civil unrest, demands for racial justice and the removal of Confederate statues across the South.

Carolina and attended UNC, receiving his under-

graduate degree in 1985.

His 1992 collection of short stories, *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*, was set in the fictional town of Tim's Creek, North Carolina. It received critical acclaim and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

He also wrote a young adult biography of author James Baldwin.

Earlier this month, Kenan wrote an open letter reflecting on his expe-

rience as a Black student at UNC in the '80s, and the changes prompted by civil unrest, demands for racial justice and the removal of Confederate statues across the South.

"For me — a poor coloured boy from the swamps of Eastern North Carolina — the Civil War was far from a lost cause, let alone a done war. I had underestimated how unfinished," he wrote.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

31 AUGUST 2020

In guise of Covid war, it's unbridled hate

The savage violence let loose by the police on Muharram processions in Srinagar last Saturday is likely to deepen the perception that physical assaults on the populace in the Valley is the action of the first resort as far as the government is concerned. At least 19 persons have been reported to be wounded, one of whom is said to be in a critical state. A dozen of the injured have taken pellet hits, including in the face. This is suggestive of the fact that pellet guns were fired from close range.

When scores were blinded or lost sight in one eye as a result of pellet injuries in the post-BurhanWani protests of 2016 in Kashir valley, the government mulled minimising if not eliminating the use of pellet guns until suitable replacements were developed. The faulty trajectory of the discharge from close range from these weapons was hitting people in the face, and head and chest areas, causing injuries of a grave nature. Such weapons were not proving to crowd deterrents in volatile situations but instruments of possible death, which raised political costs for the local administration and the country internationally.

Clearly, no active thinking on ending the use of such weapons may exist now except on paper. Last year, not long after the ending of J&K's constitutional autonomy, the government forces in Srinagar had used pellet guns on a thick crowd of civilian protesters in the Soura-Anchar locality, a dirt poor area of the old city. The incident, which caused widespread injury, had raised international concern, and gave the lie to the orchestrated government propaganda that people had accepted the ending of autonomy peacefully and had not protested.

Last Thursday the Supreme Court disallowed the holding of Muharram processions anywhere in the country on the ground that this may lead to the blaming of a particular community (the Shia Muslim) for the spread of the Coronavirus (presumably as had happened in the case of the Tablighi Jamaat). If this was a common sense precaution the top court sounded, the authorities in Kashmir enforced it with brutal energy.

Over the years, Muharram processions in Kashmir have been routinely limited to specified areas in order not to take chances with sectarian clashes, but last week's violence testifies to the uncommon zeal that the government brought to the fighting of Covid-19 by cracking down with unqualified force on the small Muharram processions. This stood in sharp contrast with police behaviour at religious ceremonies of India's majority community in many parts of the country, sometimes held with official sanction and display of devotion, underlining the grievance of many that the blatant repression of Kashmir and the taking away of J&K's historical rights owes to the fact of the Valley's denominational status in contrast with the rest of the country.

There is no peace in Kashmir, and the government's fear of the people seems real. Top political figures, no longer in detention, are routinely prevented by the police from leaving their homes. Last week, a group of protesters of the People's Democratic Party was scattered through police action. This was immediately followed by the police attacks on Muharram processions. These are signs that betray the government's insecurities.

The show must go on

The Chennai Super Kings retinue has been like a bat flying among pigeons in the IPL bio-bubble in the UAE. A whole XI of the training staff as well as two players have tested positive thus introducing a degree of uncertainty into the conduct of IPL 2020 and the participation of an international cast of players. The team's vice-captain Suresh Raina has had to leave Dubai after tragedy struck his uncle's family in Pathankot in Punjab as violent robbers trespassed into their home. One of eight teams may have run into a jinx of sorts but that cannot be reason enough to abandon the IPL season.

There is no cricket business like T20 business and the show must go on to nurture the promise to the people that a new normal can be established. Of course, there are rules to be followed, which only iron discipline can ensure. International sport set up very successful bio-secure environments in Europe, UK and USA, the worst affected country in the Covid-19 pandemic that is holding the world in its thrall. Soccer has been played, so too cricket in England with only the occasional player indiscretion to be dealt with.

The IPL is a ₹4,000 crore direct TV rights revenue per annum entertainment industry with several hundreds of crores more in team and player sponsorships, besides being a big spender in chartered flights, hotels and resorts, etc. The point is a high degree of responsibility commensurate with such riches must go hand in hand, with everyone contributing to the safety of the bio-bubble.

One team may have been foolhardy in its overenthusiasm in also holding a preparatory camp to please its iconic captain Dhoni's wishes in Chennai. But that shouldn't stop the whole circus, as the great showman P.T. Barnum said when they burned down his tent. The show must go on and UAE with 379 deaths to date from under 70,000 Coronavirus cases in six months is a safer bet than India that is seeing as many cases in a day.

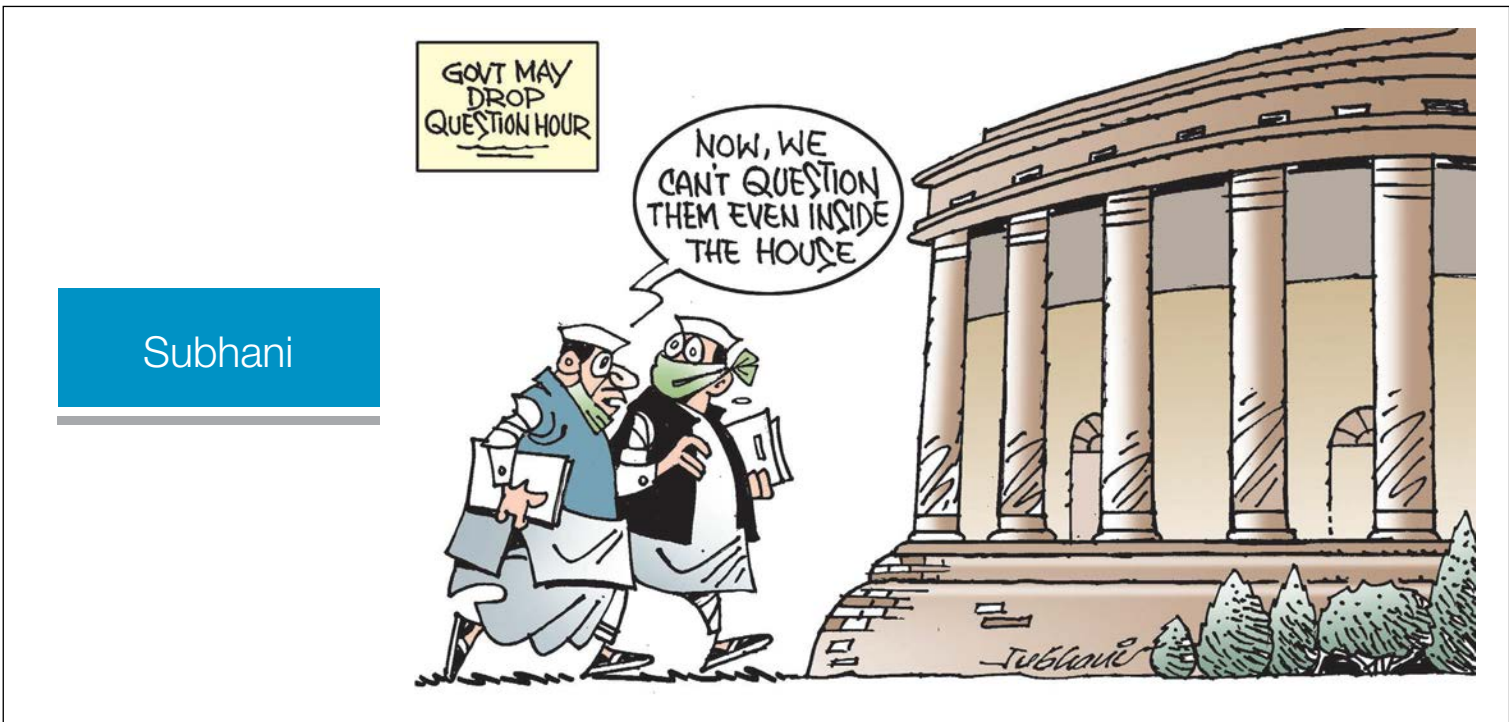
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Subhani

The centrality of dissent



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

The Nasdiya Sukta, a major verse in the Rigveda, states, "Then He, who created all that is, or did not, Who looks upon everything from the highest heaven, He alone knows. Or maybe He too does not."

In its very first intellectual iterations the Indic civilisation laid down its commitment to doubt and dissent, its determination to address the ambiguities of both the human mind and the omniscient gods through a critical lens.

It was this combination of constant seeking and continual absence of certitude that made our civilisation so fecund. A crucible of key human ideas and systems of thought. Questioning shaped us. Our foundational texts, the key Upanishads, were exploratory, provisional, in their wisdom. No rajan, no rishi, no god, could escape the sincere question. None could turn their face away from the mirror.

Anyone could be cross-examined on their dharma, from the unimpeachable Yudhishtira, to the divine Rama and Krishna. Your conduct defined your stature. No one's station was fixed. It was made and re-made through beliefs and action. It was always up for interrogation.

The genius of Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Babasaheb Ambedkar — who gave up their entire lives to restore a wounded civilisation — lay in the same seed: constant self-examination and self-correction; and a brutal honesty inextricably aligned to the greater good.

The free society they struggled to create, even as it seems to borrow from the language of a more recent West, actually owes its deepest debt to our own ancient impulses. The conviction that free citizens, thinking citizens, questioning citizens, lie at the

root of the good society. The finest rajan is not the unquestioned master of the people. The finest rajan is the embodiment of a questioning people.

More than 1,600 years after the glorious triumph of dissent in the death of Socrates, the Magna Carta was the first successful act of political dissent in 1215. It hewed into stone the first principles of Constitutional Democratism and sowed the seeds of a million mutinies. It proclaimed "No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land. To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice".

It gave birth to a central tenet of modern societies, "Be ye ever so high, the law is above you", by holding that no man is above the law, not even the king. The Magna Carta has been for 800 years a plinth idea of free people, free societies and free nations around the world.

On the continent, the Magna Carta was succeeded by the Renaissance and Reformation and the battle between old blind feudalisms and dogmas against the engines of human thought was noisily afoot. Answers were demanded not just from divine rulers but also from divinity. Political dissidents were persecuted, exiled, and heretics often burnt at the stake.

But the tsunami of change was beyond being bottled anymore. The next few hundred years would see more change than the millennia and a half before. The fruit of human inquiry would flower. Technology in the shape of the printing press would spread dissident ideas rapidly and spark fresh

questioning and reform movements. It would hasten the end of Europe's Dark Ages.

The Age of Enlightenment would push for individual liberty and religious tolerance. The English Bill of Rights in 1689 would limit the powers of the monarch and set out rights of individuals including free speech.

The founding of United States of America itself would become perhaps the most successful act of historical dissent — a revolt against the feudal order of Europe by people who went to the New World to create a new land of equality and opportunity.

Dissent is thus cardinal to the idea of the United States. The American founding fathers enshrined the right to dissent in the First Amendment to the Constitution for the American nation was baked in the oven of contesting ideas. Justice Oliver Wendell consecrated this in his famous dissenting opinion "Abrams vs United States" a century ago. He wrote, "But when men have realised that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas."

The twentieth century saw the rise of Communist and Fascist regimes. These regimes were set against all dissent. (One reason Nehru, with rare foresight and integrity, refused to meet Benito Mussolini in 1936, even while transiting through Rome.) It saw the monstrous excesses of Stalin and Mao, just to name the worst two. An estimated 50-100 million people, including their finest minds, died due to their autocratic — not-to-be-questioned — policies. In time both schools of

thought and governance collapsed, having inflicted untold suffering on innocent millions.

Adolf Hitler's concentration camp regime also commenced with the persecution of his political opponents, the Social Democrats. They were tortured and executed by the Nazi Gauleiters and Reichsleiters. While the Social Democratic ideal survived the ravages of Nazism, Hitler and his mistress were compelled to commit suicide and their bodies were charred beyond recognition. Mussolini and his mistress, similarly, were strung up in public by their own oppressed countrymen.

Ultimately what remains are the voices of dissidents celebrated for speaking truth to power, for attempting a restoration of humanity's faith in itself. Writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Soviet communism's trenchant critic, built his Nobel Prize lecture around a Russian proverb: "One word of truth outweighs the whole world." Andrei Sakharov, another famous dissident, stated that, "A man may hope for nothing, but nevertheless speak because he cannot simply remain silent."

The Indian national movement is easily the finest example of the power and creativity of dissent, both internal and external. One drove out by moral force and principled protest the most powerful colonial power in history since the Romans.

The other, the healthy, productive dissent within the key architects of the freedom struggle — arguably the greatest assemblage ever of remarkable leaders — is what made the former possible. From their arguments, their disagreements and agreements, their unwavering goal of the greater good, that the sublime idea of India was born.

The argumentative Indian is not a trope. It is the truth upon which our civilisation stands.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS

TEACHERS' PLIGHT

It is most unfortunate that teachers who were selected in 1998 are still fighting for jobs (*Teachers fight 22 yrs to get jobs, DC, Aug. 30*). Some of the teachers have also died in this waiting period. Government should concentrate on Vidya and Vaidya to develop society, particularly the poor people.

Balekar Shanker Lal
Hyderabad

UNLOCK PROCESS

It is strange that the government has opened liquor shops and restaurants but not bars and restaurants. These owners had paid fee but are forced to suffer losses. Attenders, stewards and cooks are also losing out on account of this.

T. Kailash Ditya
Hyderabad

PROCESSIONS

The Hyderabad police commissioner's decision to ban Ganesh and Muharram processions is appreciated. Both communities should understand that it is in the interest of citizens who may get exposed to Covid-19. Life is more important than people getting exposed to this pandemic.

Shahbaz Husain
Hyderabad

FIX SCHOOL FEE

The Telangana state government which announced online classes for schools from September 1 must also fix a fee structure for private schools. They must take into consideration the fact that many parents have lost their jobs in the pandemic and private firms are paying 50 per cent salary.

Rohit Pentam
Secunderabad

Vain bid to locate missing plane

CALCUTTA, Aug. 30 Two Air Force helicopters and two Indian airlines aircraft battled rains and winds to scour the 2,000 kilometre wooded hilly belt from Shillong to Nagaland border today but failed to locate the Fokker-Friendship plane which has been missing since yesterday with 39 people aboard.

A Pakistani Air Force plane also made an infructuous aerial search of the border areas in East Pakistan in view of the possibility of the plane having accidentally strayed across the border. Both aerial and ground searches are to be resumed tomorrow.

Kishwar Desai

London Diary



The latest ruse to meet people; e-cycles are the new rage in UK

There is always another side to the story — and right now it belongs to the anti-vaccine lobby — which was demonstrating in London over the weekend stating that the Covid-19 pandemic is nothing but a conspiracy by Bill Gates! None of the gathered 10,000 were wearing masks and for them there is no such thing as the killer virus either. So what happened to those millions who died, and millions more who were hospitalised all over the world? Were they somehow brainwashed by the vaccine makers into making themselves sick? It would be difficult to find a more adamant bunch of Brits, whose opinions trump over scientific research (pun intended!). But they can be understood, if we place them next to the flat-earth lobby, or anything else that seems an inexplicable denial of everything that is happening in the real world. We can only hope that their mingling in large crowds as they protest and ask for a return to "normal life" will not lead to a spike in the virus — while the rest of us continue to 'social-distance'.

Another lot of demonstrators are

also going to be out and about soon — the Extinction Rebellion — which is an environmental movement and is having its demonstration, too. If it is anything like their demonstration last year, any traffic movement will be impossible in Central London and that is not a bad thing either. Is this the latest way to hang out with buddies — organise a demonstration?

I never imagined that we would actually hope for colder weekends. We are thankful that the August bank holiday weekend threatens to be a cold one. Well, hot summer weekends mean no distancing, traffic jams on country roads and crowded beaches. Then that in turn leads to a revival of Covid infections. We need some stay-at-home cold days and nights to slow down the pandemic.

The latest data show a sharp upsurge in new cases, highest since June and in four figures. Whether this will stay next month or is just a blip is anyone's guess. September is crucial because schools reopen. There has been a battle going on between the government, which

wants schools to open, and the teachers' union, which is asking for guarantees about safety. The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, keeps changing his mind — but now it seems he has decided to follow the practice in Scotland where a sensible compromise is being worked out about masks and distancing and bubbles.

The UK government writ runs only to England in Corona matters and the devolved authorities Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are doing much better. But while the government led by Boris would like people to come back to work — not all companies agree and some City financial firms are happy to let their workers stay at home. Tube trains will have to be monitored for distancing. Many are buying e-cycles that allow them to speed fast and effortlessly to work. How London traffic will cope with bicycles as well as e-cycles remains to be seen!

This is the season for the Proms. It is a high point in the transition between summer

and autumn. It is a musical feast in the splendid location of the Royal Albert Hall. Day after day famous composers and singers and soloists perform divine music, which is broadcast on the BBC which sponsors the programme. If you want a seat you have to wrangle it from those who have bought seats permanently but may let you have it for a night for a hefty price. If not, you stand at the back as part of the promenade. On the final day of the Proms, the climax comes with the playing of Land of Hope and Glory and, of course, Rule Britannia with many standing at the back waving Union Jacks and singing a raucous chorus. All around the country people gather in open places and parks and gardens and sing along with those in the Royal Albert Hall. This has led to some light-hearted displays of patriotism. But now it seems BBC is not sure it is culturally appropriate to celebrate the past as it is associated with Empire and slavery. The culture war, which has been going on since Black Lives Matter erupted four months ago, has still not abated. So the BBC has proposed that the

music will be played but no singing of the lyrics.

You can just imagine what that has done. As it is the BBC is in trouble. It is financed by the income from the TV licence paid for by everyone who has a TV and costs £175. The Blair government gave everyone above 75 a free TV licence as part of its settlement with BBC. But the Conservatives (who never liked the BBC) have removed the subsidy. So BBC wants the elderly to pay. This is the precise audience who like Rule Britannia and the flag waving. Amol Rajan who is media editor with BBC has just accused it of becoming "the broadcasting wing for Black Lives Matter"! There is a petition going around asking Lord Hall, the departing director general of the BBC, to change his mind. BLM is impacting everything now, even music!

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author. Her 6th book, the biography of the 1930s superstar, Devika Rani, The Longest Kiss will soon be out.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,467.31	0.90
Nifty 50	11,647.60	0.76
S&P 500*	3,508.01	0.67
Dollar (₹)	73.39	0.58
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.38	0.16
Euro (₹)	87.38	0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,155*252	0.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.81	00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.097	-0.050
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.724	00

* As of Friday/Saturday

MF investment in REITs jumps 3-fold to ₹735 cr

Mutual funds have invested Rs 735 crore in REITs in the first six months of 2020, nearly three-fold jump from the year-ago period. However, mutual funds' investment in infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) dropped by 8 per cent to Rs 4,968 crore during the period, Sebi data showed. MF investment in REITs rose from a mere Rs 7 crore in January 2019 to Rs 71 crore in January this year and to Rs 402 crore in June 2020.

FM to meet bankers on loan recast on Sept. 3



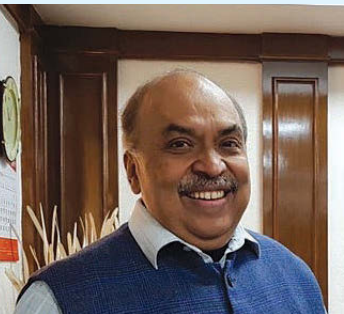
Ahead of the roll out of one-time debt recast for resolution of Covid-19 related stress in bank loans, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will hold a review meeting with bankers and heads of NBFCs on Sept. 3 for smooth and speedy implementation of the scheme. "The review (meeting) will focus on enabling businesses and households to avail of the revival framework on the basis of viability..." the finance ministry said.

Fiscal deficit to touch 7% in FY21: Brickwork

India's fiscal deficit is expected to touch 7 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 as against budget estimate of 3.5 per cent, with revenue collections being hit amidst disruptions, says Brickwork Ratings. It expects the economy to gradually pick up from the third quarter of this fiscal. As per the Controller General of Accounts data, the Centre's revenue in Q1 is much lower than collections for the corresponding period last year.

Private firms begin investing in farm sector: Secy

Private companies have begun investing in farm sector spurred by the recent farmers' income, agriculture secretary Sanjay Agarwal said. The government has already held one round of discussion with the industry on implementation of agri-reforms. "Large number of industries are planning investments, while some have already invested," he said. "Lot of things are happening."



Bank QIPs help swell inflow to ₹46,600 cr

August FPI inflow hits five-year high

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 30

Private banks' huge fund raising through qualified institutional placement (QIP) bloated foreign fund flows to the equity market in August and balanced out outflows from profit taking by domestic mutual funds.

Total foreign portfolio investments stood at Rs 46,602 crore in August so far. This is the highest foreign inflows in a month this year and in the last five years.

It should also be kept in mind that such a large inflow is coming in a world flooded with abundant liquidity and after huge withdrawal by the foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) earlier this year worth Rs 61,973 crore in March and Rs 6,884 crore in April.

In the first half of August, ICICI Bank raised Rs 15,000 crore through QIP. Also, Axis Bank and home loan financier HDFC raised Rs 10,000 crore each through QIPs where both FPIs and domestic institutions were bidders.

FPIs cornered a lion's share of ICICI Bank's QIP;



the Government of Singapore was allotted over 46.44 lakh shares comprising 11.08 per cent of the total equity shares issued in the QIP issue. Morgan Stanley Investment Management's Global Opportunity Fund was allotted over 30.63 lakh shares (7.31 per cent of the issue) and Societe Generale got over 23.24 lakh shares, or 5.55 per cent of the issue.

Axis Bank, after close of the QIP, said, "Despite a challenging macro-economic environment, the placement has witnessed strong reception from the global and domestic investor community, including several large foreign portfolio investors, domestic mutual funds and insurance companies."

FPIs shareholding in Axis Bank has gone up from 45.96 per cent as on June 30 to 48.47 per cent as on August 11, as per the updated shareholding data, post-QIP.

In HDFC Ltd's case, Government of Singapore was allotted over 75.96 lakh shares comprising 13.37 per cent of the total equity shares issued in the QIP while another FPI, Invesco Oppenheimer Developing Market Fund was allotted over 31.40 lakh shares comprising 5.54 per cent of the QIP.

ICICI Bank and HDFC are yet to update their shareholding data post-QIP.

BANKS TOLD TO REFUND UPI, RUPAY TRANSACTION CHARGES

New Delhi, Aug. 30: The Income Tax department on Sunday asked banks to refund the charges collected on or after January 1, 2020, on transactions carried out through electronic modes like RuPay cards or

BHIM-UPI.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), in a circular on 'imposition of charge on the prescribed electronic modes under section 268SU of I-T Act', also advised banks not to

impose any charges on any future transactions made through these modes.

"Banks are advised to immediately refund the charges collected, if any, on or after January 1," the circular said. —PTI

Biyani gives up after wrestling with debt

New Delhi, Aug 30: Kishore Biyani, considered the pioneer of modern retail in India, taking convenience shopping to the masses, has finally bowed to the winds of change blowing across the sector, giving the control of what he nurtured for over three decades to Reliance Retail.

Biyani (59), who started his business in 1987 by launching Manz Wear which later adopted the brand name of Pantaloon, has on Saturday agreed to hand over the control of his retail empire to new entrant Reliance Retail, a part of Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries, in a Rs 24,713-crore deal.

Biyani, a man known for thrifty approach to running the business, has been spreading himself too thin as the need for capital increased to expand his retail business amidst rising competition from new players like Reliance Retail as well as the advent of e-commerce, which he had dismissed as challengers initially.

Many a time he has been forced to divest assets to pare mounting debt of his



Kishore Biyani

retail empire, a business which is always considered cash consuming.

In 2012, he sold his majority stake in Pantaloons chain to Aditya Birla Nuvo for Rs 1,600 crore, which included Rs 800 crore of debt transfer. Back in 1992, he had listed Pantaloon on the bourses to raise funds for expansion, store improvements and marketing and from there it was never a look back for him, as he created an entire ecosystem for retail including logistics and also mentored many other entrepreneurs and brands.

Again in 2012, Biyani had also sold a majority stake in Future Capital Holdings to US-based private equity Warburg Pincus to raise funds and exited from a stationery joint venture with US-based Staples by selling its entire stake to the partner.

At that point of time, his group was laden with debt of around Rs 5,000 crore. Similarly, in 2013 Future Lifestyle Fashion Ltd (FLFL) divested minority stakes in ethnic wear firm Biba Apparels and designer Anita Dongre-owned AND for Rs 450 crore.

In August last year Biyani had sold 49 per cent stake in Future Coupons to Amazon.com NV Investment Holdings. According to some reports, the debt of Future Group has now reached around Rs 13,000 crore and most shares of the promoter's group are pledged.

When things came to a head, Biyani agreed to a deal on Saturday under which Reliance Retail Ventures Limited, a step down subsidiary of Reliance Industries, will acquire popular Future brand stores such as Big Bazaar, fbb, Foodhall, Easyday, Nilgiris, Central and Brand Factory. —PTI

Consumers opting for essentials, not luxury: Nestle

New Delhi, Aug. 30: The pandemic has brought a major shift in consumption patterns among consumers as necessary purchases are taking precedence over luxury spending, Nestle India chairman Suresh Narayanan has said.

Stating that the coronavirus crisis has witnessed "re-calibration of the consumer wallets" amidst economic disruptions, he said certain terms like quality, safety, nutrition and trust have gathered more prominence as consumers are preferring "tried and tested" brands in these uncertain times.

"With the economic pandemic that has followed Covid-19, a re-calibration of the consumer wallets is taking place where essentials are taking precedence over luxuries, however affordable they are," said Narayanan. Moreover, there will also be re-calibration of channels such as e-commerce, which has increased its penetration and prominence among the customers post lockdown, he said.

"If you look at e-commerce channels, in the US what took eight years in terms of penetration, it has been achieved in eight weeks (of lockdown). Clearly the e-commerce journey is here to stay and there will be re-calibration of channels, Narayanan said. —PTI

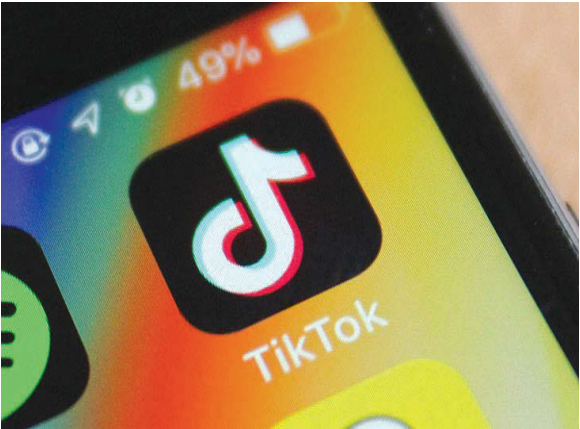
China throws spanner in Trump's TikTok works

Aug. 30: ByteDance Ltd. will be required to seek Chinese government approval to sell the US operations of its short-video TikTok app under new restrictions Beijing imposed on the export of artificial intelligence technologies, according to a person familiar with the matter.

AI interface technologies such as speech and text recognition, and those that analyse data to make personalised content recommendations, were added to a revised list of export-control products published on the Ministry of Commerce's website late Friday. Government permits will be required for overseas transfers to "safeguard national economic security," it said.

The new restrictions cover technologies ByteDance uses in TikTok and will require the company to seek government approval for any deal, according to the person, asking not to be identified because the details aren't public. The new rule is aimed at delaying the sale and is not an outright ban, the person said.

Donald Trump's administration has said ByteDance must sell the US operations of its popular video-sharing app because of alleged national security risks. Microsoft Corp and Oracle Corp have submitted rival bids to ByteDance to acquire TikTok's US business, while Centricus Asset Management Ltd and Triller Inc were said to have made a last-minute pitch on Friday to buy TikTok's operations in several countries for \$20



billion.

China's foreign ministry and commerce ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A ByteDance representative had no immediate comment when reached by Bloomberg.

ByteDance should study the new export list and "seriously and cautiously" consider whether it should halt negotiations, Cui Fan, a trade expert and professor at Beijing's University of International Business and Economics, told the official Xinhua News Agency.

Additional approval in Beijing is likely to delay and could undermine any transaction. Because the Chinese government review will take time, the TikTok deal may be delayed until after the US elections in November, the person familiar said.

The revised rules would cover cross-border transfers of restricted technologies even within the same company, while the impact and consequences of failing to make appropriate

applications would be very different if an international business is spun off, Cui said separately in an interview with Bloomberg.

Technologies related to drones and to some genetic engineering methods and procedures were also added to the revised export-control list while others in areas like medical equipment were removed. The revisions are meant to promote China's technological advancement and international cooperation, and "safeguard national economic security," a commerce ministry representative said in a separate statement on Friday.

Technology exports encompass various transfers out of China including via trade, investment and patents, according to the statement. Any export of restricted technology will require letters of export permit intentions from Chinese authorities before negotiations can be held, while final permits are required before any transfer happens. —Bloomberg

Apparel retailers could see demand rebound in Q4

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 30

Apparel retailers will see demand returning to pre-Covid levels by the fourth quarter of this fiscal. However, for the entire fiscal, revenues will be down by 40 to 45 per cent.

In the June quarter, revenues of apparel retailers were less than 20 per cent of the pre-Covid levels, finds India Ratings and Research. Players with exposure in value retail and presence in tier-2 and tier-3 cities were placed better than retailers primarily in metros.

However, the upward sales trend witnessed in June 2020 slowed down by intermittent lock-downs across the country and the pandemic spreading to non-metro cities. Despite about 80 per cent of stores being open as of August, the sector could only witness a slow-but-incremental recovery with the social distancing norms in force, leading to reduced footfalls in stores and prioritisation of spends towards essentials and low-ticket discretionary items amidst a squeeze on income levels.



Sales in the quarter remained around 45 per cent of the pre-Covid levels.

As per the Retail Business Survey of Retailers Association of India, July sales of apparel and clothing category were down 69 per cent. Strict lockdown in several states during weekends are crippling the business of retailers.

In the December quarter, Ind-Ra expects a meaningful recovery, driven by the pent-up festive and wedding season demand. However, social distancing norms and a slowing economy will continue to be a drag. Overall, sales may touch around 85 per cent of the pre Covid levels. Consumer behaviour patterns such as revenge buying may also support

sales. By the March quarter, pre-Covid level demand can be achieved, with economic recovery accelerating. The lower base effect from the Covid-hit March quarter of the previous fiscal will also support year-on-year quarterly revenues.

However, for the entire fiscal, the sector revenues may fall 40-45 per cent year-on-year. FY22 will see a sharp recovery with a lower base effect and new store openings. Post-Covid-19, the trend of shift to organised from unorganised would accelerate as small players would find it difficult to sustain operations, given lower footfalls, apprehension among customers related to store hygiene and credit crunch.

UAE scraps Israel boycott to foster ties

MAHER CHMAYTELLI DUBAI, AUG. 30

The president of the United Arab Emirates scrapped an economic boycott against Israel, allowing trade and financial agreements between the countries in another key step towards normal ties, the UAE's state news agency reported.

Israel and the UAE said on August 13 they would normalise diplomatic relations in a deal brokered by US President Donald Trump that reshapes the order of Middle East politics from the Palestinian issue to the fight against Iran.

President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan issued a decree abolishing a boycott law as part of "the UAE's efforts to expand diplomatic and commercial cooperation with Israel, leading to bilateral relations by stimulating economic growth and promoting technological innovation," the WAM news agency said on Saturday.

Israeli foreign minister Gabi Ashkenazi said the UAE had taken "an important step towards peace." —Reuters

Cheaper diamonds fire life into gem trading

THOMAS BIESHEUVEL AUG. 30

For the past six months, the global diamond hubs in Antwerp, Belgium and Mumbai have been at a standstill, with cutting and polishing factories closed and trading floors shuttered. Now, a capitulation on prices by the biggest miners is sparking the industry back to life.

After refusing to budge on diamond prices during much of the pandemic, De Beers and Russian rival Alrosa PJSC decided last week they saw enough signs of recovering demand and seized the opportunity, cutting some prices by almost 10 per cent. The impact was instant, as rough diamond buyers snapped up about half a billion dollars in uncut gems, according to people familiar with the situation who asked not to be identified because the

information is private.

The resurgence came the same week Tiffany & Co said its jewellery sales were improving monthly, adding to optimism the entire industry is rebounding. The developments will bring relief to a supply chain that's been paralysed since the pandemic hit, with jewellery stores closed, cutters and polishers stuck at home and traders locked out of key producing countries.

"The worst I think is past us and there are reasons to be encouraged," said Stephen Lussier, head of consumer and brands at De Beers. "There is some real consumer data which underlines the midstream's belief that business is coming back for them. The industry is in a healthier place than it has been for some time."

The diamond industry's engine room is dominated by small and private family-run



businesses that cut, polish and trade the stones. They form the invisible link between African mines and jewellery stores in New York, London and Hong Kong. It's a secretive business and goes largely unnoticed outside the closed world of diamonds, but their fortunes are often a bellwether of the wider

"The pipeline has been starved, and people were worried that they would not be able to get their hands on rough, missing out on sales when polished demand comes through," said Anish Aggarwal, a partner at specialist advisory firm Gemdax.

The fortunes of the diamond industry ultimately will be decided by retail demand, and so far that's been patchy. The Chinese market has rebounded strongly, with Chow Sang Sang, one of the country's biggest jewellery retailers, saying its domestic sales as of June were at 95 per cent of last year's levels. That recovery was helped by consumers being unable to travel abroad, where they've traditionally been big buyers in cities such as Hong Kong, London and New York.

Yet US sales, which account for almost half of all diamond demand, remain under pres-

sure as the pandemic keeps shops closed, millions are unemployed and the country posted its biggest quarterly economic contraction since the Great Depression.

De Beers likely sold about \$300 million in rough diamonds last week, according to people familiar with the situation. That's less than a traditional sale, but it's the biggest offering since February and amounts to about six times its total sales in the whole second quarter. The company could have sold more but held back some sales to prevent overwhelming the nascent recovery, the people said. Diamond buyers estimate that Alrosa likely sold about \$200 million, the people said.

Alrosa chief of sales Evgeny Agureev declined to say how much the company sold.

"In August the rough diamond market showed clear signs of revival after being frozen for

several months," he said. It's not yet at pre-pandemic levels though, as "external factors, including international travel restrictions, continue to weigh on negatively on the market," he said.

High-quality diamonds, used as solitaires and for bridal rings, are where demand is strongest, and it was for these type of stones that De Beers cut prices.

It's another story for lower-quality stones, where there is little demand from retailers or traders. De Beers refused to cut prices here, accepting it would sell few stones. The company would have had to lower prices by as much as 20 per cent to find buyers able to make a profit, according to people familiar with the matter.

Yet many diamond traders remain nervous about the strength of any recovery. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Messi skips Covid testing with Barca

Madrid: In another sign that Lionel Messi's time with Barcelona is coming to an end, the player did not report for required coronavirus testing scheduled for the whole squad on Sunday. Barcelona said Messi was the only player who did not undergo the tests at the club's training center. The team is set to resume training on Monday ahead of the upcoming start of the season. The club also reiterated their stance not to negotiate Messi's early release, saying president Josep Bartomeu will only sit down with the player if it is to extend his contract beyond next season. Messi last week expressed his desire to leave the club, but Barcelona want him to play out the contract that ends in June 2021. The club also said it is not negotiating a possible transfer with any other team. Messi announced his decision to leave on Tuesday by sending the club a burofax, a certified document similar to a telegram. — AP

Djokovic bags 35th Masters title

New York: For all that's been on Novak Djokovic's plate of late including a painful neck and his efforts to start a new players' association in men's tennis he just keeps winning. He's perfect in 2020, an ideal way to head into the U.S. Open. Djokovic tied Rafael Nadal's record by earning his 35th title at a Masters 1000 tournament, overcoming a sluggish start to beat Milos Raonic 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the Western & Southern Open final Saturday and improve to 23-0 this season. "Has been challenging mentally and emotionally for me to stay sane and be able to compete on the highest level and win this title," Djokovic said. "Going on an unbeaten run so far this year obviously brings even more confidence each match." — AP

Novak, Serena eye Grand Slam

New York: The US Open becomes the first Grand Slam of the Covid-19 era when it starts on Monday in a spectator-free bubble at Flushing Meadows following a troubled build-up that saw several top stars withdraw over coronavirus fears. Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams headline a tournament that will be unrecognisable from previous Slams due to strict safety protocols that were still not enough to convince some of tennis's biggest names to travel to New York. Defending champion Rafael Nadal and women's number one Ashleigh Barty are among high-profile absentees at the US National Tennis Center, which just months ago was transformed into an emergency coronavirus field hospital. Raucous crowds are a hallmark of the US Open, but this the cavernous Arthur Ashe Stadium will be eerily empty to mitigate the risk of infection from the deadly pandemic. — AFP

Covid positive Paire removed

New York: France's Benoit Paire was removed from the US Open men's draw on Sunday after the Grand Slam tournament announced an unidentified player had been withdrawn after testing positive for Covid-19. Paire's name was removed from the US Open website's official draw and replaced with that of 149th-ranked Spaniard Marcel Granollers, who is set to face Poland's 108th-ranked Kamil Majchrzak in a first-round match next week. French sports daily *L'Equipe* had earlier reported that World No.22 Paire had tested positive for Coronavirus in New York. The US Tennis Association said the asymptomatic player has been advised to follow state and tournament health and safety protocols requiring isolation for at least 10 days. — AFP

Live on TV

TENNIS

US Open
First round matches from 8.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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India, Russia share gold medal

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, AUG. 30

In a dramatic turn of events, India and Russia were declared joint winners of the first online chess Olympiad that concluded on Sunday. After the first round ended in a 3-3 draw, the final was poised for a thrilling finish before India's Nihal Sarin and Divya Deshmukh lost their Internet connection and forfeited on time. The match ended 4.5-1.5 in favour of Russia, but Fide, the international ruling body of chess, declared both finalists as joint winners after India filed an appeal.

The event has been hit by a global internet outage throughout and the final day witnessed more drama. Fide president Arkady Dvorkovich said the decision to award gold medals to both teams was made after the Appeals Committee examined all the evidence provided. "Apart from that, information was gathered from other sources about this internet outage. After being informed of their considerations and in absence of an unanimous decision, and taken into account these unprecedented circumstances, I made the decision," said Dvorkovich.

FIRST GOLD FOR INDIA
It was India's second medal at the Olympiad

Kohli & Co. sweat it out at the nets

Dubai, Aug. 30: Indian captain Virat Kohli admitted he was "pretty scared" to hit the nets for the first time in five months but said his first training session ahead of the upcoming IPL went "better than expected".

The Royal Challengers Bangalore captain resumed training after a five-month coronavirus-forced hiatus. The net session was also attended by South African pace legend Dale Steyn and RCB team director Mike Hesson.

"(It went) much better than expected, to be honest. I was pretty scared. I hadn't picked up a bat for five months, but yeah it came out better than I thought, to be honest," Kohli was quoted as saying by the franchise's website. The 31-year-old, who was RCB's highest run-getter in IPL last year, said staying fit during the lockdown helped him to react better during the net session even though he was training after a long break. "I've trained quite a bit during the lockdown, so I'm feeling quite fit and that helps. Because the body is light and you react better, I feel like I have more time on the ball. That's a big plus," he said.

"Otherwise you come heavier into the season, the body isn't moving as much, and it starts playing on mind, but yeah, as I said it went much better than I expected."

Besides Kohli, spin trio of Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar and Shahbaz Nadeem and a few pacers also trained and Kohli was pleased with the way they went about their business in the first session. — PTI

CHESS | OLYMPIAD



Koneru Humpy

VISHY ENDS OLYMPIAD DROUGHT

For India's chess king Anand, it was his first taste of Olympiad success. He made his Olympiad debut as a teenager in 1984, but a medal had eluded him for more than two decades. "You can't make this up. It just had to happen and it did after so many twists and turns. It was an unusual end, but we will take it," said the five-time world champion, who didn't have a great tournament.

Anand had opted out of the first match on Sunday, paving the way for P. Harikrishna. Anand

returned for the second match and played out a draw against Ian Nepomniachtchi.

Anand credited India's stupendous show to its bench strength. "This format really showcased our strength. We have a good set of juniors. Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli are still going strong. I wanted Harikrishna to play the first match because he brings in a lot of stability. I am glad it worked out," he added.

Humpy was overjoyed as well. "We played tough right through and managed to come back strongly from difficult situations many a time during the

tournament. It's been a great run and an outstanding team effort. It's a big win since more than 150 countries were in the fray," the 33-year-old said.

She cherished two key turns. "To beat China in the preliminary rounds showed the strength of the team. Then, with the scores level in the semifinal against Poland, I was chosen to play the tie-breaker and beat Monika Socko in a tense game," she said.

Humpy said it took some adjustment to play the tournament online. "We are not used to playing online chess tournaments. The players are connected through a video call with the organisers watching every move. The player has to be alone in the room with no electronic devices allowed. Every day after the game, we would discuss strategy over video calls. It was a bit strange," she said.

'NEW START' FOR INDIAN CHESS

The event created a lot of buzz online with more than 60,000 people watching the live analysis on chessbaseindia.com.

Anand said the support was amazing. "It was fantastic to see such interest. An unusual opportunity has opened up for chess in this pandemic."

Anand believes India's Olympiad success will change the public perception of chess.



Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli during the team's first practice session in Dubai on Saturday.

Captain Iyer demands consistency from team

Dubai, Aug. 30: Terming the upcoming IPL one of his "most important assignments" as captain, Delhi Capitals' Shreyas Iyer has demanded consistency from all his teammates.

In the last edition, Delhi Capitals reached the IPL play-offs for the first time in seven years, and they are hoping to better that result this time. "It's certainly very different from last season, but challenges excite me," Iyer told *IPLT20.com*.

"As a captain, this is going to be certainly one of my most important assignments just because of how different the setting is. It is going to be

● In the last edition, Delhi Capitals reached the IPL play-offs for the first time in seven years, and they are hoping to better that result this time.

very different, the key is to take it one day at a time.

"We're being briefed about the do's and don'ts at every step, it's crucial that everyone who is part of our team bubble follows that."

Moved out of India due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 13th edition of the

world's biggest T20 league will be played across three venues in the UAE from September 19 to November 10.

"All pieces of the puzzle need to fall in the right place to be a champion team," he said.

"But the IPL is a long tournament and results keep going up and down invariably.

The one thing that worked for us last season for how in each and every match, different players stepped up to the occasion and that was crucial to our success and will be key this year too. Having not just one consistent performer but many of them."

— PTI

MORGAN, MALAN SCRIPT ENGLAND VICTORY IN T20

Manchester, Aug. 30: England beat Pakistan by five wickets to win the second Twenty20 international here on Sunday.

Eoin Morgan, the England captain, came in on a hat-trick but hit a dashing 66 and shared a third-wicket stand of 112 with Dawid Malan (54 not out) as the hosts chased down a stiff target of 196 with five balls to spare.

Earlier, Pakistan's 195-4 featured fine fifties from Mohammad Hafeez (69) and skipper Babar Azam (56). Victory put England 1-0 in a three-match contest. — AFP

Brief scores: Pakistan 195/4 in 20 overs (M. Hafeez 69, Babar Azam 56) vs England 199/5 in 19.1 overs (Eoin Morgan 66, Dawid Malan 44 n.o., Shadab Khan 3/34).

COMMUNITY | SHIELD



Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang lifts the trophy after winning the English FA Community Shield match between Arsenal and Liverpool at Wembley Stadium in London on Saturday. — AP

Auba is amazing, seals it for Arsenal

London, Aug. 30: Mikel Arteta claimed Arsenal captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang is close to signing a new contract after the Gunners beat Liverpool 5-4 on penalties following a 1-1 draw in the Community Shield on Saturday.

Aubameyang put Arteta's side ahead in the first half at Wembley with a typically eye-catching strike.

Japan's Takumi Minamoto equalised with his first goal for Liverpool late in the second half of the annual pre-season friendly between the Premier League champions and FA Cup winners.

In the shoot-out, Liverpool's young striker Rhian Brewster was the only player to miss, hitting the bar with their third penalty before Aubameyang calmly dispatched the decisive spot-kick.

As if Arteta needed any reminding, it was another sign of the influence wielded by his captain Aubameyang, who is yet to

commit his long-term future to the club as he enters the final year of his contract.

Gabon forward Aubameyang has kept Arsenal waiting nervously during protracted talks and he demurred when asked in a post-match interview if he was ready to sign the club's contract offer. "We are going to see, today we will just take the trophy and that is it," he said.

Arteta has remained confident the 31-year-old will stay and he insisted his talisman's status will be resolved to his satisfaction before the Premier League season starts on September 12.

"We are close," Arteta said of the contract. "He was magnificent in the FA Cup final and again today."

"I try to do my job, which is convince him that he is in the right place, that he has the environment here to produce the moments like he's done today and he's done here three weeks ago." — AFP

HAMILTON WINS, CLOSES IN ON SCHUMI RECORD

BELGIAN | GP

Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium), Aug. 30: Lewis Hamilton stretched his lead in the drivers' world championship and closed to within two wins of Michael Schumacher's Formula One record of 91 on Sunday with a majestic, if ultimately tense, Belgian Grand Prix victory.

The series leader and six-time champion registered his 89th career win with another flawless drive to take his fourth Belgian triumph, finishing 8.448 seconds clear of his Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas.

It was Hamilton's fifth win in seven races this year and extended his record run of points-scoring races to 40. Max Verstappen came third for Red Bull, seven

seconds further adrift, to claim his sixth podium finish in succession.

Hamilton, who had to nurse his car home on worn tyres, has 157 points in the title race, 47 clear of Verstappen. The 'black arrows' lead the constructors' championship with 264 points, well ahead of Red Bull on 158.

"It wasn't the easiest of races," said Hamilton. "I had a lock-up, which produced vibrations, at Turn Five and another one at the last corner and it was a bit of a struggle, but nonetheless I think it was ok in the end."

At the British GP, Hamilton had clung on to win after one of his tyres disintegrated. — AFP

In just 10 days alarm bells started ringing in IPL bubble



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

“Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble!” As kids we always had a problem when it came to reciting this famed line from the Shakespearean tragedy *Macbeth* as the last word (bubble) always replaced double. By a strange irony, the happenings in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where the Indian Premier League (IPL) is to kick off in three weeks from now, there seems to be a bit of a burst in the

bubble; very different from what the three witches had chanted in the Bard's play.

In just ten days (from when the teams playing the IPL landed in the desert country) the alarm bells started to ring when part of the contingent of Chennai Super Kings (CSK) were tested Covid positive, two of them being players. As if that was not enough, Suresh Raina, an iconic player who sports the yellow jersey pulled out of the edition and flew back to India citing personal reasons.

This will be the first (of the thirteen) edition without the 33-year old middle order batsman who has been the perfect foil to skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, helping in making CSK a champion team. While no official statement giving specific reasons for Raina's departure has been issued barring a standard response from the team management that offered complete support to him and his family, one respects the effervescent cricketer's personal decision and leaves it at that.

With members testing positive, whatever plans that team CSK may have had of stepping out of their forced confines will need to be reviewed, effectively throwing a spanner in their works. Coming out after a five month hiatus

and being thrown, once again, in severe lock down situation with zero human contact is going to be a big test for the players who are raring to step out on the grassy field.

Those who have been given the privilege to travelling to the UAE with their families are fortunate unlike the others who will have to rest content staring at the same view out of their hotel rooms for a week to do so. The rules of confinement, set for the IPL, are very stringent and any deviation can lead to further isolation as was found out by England pacer Jofra Archer who broke the bio security bubble during the recently concluded Test series against the West Indies.

With quarantine rules being different in the three

Emirates — Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi — the plans for teams change depending on where they are based. Unlike in Dubai and Sharjah, which have a 7-day quarantine, Abu Dhabi has an isolation period of 14-days which entails a further delay of a week for two teams, Kolkata Knight Riders and Mumbai Indians who are camping there.

With multiple medical tests and strict guidelines to ensure that no member, player or otherwise, crosses the lines marked by the bio security bubble, the endurance and patience of all contingents will be severely tested.

Apart from monitoring the movements of players and support staff, team managements are tasked with the all important

effort to keep everyone in good spirits and in a positive frame of mind. The IPL is a high powered tournament in which a big role is played by maintaining the mental balance of team members and keep them from succumbing to pressure which can make or break the sides.

By organising the IPL in these trying times, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) have taken up a challenge which is unprecedented in the history of cricket. Managing eight teams, replete with 20-plus players along with the support and administrative staff is a mind blowing exercise which the BCCI is confident of pulling off. Teams apart, handling an entire ecosystem of affiliates and partners (broadcast and

more) for 80 plus days under harsh guidelines is going to be a thankless and ground breaking effort.

With just two weeks before the tournament begins, the cases affecting CSK have given the BCCI a mini preview of the tough demands that lie ahead. These are testing times for the BCCI which has a huge task on hand, one that can enhance or sully their reputation after having taken on a mammoth challenge. The obvious pun inserted in the statement will probably cause the naysayers to guffaw but the organisers who are currently running the show are certainly not in the mood for a laugh. They will be on double shifts to ensure that the bubble does not burst and the league stays out of trouble.