

IN BRIEF

Noida: 51 held for flouting Covid norms

Noida: Fifty-one people were arrested across Noida and Greater Noida on Sunday for allegedly violating curbs imposed to check the spread of Covid outbreak, Gautam Buddh Nagar police said. Owners of over 1,700 vehicles were issued challans for similar violations across the district, which, according to official figures, has so far recorded over 6,400 cases of Covid including 44 deaths. CrPC Section 144, which bars assembly of more than four persons, is in force in Gautam Buddh Nagar.

Security checks also remained intensified due to the lockdown-like curbs imposed in the district, like elsewhere in the state, over the weekend. "Ten FIRs were registered and 51 people arrested for violating the Covid curbs. A total of 4,708 vehicles were checked across 200 barrier points in the district and challans issued to 1,757 of them while another six were impounded," the police said in a statement. — PTI

4 held for stealing injections worth ₹2L

New Delhi: Four people have been arrested here for reportedly robbing a pharmacy employee of injections worth ₹2,24,000 used for treating cancer patients, police said on Sunday. The incident was reported on August 13. Aman Sharma (26), Vikas Swami (30) and Sakib Khan (28) were arrested for executing the robbery on the pretext of purchasing the injections. Prabhu Jha (32) was arrested for buying these stolen injections, they said. According to the police, Khan, who introduced himself as Sudhir Dixit, called up the pharmacy to place order for the medicines. Khan placed the order for six injections worth ₹2,24,000 used for treating cancer patients. He then asked the pharmacy employee, Mohd Anas, to hand over the medicines to him near Red Fort, they said. When the employee reached the venue, Khan asked him to accompany him to Okhla in south east Delhi to receive the payment. But their scooter was overtaken by two bike-borne men, who slapped Anas and took away the medicine bag from him, police said.

Fire breaks out in 3-storey building

New Delhi: Five women were rescued after a fire broke out at a clinic located in a three-storey building in northwest Delhi's Pitampura area on Sunday, a Delhi Fire Service official said. No one was injured in the incident, he said. The fire department said it received information about the blaze around 11 AM and seven fire tenders were rushed to the spot. A woman was rescued from the clinic which is located in the basement of the building, while four others were rescued from a house on the second floor, said Delhi Fire Service director Atul Garg. The fire broke out at the clinic and the smoke later engulfed other floors of the building, he said. The cause of the fire is being ascertained, he added. The woman rescued from the clinic has been identified as Swati (27). The other four are Laxmi Kansal (52) and her two daughters Pridhi Kansal (25) and Malika Kansal (23), and their relative Asha Rani, fire officials said.

Shaadi.com partners with MediBuddy

New Delhi: Shaadi.com has partnered with MediBuddy-DocsApp to enable, for all its employees, online consultation with health specialists and MD doctors. For the employees, it is a quick and easy way to cater to their own and their family members' healthcare needs. Shaadi.com has been a front runner in availing new-age healthcare solutions like online doctor consultation for its employees across the nation. "With MediBuddy-DocsApp, our employees from across the country can avail medical assistance instantly through a phone call. It solves the problem of physical availability of doctors and we are happy to partner with them for this service," said P. Ganesan, the vice president of Shaadi.com. The pandemic has caused upheaval in many aspects of daily life. With health taking the centre stage, companies — both large and small — are increasing their focus on employees' health.

Covid recovery rate in Delhi over 90%

652 new cases registers in last 24 hours

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

The national capital's Covid-19 tally rose to 1,52,580 on Sunday with 652 fresh cases, while 1,310 people recuperated from the disease in the last 24 hours pushing the recovery rate in Delhi to more than 90 per cent, authorities said.

The death toll due to the disease has increased to 4,196 with eight more fatalities in the last 24 hours. This was the second time in a week that the number of daily fatalities due to the viral infection has dropped below 10, the Delhi government's health bulletin stated.

On August 11, Delhi had recorded eight Covid-19 deaths, indicating a significant improvement in the pandemic situation in the city. The national capital recorded 14 deaths each on Wednesday and Thursday, 11 on Friday and 10 on Saturday.

The number of fresh cases recorded on Sunday was the lowest after July 27, when Delhi registered 613 cases. The number of recoveries on Sunday was also the highest since July 27, when 1,497 patients had recuperated from the disease.

Of the total Covid-19 cases recorded in the city so far 1,37,561 people have

Noida: 79 new Covid-19 cases push tally to 6,486

Noida, Aug. 16: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar on Sunday recorded 79 new Covid-19 cases, pushing the district's case-load to 6,486, official data showed. So far, 43 people have died from the virus in the district. The number of active cases reached 873, up from 867 on Saturday and 826 on Friday, according to the data released by the UP health department for a 24-hour period.

The district currently ranks 14th in the state in terms of active cases, the data showed. Also, 72 more patients got discharged during the period. So far, 5,570 patients have recovered from Covid-19 in Gautam Buddh Nagar, the third highest among districts in UP after Lucknow (9,633) and Kanpur (5,798),

it showed. The district has so far recorded 43 deaths linked to coronavirus and the mortality rate among positive cases dropped to 0.66 per cent from 0.67 per cent on Saturday, according to official statistics.

The recovery rate of patients improved slightly to 85.87 per cent from 85.79 per cent on Saturday, as per the statistics.

The maximum active cases in the state are in Lucknow (7,628) followed by Kanpur Nagar (4,275), Gorakhpur (2,491), Varanasi (2,313), Allahabad (2,290), Bareilly (2,017), Ghaziabad (1,062), Saharanpur (993), Aligarh (971), Azamgarh (970), Ballia (936), Kushinagar (893), and Basti (914), according to the data.

— PTI

recovered or discharged putting the recovery rate at 90.15 per cent. There are 10,823 active cases of coronavirus infection and among them 5,762 are under home isolation.

As many as 3,024 RT PCR, CB NAAT and TrueNat tests, and 7,685 rapid-antigen tests were conducted in last 24 hours.

A total of 13,02,120 tests have been conducted till date that is 68,532 tests per million population, the health bulletin stated.

The case positivity rate in the last 24 hours stood at 6.08 per cent. In the last one week, the number of new infections has grown by less than one per cent everyday.

AAP to make oximeters available in 30K villages

New Delhi, Aug. 16: To give a boost to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, the AAP will set up centres for testing saturation of oxygen content in blood in 30,000 villages across the country, its national convener and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced on Sunday.

Kejriwal said he has already received a commitment for 30,000 oximeters from people. Oximeters help in measuring the oxygen level and are found to be extremely useful for coronavirus patients who in many cases battle breathlessness due to drop in oxygen level.

"Already received com-

mitments for 30,000 oximeters. Am overwhelmed. Will now set up "oxygen jaanch kendra" in 30,000 villages. Commitments still pouring in. Will help set it up in more villages. Thank you donors. We will train village youth and give them oximeters to set up oxy kendras," he said.

"This will help us in saving lives by detecting drop in oxygen levels in time," he said. Mr Kejriwal had on Saturday urged people to donate oximeters to the AAP so that they can be distributed by its volunteers in villages across the country to help those battling Covid in the hinterland.

— PTI

Ganesh Chaturthi: No idol immersion, celebrations

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

There will be no large congregations, community celebrations or idol immersion at public places on Ganesh Chaturthi in the national capital this year in view of the Covid pandemic, according to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee.

A fine of ₹50,000 will be imposed on violators, it said. This year, the festival will be celebrated on August 22. Idol immersion in the Yamuna river was banned

following an order by the National Green Tribunal in 2015. Last year, the Delhi government had created artificial ponds at public places for people to immerse idols on Ganesh Chaturthi and Durga Puja.

"Idol immersion in artificial ponds, too, is not allowed this time as large gatherings will increase the risk of virus transmission," a DPCC official said. Community celebrations cannot happen as large congregations are prohibited by the government in view of the pan-



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal along with his wife Sunita Kejriwal offers prayers at Hanuman Temple in Connaught Place on his birthday in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

New team of city BJP office bearers to be announced soon

New Delhi, Aug. 16: Delhi BJP's new team of office bearers is likely to be announced in the coming week, with workers from groups and castes less penetrated by the party expected to get important posts in the organisation, party leaders said.

A senior party leader said consultations over new appointments were in final stages and the announcement may possibly be made in the coming week.

"The names of leaders for different posts are almost final. Senior Delhi BJP leaders held discussions with RSS leadership over the organisational matters in a meeting earlier this week and another meeting is due in next 1-2 days," he said.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said names of new office bearers will be announced "soon", without giving any specific time for it.

"As per our party constitution proportionate representation is given to various sections including women and leaders from various social and caste groups," he said. — PTI

Kejri turns 52, prays for good health of Delhiites

New Delhi, Aug 16: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who turned 52 on Sunday, visited the Hanuman temple at Connaught Place in the city along with his wife and prayed for the good health of Delhiites amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Addressing Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) party volunteers on Independence Day, CM the national convener of the party, had said he would not celebrate his birthday this year and urged them to send their wishes from home

Addressing Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) party volunteers on Independence Day on Saturday, Kejriwal, the national convener of the party, had said he would not celebrate his birthday this year and urged them to send their wishes from home. There were no festivities at the chief minister's residence in north Delhi's Civil Lines area, unlike previous years when he was visited by Aam Aadmi Party leaders, workers and admirers.

"On his birthday, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal visited the Hanuman temple at Connaught Place, worshipped the deity and performed 'abhishhek'. He prayed for the good health of the people of Delhi," the Chief Minister's Office said in a tweet in Hindi with pictures of Kejriwal and his wife Sunita at the temple. The Aam Aadmi Party

30,000 pieces of the machine were received.

"Already recd commitments for 30,000 oxymeters. Am overwhelmed. Will now set up "oxygen jaanch kendra" in 30,000 villages. Commitments still pouring in. Will help set it up in more villages. Thank u donors. We will train village youth n give them oxymeters to set up oxy kendras," he said in a tweet. Arvind Kejriwal had asked Aam Aadmi Party volunteers to take the responsibility for their colonies and villages and set up oxygen-testing centres there.

Oximeters are devices used to measure the oxygen level in the body. One of the symptoms of the coronavirus infection is a drop in the oxygen level in the body.

Mr Kejriwal said many countries and cities, such as Italy, London and New York, have seen sick people being turned away from hospitals. "Then we decided that beds should be reserved for serious patients, and those with mild or no symptoms would be treated at home. It did not mean we were shying away from our responsibilities," he said.

— PTI



A family enjoy spending time on the lawns of India Gate in New Delhi on Sunday.

— AFP

Man stages robbery to take revenge from employer

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

The Delhi police has arrested a 44-year-old employee of a company who allegedly plotted a fake loot of ₹10 lakh in the national capital. The police said that it has also recovered the amount from the possession of the accused. The accused has been identified as Vijay Pratap Dixit, a resident of Faridabad in Haryana.

According to DCP (Southeast district) R.P. Meena, on August 13 a police control room (PCR) call regarding robbery of ₹10 lakh near Barapullah flyover was received.

"A case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at Sunlight Colony police station and an investigation was taken up. The

IN ORDER to take revenge, victim decided to teach his employer a lesson by confiscating the collection money of his company and waited for the right time to grab the collected amount of ₹10 lakh

complainant, Vijay Pratap Dixit, was taken to the place of occurrence to recreate the scene of crime," said the DCP.

"During the course of recreation of the scene of crime, the complainant variably changed his statement and tried to convince the police team frequently that he was robbed. This created doubt. The complainant was again examined and the sequence of incidents was verified by putting cross questions, which finally led to a con-

fession of the self-planned crime and execution by the complainant," said the DCP.

"During interrogation, accused Dixit disclosed that he had been serving his employer for a very long time and despite that his employer did not give him any raise in salary. Once, his employer had slapped him and also let him down publicly," said the DCP.

"In order to take revenge, he decided to teach his employer a lesson by confiscating the collection money of his company and waited for the right time. Now, he found the right time and decided to grab the collected amount of Rs 10 lakh, which he had brought from Model Town in Delhi. He concocted a story of robbery before the police and his employer.

DMRC begins work on building 1st cantilever metro bridge over Yamuna

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

The DMRC has commenced preliminary work on the construction of the fifth Metro bridge over River Yamuna here as part of its phase-4 work on the Majlis Park-Maujpur corridor, officials said on Sunday.

The new 560 metre long bridge will come up between two existing bridges on the Yamuna i.e. Wazirabad Bridge and the Signature Bridge.

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technical investigation at the location of proposed piers, the activity of casting of test piles is in progress," the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said in a statement.

Currently, there are four bridges of Delhi Metro on the River Yamuna, viz, at Yamuna Bank (698.8 m on Blue Line), Nizamuddin (602.8 m on Pink Line), Kalindi Kunj (574 m on Magenta Line), and Shastrī Park (553 m on Red Line), it said. To utilise the available time during this monsoon season, a coffer-

dam has been constructed, away from the active course of the Yamuna, by raising the level of the ground by filling of earth and sand with protection of its slope through bamboo, jute netting, and sand bags, the officials said. The level of the cofferdam has been kept same as that of the adjacent road to ensure supply of requisite construction material like steel reinforcement, metal liner, ready mix concrete, etc.

The design of the bridge was finalised using the 'building information modelling' (BIM) technology. With the help of this technology, a 3D model of the bridge was uploaded with intricate details of the proposed structure.

"All mandatory approvals from the agen-

cies concerned have been obtained for the construction of the bridge. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation is committed to fulfil the conditions given by the principal committee on Yamuna for construction of the bridge," the statement said. Various eco-friendly measures will be taken during its construction.

All the construction activities are being carried out with minimum effect on the floodplains. Restoration of the floodplain that may be impacted by the construction of bridge alignment or pillars in it will be undertaken, the DMRC said.

The muck and debris generated would be disposed of scientifically and no dumping shall be allowed on the floodplains, it added.

SHORT TAKES

Former corporator hacked to death

Nagpur: Two persons, including a former corporator of the Nagpur municipal corporation (NMC), have been allegedly murdered in two separate incidents in the city in the last 24 hours, police said on Sunday. The former corporator, Deva Usre, 52, was hacked to death by two motorcycle-borne men on Sunday morning near Bharat Talkies in Sadar police station area, an official said. Police are suspecting a property dispute as the cause behind the incident. Usre had served as a corporator on the Congress' ticket for two terms. "The accused have been identified and search is on to arrest them," the official said. A case of murder has been registered. In another case, a 27-year-old man was brutally killed on Saturday by four history-sheeters over parking of his vehicle. — PTI

MP elephants get a week-long break

Bhopal: Sixteen elephants deployed for carrying out different forest-related tasks, like patrolling, in Madhya Pradesh's Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR), got a break from their routine work and enjoyed a week-long vacation recently, an official said on Sunday. This "rejuvenation camp" for elephants, which ended on Thursday, was part of a 12-year-old tradition of the KTR, he said. "These tuskars help us in different tasks like patrolling, tiger tracking and averting man animal-conflict all the year round. So this camp is our thanksgiving gesture to them for their toil," KTR field director L Krishnamurthy told PTI on Sunday. — PTI

Pak fisherman arrested by BSF

Bhuj: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Sunday apprehended a Pakistani fisherman and seized four fishing boats of the neighbouring country from Harami Nala creek area along the Indo-Pak border in Gujarat's Kutch district. During patrolling near border pillar number 1160 in Harami Nala area, a BSF team observed the movement of some Pakistani fishermen with four-five boats trying to enter the Indian territory early on Sunday morning by taking advantage of rough sea condition, the BSF said in a statement. A fisherman, identified as Alla Bachao Siddique (25 years) from Sindh province of Pakistan, was apprehended. — PTI

Sarpanch held for misusing power

Balangir: A sarpanch has been arrested in Odisha for allegedly misusing powers of a Collector, a police officer said. The sarpanch and her husband have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the demolition of several under construction houses allotted to tribal families under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAYG) in Balangir district, he said. Hemakanti Munda, the sarpanch of Salebhata panchayat in Agalapada block, was arrested on Saturday for ordering the demolition by misusing powers of a Collector which have been delegated to sarpanches by the state government for Covid-19 management, the police officer said. Her husband Mohan Munda was arrested for his role in the demolition drive while efforts are on to nab eight others, he said. As the tribal families did not own land, the construction of houses, under the PMAYG, was in progress on a government plot at Salebhata village after it was allotted to them by the panchayat and block administration, the police officer said. — PTI

2 dead as car skids off U'khand highway

New Tehri: Two persons died and another was injured when a car skidded off a highway in Uttarakhand's Tehri Garhwal district on Sunday and fell on a road below, an official said. The three residents of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh were on their way to Uttarkashi when the accident occurred on the Rishikesh-Gangotri national highway at Kandisaur, revenue official Upendra Bahuguna said. They were rushed to a hospital where Ajay Kumar Sagar (34) and Santosh Gangwar (35) succumbed to injuries. — PTI

4G Net restored in two districts of J&K

High-speed Net restored in Ganderbal, Udhampur

Srinagar, Aug. 16: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday night restored high-speed mobile Internet services on a trial basis in Ganderbal and Udhampur districts — one each in Kashmir and Jammu divisions — over a year after the facility was suspended.

The resumption of 4G Internet services on mobile devices came days after the Centre had informed the Supreme Court that a special committee looking into the matter was considering allowing the facility on a trial basis in two of the 20 districts of the Union Territory. "The high-speed mobile data services in the districts of Ganderbal (Kashmir) and Udhampur (Jammu division) shall be restored forthwith, on trial basis, while in rest of the districts, the Internet speed shall continue to be restricted to 2G only," an order issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Home Department read.

The order issued by Principal Secretary Shaleen Kabra said the directions would be effective from 9 pm Sunday and will remain in force till September 8, unless modified earlier.

"Whereas, in context of

Video of shepherd assaulted by cow vigilantes goes viral

Jammu, Aug. 16: A video purportedly showing a shepherd being roughed up allegedly by cow vigilantes in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir went viral on social media, prompting intervention by police which said all the accused were arrested on Sunday.

"Three separate FIRs were registered in Arnas police station including the one related to the beating of Asgar Ahmed of Garhi village and all the accused were arrested," a police official said.

The video showed a police team rushing towards the crowd to save the victim who was lying on the ground.

He said police took cognisance of the video shared on Twitter showing a group of youth roughing up Ahmed in a forest area where he had reportedly gone for grazing his cattle.

"An FIR under various sections of IPC was registered against the accused persons who were arrested," the official said.

— PTI

the conclusions drawn and the parameters laid down by the special committee for considering calibrated easing of restrictions in limited and comparatively less sensitive geographical areas, the law enforcement agencies, while furnishing fresh inputs relating to the present security scenario in the UT of JK, have identified the districts of Ganderbal and Udhampur for lifting restrictions on high-speed mobile Internet connectivity on trial basis and these recommendations are found to be in conformity with the law laid down as also the conditions set by the special committee," it said. The order said that high-speed Internet will be provided to post-paid subscribers while pre-paid customers would be able to enjoy the benefit only after completing the verification process. Internet services were snapped in Jammu and Kashmir hours before the Centre abrogated its special status on August 5 last year.

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— PTI



Villagers commute with their vehicles through a flood affected area by a boat following release of water from Prakasam Barrage due to heavy rainfall at Pamula Lanka village in Krishna district on Sunday.

— PTI

Flood havoc continues in AP, SDRF deployed

Amaravati, Aug. 16: The swollen Godavari river continued to cause flood havoc in East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday as tens of villages lay marooned even as three teams of State Disaster Response Force have been deployed for rescue and relief operations.

A total of 3,340 people have been moved to 16 relief camps in the two districts so far.

Chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewed the situation with top officials and directed the Collectors of the two districts to remain on high alert and ensure there was no loss of lives due to the calamity.

A TOTAL OF 3,340 people have been moved to 16 relief camps in East and West Godavari districts

A release from the CMO said Jagan Mohan Reddy asked the Collectors to constantly coordinate with the State Disaster Management Authority and take required measures for rescue and relief of the affected people.

Two teams of SDRF personnel have been deployed in West Godavari and one in East.

One more team of SDRF was also moved to Rajamahendravaram where the urban mandal has been affected.

The third warning signal has been raised as the



Devotees offer prayers at a shrine as authorities reopened religious places in Jammu and Kashmir after remaining closed for almost five months due to Covid-19 outbreak in Srinagar on Sunday.

— PTI

'Make a move towards your villages'

Dehradun, Aug. 16: Uttarakhand chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has bought a piece of land in Gairsain, the summer capital of the state.

"On the sacred occasion of Independence Day, I formally became a land owner in Gairsain," Rawat tweeted on Sunday, a day after hoisting the national flag at the Vidhan Sabha in Gairsain.

Giving a big message on reverse migration, Rawat said people's representatives will have to show the way by starting a reverse



Trivendra Singh Rawat

migration themselves. "Gairsain represents the aspirations of people. It lives in the heart of every citizen of Uttarakhand. The aspirations of people are of paramount importance in a democracy. The

road to the all-round development of Uttarakhand goes through Gairsain. People's representatives will have to lead by example by starting a reverse migration themselves," he said.

"A reverse migration alone will change the economic landscape of the hills," Rawat said in a series of tweets. An official at the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) here said Rawat bought a piece of land at Gairsain on Saturday and he plans to build a house there in future.

The chief minister also appealed to people to reconnect with their roots.

"On the holy occasion of Ghee Sankranti, I appeal to you all with folded hands to make a move towards your villages. I expect you to respond to my appeal and unlock the doors of your broken homes in the villages and look after those," he said.

The state government is working sincerely to change the old mindset and achieve development through the route of self-employment, Mr Rawat said.

— PTI

Student's death: 2 held, cops say no harassment

Bulandshahr, Aug. 16: Two people have been arrested in connection with the death of a 20-year-old student here, police said on Sunday while ruling out that she was harassed by bike-borne men before being killed in an accident.

Sudiksha Bhati, who hailed from Deri Scanar village in Gautam Buddha Nagar's Dadri, died on August 10 in a road crash in Bulandshahr district while she was pillion riding a motorcycle with her younger cousin, a minor.

Police said they arrested the two people — Deepak Choudhary and Raju — on the basis of CCTV camera footage. Sudiksha, an academically bright student, was pursuing a graduation course in entrepreneurship at Babson College, Massachusetts (US), on a scholarship and was scheduled to go back on August 20.

While her family has alleged that the road crash took place because two unidentified motorcycle-borne men were "following" her two-wheeler and harassing her, the police on Sunday said it has found no evidence to corroborate their claims.

Senior Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar Singh and District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar during a press conference on Sunday ruled out harassment or a motorcycle stunt as cause of death. They made it clear that the woman's



Sudiksha Bhati

death was an accident. After going through video footage from eight CCTV cameras, police have not found any evidence of harassment, they said.

On the basis of the SIT's probe, eye-witness accounts and CCTV video footages, the incident is not a case of sexual harassment and Sudiksha's death occurred in a road accident, Kumar said.

Deepak told police that while the duo was on the road on a bullet motorcycle, they had to suddenly apply the brakes when an autorickshaw and a bullock cart came in its way as a result of which the bike behind them, on which Sudiksha was riding pillion, rammed into their vehicle and she fell on the road. According to police, after the incident came in the lime-light, Deepak got scared and in order to evade interrogation he got his bike modified by changing its tyres, silencer and even the vehicle registration number plate that had 'Jat' written on it.

Police have recovered the pre-modification parts of the bike. — PTI



Parth Pawar

Pawar family holds meeting in Baramati to pacify Parth

SONU SHRIVASTAVA with agency inputs MUMBAI, AUG. 16

As Pawar family is trying to pacify disgruntled Parth Pawar, son of deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, the Opposition BJP took advantage of the situation and termed Parth, a mature leader. According to reports, a meeting was held in Baramati at Shrinivas Pawar's bungalow to speak to Parth regarding Sharad Pawar's public reprimand.

Few days ago, NCP chief Sharad Pawar had openly called Parth 'immature' and said that he gives absolutely no importance to his grand-nephew's demand for a CBI probe in Sushant Singh Rajput's death case.

The meeting in Baramati was attended by father Ajit Pawar, mother Sunetra Pawar, Uncle Shrinivas Pawar and Aunt Sharmila Pawar on Saturday night.

On August 13, Parth had gone to meet NCP chief Sharad Pawar at the latter's residence Silver Oak in South Mumbai. However, he could not meet the NCP chief but had over two-hour long discussion with paternal aunt Supriya Sule.

According to the media reports, Sharad Pawar was scheduled to go to Baramati on Sunday but cancelled the visit after a telephonic conversation with Ajit Pawar, who was in Baramati, and returned back to Mumbai from Pune.

Meanwhile, BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Narayan Rane said, "Parth is above 18 years and is mature enough. There must be a reason why he demanded a CBI probe in Rajput's death case."

Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnis had on Saturday said it was a "public sentiment" that the probe in actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death be conducted by the CBI even though he believes in capability of the Maharashtra police.

— PTI

Dhoni will spend a lot more time with Territorial Army now, says biz partner

BARAT SHARMA NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

Mahendra Singh Dhoni will be spending a lot more time with the Territorial Army now that he has retired, said friend and business partner Arun Pandey on Sunday, rejecting talk of his brand value going down due to the decision.

Pandey saw the retirement announcement coming after this year's T20 World Cup, which was postponed to 2022 last month, but only Dhoni knew that it would come on Independence Day.

"I was aware that he would do it soon but did not know the exact timing. Anyway it was for him to decide. He had started IPL



M.S. Dhoni

preparations but it was postponed and then the T20 World Cup was postponed, he thought to be mentally free," Pandey told PTI day after Dhoni's unexpected announcement on Saturday.

"And since August 15 is a special day for the Army, he must have thought on

those lines. The T20 World Cup postponement was surely a factor as he planned for it," he said.

Dhoni holds the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army. Following the 2019 World Cup semifinal loss, he trained with the Parachute Regiment for more than a month.

"One thing is for sure, he will be spending more time with the Army. He will also give time to his commercial ventures and other commitments. We will sit down soon and decide the way forward."

In most cases, the brand value of an athlete goes down after retirement but Pandey insists it won't happen to Dhoni.

"Since the World Cup (in

July 2019), we have signed up with 10 new brands and it is a long-term thing. It will keep on increasing as Dhoni is not just about cricket, he is a youth icon.

"In most cases retirement does have an impact but not when it comes to Dhoni. His achievements are not individual, his achievements are for the team and for the country," said Pandey.

Pandey added that Dhoni will play the IPL for another two or three seasons.

"He will play for at least couple of years, if not more. He will be more mentally free now that he is retired. The T20 World Cup postponement was definitely a factor in his retirement."

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Rajasthan HC CJ tests -ve for covid

Jaipur: Chief Justice of Rajasthan high court Indrajit Mahanty on Sunday tested negative for coronavirus after a scare that he has contracted the infection. Jaipur chief medical and health officer (CMHO) Dr Narottam Sharma said the first report had come out positive due to a technical error in the RT-PCR test. "However, he has tested negative in two subsequent reports," Mr Sharma said, adding that there is a possibility of an error cropping up due to mistakes by the health staff or technical issues. The laboratory technique, called Real Time-Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction, is widely used in the diagnosis of genetic diseases and considered more reliable due to its sensitivity. Mr Sharma said the health staff has been asked to remain vigilant with utmost accuracy. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday had expressed concern after the chief justice tested positive for the infection. He had wished him speedy recovery in a tweet. — PTI

Family cremates wrong body in MP

Gwalior: The staffers at the mortuary of a government-run hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior allegedly mixed up bodies of two deceased patients while handing over one of them to the relatives, the police said on Sunday. The family that took the wrong body, which was wrapped in a polythene bag, even cremated it thinking that it was of their relative, a police official said. The incident took place recently at the Gajra Raja Medical College and Hospital and it came to light when the other family reached the hospital to receive the body, he said. According to the police, both the patients had died due to different diseases and tested negative for Covid-19. ASP Satendra Singh Tomar said that one Irtaza Mohammed (64), a resident of Morena, was admitted to the Gajra Raja Medical College on August 11 for the treatment of his hands. — PTI

Steep hike in India's daily count still on

■ **Continued from Page 1** Mexico in 141 days. India took 156 days to reach this figure. The government said the mortality rate is low in India "because of aggressive testing and early detection coupled with quick isolation and effective treatment protocols". India's case fatality rate (CFR) is on a "continuous positive slide" and stands now at 1.94 per cent.

The CFR is the proportion of incident patients dying because of a disease or injury in a certain time window.

India's recovery rate is now 71.91 per cent after 18.91 lakh people were discharged across the country. Of these, over 53,000 patients were discharged in the past 24 hours. The country saw a record of highest single-day recoveries on Saturday, after 57,381 Covid-19 patients were cured.

To further build on this achievement, 32 states and Union territories have exceeded the 50 per cent mark.

About a dozen states or Union territories have exceeded the national recovery rate. The gap between the recovered patients and active Covid-19 cases has increased further and crossed 11 lakhs, at 1,184,814 on Sunday.

The improvement in the recovery rate of coronavirus patients is mainly being attributed to the continuous strengthening of the testing network in the country. There are 1,465 labs in the country — 968 labs in the state sector and 497 in the private sector. With efficient and aggressive testing, India is rapidly moving towards completing three crore Covid-19 tests.

A total of 2,93,09,703 samples had been tested for detection of Covid-19 till August 15, with 7,46,608 samples being tested on Saturday alone.

Improved and effective clinical treatment in hospitals, supervised home isolation, use of non-invasive oxygen support, and improved services of ambulances for ferrying patients for prompt and timely treatment have also been the focus of the Centre and the state and Union territory governments.



An artist gives finishing touch to an idol of goddess Durga in Kolkata on Sunday. The idol will be sent to France for the Durga Puja festival. — PTI

Prohibitory orders in riot-hit B'loru till August 18

Bengaluru, Aug. 16: Prohibitory orders clamped in parts of the city after the violence last week led to police firing, killing three people, have been extended from Sunday to Tuesday. The order would be in force from the morning of August 16 to the morning of August 18.

Bengaluru police commissioner Kamal Pant, in his order, said there is a ban on more than two persons gathering at any place, carrying of any kinds of weapons and convening any public meetings. Violators would be prosecuted, he said. Three people were killed after police opened fire to quell a mob that went on a rampage in DJ Halli and adjoining areas on Tuesday night over an inflammatory social media post allegedly put out by P. Naveen, a relative of Pulakeshi Nagar MLA R. Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy.

The MLAs residence and a police station at DJ Halli were torched by the rioters who also set many police and private vehicles afire, and looted the belongings of the legislator and those of his sister.

About 200 people have been arrested so far in connection with the incident and many others have been detained. — PTI

India sends equipment to Mauritius to tackle oil spill

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

In response to a request by Indian Ocean nation Mauritius for assistance in dealing with the environmental crisis due to oil spill on its south-eastern coast caused by a Japanese merchant vessel that struck a coral reef and ran aground there last month spilling about 1,000 tonnes of fuel, India on Sunday said it has "dispatched over 30 tonnes of technical equipment and material on board an IAF aircraft to Mauritius" to supplement that country's ongoing oil spill containment and salvage operations.

The specialised equip-

ment, consisting of "ocean booms, river booms, disc skimmers, heli skimmers, power packs, blowers, salvage barge and oil absorbent Graphene pads" and other accessories, is specifically designed to contain the oil slick, skim oil from water, and assist in clean up and salvage operations, New Delhi said, in a statement.

A 10-member Technical Response Team, consisting of Indian Coast Guard (ICG) personnel specially trained for dealing with oil spill containment measures, has also been deployed to Mauritius to extend necessary technical and operational assistance at the site, New

Delhi added. India has extremely close ties with Mauritius.

New Delhi said the "urgent assistance reflects the close bonds of friendship between India and Mauritius and India's abiding commitment to assist the people of Mauritius in need".

According to international news agency reports, the Japanese merchant vessel MV Wakashio struck a coral reef off Mauritius on July 25, spilling about 1,000 tonnes of fuel oil and endangering corals, fish and other marine life in what some scientists have called the Indian Ocean country's worst ecological disaster.

the Space Commission, the apex policy making body on space related issues. The Space Commission is headed by Isro chairman and department of space secretary K. Sivan.

Two years ago, PM Narendra Modi had announced the human space mission in his Independence Day address.

The Gaganyaan mission aims to send a three-member crew to space for a period of five to seven days by 2022 when India completes 75 years of Independence.

The ISRO had started planning for the mission

Lucknow, Aug. 16: The Uttar Pradesh government has extended by three months the detention of physician Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act for his alleged provocative speech during the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests.

Khan was arrested in January for delivering the speech at Aligarh Muslim University on December 10, 2019. It is the second time his detention under the stringent law has been extended by another three months, this time beyond August 13.

Under the National Security Act (NSA), people can be detained without a charge for up to 12



Kafeel Khan

months if authorities are satisfied that they are threat to the national security or law and order. In an order dated August 4, 2020, the UP Home Department said the NSA was invoked against Khan on February 13, 2020, on the orders of the Aligarh district magistrate.

The matter was then sent to the advisory coun-

cil, which in its report, said there are "enough reasons" to keep Dr Khan in jail following which orders were given on May 6, 2020, to extend his detention under the NSA by three months, that is till August 13, 2020, the order said.

According to the report of the UP advisory council and the report obtained from district magistrate, Aligarh, governor Anandiben Patel using the powers vested in her, directed that the detention of Kafeel Khan be further extended by three more months.

"As a result, Kafeel will remain in jail till November 13, 2020," the order said. — PTI

Operators need to provide time in, time out at intermediate rail stations 'Pvt train operators can choose halt stations'

ANANYA SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

Private operators who will be handed over 150 trains to ply on 109 routes by the Railways will have the freedom to choose halt stations of the trains they operate, documents released by the national transporter have shown. However, the private operators have to submit in advance to the Railways the list of such intermediate stations on the trains' paths where they are proposing halts in advance.

THE RAILWAYS has also said the number of such halts of the pvt trains will not be more than the number of existing halts of the fastest train of the Railways operating in that route

ment," the Railways has said in reply to a query by one of the private players who attended pre-application meetings.

The Railways has also said the number of such halts of the private trains will not be more than the

number of existing halts of the fastest train of the Railways operating in that route. The train operation plan submitted by private operators will also have to include the stations at which the water tanks in the trains need to be filled and also the railway stations, washing lines or stabling lines, as the case maybe, at which the train toilets would be evacuated.

As earlier reported by PTI, the fares for private trains that are scheduled to begin operations by 2023

will not be regulated by any authority and will be decided by the private operators depending on market conditions.

Bombardier Transportation India, Siemens Limited, Alstom Transport India Ltd are among the 23 firms that have evinced interest in running private trains.

The first-of-its-kind venture, the project to bring in private players to run trains is expected to see private sector investment of around ₹30,000 crore. — PTI



Vehicles buried in landslide rubble following heavy rainfall being salvaged in Jaipur on Sunday. — PTI

Space Commission," a source said.

The sources added that staff members from Isro's different centres were infected. Only essential and process related work is on. Also, the related industry has been affected. Even the training of four astronauts in Russia was hit due to the pandemic. However, the training has now resumed.

"Even if we are not able to launch the manned mission by December 2021, we have eight months to cover up for the time we have lost," the source said. — PTI

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THE ASIAN AGE

17 AUGUST 2020

Bhushan ruling: Court in contempt of justice

The Supreme Court of India is perfectly justified when it says the judiciary is considered “the last hope when a citizen fails to get justice anywhere” but its decision to punish one who doubted its ability to deliver justice is problematic. The court’s observation on its own role in the democratic scheme of things came on Friday along with its finding that lawyer and activist Prashant Bhushan is guilty of criminal contempt of the court for his two tweets that were critical of it.

One of Mr Bhushan’s tweets suggested that access to justice was denied during lockdown, and he seemingly attributed the reason to the Chief Justice of India (CJI). In another tweet, he held the Supreme Court, and the last four CJIs in particular, responsible for “the weakening of democracy” in India in the last six years. Those who wonder why a lawyer should hold the judiciary responsible for the denial of access to justice and weakening of democracy may find their answers in the 108-page judgment itself. “The Indian judiciary is not only one of pillars on which the Indian

We have the SC putting off the hearing on the habeas corpus petitions... It refused to act when its intervention was sought to bring relief to guest workers forced to trek home... It will be a far-fetched claim if someone says such acts added to the dignity of the court...

democracy stands but is the central pillar,” insists the judgment. Is it not then fair that a citizen, who feels the structure of democracy is weakened, holds the institution which arrogates to itself the role of the central pillar, responsible? Isn’t he entitled to hold the view that the CJIs, as masters of the roster, have a role in it? The court does not share the view, obviously. One must stand with the court when it says “the Supreme Court is a protector of the fundamental rights of the citizens, as also is endowed with a duty to keep the other pillars of democracy i.e. the executive and the legislature, within the constitutional bounds”. But has it come to the aid of the people and protected their fundamental rights when it was warranted the most is the moot question. Some of the recent events are not particularly encouraging. We have the SC putting off for months together the hearing on the habeas corpus petitions, a constitutional guarantee against the State’s unauthorised usurpation of people’s liberties, moved by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It initially refused to act when its intervention was sought to bring relief to the millions of guest workers who were forced to trek home following a government missive. It is yet to hear petitions against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, which many fear undermined the very idea of India. The highest court shocked many when it put pre-conditions to hear the students of a university who sought protection from governmental action. It will be a far-fetched claim if someone says such acts added to the dignity of the court and strengthened the people’s belief in the system; the contrary could very well be the truth. Believers in democracy could air their desperation publicly; little purpose will be served by shooting the messengers.

Dhoni made winning a habit

Mahendra Singh Dhoni is a sui generis. Coming as he did from a town in the hinterland and his first job as a railway ticket examiner, his background seemed all wrong and he was run out without scoring on his international debut. As he evolved from a gawky youth with long hair into a suave national icon he also transformed Indian cricket — on the field with his instinctive dynamism and in the selection committee room where he backed the men he saw as match winners.

Leading a bunch of young players, he stunned the world in the T20 World Cup in a format that was thought to be unsuitable for the laid-back temperament of Indian cricketers. Like Kapil’s Devils did in the 1983 World Cup final at Lord’s, Dhoni’s young guns had shown an ability to seize the moment. Indian cricket was a financial powerhouse by then but with few trophies in its cupboard. Dhoni changed that by bringing in his winning ways, leading from the front as one of the best finishers in the game and the safest catcher and alert stumper.

Soaking up the pressures while retaining an essential calmness to bring out the best of sporting skill sets was Dhoni’s forte. He became the only captain in the world to win across formats — T20 World Cup in 2007, World Cup in 2011 and Champions Trophy in 2013 after having first led India to the top rung of the Test ladder of merit, besides three IPLs for his favourite Chennai Super Kings and two Champions League titles.

In handling success with equanimity, Dhoni has become an inspirational national figure with a special place in his heart for men of the armed forces, who see him as an apolitical figure endowed with the ideal fighting spirit. He kept up the element of surprise in timing his retirement announcement, lacing it with the Armed Forces’ 24-hour clock — 1929 hours — in perhaps a hint of what he may like to do as a mentor. Close to 40, he gives up a young man’s international game while leaving Indian cricket in better shape.

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Subhani



Find motive to work out Chinese checkers moves



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

It has been over 100 days now that the Chinese are squatting on Indian territory. They are refusing to move back. Neither the government nor any former official or for that matter any strategic thinker has answered the basic question — Why have the Chinese occupied our land? The Chinese, of course, choose to deny that they are in our territory and profess they are only at best on their perception of the Line of Actual Control.

For the sake of argument even if you buy the Chinese explanation, their behaviour still is in stark contrast to 1962 where the Chinese were tactically successful in the eastern sector. After launching an unprovoked aggression then they still chose to retreat 20 kilometres not from their professed claim line but from the Actual Ground Position as on November 7, 1959. The Chinese ceasefire declaration of November 19, 1962, stated as follows — “Beginning from 21 November 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will cease fire along the entire Sino-Indian border. Beginning from 1 December 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to positions 20 kilometres (12 miles) behind the line of actual control, which existed between China and India on 7 November 1959. In the eastern sector, although the Chinese frontier guards have so far been fighting on Chinese territory north of the traditional customary line, they are prepared to withdraw from their present positions to the north of the illegal McMahon Line, and to withdraw twenty kilometers (12 miles) back from that line. In the middle and western sectors, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw 20

kilometres (12 miles) from the line of actual control.”

What is the salience of November 7, 1959? It was on this date a seminal proposal was made to Pandit Nehru by the then Chinese premier Chou-en-Lai. Excerpts from that letter are worth quoting: “In order to maintain effectively the status quo of the border between the two countries, to ensure the tranquility of the border regions and to create a favourable atmosphere for a friendly settlement of the boundary question, the Chinese government proposes that the armed forces of China and India each withdraw 20 kilometres at once from the so-called McMahon Line in the east, and from the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west, and that the two sides undertake to refrain from again sending their armed personnel to be stationed in and patrol the zones from which they have evacuated their armed forces, but still maintain civil administrative personnel and unarmed police there for the performance of administrative duties and maintenance of order. This proposal is in effect an extension of the Indian government’s proposal contained in its note dated September 10 that neither side should send its armed personnel to Longju, to the entire border between China and India, and moreover a proposal to separate the troops of the two sides by as great a distance as 40 kilometres. If there is any need to increase this distance, the Chinese government is also willing to give it consideration. In a word, both before and after the formal delimitation of the boundary between our two countries through negotiations, the Chinese government is willing to do its utmost to create the most

peaceful and most secure border zones between our two countries, so that our two countries will never again have apprehensions or come to a clash on account of border issues. If this proposal of the Chinese government is acceptable to the Indian government, concrete measures for its implementation can be discussed and decided upon at once by the two governments through diplomatic channels.”

In his reply on November 16, 1959, Nehru after extensive consultations both in the Congress Working Committee and his Cabinet rejected the proposal for all the right reasons outlined in that letter except insofar it applied to Ladakh. He wrote “I suggest, therefore, that in the Ladakh area, both our governments should agree on the following as an interim measure. The Government of India should withdraw all personnel to the west of the line which the Chinese government have shown as the international boundary in their 1956 maps which, so far as we are aware are their latest maps. Similarly, the Chinese government should withdraw their personnel to the east of the international boundary, which has been described by the Government of India in their earlier notes and correspondence and shown in their official maps. Since the two lines are separated by long distances, there should not be the slightest risk of border clashes between the forces on either side.” One can only speculate that had Nehru accepted Chou’s proposal the trajectory of Sino-Indian relations could have been different.

Did Prime Minister Modi renege on some commitments given to President Xi in Wuhan and Mamallapuram, is it about distance from the US, accepting China’s new hedonistic world order or all of them?

Since 1962, India and China have had a number of standoffs but eventually they were all surmounted some with casualties and others without any loss of life. Even Doklam that persisted for 73 days was eventually cracked through a fortnight of diplomatic negotiations in 2017. However, the current crisis is substantively distinctive for both Chinese belligerence and brazenness. They have killed 20 Indian soldiers and injured numerous more in at least three clashes in Ladakh alone. Ten Indian soldiers were taken hostage and subsequently released by the People’s Liberation Army.

Despite both foreign ministers speaking to each other, Mr Doval confabulating with his special representative equivalent, numerous conferences of the working mechanism for consultation and coordination on India-China borders affairs, five corps commander level exchanges and other tactical level military talks, the Chinese are not budging. In fact, in the July issue of the China-India Review, Ambassador Wei Sun Weidong has squarely blamed India for the current crisis. Unlike this government that pulled documents of the MOD website.

China has effectively moved the Line Actual Control westwards by creating new facts on the ground along the entire LAC in Ladakh. They have instigated Nepal and Pakistan to indulge in cartographic aggression. The question, however, remains, why? Did Prime Minister Modi renege on some commitments given to President Xi in Wuhan and Mamallapuram, is it about distance from the US, accepting China’s new hedonistic world order or all of them? Till the time we do not know what the Chinese want we will not be able to deal with them effectively going forward.

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

LETTERS

BAG OF GOODIES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Independence Day address to the nation opened a bag of goodies. The key take-aways included efforts to develop three Covid-19 vaccines, a National Digital Health Mission that would give every Indian a health identity, giving away sanitary napkins at ₹1, a 7,500 MW solar power park in Ladakh and an ₹100 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline Project to move India towards modernity at a faster pace. The PM also lauded the jawans for rising to the challenges on the borders.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

BOOST TO GIGS

ONE MAJOR and perhaps largely irreversible fallout of this mega-pandemic is that every nation’s informal working economy, the gig and working from home, will get formalised. Economic globalisation and the exponential burst of technology will soon bear out that work carried out in isolation due to interruptions such as the coronavirus already stand largely factored in. What is of relevance is that the gig economy is destined to grow as people find myriad opportunities to earn beyond the brick and mortar concept of an office to fit with their chosen work-life style.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

SPARED IGNOMINY

MSD WAS ABLE to read the writing on the wall. At 39, it was impossible for him to match the fitness required for him to make the cut. His timely retirement spared him the ignominy of an ouster. Indian cricket has had a long obnoxious tradition of failing to give an honourable exit to star players, either misbehaving with them or retaining them way past their prime, blocking the way for young talent. MSD was able to avoid this fate and by a whisker. It is a happy ending.

Chanchal Nandy
Durgapur

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Syed Abdul Monim (Aug. 13). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Gautam Moorthy



August 9, 2020, will go down as a red-letter day in India’s history. While the world and India, too, remained largely immobilised owing to the ubiquitous Chinese virus, the defence minister, Rajnath Singh, announced what is arguably the most historic reform ever undertaken by India’s ministry of defence (MoD). It put out a list of 101 major war fighting equipment, platforms and systems whose imports are to be progressively terminated from December 2020 to December 2025. There is supposedly yet another “negative import” list due. This left observers hard put to count the systems/platforms left out for future import.

A quick glance at the list indicates that 69 systems/platforms have the cut-off date of December 2020, 11 with December 2021, four with December 2022, eight with December 2023, eight with December 2024 and one with December 2025. A cursory look at the timelines would indicate to the astute observer that these have been drawn up keeping in mind the indigenised content already incorporated into the system.

With this announcement closing the tap on imports, India’s ranking as the second largest defence importer in the world next only to Saudi Arabia will certainly drop much to the relief of its government and citizens. Besides saving precious foreign exchange, it will also indicate to the world that India is no longer punching below its weight.

While all this is music to the ears of most Indians as it would boost manufacturing, employment and trade, thereby giving a fillip to the economy, how this would be operationalised is the question that needs to be addressed.

There is a lot of apprehension that has been expressed in the media. Some commentators have stated that this is nothing but new wine in old bottles being as it is a reiteration of the Defence Procurement Procedure 2016 (DPP-2016). However, if one examines that document in some detail, it is seen that this is simply not the case, but a logical conclusion of that policy four years down the line.

In the foreword prefacing that document, the then defence minis-

ter, late Manohar Parrikar, very presciently forecasted this conclusion. He had written, “Hence, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is determined to treat DPP 2016 as a dynamic and an evolving document and is committed to making improvements based on emerging data and anecdotal evidence, to realise the vision of ‘Make in India’ in the defence sector.” It is evident that this import embargo list is neither a reiteration of that policy nor something completely new, but simply a consequence consistent with that policy.

The other apprehension is that India’s military-industrial complex has not matured enough to be standing on its own feet and delivering the goods. This too is fallacious as a number of platforms/systems that are now being manufactured in India is a testimony to the level of expertise achieved. This has taken place either through tie-ups with firms abroad (the strategic partnership model) or through the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) route.

Going forward, how this embargo would be operationalised is the question rightly asked. First,

India’s defence industry complex, tightly controlled by the government, represented by 41 ordnance factories and nine defence PSUs have now to compete with the private sector and can no longer bank on the Armed Forces to bail them out with orders whose pricing in many cases is exorbitant.

Second, within the private sector, there is a humongous scope for medium and small scale industries to rise to the occasion by ramping up capacities and building up a huge defence industry base to cater for ancillaries, sub-systems and components that would be required if India is going solo and not relying on government imports.

This leads us to the third important factor, which is that the private sector and the corporatised Ordnance Factory Board along with the defence PSUs are free to sign MoUs with original equipment manufacturers abroad to also import critical ancillaries, sub-systems and components for manufacture within India with transfer of technology and with proportionate offsets. This single significant step frees the government from getting involved in complex negotiations

with foreign firms and being compelled to adhering to stringent policies and rules laid down in the government financial regulations and the DPP (Defence Procurement Procedure 2020). All such manufacturers will also be free to export their products making India a net exporter of defence products.

The requirement to drastically reduce imports has long been felt but it needed a strong political dispensation and the will to carry it out. The road ahead is not going to be smooth but this single significant step taken by the government to wean itself away from imports in this crucial domain needs to be applauded. That it was in the making since 2016 is known. However, it appears to have been pushed through now because of the combination of a slackening economy, the deleterious effect of Covid-19 and, above all, by China’s transgressions in Eastern Ladakh. How this will play out remains to be seen.

Lt. Gen. Gautam Moorthy (Retd)
is a former member of the Armed Forces Tribunal and a former director-general of ordnance services

SHORT TAKES

ARIANE ROCKET PUTS TELECOM SATELLITES

Paris, Aug. 16: A rocket that blasted off from French Guiana successfully placed two communications satellites into orbit on Saturday, launch firm Ariane space said.

The Ariane 5 rocket took off from Kourou, the European Space Agency's space centre in the South American territory, the company said in a statement.

Two satellites on board — belonging to the intergovernmental provider Intelsat and Japan's Broadcasting Satellite System Corporation — were later successfully placed into orbit, Arianespace said.

A servicing vehicle that will dock with other satellites in orbit was also deployed, it added.

The launch — the first for Arianespace since activities at Kourou were halted in March due to the Coronavirus — had originally been scheduled for July 28 but was delayed to allow for more "technical inspections".

Another delay followed due to "the unexpected behaviour of one sensor" for a liquid hydrogen tank.

ITALY GARBAGE DIPS WITH CURBS BUT PLASTICS RISE

Rome, Aug. 16 : Italy produced 10 per cent less garbage during its Coronavirus lockdown, but environmentalists warn that increased reliance on disposable masks and packaging is imperiling efforts to curb single-use plastics that end up in oceans and seas.

Italian researchers estimate that during the peak months of Italy's lockdown in March and April, urban waste production fell by 5,00,000 tons. That decrease is enabling dumps in Italy — where trash collection in major cities has often become a hot-button political issue — to absorb the 3,00,000 tons of extra waste from protective masks and gloves estimated to be used this year, according to the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research.

"Substantially, the figures will balance each other by the end of this year," Valeria Frittelloni, the institute's head of waste management and circular economy, told The Associated Press. But the pandemic dealt a blow to efforts to move away from single-use plastics in many places where they were just beginning to become mainstream. UN, Greenpeace, Italy's Marevivo environmental organization and other such groups are warning that continued reliance on single-use plastics will pose longer-term risks to the environment.

GREENLAND ICE HAS SHRUNK BEYOND RETURN

Greenland, Aug. 16: Greenland's ice sheet may have shrunk past the point of return, with the ice likely to melt away no matter how quickly the world reduces climate-warming emissions, new research suggests.

Scientists studied data on 234 glaciers across the Arctic territory spanning 34 years through 2018 and found that annual snowfall was no longer enough to replenish glaciers of the snow and ice being lost to summertime melting.

That melting is already causing global seas to rise about a millimeter on average per year. If all of Greenland's ice goes, the water released would push sea levels up by an average of 6 meters — enough to swamp many coastal cities around the world. This process, however, would take decades.

"Greenland is going to be the canary in the coal mine, and the canary is already pretty much dead at this point," said glaciologist Ian Howat at Ohio State University. He and his colleagues published the study Thursday in the Nature Communications Earth & Environment journal.

The Arctic has been warming at least twice as fast as the rest of the world for the last 30 years, an observation referred to as Arctic amplification. The polar sea ice hit its lowest extent for July in 40 years.

The Arctic thaw has brought more water to the region, opening up routes for shipping traffic, as well as increased interest in extracting fossil fuels and other natural resources. Greenland is strategically important for the US military and its ballistic missile early warning system, as the shortest route from Europe to North America goes via the Arctic island.

‘Massive poisonous shock’: Scientists fear lasting impact

Wildlife at risk include the seagrasses blanketing sand in the shallow waters

Nairobi, Aug. 16: Some corals have lived for centuries at the fringes of Mauritius. Now smothered for days in heavy fuel oil spilled from a wrecked Japanese tanker nearby, parts of those reefs may be in trouble.

The full impact of the toxic spill is still unfolding, scientists say. As the Indian Ocean island's residents scramble to mop up the oil slicks and clumps, they are seeing dead eels and fish floating in the water, as fuel-soaked seabirds limp onto shore.

Satellite images also show the 1,000 tonnes of spilled oil spreading northward along the coastline from the spill site in the turquoise waters of Blue Bay Marine Park. The damage, scientists say, could impact Mauritius and its tourism-dependent economy for decades.

"This oil spill occurred in one of, if not the most, sensitive areas in Mauritius," oceanographer and environmental engineer Vassen Kauppaymuthoo said by telephone from the island, where he was surveying the disaster. "We are talking of decades to recover from this damage, and some of it may never recover."

The wildlife at risk include the seagrasses blanketing sand in the shallow waters, clownfish darting around coral reefs, mangrove trees coralling the coastline with their tangled root systems, and the critically endangered Pink Pigeon, endemic to the island.

Giant tortoises slow-walk through a nature reserve on the nearby islet, Ile-aux-Aigrettes, where there is also a scientific research station. Altogether, Blue Bay Marine park counts 38 types of coral and 78 species of fish.

The spill brings "a massive poisonous shock to the system," said Adam Molina, an environmental scientist from Mauritius who lectures at Keele University in Britain. — Agencies



Picture taken near near Blue Bay Marine Park, shows the vessel MV Wakashio, belonging to a Japanese company but Panamanian-flagged, that ran aground near Blue Bay Marine Park off the coast of south-east Mauritius. (R) Workers collect leaked oil at the beach in Riviere des Creoles. — AFP

India sends 30 tonnes of equipment to Mauritius

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

In response to a request by Indian Ocean nation Mauritius for assistance in dealing with the environmental crisis due to oil spill on its south-eastern coast caused by a Japanese merchant vessel that struck a coral reef and ran aground there last month, India on Sunday said it has "dispatched over 30 tonnes of technical equipment and material on board an IAF Aircraft to Mauritius" to supplement that country's ongoing oil spill containment measures, has also been

tions. The specialised equipment, consisting of "Ocean Booms, River Booms, Disc Skimmers, Hell Skimmers, Power packs, Blowers, Salvage barge and Oil absorbent Graphene pads" and other accessories, is specifically designed to contain the oil slick, skim oil from water, and assist in clean up and salvage operations, New Delhi said, in a statement.

A 10-member Technical Response Team, consisting of Indian Coast Guard (ICG) personnel specially trained for dealing with oil spill containment measures, has also been

deployed to Mauritius to extend necessary technical and operational assistance at the site, New Delhi added. India has extremely close ties with Mauritius. New Delhi said the "urgent assistance reflects the close bonds of friendship between India and Mauritius and India's abiding commitment to assist the people of Mauritius in need".

According to international news agency reports, the Japanese merchant vessel MV Wakashio struck a coral reef off Mauritius on July 25, spilling about 1,000 tonnes of fuel oil and endangering corals.

SHIP THAT OOZED OIL OFF IN COAST SPLITS INTO TWO

Tokyo, Aug 16: A Japanese bulk carrier that ran aground on a reef in Mauritius last month threatening a marine ecological disaster around the Indian Ocean island has broken apart, authorities said on Saturday.

The condition of the MV Wakashio was worsening early on Saturday and it split by the afternoon, the Mauritius National Crisis Committee said.

"At around 4.30pm, a major detachment of the vessel's forward section was observed," it said in a statement. "On the basis of the experts' advice, the towing plan is being implemented." — Agencies

Air pollution in China falls 10.8% due to lockdown

Shanghai, Aug. 16: China saw average concentrations of lung-damaging airborne particles known as PM2.5 fall by 10.8% from January to July as industry slowed because of the Coronavirus, data showed on Friday, though levels were still well above WHO recommendations.

Average PM2.5 stood at 33 micrograms per cubic metre over the seven months, according to data collected from monitoring stations in more than 300 cities, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said. China's national standard is 35 micrograms, though the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends levels of no more than 10.

PM2.5 is caused by the burning of fossil fuels and other industrial processes and is associated with a range of health problems, including respiratory disease and cancer. The environment ministry said the improvement in air quality throughout the country in February and March was "incomparable" after the government

imposed lockdowns to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, which cut industrial activity and traffic.

But environmental groups have warned that China might turn a blind eye to industrial polluters and rely on energy-intensive processes to try to reverse the economic impact of the pandemic in the second half of the year. "There was a temporary pollution increase in April but it quickly went down in May," said Li Shuo, senior energy and climate analyst with Greenpeace. "We need to see if July represents the beginning of a larger trend." In July, average PM2.5 levels fell 5%, but some regions saw a rebound. The capital, Beijing, saw average PM2.5 rise 10.8% to 41 micrograms. The smog-prone Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region as a whole jumped 5.9% to 36 micrograms.

"Industrial outputs are coming back to pre-Covid levels," said Li.

"Sometimes air quality would correspond with that, sometimes not. Weather and other conditions play a role here too." — Agencies

NYC releases policy to fight climate crisis

New York, Aug 16: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on Friday released proposed regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emission and to implement the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

The proposed regulation will be published in the state register on Aug. 19 and mandates a 40% reduction of methane and other harmful gases by 2030 and an 85% reduction by 2050, according to a statement.

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The regulation also requires the state to achieve a carbon-free electricity system by 2040, the department said in a statement.

Symbol of threat as Brandenburg dries

Seddiner, see , Germany, Aug. 16: After years of summer heatwaves and minimal rainfall, eastern Germany's lakelands are drying out, local scientists say, to the detriment of fish and plant life as well as fishermen.

Seddiner lake, in the state of Brandenburg, south-west of Berlin, has sunk 60 cm annually on average over the past few years, with local geographer Knut Kaiser calling it the beginning of the end for the region's lakes.

"You could say that Seddiner is a symbol of a situation, or to put it more dramatically, it has become a portent for climate change here in Brandenburg," Kaiser, from the German Research Centre for Geosciences, said.

Spanning 218 hectares, it is fed from groundwater, leaving it at the mercy of rainfall and human water usage. At a high point in 2013, the lake was full enough to flow naturally into a smaller neighbouring lake. In 2020, piers along the water's edge stand high and dry.

The state has the third

● **THE STATE has the third most lakes in Germany relative to its size, but is the second most arid, according to the German Weather Agency.**

most lakes in Germany relative to its size, but is the second most arid, according to the German Weather Agency.

After the drought years of 2018 and 2019, Kaiser said the lake will likely lose a massive amount of water in 2020 for the third year running.

"This is a bad sign! You could put it more starkly: It is a horror story for the region's water landscape," he said.

While scientists agree that the main problems facing Brandenburg's lakes are linked to climate change, human influence also plays a role. Reeds, which clean the lake and act as a place for fish to spawn, have been exposed by low water and are often trampled by people heading to beaches, Kaiser said.

— Agencies

California wildfire burns 21 structures, forces 1,500 to evacuate their houses

Los Angeles, Aug. 16: Firefighters scrambled to protect thousands of homes from a wildfire racing through brush-covered mountains north of Los Angeles on Friday that caused hundreds of evacuations and burned 21 structures.

The blaze, dubbed the Lake Fire, swelled to over 17,000 acres (6,880 hectares), forcing up to 1,500 people from their homes after erupting on Wednesday afternoon in the Angeles National Forest.

Triple digit temperatures and single digit humidity fanned flames on Friday evening, and little let-up was expected over the weekend with an excessive heat warning in effect across Southern California.

"We saw extreme fire conditions," Los Angeles County Fire Department spokesman Frank Garrido said of the operation in steep canyons aided by firefighting helicopters.

The cause of the blaze was under investigation but human activity is likely to blame, said US Forest



A Riverside firefighter stands on top of his truck during the Lake Fire at Pine Canyon Road in the Angeles National Forest, by Lake Hughes, 60 miles north of Los Angeles, California — AFP

Service spokesman Andrew Mitchell.

No casualties were reported but the blaze threatened 5,420 homes and other structures in communities about 40 miles (65 km) north of downtown Los Angeles where residents have been told to prepare for possible evacuations over the weekend, Garrido said.

Much of the area has not had a fire in 60-100 years, allowing flames to move swiftly through fuel-choked areas.

● **TRIPLE DIGIT temperatures and single digit humidity fanned flames on Friday evening, and little let-up was expected over the weekend with an excessive heat warning in effect across Southern California.**

Across the United States, fires have been less ferocious so far in 2020, burning around 1.4 million fewer acres than in the same period of 2019.

— AFP

Firefighters fight climbing flames

Apui, Brazil, Aug 16 : For a moment, the Brazilian firefighters were taken aback by the sudden rage of the climbing flames: the speed at which they grew and moved, carried by the evening wind.

Under the supervision of fire fighters from Brazil's environment agency Ibama, a farmer in this remote part of the Amazon had set alight undergrowth along part of his land, a last-ditch attempt to divert a major fire approaching his home by starving fuel from the encroaching flames.

But fire is unpredictable, especially here in the Amazon where different vegetation burns at different rates during the long dry months of the annual "fire season." Wind and heat can quickly change the pattern of a blaze. Even rainfall from months

ago can make a difference. Ten firefighters, dressed in yellow flame-retardant jackets with white balacavas covering their mouths to protect from the smoke, worked to control the larger blaze by pushing the new flames with a water cannon towards it.

There is little else to be done. The fire, filling up the horizon, is too big to put out with the little equipment and the small team that Ibama has in Apui, a sawmill town of around 20,000 people on a rough dirt patch of the Trans-Amazonian highway in the eastern corner of Brazil's giant Amazonas state.

Two journalists accompanied the firefighters, sweating from the flames and wearing gas masks against the smoke, as the heat rose through their boots. — Agencies

ENVIRONMENT | THREAT

Global warming is emerging as a driver of infectious disease like malaria, dengue to Zika

Climate change could expose new epidemics

Paris, Aug. 16: Long-dormant viruses brought back to life; the resurgence of deadly and disfiguring smallpox; a dengue or zika "season" in Europe.

These could be disaster movie storylines, but they are also serious and increasingly plausible scenarios of epidemics unleashed by global warming, scientists say.

The Covid-19 pandemic that has swept the globe and claimed over 7,60,000 lives so far almost certainly came from a wild bat, highlighting the danger of

humanity's constant encroachment on the planet's dwindling wild spaces.

But the expanding ecological footprint of our species could trigger epidemics in other ways too.

Climate change — already wreaking havoc with one degree Celsius of warming — is also emerging as a driver of infectious disease, whether by expanding the footprint of malaria- and dengue-carrying mosquitos, or

defrosting prehistoric pathogens from the Siberian permafrost.

"In my darkest moments, I see a really horrible future for Homo sapiens because we are an animal, and when we extend our borders things will happen to us," said Birgitta Evengard, a researcher in clinical microbiology at Umea University in Sweden.

"Our biggest enemy is our own ignorance," she added. "Nature is full of microorganisms." Think of permafrost, a climate change time bomb spread across Russia, Canada and Alaska that contains three

times the carbon that has been emitted since the start of industrialisation.

Even if humanity manages to cap global warming at under two degrees Celsius, the cornerstone goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement, the permafrost area will decrease by a quarter by 2100, according to the UN's climate science panel, the IPCC. And then there are the permafrost's hidden treasures.

"Microorganisms can survive in frozen space for a long, long time," said

Vladimir Romanovsky, a professor of geophysics at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

As ground thaws, once-frozen soil particles, organic material and microorganisms that had been locked away for millennia are carried toward the surface by water flows, he explained.

"That's how thawing can spread these microorganisms into present day environments." There are already examples of ancient, long-frozen bugs coming to life. — AFP



Representational image

— AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,877.34	-1.13
Nifty 50	11,178.40	-1.08
S&P 500*	3,372.85	-0.02
Dollar (₹)	74.90	-0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.87	0.00
Euro (₹)	88.43	0.09
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,691.730	1.35
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.80	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.965	0.070
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.709	0.00

* As of Friday/Saturday

Zimbabwe annual inflation soars to 837%

Annual inflation in Zimbabwe accelerated to 837.53 per cent in July, the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency said on Saturday in a Twitter post. The year-on-year rate for June was 737.3 per cent. The monthly rate was 35.53 per cent, up from 31.7 per cent in June. The southern African nation is struggling with food and fuel shortages and a local currency that has imploded since being re-introduced last year after a decade-long hiatus.

Chandra: Steel demand to dip significantly



Steel demand is expected to decline significantly in 2020-21. Most of the steel producing regions are expected to witness a decline in crude steel output due to production cuts amidst ongoing lockdowns. The global economic growth is expected to see a contraction of over 3 per cent in 2020, Tata Steel chairman N. Chandrababhan Naidu said in Tata Steel's annual report, terming the slump as the "worst contraction" since the 1930s.

Strict safety rules for construction machinery soon

To ensure greater safety on highways, the government has proposed stricter norms that include features like machine-mounted audible travel alarms, non-metallic fuel tank and wider operator visibility for construction equipment machinery. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has come out with a draft notification for construction equipment vehicles that addresses issues of safety requirements.

Peak power demand declines further to 5.65%

The slump in peak power demand has widened to 5.65 per cent in the first fortnight of August from a 2.61 per cent drop recorded in July, by the power ministry data. Peak power demand met was at 167.49 GW in the first half of Aug., down by 5.65 per cent from 177.52 GW recorded in Aug. last year. Peak power demand met was recorded at 170.54 GW in July this year, down 2.61 per cent from 175.12 GW a year ago.

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MFs change tack, take to value investing Funds book profit on top performers

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 16

Profit booking in stocks that had given high return from March 2020 lows and value investing in the large-caps and mid-caps where the upside potential is still intact were evident in mutual funds top picks and sell in July 2020. Thus, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and Mindtree became the top picks while Reliance Industries, HDFC, Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra were top sell based on their stock market performance.

Primary market offerings also attracted mutual funds' interest as they bought shares of Rossari Biotech and Yes Bank.

Mutual funds' top 10 buys in value terms in July, as per data compiled by Prime Database, included TCS, PI Industries, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Balkrishna Industries, Rossari Biotech, Yes Bank, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, ACC and Nestle India.

Page Industries, Mindtree, UPL, Petronet LNG, Cipla, Ashok Leyland, Indiamart, Intermesh, Voltas, State Bank of India and Ultratech Cement were the other top picks of the mutual funds in value terms, according to Prime Database.

Top companies where mutual funds sold shares in value terms in July included RIL, HDFC, Bajaj Finance, Eicher Motors, Axis Bank, Vedanta, Avenue Supermarts, Bajaj



Auto, Vodafone Idea, Hindalco Industries and Power Grid Corporation of India.

Mutual funds also reduced stake in Titan Company, Biocon, Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Consumer Products, Emami and Indian Oil Corporation, Dabur India, Siemens,

Syngene International and IndusInd Bank.

The combined top holdings of the mutual funds at the close of July in terms of market value were HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, HDFC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, TCS, Axis Bank and ITC.

FPIs invest ₹28,200 cr in Aug.

New Delhi, Aug 16: Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) remained net investors in Indian markets in the first half of August, pumping in Rs 28,203 crore in debt and equities on a net basis.

Also, FPIs turned net investors in the debt segment in August after a gap of five months.

Experts attributed the inflows to better-than-expected corporate earnings and global liquidity.

Depositories data showed that a net sum of Rs 26,147 crore was invested in equities and Rs 2,056 crore in the debt segment by FPIs during

August 3-14.

In the debt segment, overseas investors turned net investors after a gap of five months. Before this, FPIs had invested Rs 4,734 crore in February.

Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research, Morningstar India, said, "A combination of global and domestic factors has resulted in huge net inflows from FPIs in Indian equities."

Harsh Jain, The co-founder & COO of Groww, said the inflows are in correlation to the fall of treasury returns in the US.

—PTI

Media catches MPC mood ahead of meet: RBI study



Mumbai, Aug 16: Media often captures the sentiments correctly ahead of monetary policy announcements by the central bank, says a study by the Reserve Bank of India officials. Many media organisations, based on experts' analysis and movement of key macroeconomic variables in the immediate past, project policy action ahead of the actual monetary policy announcement by the central bank.

"It is found that (media) sentiment concentration was directionally in sync with the policy rate decision except on few occasions," said the article on 'Policy rate expectations in media,' written by Geetha Giddi and Shweta Kumari of RBI's Big Data Analytics Division, Department of Statistics and Information Management.

"Media disseminates, explains and interprets news to the general public, and also conveys concerns, perceptions and opinions of various economic agents to the policy makers," it added.

—PTI

Cruising industry sees no gains from govt measures

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 16

In a decision intended to provide relief to the industry during the pandemic, the Ministry of Shipping has rationalised the tariff rates of cruise ships for a limited period of one year. However, experts say a limited period offer will do no good to the industry, which will take a year to operate normally.

According to the ministry, the rate relaxation would be an immediate reduction in port charges ranging from 60 to 70 per cent. This includes port charges of \$0.085 per gross registered tonnage (GRT) instead of the current rate of \$0.35 for the first 12 hours stay and \$5 per passenger. The ports will not charge other rates like berth hire, port dues, pilotage and passenger fee.

For the period exceeding 12 hours stay, the fixed charges on cruise ships will be equal to the berth hire charges payable as per the Schedule of Rates, with 40 per cent discount as applicable for cruise ships. Further, rebates will be given based on calls cruise ships make—those making 1-50 calls per year will get 10 per cent rebate, 51-100 calls per year 20 per cent rebate and those above 100 calls per year will get 30 per cent rebate.

The new tariff rates are applicable from August 14 and will be in place till the same day next year. The ministry believes



this will give "substantial relief to the cruise industry in India, in line with the government policy to support the economy in the pandemic situation". However, no cruise liners are operating during the pandemic and are not expected to operate normally till it subsides.

"The revival of the tourism industry itself will take one year. Chances are very low that people will travel in cruise liners till the pandemic fears have completely vanished. So this one-year offer will have no impact on the industry. The government should have given these concessions for a five-year period," said Iqbal Mulla, chief council, Global Tourism Council.

"This is an unfeasible scheme and will serve no purpose," he added.

According to Ratna Chadha, co-founder and chairperson of Tirun

Travel Marketing, the tariff rates will be applicable to only domestic cruise ships, which are expected to start operations in November. "International cruises are not going to come to Indian ports soon," she said. However, she too is not sure when the industry will start functioning normally.

"This is a nascent industry and if the industry has to develop, it needs government push. We have been asking the government for incentives. At the moment, we are taking what the government is giving and we will show that we can flourish. We hope that the government will extend the rebate scheme beyond one year," she said.

Mulla finds that the rebate-system based on performance is discriminating as the targets seem unachievable in the current situation.

It could be shortest recession: Birla

FC BUREAU with agency inputs NEW DELHI, AUG. 16

Hindalco Industries chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla has said the widely expected recession in 2020 will be the one of the shortest if the pandemic doesn't create a second wave. "Terming the pandemic-induced troubles as a once in-a-century crisis for the society and the economy, Birla, in a letter, cautioned shareholders that this year will see an economic contraction. This 2020 recession is turning out to be very different from the past recessions, he said.

"It has been too sudden almost off the cliff; its spread has been all-encompassing affecting almost every economy and sector, and the plunge in economic activity levels and employment has been unprecedented," Birla said.

On the positive side, this recession is likely to be one of the shortest, assuming no second wave of the pandemic recurs. As present lockdowns around the world get lifted, and businesses reopen, economic activity is likely to bounce back fairly quickly, he said.



Kumar Mangalam Birla

"Around \$9-trillion stimulus from different governments globally will help to support this recovery, along with the monetary actions by central banks. These policies will also help to restrict the second-order effects like defaults and bankruptcies," Birla said.

Some scars of the crisis will remain in the form of subdued consumer and business confidence. Some sectors, like airlines and hospitality, will take time to recover fully. And some supply chain disruption effects will linger.

As the world emerges from the current crisis, the next few years are likely to be marked by lack of buoyancy in growth, subdued commodity prices and infla-

tion, a cautious trend in project investments, heightened risks of de-globalisation and political uncertainty; and increased dependence of financial systems on ultra-loose monetary policy conditions, Birla said.

He mentioned that Covid-19 struck India at a time when the underlying economic conditions were subdued on account of heightened global uncertainty and stress in the domestic financial system.

"It is estimated that about 80 per cent of India's GDP originates from districts which were classified under red and orange zones during the lockdown, where economic activity remained severely constrained. Correspondingly, India's GDP is likely to contract in FY21, which would be the first such instance in over four decades," Birla said in the letter.

Given the fog of uncertainty all around, it is hard to be prescient in these times, Birla said. "But there is little doubt on one reality: companies with quality leadership, sound business fundamentals, and a track record of winning in turbulent times, will emerge as champions in the new global order," he said.

PSBs may manage without additional capital infusion

New Delhi, Aug 16: The government may not have to inject fresh capital into the public sector banks (PSBs) as the one-time loan restructuring permitted by the RBI has reduced their additional fund requirement.

Also, the poor credit off-take on account of the pandemic may obliterate the need for significant growth capital during the current fiscal, sources said.

There may not be a sudden surge in non-performing assets (NPAs) after the six-month moratorium comes to an end this month, as it is followed by one-time loan restructuring, the sources said, adding, provisioning requirement is also low for the debt recast accounts.

Moreover, most of the public sector banks have taken approval in advance for raising tier-I and tier-II capital in the current fiscal depending on the need.

Despite all these, if at all there is a need for regulatory capital requirement by some public sector banks towards the end of the fiscal, the government will provide that, the sources said.

In 2019-20, the government infused Rs 70,000



crore into PSBs to boost credit for giving a strong impetus to the economy.

However, the government refrained from committing any capital in the Budget 2020-21 for the PSBs, hoping that the lenders will raise funds from the market depending on the need.

After the second quarter numbers are out, the government may do a performance appraisal and assess the capital position of the public sector banks.

According to a senior official of a public sector bank, loan restructuring will act as balm for the economy stressed from the Covid-19 crisis.

Many borrowers are under stress because their businesses are running at 50 per cent capacity, impacting their cash flow, which compromised their capacity to service debt.

Banks, under a board-approved loan restructuring programme, can save such accounts from turning bad by extending the repayment period, reducing the interest rates or offering an extension of the moratorium to avoid an immediate shock.

Still some of the accounts would turn NPAs, especially those which were under stress even before the outbreak of the pandemic, and banks are gearing up for meeting that challenge, the bank official said.

According to rating agency Fitch, "Raising capital remains challenging in the current environment. However, the new policy will reduce transparency over asset quality, which could further hinder some paths for capital-raising."

—PTI

M&M unveils new Thar, launch in Oct.

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG 16

Mahindra & Mahindra, India's biggest utility vehicle maker, has unveiled the all-new Thar, the much anticipated off-road tough SUV to boost sales in Asia's third biggest economy.

The Mumbai-based automaker will launch this new capable vehicle for sale on October 2 when the price would also be revealed. Experts estimate it to be tagged at Rs 10 lakh-Rs 15 lakh.

It will face competition from the new Force Gurkha, which is also expected to arrive in the coming months.

"Thar is an icon," Ramkripa Ananthan, chief designer of automotive business at M&M, said proudly.

"There were many aspects that were intrinsic to its character. We retained them and at the same time, we also addressed some of the customer requirements," he said.

Of course, the classic proportions of the Thar had to be changed. Mahindra increased the track to 1,820 mm to liberate more space inside the cabin. The company has also unsized the tyres, and now Thar sits on R18 tyres. Thar's wheelbase was increased for easier ingress and egress.

Thar, which was first launched in India back in 2010 promises more comfort and convenience, apart from its par excellence driving capabilities.

Given their shared heritage, the Thar resembles the Jeep Wrangler and its overall proportions are similar.



Super tiny stocks outdo Wall St. megacaps

AMENA SAAD AUG. 16

Tech behemoths have been Wall Street's obsession all year. But the tiniest of stocks have surreptitiously been making a comeback—in a big way.

The Russell Microcap Index, whose members have a value of \$300 million on average, is up more than 60 per cent from this year's stock-market lows, outperforming both the tech-heavy Nasdaq 100 and the S&P 500. The tiny-stock gauge is having its best month relative to the US equity benchmark since September 2017.

"The good-looking big boys and girls have been touted as the only game in town this year. These large, domestic, safe, easily rec-

ognized, fast-growing, and sexy stocks have been the ticket," wrote Jim Paulsen, chief investment strategist at the Leuthold Group. "But, like the S&P 500 this year, the really tiny—those Mighty Microcaps—have shown their FAANGs!" he said, referring to the popular Facebook, Amazon, com, Apple, Netflix and Google-parent Alphabet.

It's a demonstration of the market weirdness this year, with the most beaten-down stocks recovering toward pre-pandemic levels even as unemployment remains around 10 per cent and signs mount the recovery is slowing. Unprecedented support from the government and central bank has given a lifeline to small companies. At the same time, retail investors



have rushed in, chasing momentum names without always scrutinising their balance sheets.

Tiny companies, which often swing at a higher velocity during times of turbulence than their larger brethren, were among the most punished during the coronavirus crash. They tend to be more indebted and have less cash on hand. But many ana-

lysts see potential for them to outperform once a recovery begins.

That's because their profits are often depressed in a recession and the companies have more room to improve during a rebound, said Michael Sheldon, executive director and chief investment officer at RDM Financial Group Inc.

But the performance in micro-caps is remarkable given that more than half of the members didn't make any profit in the latest quarter. More intriguingly, unprofitable ones have seen their shares outperforming, rising an average 13 per cent this year. That's triple the 4 per cent gain from those that made money.

Data from website Robintrack.net suggested

retail investors have been part of the forces behind some of the parabolic gains.

Vaxart Inc has soared 2,500 per cent this year as it was selected to take part in the Trump administration's Operation Warp Speed, meant to crank up development of a Covid vaccine. The price explosion coincided with a surge in ownership on brokerage platform Robinhood. From fewer than 2,000 owners in January, the number of shareholders on Robinhood has jumped to near 90,000 this summer.

"If the Micros truly can keep up with the Bigs, investors should consider diversifying some of their S&P 500 allocation," said Leuthold's Paulsen.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Former cricketer
Chetan no more

New Delhi: One of Indian cricket's most well-known batsmen without an international hundred, former opener Chetan Chauhan died on Sunday due to Covid-19 related complications after being put on life support for nearly 36 hours.

Chauhan, who was 73, was serving as the Minister of Sainik Welfare, Home Guards, and Civil Security in the Uttar Pradesh cabinet. He is survived by his wife and son Vinayak.

"My elder brother Shri Chetan Chauhan has left us today after fighting a good battle. I sincerely thank everyone who had prayed for his recovery. His son Vinayak will be reaching anytime and we will then perform last rites," his younger brother Pushpendra said.

Chauhan, who was the legendary Sunil Gavaskar's longest serving opening partner, was admitted to Sanjay Gandhi PGI in Lucknow on July 12 after being testing positive for Covid-19. Due to kidney related ailments, his health deteriorated and he was shifted to Medanta hospital in Gurugram. — *PTI*

Lyon roar past
crumbling City

Lisbon: Moussa Dembele broke his Champions League drought in timely fashion in Lisbon on Saturday after Maxwel Cornet again proved a thorn in Manchester City's side with his fourth goal in three games against the Premier League heavyweights.

Quite remarkably, no player has struck more often versus Pep Guardiola's City since the start of the 2018-19 season than the Ivory Coast international, with only Tottenham forward Son Heung-Min breaching their defence as many times.

Converted into a wing-back this season by Lyon coach Rudi Garcia on the left of a 3-5-2 formation, Cornet has adjusted seamlessly to the new role after spending most of his time at the club as a right-sided attacker. While Cornet's magnificent first-time finish gave Lyon the lead against City on 24 minutes, it wasn't until the introduction of top scorer Dembele that the French side administered the knockout blow to one of the competition's favourites for the title. — *AFP*

Hamilton claims
Spain Grand Prix

Barcelona: Lewis Hamilton claimed his 88th Formula One career victory and, with it, an outright record 156th podium finish on Sunday when he drove his Mercedes to a masterful victory in the Spanish Grand Prix. It was the world championship leader and six-time champion's fifth win in Spain and his fourth in consecutive years, extending his record run of finishes in the points to 39. Hamilton came home 24 seconds ahead of nearest title race rival Max Verstappen of Red Bull who finished 20 seconds ahead of Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes. Hamilton had shared a record 155 podium finishes with Michael Schumacher whose other records for championships and wins are in the Briton's sights this year. His victory increased his lead in the drivers' title race to 37 points ahead of Verstappen. — *AFP*

STAGE SET FOR
NBA PLAY OFFS
IN ORLANDO

Miami: An NBA season unlike any other shifts into high gear on Monday with the start of the playoffs in the league's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. Antetokounmpo's Bucks arrived at the bubble virtually assured of the top seed in the Eastern Conference and own the best record in the league as they head into a first-round meeting with the Orlando Magic. Toronto Raptors are back in the playoffs despite losing Kawhi Leonard and starter Danny Green after their run.

They'll be taking on a Brooklyn Nets team that has gone 5-3 in the bubble. — *AFP*
NBA Playoffs: Boston Celtics vs Philadelphia 76ers from 4 am (Tuesday) on Sony Six; Los Angeles Clippers vs Dallas Mavericks from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Six.

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THERE IS ONLY ONE 7

Fans, teammates want BCCI to retire Dhoni's jersey number

New Delhi, Aug. 16: Players and fans Sunday urged India's cricket board to retire Mahendra Singh Dhoni's number seven jersey in a tribute to the two-time World Cup winning captain.

Dhoni, 39, called time on his 16-year-old international career Saturday with a cryptic message on his *Instagram* post that read "From 19.29hrs consider me as retired". The Board of Control for Cricket in India confirmed the news in a statement, saying: "The boy from Ranchi, who made his One-Day International debut in the year 2004, changed the face of Indian cricket with his calm demeanour, sharp understanding of the game and astute leadership qualities."

Dhoni's legions of fans including 7.8 million *Twitter* followers and former teammate Dinesh Karthik said they did not want to see 7 on the back of any other Indian cricketer's jersey.

"I hope the @bcci retire the #7 jersey in white ball cricket Good luck with your second innings in life, I'm sure you'll have a lot of surprises for us there too," Karthik, a wicketkeeper-batsman, tweeted.

Former batsman Mohammad Kaif agreed, writing on *Twitter*: "Can't imagine any one else wearing a Number 7 India jersey again."

There is no provision to retire jerseys in cricket, unlike in football.

But the BCCI unofficially retired batting great Sachin Tendulkar's number 10 shirt a few years after his retirement.

Dhoni, a flamboyant wicketkeeper-batsman who led India to win the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup in 2007 and lifted the 50-over showpiece event in 2011, was born on July 7.

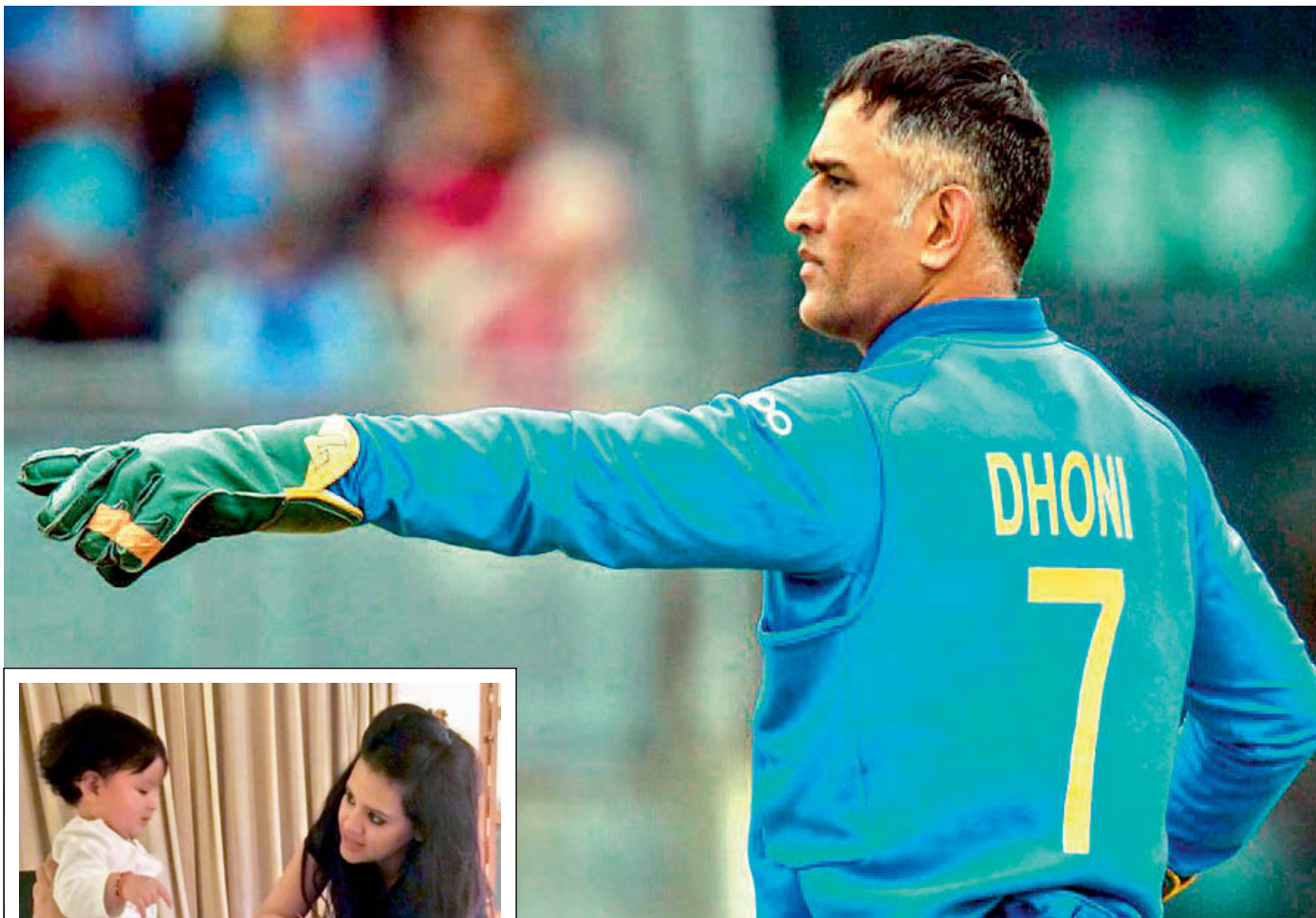
He is a self-confessed fan of Portuguese football megastar Cristiano Ronaldo, who also wears a famous number seven jersey.

"@BCCI should retire 'Jersey Number 7' as a Tribute to Legend MS Dhoni," a fan wrote on *Twitter*.

Dhoni, dubbed 'Captain Cool' because of his unflappable style, will continue to lead his team Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League starting in the United Arab Emirates next month.

The Indian women's team's ODI captain Mithali Raj also congratulated him.

"The man who immortalised jersey no.7, whose sharp mind and a cool head earned him the tag of #CaptionCool, the man who fulfilled billion indian dreams by two World Cup trophies and who bid adieu in his inimitable style. Congratulations #MS Dhoni on an outstanding career," she tweeted. — *PTI*



Former Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni in this file photo.



Former Indian cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni spends some quality time with his daughter Ziva and wife Sakshi in this file photo.

Proud of you,
says Sakshi

New Delhi, Aug. 16: For someone who has the reputation of keeping his emotions in check, Mahendra Singh Dhoni must have held his tears back when he decided to quit international cricket, felt his wife Sakshi while lauding the legend's phenomenal accomplishments.

Sakshi, in a social media post which she shared both on *Instagram* and *Twitter* along with a picture of the former India skipper, congratulated Dhoni on his career.

"You should be proud of what you have achieved. Congratulations on giving your best to the game. I am proud of

your accomplishments and the person you are!" wrote Sakshi.

"I am sure you must have held those tears to say goodbye to your passion. Wishing you health, happiness and wonderful things ahead!" she posted.

Called 'Captain Cool' for his calm demeanour and exceptional leadership qualities, Dhoni has etched his name as one of world cricket's great.

Sakshi ended her post with American poet Maya Angelou's quote, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." — *PTI*

MS all-time great: ICC

Dubai, Aug. 16: Tributes continue to pour in for Mahendra Singh Dhoni with the game's governing body ICC saying that the former India skipper "inspired a whole generation and will be sorely missed".

The 39-year-old is the

only captain to have won all ICC trophies — T20 World Cup in 2007, ODI World Cup in 2011 and the Champions Trophy in 2013.

"MS Dhoni is one of the all-time greats of the game. The image of his winning shot at the

Wankhede Stadium in the 2011 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup final is etched in the memory of cricket lovers around the world," said ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney. — *PTI*

WARNE WANTS
MAHI TO PLAY
THE HUNDRED

Melbourne, Aug. 16: Retirement from international cricket done, Australian spin legend Shane Warne now wants Mahendra Singh Dhoni to get on with the game and consider being part of his team London Spirit in next year's The Hundred tournament.

Two-time World Cup-winning former India captain Dhoni retired on Saturday, putting endless speculation about his future to rest.

Spinner Warne said he should give serious consideration The Hundred now.

"I just wonder if I could get him down to the London Spirit next year for The Hundred. I might put out a call to see if he wants to play at Lord's. I'll find the money, MS!" Warne told *Skysports*.

The Hundred is a 100-balls-per-side tournament of the England and Wales Cricket Board which was scheduled to be launched in June this year but had to be postponed to next year due to the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic. — *PTI*



Former Indian cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni (left) poses for a photograph with Indian wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik after their 2019 World Cup semifinal loss against New Zealand.

DHONI THE WORDSMITH

God helps those who help themselves. I said God is not coming to save us.

— **JOKED LATER ABOUT THE DRESSING ROOM TALK BEFORE THAT TOUGH CHASE AGAINST SRI LANKA IN 2011 WC FINAL, WHICH HE FINISHED WITH A SIX.**

— **ON HANDING JOGINDER SHARMA THE LAST OVER IN 2007 T20 WC FINAL'**

You die, you die. You don't see which is the better way to die.

— **AFTER HAVING BAD AWAY SERIES' AGAINST ENGLAND AND AUSTRALIA**

Words fall short a lot of times in life and I think this is one of those moments. All I can say is that you will always be that guy who sat in the last seat of the bus. We have shared a great camaraderie, friendship, understanding because we have always played for the same roles, same goals, which was to make the team win. I have said it before, I will say it again, you will always be my captain.

— **VIRAT KOHLI**

One of the most influential man in the history of Indian cricket. His impact in and around cricket was massive. Will surely miss him in blue but we have him in yellow. See you on 19th (Sept.) at the toss.

— **ROHIT SHARMA**

In any list of cricket's greatest, not greats but the greatest, you have to include this man. This man is second to none. And coming from where he did he changed cricket for all times to come. And his beauty is he did it in all formats. I salute you Lieutenant Colonel M. S. Dhoni.

— **RAVI SHASTRI**

Congrats @msdhoni on a brilliant international career. I loved and enjoyed every contest we had as players and now I still have to find ways to stop you winning games against the @DelhiCapitals. Look forward to saying it in person in a few weeks time.

— **RICKY PONTING**

Welcome to the retirement club, MSD! What a magical career!

— **KEVIN PIETERSEN**

Congrats @msdhoni on a fantastic career, he is one of the coolest guys I've played against on the park.

— **DAVID WARNER**

Dhoni's retirement style sets a precedence



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

In many ways August 15th, India's Independence Day, may have heralded a new nomenclature to the 'eras of cricket' in the new normal of today. The words BC and AD can now be known as 'Before Coronavirus' and 'After Dhoni' in Indian cricket's parlance.

"Thanks a lot for ur love and support throughout. From 19.29 hrs consider me as Retired." With these words on his *Instagram* handle, Mahendra Singh Dhoni (MS) walked into the sunset of international

cricket. It was not a lengthy post swooning with words but a simple statement of saying it was all over from international cricket for the man from Ranchi. One who had taken the job of a ticket checker in the Indian Railways which would enable him to play cricket at a national level. And play cricket he did, with aplomb and a style never seen before.

Just the way he had announced his retirement from Test cricket, through a press release, mid-series while in Australia, MSD's

'announcement' on an important day turned out to be without fanfare, a trait he is known for. He played his cricket with a certain proclivity based on hunches inclining towards unpredictability, never seen before in the history of the game in India. No wonder, his boss and former president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India called him an 'instinctive cricketer.'

An incident recounted to me by former Bombay (Mumbai) skipper Milind Rege in 2009 will put MS's psyche in perspective. Rege was in charge of the Brabourne Stadium, the venue of India's third and final Test against Sri Lanka. A few days before the match, Rege asked MS if he would like to take a look at the pitch which was being prepared.

"You can give us whatever pitch you want, it's fine by me. We will play on it," was his polite reply as he continued practicing with the team. India ended up winning the Test by an innings and 24 runs taking the team to the top of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Test rankings.

MS's penchant for doing things his way made him unique from others, as a player and captain. Whether it was honouring a senior colleague — inviting former skipper Sourav Ganguly to lead the team in the field for the final time against Australia in 2008 — or not picking up VVS Laxman's call in 2012 regarding VVS's retirement, the acts had the MS stamp all over them. When Zaheer Khan's hamstring gave way during the

2011 Lord's Test match, MS pulled off his gloves to drive home the point that Khan wasn't match fit when the match began.

That MS would retire was a given considering the ICC Twenty20 (T20) world Cup was moved ahead a month ago. Though he never made a statement, his desire to wear the number 7 jersey for India must have been his last wish before he called it a day. Many believe that his body wasn't that of the MS they knew while playing the shortest and most testing formats of the game and he should have called it quits after India's loss to New Zealand in the 2019 ICC World Cup.

Continuing or retiring from the game is a personal decision taken by the

player himself even whatever the writing on the wall may be.

If Sunil Gavaskar was post-partition India's first cricketing superstar, MS can well be called the country's first cricket rockstar. From sporting long locks during his early days to wearing a military logo on his gloves during the ICC World Cup, 2019, he loved making statements. While Gavaskar created symphonies that would have made Beethoven proud, MS took fans through the purple haze of a Jimi Hendrix experience, signing each gig with a unique stamp.

The colour yellow will now replace the blue as MS embarks to play his 13th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL). This would have been one where he would give his all

to try and make the team for the ICCT20 World Cup which now stands postponed.

Pushing 40, MS's energies will be now be directed towards pleasing his (and his IPL team's) fans. One is bound to see a refreshed MS leading his band of faithfuls with a complete sense of freedom.

After leading his country to three ICC championships (including two World Cup wins) and the number one spot in ICC Test rankings, there's not much MS would have wanted to prove as a player and captain. His retirement will, thankfully, end the debate concerning his future and may start another one. The future of Indian cricket (short-format games) in AD — 'After Dhoni.'