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KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 8 AUGUST 2020

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*worldometers.info/
coronavirus*

The rescue operations were carried out amid heavy rains.

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IN BRIEF

AFTER 3 MONTHS
CASE AGAINST
FOREST OFFICERDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, AUG. 7

After three months, a case under SC and ST Atrocities Act against Sattupalli forest range officer A. Venkateswara Rao was filed in the Penuballi police station on Friday.

In an incident that took place three months ago, the complaint Marakala Bhaskara Rao had stated then that Venkateswara Rao beat him and abused him on caste lines at Erugatla village under Penuballi mandal.

After primary investigations, the cops filed a case under IPC 294 (N) and 324.

FIVE CO-OPTION
MEMBERS ELECTED
IN NIZAMABADDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 7

The election for the co-option members was held on Friday at the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation through an online app. Of the five co-option member posts, the ruling TRS party and its ally MIM won three and two posts respectively.

Municipal commissioner Jithesh V. Patil declared the elected members names. MLAs, MLCs had also participated in the elections.

Daram Sailoo, T. Chandrakala, Anthareddy Latha from the TRS and Mohammad Mujeeb and Irfana Begum have been elected as the co-option members.

In the municipal corporation, corporators will be elected by the people and co-option members will be elected by the corporators.

Nizamabad urban MLA Bigala Ganesh Gupta, Nizamabad rural MLA Bajireddy Govardhan, Armoor MLA A.Jeevan Reddy, MLCs D.Rajeshwar Rao, V.G. Goud and Akula Lalitha participated in election.

JOGU RECALLS
SADASHIVA'S
CONTRIBUTIONDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, AUG. 7

The eight death anniversary of Kendra Sahitya Academy awardee late Samala Sadashiva's was observed in the Adilabad town on Friday. Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna and leaders of the Padmashali community paid rich tributes to Sadashiva on the occasion.

Mr Jogu Ramanna recalled the contributions of Sadashiva to the Telugu literature and spoke about this literary works which brought him national fame and won him the Kendra Sahitya Academy award. Mr Ramanna said that he would try to ensure that state government introduces literary awards in state in Sadashiva's name.

Adilabad market committee chairman Prahlad, Rythu Samanyavaya Sangham president Addi Bhojaraeddy and Padmashali Sangham district president Manchikatla Ashamma, state secretary Jitta Ramesh and district organising secretary Dasari Ramesh and Sadashiva's son Rajya Vardhan along with others were present.

SALESMAN HELD
FOR LOOTING ₹35L
FROM SHOP IN HYDJAYENDRA CHAITHANYA
T. DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 7

A teen working as a salesman in a textile store at Charminar was arrested for allegedly stealing ₹35 lakh cash after breaking into the shop on August 4.

Charminar police identified the accused as Mohd Nasir, 19, a resident of Vattapally.

He was said to be involved in two more burglaries at Falaknuma and Charminar. About ₹31.31 lakh cash, a laptop, four wrist watches, two pairs of anklets, fancy bangles and cosmetics he purchased with the stolen money were recovered from him.

At Malkajgiri, Pabitra Kumar Jaysingh, 23, and Dilip Dalei, 19, residents of Mallikarjunnagar and natives of Odisha, were arrested for stealing a mobile phone from a pedestrian at station road on August 5. They were named in similar cases at the Marredpally and Tukaramgate police stations.

■ **HE WAS** said to be involved in two more burglaries at Falaknuma and Charminar.



Collector K. Shashanka speaks to BC welfare and civil supplies, consumer affairs minister Gangula Kamalakara in front of the Covid-19 ward at the Civil Hospital in Karimnagar on Friday. Also seen are ZP chairperson K.Vijaya and Karimnagar Municipal Corporation mayor Y. Sunil Rao.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Hospitals rip patients in
the name of Covid-19

Need awareness about virus and seasonal flu, say citizens

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, AUG. 7

Seasonal diseases are common with the onset of rains. But what is causing dilemma, and even fear, among many, including the educated, is that symptoms of fever, cough and cold are also the signs of the now-dreaded Covid-19 disease.

Till last year, people never took these symptoms seriously in Adilabad district. They just went to their nearby doctor or even to the medical shops for over-the-counter medicines. But, the emergence of Coronavirus has changed all that. Those affected are getting anxious and even rushing to hospitals.

Certain private hospitals in the district are seeing an opportunity in this. They are exploiting people by admitting them into the hospital, ordering tests, and running up bills.

Socially conscious citizens say it is time the state government created awareness among people about the symptoms pertaining to Covid-19 and seasonal diseases. Otherwise, common people will end up spending a lot of money on getting just their seasonal diseases treated.

Sudhakar of Adilabad town said, "There is a lot of confusion among people about symptoms of

Another frontline
warrior succumbsDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, AUG. 7

An another frontline warrior, deputy district medical and health officer of Bhadradi district and working in Bhadrachalam Area Hospital succumbed to the Coronavirus while undergoing treatment in Hyderabad.

He was the in-charge of a Covid-19 centre in Manuguru where he picked up the infection. He was shifted to Hyderabad and his condition deteriorated later. District collector M.V. Reddy said that the district had lost a great warrior. "He was to travel abroad to pursue his PG. It is very sad to hear such news", he said.

Bhadradi DMHO L. Bhaskar Naik and the medical and employees union were shocked. Nama Nageswara Rao, TRS Parliamentary Party

seasonal diseases and Coronavirus, since both are matching to some extent. This is causing anxiety among people about their actual health condition."

He suggested that the

■ **THE DEPUTY** district medical and health officer of Bhadradi district and working in Bhadrachalam Area Hospital succumbed to the Coronavirus while undergoing treatment in Hyderabad.

■ **HE WAS** to travel abroad to pursue higher studies.

leader, said that the state had lost a committed frontline warrior as he worked hard to check the virus. The doctors association have asked all colleagues to take precautionary measures while treating Covid-19 patients.

Former MP P. Srinivasa Reddy said that the state lost an efficient young doctor. "One cannot forget the services he rendered to Covid-19 patients in their hour of crisis," Mr Srinivasa Reddy said.

state government create awareness among people about the real symptoms of Covid-19 virus and treatment for the same.

Covid situation alarming in Nizamabad district.

+VE CASES TOUCH
3,000-MARK IN
NIZAMABAD DIST.DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY,
AUG. 7

Covid-19 positive cases touched the 3,000 mark in old Nizamabad district.

On an average 100 cases are being reported daily in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts for the last few days.

A shocking development is that even those staying in remote areas are getting infected. Most patients are in home isolation in the two districts.

Minister for roads and buildings, legislative affairs and housing V. Prashanth Reddy reviewed the Covid-19 situation in Nizamabad district on Friday.

He said that positive patients could overcome the disease with confidence. Doctors should counsel the patients, he said.

Prashanth Reddy said that 566 beds with oxygen facility are available in Nizamabad district apart from 55 beds with ventilator facility.

Mr Prashanth Reddy said that seven Covid-19 patients are on ventilators. Remidicivir injections are available and people should not get worried about treatment and medicines, he said.

Bommakal land grab:
TSHRC files 4 casesPULI SHARAT
KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 7

Taking the issue of encroachment on government lands and water bodies seriously, the Telangana State Human Rights Commission (TSHRC) filed four cases and issued notices to the special chief secretaries of the irrigation and revenue departments and to the collector of Karimnagar district.

The TSHRC sought complete details on the encroachment of lands along with water bodies in Bommakal and surrounding villages of Karimnagar rural mandal and asked for respective comprehensive reports along with the copies of original revenue records by November 10.

The value of lands present in the Bommakal (which was merged under Karimnagar municipal corporation) and surrounding villages rocketed due to the boom in the realty sector. Keeping that in view, the land mafia with the support of the local politicians and officials, created false documents and sold them by laying illegal layouts and construction.

Receiving the case suo motu against the land mafia who created false documents and officials who provided permissions for selling government and private lands, along with water bodies, the TSHRC registered four cases under sections 1777/2020, 1778/2020, 1779/2020 and 1780/2020.

The TSHRC also issued notices to the commissioner of police, Karimnagar to send a comprehensive report along with the copies of relevant documents on the total number of cases registered against the land mafia, the number of cases pending, action taken by the police and, if not taken, the reasons for it and whether or not there are any proposals to book accused land mafia under the preventive detention (PD) act.

Further, the TSHRC has directed the district collector to take immediate steps to evict the land mafia and restore the encroached government land and properly maintain the tanks to the full tank level.

The revenue divisional officer, Anand Kumar, along with the other offi-



Members of the Loksatta Udyama Samstha (LUS) along with the victims whose lands have been encroached demand that the government protect the lands at a press meet held in Karimnagar district on Friday. — DC



Illegal layouts that have come up on government lands in Bommakal village in Karimnagar rural mandal.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

cials visited Bommakal village and asked villagers about the water bodies and the government lands which were encroached. With the help of *pahani* records and maps, the officials inspected the lands with surveyors.

Meanwhile, the members of the Loksatta Udyama Samstha, along with the victims of land grabbers, held a press meet on Friday and demanded that the government take immediate action against the land grabbers.

They alleged that for the past several years, about 200 acres of government land present in the survey number of 32 and 34 of Bommakal, Theegalutapalli, Alagunur,

Chintakunta and Rekurthinagar villages, under Karimnagar rural mandal were encroached on by land grabbers with the support of local political leaders and officials, land worth more than ₹100 crore. They did not even spare the burial ground on the Manair riverside.

They appreciated the TSHRC for filing the cases and for issuing notices to the concerned officials and urged the Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao, and Governor, Tamilisai Soundararajan, to institute a high level enquiry into the issue and impose the PD act against the land grabbers and also against the political leaders and officials who supported them.

Choppadandi tahsildar issued
notice for ignoring RTI queryDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 7

For not giving information within prescribed time, in accordance with the Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005, to an applicant, the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) of Karimnagar Anand Kumar on Friday issued notices to the office of the Choppadandi tahsildar and asked the officials concerned to give the information within seven days, warning of stringent action if they failed to do so.

The founder president and chairman of the 'Council for Citizens Rights (CCR)-Voluntary and Social Development Organisation', M. Anil Kumar said that the representatives of the Choppadandi unit of the CCR had filed an RTI seeking details of land along with ROR and Vilasath files of various survey numbers on 3 February, 2020. But even after 30 days, the officials did not respond.

■ **FOUNDER PRESIDENT** and chairman of the Council for Citizens Rights -Voluntary and Social Development Organisation, M. Anil Kumar said that the representatives of the Choppadandi unit of the CCR had filed an RTI seeking details of land along with ROR and Vilasath files of various survey numbers on 3 February, 2020. But even after 30 days, the officials did not respond.

tives of the Choppadandi unit of the CCR had filed an RTI application seeking details of land along with ROR and Vilasath files of various survey numbers on 3 February,

2020. But even after 30 days, the officials did not respond to the appeal. So, a first appeal was submitted to the RDO Mr Anand Kumar under section 19 (1) RTI act on 17 July, 2020. Receiving the complaint, Mr Anand Kumar issued notices to the Choppadandi Tahsildar office and asked the concerned officials to give the information within seven days at the same time warning of stringent action if they failed to do so.

Mr. Anil Kumar said, "If the officials fail to give information, then we will appeal to the state information commission under section 19 (3) of the RTI Act against the first appellate authority for not giving information within the specified time period."

Even birds know distancing is good



Peacocks maintain a physical distance while searching for food in a paddy field at Ramakrishnapur Nustulapur village in Thimmapur mandal in Karimnagar on Friday.

— YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

PEOPLE | FIRST The state government has sanctioned ₹80 crore for a beautification project on these lands

Gollapadu dwellers want 2BHK houses before eviction

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, AUG. 7

Residents of Gollapadu canal colony in Khammam confronted revenue officials when they arrived to serve notices to them for evacuating their houses for implementation of the proposed beautification project being undertaken in this area of the town.

People surrounded the officials demanding to know how notices could be issued during the lockdown period. N. Veerabhadram, one of the residents, said, "It is very difficult to get a house on rent during the

Coronavirus time. It is not right for officials to issue notices at this juncture".

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had earlier assured those losing their houses that alternative lands will be provided in Velugumatla. That process has not yet been completed by officials. "How can you dare to evict us without giving us alternative accommodation, that too during Covid-19 times," C. Naveen, another resident, demanded to know from officials. He said though officials had issued pattas for lands in Velugumatla, their locations have not yet been disclosed to them

so far.

Gollapadu channel, which once irrigated lands in the Khammam Rural mandal by drawing water from Munner, had for long been in a neglected state. Following increasing urbanisation, majority of the lands under the channel are under encroachment. Thousands of poor have built houses on these lands and have been living there since a long time.

The state government wants to develop these lands and sanctioned ₹80 crore for a beautification project. The project had commenced when Tummala Nageswara

Rao was the road and buildings minister. Residents of the area were given pattas for land at Velugumatla but they were not given possession of these lands.

Residents are now demanding that double bedroom houses be built and handed over to them before evicting them from their existing dwellings. They want to take up the issue with transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar. M. Sunder Rao, a resident, said, "The government is giving importance to beautification of the town. But it is not bothered about the concerns of the poor while evicting them."



Gollapadu channel residents argue with the police as revenue officials issued eviction notices to them in Khammam on Friday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

IN BRIEF

Khan Lateef Khan dies in Chicago

Hyderabad: Khan Lateef Mohammed Khan, business tycoon and Chief Editor of the Urdu daily *Munshif*, passed away on Thursday in Chicago. He was 76. His body was laid to rest after Friday prayers at a Muslim graveyard there. Khan, once a close friend of Prince Mukarram Jah and Dilip Kumar, was an Osmanian. He went to Chicago in the 1970s and established himself in business. In 1997, he took ownership of *Munshif* and gave it a modern touch. He launched *Munshif TV* nearly 15 years ago. For 22 years until his demise, Khan was chairman of Sultan-ul-Uloom Education Society (SUES) and established high schools and junior colleges in the Old City.

Labour dept to settle job disputes

Hyderabad: The labour department will begin a joint online meeting with management personnel and employees who have lost their jobs in the wake of Covid-19, from August 10. Joint labour commissioner Dr E. Gangadhar told *Deccan Chronicle* here on Friday that there were 70 disputes between managements and employees. On the first day, they will take up 23 cases between 11 am and 3 pm. He said normally such meetings are held in the office of the labour department. Dr Gangadhar said that because of the pandemic many had lost their livelihoods or were subject to gross reduction in wages, which the employees maintain are illegal decisions. He said that earlier there would be as many as 50 complaints but since the Coronavirus outbreak, cases have come down. Those who wish to lodge complaints can do so on the website www.labour.telangana.gov.in.

No stamp duty for MSMEs, vendors

Hyderabad: The state government issued orders on Friday exempting MSMEs and street vendors from paying stamp duty till October 31. MSME were paying stamp duty of ₹1,000 and vendors ₹400 each. During a video-conference held with Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar on the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Scheme, bankers and collectors said MSMEs and vendors were finding it difficult to pay the duty. The CS said that when the matter was taken to the notice of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, he immediately gave a direction to issue notification exempting MSMEs and vendors from stamp duty. A government was accordingly issued, benefiting 1 lakh MSMEs and about 3.5 lakh street vendors. Vendors will get a loan of ₹10,000 each at a very low interest rate without any guarantee. They will benefit by ₹350 crore with the decision. The MSME sector may get loan support to the tune of ₹7,300 crore under the Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) and Credit Guarantee Scheme Subordinate Debt (CGSSD).

AIR SUVIDHA PORTAL AT AIRPORT SOON

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 7

The GMR Hyderabad International Airport will be introducing Air Suvidha, a first-of-its-kind portal where India-bound passengers can fill the mandatory self-declaration form for Covid-19 and apply online for exemption from mandatory institution quarantine in specified cases. The online forms have been developed in collaboration with the ministries of Civil aviation, health, external affairs and governments of states and union territories including Delhi, UP, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Telangana state and Madhya Pradesh. Passengers would be considered for exemption only if they fall under any one of the five exempted categories — pregnant women, suffered a death in the family, suffering from serious illness (description to be provided), parents accompanied by children below 10 years and Covid-19 negative in recent RT-PCR test within 96 hours prior to undertaking the journey as per the government's guidelines.

Cong: CM favours AP, ignores TS

Krishna water project of AP will create drinking water crisis in city: Uttam

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 7

State Congress leaders on Friday alleged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was directly helping Andhra Pradesh complete expansion of the Pothreddy padu head regulator and start work on the Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme which would deprive Telangana state of 6.3 tmc ft of Krishna water. TPCC president N.

Uttam Kumar Reddy, Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhattacharya, AICC secretaries A. Sampath Kumar and Vamshichand Reddy and TPCC Krishna Water Protection Committee convener Ram Mohan Reddy were addressing a press conference through Zoom App. Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the two projects being pursued by the AP government would badly hit the farmers of south Telangana state and

drinking water supply to Hyderabad. The TPCC chief said: "KCR must answer as to why he is helping the AP government take away Telangana's share in Krishna water. His silence is raising serious suspicions of a secret deal." Referring to the special leave petition (SLP) filed by the Telangana state government in the Supreme Court, he alleged Rao was trying to create new complications

to help the AP government. "This is a straight fight between AP and TS governments and our intention should be to stop AP from taking away 6.3 tmc ft of Krishna water. But the TS government in its SLP has made Karnataka the first respondent, Maharashtra the second and AP the third respondent. This is nothing but diluting the main issue and diverting attention away from AP's new projects. This was done delib-

erately so as to delay the legal process which will help AP government complete both the projects." The Congress leaders asked why Rao did not advance the Cabinet meeting to August 4 or put it off to August 6 so as to facilitate the meeting of the Apex Council on August 5. "KCR deliberately got the meeting postponed to help the AP to complete the tender process. Should we act before the tender process or wait for the completion

of the entire process," they asked. They said the Chief Minister should have first participated in the Apex Council meeting and then approached the Supreme Court. The TPCC chief said he would implead in the case in the Supreme Court as he was elected from Nalgonda, which is irrigated by water from the Nagarjunasagar. "The Congress will protect the interests of farmers in South Telangana," he said.

AP FORMS PANEL TO STUDY SETTING UP OF NEW DIST.

Vijayawada: The state government has formed a committee to study the restructuring of districts on Friday. Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney issued GO Rt: 2098 to study aspects related to the creation of new districts and measures to be undertaken to optimally utilise the existing resources in their creation. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy earlier had stated about formation of 12 new districts taking the total to 25 districts. According to the order, it will be named as "Committee to study restructuring of Districts in AP" with the Chief Secretary.

MAJORITY WILL HAVE ANTIBODIES AS VACCINE COMES

From Page 1

Dr A. Velumani, scientist and founder of Thyrocare Technologies Limited, who is studying the antibody data, said, "We have pockets where people have developed antibodies and they will not require the vaccine. There are a large number of asymptomatic carriers through whom the virus has passed and they have not required hospitalisation. These people have 1,000 times more antibodies than those who have had severe symptoms. By the time the vaccine arrives a majority of the population will have developed antibodies." Dr Kiran Madhala, HoD, anaesthesia, Government Medical College at Nizamabad, said, "For herd immunity, it will require at least 60 per cent of the population to be infected. We are looking at December. If a vaccine does not arrive in the next few months, there will be immunity in a large number of people and they may not need the vaccine."

SAGAR WATERS RELEASED FOR FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUG. 7

Officials released water from the Nagarjunasagar Project (NSP) to the left canal to benefit farmers in Nalgonda and Khammam districts, following a direction from Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao. The Chief Minister had decided to release the water as water was available in the upper Krishna region, and there was good rain forecast for the monsoon. Legislator Nomula Narasimhaiah and Chief Engineer Narasimha released water to the left canal, which covers 6.3 lakh acres.

TS records highest of 2,207 cases, tally crosses 75,000

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 7

The state crossed the 75,000 mark in Covid-19 cases and the toll went past 600 due to the disease on Thursday, according to data released on Friday by the state health department. The state recorded its highest-ever number of cases at 2,207 and the overall tally stood at 75,257 on Thursday. Reports of 1,539 samples are awaited. Of these 1,675 new cases are from semi-rural and rural areas and the GHMC area reported 532 cases. After the first case was recorded on March 2, Covid-19 cases reached the 25,000 mark after 126 days, on July 6, and

● **AFTER THE first case was recorded on March 2, Covid-19 cases reached the 25,000 mark after 126 days, on July 6, and another 17 days to reach 50,000 on July 23. The caseload stood at 36,211 on July 13, and has doubled in 24 days.** another 17 days to reach 50,000 on July 23. The caseload stood at 36,211 on July 13, and has doubled in 24 days. The surge outside the GHMC area is the highest in districts on the city outskirts: Ranga Reddy district recorded 196 cases. Warangal Urban reported 142

cases on Thursday and Kamareddy 96. Other districts are recording numbers in the double digits, according to the health department bulletin. Twelve deaths were recorded on Thursday, taking the toll to 601. The first Covid-19 related death was registered on March 28, the one hundredth on June 4 and the toll reached 301 on July 6. The intensity of cases in rural areas is showing the same pattern as in the city, with those in the age group from 30 to 60 years being the most affected. More men are affected when compared to women. As in the urban areas, family members are being affected in the countryside.

Coronavirus cases in AP crosses 2-L mark; deaths in single day 89

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 7

The number of Covid-19 cases in Andhra Pradesh has crossed the two-lakh mark and reached 2,06,960, with 10,171 new Coronavirus cases reported during the last 24 hours. The period also witnessed the highest number of 89 deaths in a single day, raising the death toll to 1,842. The state health department, in its Covid-19 bulletin released on Friday, reported that out of 62,938 samples tested during the last 24 hours, 10,171 individuals have been found infected with

Covid-19. Out of total number of 23,62,270 samples tested so far in the state, 84,654 infected patients are undergoing treatment, while 1,20,464 patients have been discharged after recovery. Among new infections, Kurnool district has been affected badly with 1,331 cases, followed by 1,270 in East Godavari, 1,100 in Anantapur, 980 in Chittoor, 941 in Nellore, 852 in Visakhapatnam, 817 in Guntur, 596 in Kadapa, 548 in West Godavari, 530 in Vizianagaram, 449 in Srikakulam, 420 in Krishna and 337 in Prakasam. With regard to cumulative number of Covid-19

positive cases, East Godavari district has topped the list with 28,850 cases, followed by 24,679 in Kurnool, 22,273 in Anantapur, 20,236 in Guntur, 17,534 in Visakhapatnam, 16,334 in Chittoor, 15,286 in Kadapa, 11,646 in Nellore, 10,085 in Srikakulam, 9,462 in Krishna, 7,998 in Vizianagaram and 7,593 in Prakasam. Among the total 89 deaths of Covid-19 infected patients during the last 24 hours, Chittoor registered 10 deaths, followed by nine each in Anantapur, Guntur, Nellore and

West Godavari, seven each in East Godavari, Kadapa and Prakasam, six in Krishna, five each in Kurnool and Visakhapatnam, and three each in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts. AP has conducted Covid-19 tests on 44,237 samples per million population and has registered Covid-19 positive rate at 8.76, while Maharashtra has recorded a positive rate of 19.25, Telangana 13.44 and Karnataka 10.01. State health authorities have discharged 7,594 patients after recovery from various hospitals during the last 24 hours.



Collector K. Shashanka views handloom items created by weavers and interacts with them after inaugurating an exhibition on National Handloom Day celebrations in Karimnagar on Friday. — YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

Minister hails seed Ganesha idol of MP

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 7

With Ganesh Chaturthi round the corner and most Ganesh statues made of materials which are hazardous to the environment, TRS Rajya Sabha member J. Santosh Kumar has started the innovative idea of distributing idols made of clay that are embedded with neem seeds. The initiative was appreciated by environment minister A. Indrakaran Reddy. When a seed Ganesha idol was handed over to him, Reddy appreciated it and hoped it would inspire citizens to take up the responsibility of protecting the environment during the festival. Recently, Kumar had initiated the Green India Challenge, which drew wide support including from film actors Chiranjeevi, Nagarjuna,



State environment minister A. Indrakaran Reddy (left) with TRS MP J. Santosh Kumar.

Mahesh Babu, Samanth. They planted saplings and passed on the challenge to others. Sports personalities and celebrities also took part. As this has inspired the people to plant trees, the hope is that the seed Ganesha idols will also be a game changer in helping the environment while celebrating the festival.

Jagan greets weavers, promises sop

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 7

Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, greeted the weavers' community on the occasion of national weavers' day on Friday. He said, "Andhra Pradesh is one of the most important states in the handloom industry, with the second-largest concentration of weavers in India. We are proud of our weaver community and are making every effort to preserve the rich textile heritage of the state." Pointing out that the YSR Nethanna Nestham scheme has provided annual assistance of ₹24,000 to all eligible weaver families for two consecutive years, positively impacting the lives of all the weavers, especially during the lockdown, Jagan added, "Besides taking up welfare activities to boost the handloom sector in the state, we introduced e-platforms, through which marketing of handloom and handicrafts can be done easily. "We are planning to launch the initiative on October 2 this year."

Minister for BC welfare, Chelluboyina Srinivas Venugopalakrishna, said, "Under the Nethanna Nestham scheme, 81,783 families have benefited in Andhra Pradesh, accounting for nearly ₹200 crore per annum."

Police grills Vizag doc about child trafficking

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 7

The Maharani police continued to grill universal Shruuti hospital managing director, Dr. P. Namratha, for the second day on Friday. The police took her into their custody for two days from the judicial realm to find more about the trafficking racket. During the investigation, it was found that one more baby was sold two months before the current incident.

● **DURING investigations, it was found that one more baby was sold two months before the current incident.**

The police on Thursday evening arrested Dr. Chekuri Padmaja of Padmaja hospital, Seethamadhara and N. Nooka Ratnam, a resident of Cheedikada in Vizag district. Dr. Namratha and Dr. Padmaja had ganged up and sold a new-born baby girl to a couple from Vizag

nagaram, informing the mother of the infant that the infant was born dead. The couple had come to Dr. Namratha seeking assisted pregnancy and she immediately agreed. After conducting the procedure, Dr. Namratha sold the baby to the couple stating she was born to a surrogate mother. "These doctors might have sold a number of babies during the last few years cheating innocent people," a senior officer said.

Courts interference in legislative decisions wrong, says AP Speaker

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 7

Andhra Pradesh Assembly speaker Tammineni Sitaram refuted the allegations of the opposition Telugu Desam that three capitals and APCRDA repeal Bills were passed without proper discussion in the House. The two Bills were debated in the House for 11 hours including 2.17 hours used by the opposition party to present its view, he said. "Despite the fact

● **SITARAM QUESTIONED the reasonableness of TD's objection to the ministers presenting the two Bills in Legislative Council.**

that the opposition TD doesn't have good number in the Assembly, more time was given to it." "It's incorrect to say that there was no discussion on the Bills." Maintaining that the courts should not interfere in the decisions taken by the Assembly, Mr Sitaram recalled that the same line was taken by TD leader Yanamala

Ramakrishnudu as speaker in 1997. Mr Sitaram questioned the reasonableness of TD objection to the ministers presenting the two Bills in Legislative Council on behalf of the government. He said some were misinforming the court that the Bills were referred to a select committee. "When there is no such select

committee, where is the question of the Bills pending for its consideration?" he wondered. "Voting is a must to form a select committee in the Council. No such procedure was followed and the committee to which the Bills were referred has no validity." Mr Sitaram questioned as to why Chandrababu Naidu did not ask in the Legislative Assembly to send the Bills to a select committee. "This shows double standards of the Telugu Desam."

SHORT TAKES

NEP FOUNDATION OF NEW INDIA, SAYS PM MODI

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that India's education system needs to change according to the changing times, and therefore the new National Education Policy (NEP) has introduced a new structure of a 5+3+3+4 curriculum.

Addressing a higher education conclave via video conferencing, Modi said the new policy stresses on "how to think", instead of "what to think", and its emphasis was on inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based and analysis-based learning methods for children.

Modi added that the new policy also provides for a "credit bank" so that students can have the freedom to leave a course in the middle and utilise them later when they want to resume their courses.

The Prime Minister expressed happiness that no section of the country had claimed that the NEP had any bias. "After the NEP came, no section of the country said the policy has any bias. It is a matter of happiness," the PM said while addressing a "Conclave on Transformational Reforms in Higher Education".

ED GRILLS ACTOR RHEA IN MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 7

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday grilled actor Rhea Chakraborty in connection with the alleged money laundering case that stems from a complaint filed by late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's father. The officials questioned Chakraborty, business manager and brother on some shell companies that were registered in the addresses of Navi Mumbai. The action comes a day after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a case against her and others taking over the suicide probe.

The central agency is investigating the monetary trail in connection with the properties owned by Chakraborty and her family to ascertain how the funds were arranged to buy them. The officials found a flat measuring 500 sqft in the name of Chakraborty located at Khar (east). The ED questioned her to find out how she arranged money to partly pay the total cost of ₹85 lakh.

SC DISMISSES BAIL PLEA OF ACTIVIST REHANA

New Delhi, Aug. 7: The Supreme Court dismissed activist Rehana Fathima's plea seeking anticipatory bail in cases against her for allegedly circulating a video in which she was semi-nude and allowing her minor children to paint on her body, and said the court was baffled at the case.

The top court observed as to what kind of impression the children will get about the culture of this country through such videos. A bench of Justices Arun Mishra, B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murari said this kind of thing is unthinkable and would leave a bad taste in society.

Senior advocate Gopal Shankaranarayan, appearing for the petitioner, said that strangely, the allegation of child pornography has been made. He said that a lady, a mother, had asked her children to paint on her half nude body.

— PTI



Locals move through a flood affected area near Mavoor in a boat, following heavy rainfall in Kozhikode district on Friday.

— PTI

15 dead, 50 trapped in Kerala landslide

Police, NDRF get into rescue mode after heavy rains

GILVESTER ASSARY I
DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG. 7

Kerala woke up to a major tragedy on Friday with a landslide in Rajamalai near Munnar, in Idukki district of Kerala, leaving 15 persons dead and over 50 persons feared trapped under debris.

The dead include a 12-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl, eight men and five women.

The state police, National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF), fire force and defence personnel are engaged in a massive rescue operation in the area to save the lives of people trapped under the debris.

At a press conference here Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan said the landslide occurred in Pettimudi near Rajamalai in which 30 rooms of a residential cluster known as layams, of tea estate workers, was completely destroyed.

Over 80 people residing in the quarters were trapped in the landslide, of which 15 died, 15 were rescued and rescue operations are on at the site to retrieve the others safely from under the debris.

The seriously injured have been shifted to Kolenchery medical college and the others are

Talacauvery temple chief priest, wife, others missing

SHILPA P. I DC
MYSURU, AUG. 7

Heavy rains continued to create massive floods and landslides in Kodagu, hitting normal life and road connectivity on Friday too.

Landslides at more than 30 places in the past three days, according to Kodagu collector Anniyes Kanmani Joy, the disrupted National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team operations on Friday too. The team is trying to trace five missing people, suspected to be stuck under the debris

of their house which collapsed due to landslides on Thursday at Brahmagiri hills in Talacauvery, the birth place of river Cauvery in Kodagu.

Chief priest of Talacauvery temple, 80-year-old Narayan Achary, his wife Shantha, his brother, 86-year-old Anandatheerthawamy, assistant priests, Pavan and Ravikiran, are the ones missing. Their 40 cows have also reportedly got stuck under the debris of the landslides.

Twenty other families at Bagamandala are

being moved to a relief centre. People in landslide and flood prone parts of Aiyappa hills, Nehru nagar and other unsafe places are being moved to relief centres.

There were landslides at Gaalibeedi road, Mangaluru road, Madikeri-Siddapura road and other places too in Kodagu. Chedukaaru bridge, near Chettimaani, was submerged and Tavarekere road in Kushalnagar, Second Mannangeri near Karthoji road and other areas were flooded.

— PTI

RAILWAYS TO END COLONIAL-ERA KHALASI SYSTEM

New Delhi, Aug. 7: The Railways is set to end a colonial-era practise of appointing khalasis or 'bungalow peons' who worked at the residences of senior officials, following an order from the Railway Board barring any new appointment to the post.

In an order issued on August 6, the Railway Board has said the issue regarding telephone attendant-cum-dak khalasis (TADKs) is under review.

"The issue regarding the appointment of TADK is under review in Railway Board. It has, therefore, been decided that any appointment of fresh face substitutes as TADK should not either be processed or made with immediate effect. Further, all cases approved for such appointments since 1st July 2020 may be reviewed and position advised to Board."

This may be complied with strictly in all Railway establishments," the order said. Upon joining Railways as temporary staff, TADKs become Group D staff following a screening process after a period of around three years.

In earlier days, officers posted in remote areas or working in the field during odd hours would be provided a TADK to ensure security for his family as well as do odd official work like take phone calls or ferry files.

These TADK staff would usually become ticket examiners, porters, mechanics for air-conditioned coaches and cooks in the running room.

However, over the years, the role was relegated to that of domestic helps and then to office peons, officials said.

Bhojpuri actress Anupama ends life by suicide

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 7

Bhojpuri film actress Anupama Pathak allegedly committed suicide by in Mumbai's Dahisar suburb on Thursday. The 40 year-old-actor was found hanging at her rented flat on August 2. Police said that a suicide note has been recovered from the late actor's residence.

Pathak hailed from Patna and had shifted to Mumbai to work in Bhojpuri films and TV shows. A day before her death, she had shared a Facebook video and said that she felt cheated and was unable to trust anyone.

In the video, she spoke about not having friends who can be of help. She allegedly killed herself when her husband was not at home, police said.

"If you confide to someone that you are going through some problems and feel suicidal, that person, no matter how good a friend he or she is, will immediately ask you to keep them away from your problems so that they don't get into trouble after you die. Also people will make fun of you and disrespect you in front of others. So never share your problems with any-

one and never consider anyone your friend," Anupama said in Hindi in her Facebook live video. An official said that a case has been filed under section 306 of the Indian Penal Code.

Reports said that the late actress has mentioned in her suicide note that she invested ₹10,000 in a company named Wisdom Producer Company in Malad, but she did not get the money after maturity date in December 2019.

Pathak's death comes at a time the entertainment industry is reeling from the shock of the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, who was found hanging at his apartment in suburban Bandra on June 14.

On June 9, Rajput's former manager Disha Sallian jumped from a high-rise building.

The month earlier, on May 15, TV actor Manmeet Grewal had hanged himself at his Mumbai home.

Television actor Samir Sharma, 44, best known for his roles in 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' and 'Left Right Left', was on Wednesday found dead at his home in suburban Malad where he lived alone.

Cong questions PM's silence on China, deleted document

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The Congress Party on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "running for cover" when questioned on the issue of Chinese incursions into Indian territory.

"The Prime Minister either keeps quiet on the issue or misleads the country, gives a clean chit to China by saying 'no one entered our territory'..." So much so, that a document that talks about Chinese incursions is removed from the website of the ministry of defence. We have also seen the loud silence of the Prime Minister on questions asked about Chinese companies con-

tributing to the opaque PM Cares Fund," Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said.

Claiming that the Prime Minister had crafted an image for himself – an image of a leader who, before 2014, roared on issues of border security, the Congress leader said: "Today we see the same man running for cover when it comes to the issue of Chinese incursions into Indian territory".

"The country is surprised at attempts being made by Prime Minister and his colleagues to intimidate those who question the Prime Minister on his surrender to China, into silence. Modiji, we are only reminding you of your Raj Dharma. Your Raj

Dharma is to protect the territory and people of India".

He posed some direct questions to the Prime Minister including what was the NDA government's relationship with China, why was his government submissive in the relationship with China and what influence does China wield on the Indian establishment.

"Why did your party take the help of China in the Lok Sabha elections? In doing so, why did you give away vital data of Indian citizens to China? Why did you compromise the data security and privacy of crores of Indians by involving Chinese companies linked to the PLA?" he asked.

India sees steady recovery rate, reduced fatality rate

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

India had registered a total of 20,85,124 lakh Covid-19 cases, and the toll stood at 42,554, as per covid19-India.org.

There were 60,622 new cases and 923 deaths during the day. The Union health ministry said India continues on the path of Covid-19 management boosted by two significant achievements—continuously rising recovery rate and reducing case fatality rate (CFR) which is much below the global average. The recovery rate on Friday was recorded 68 per cent, while

the CFR dropped down to a new low of 2.05 per cent.

"These two in tandem have enabled a higher and rising difference (more than 7.7 lakhs) between the number of recovered patients and active cases in India. Ramped up hospital infrastructure and emphasis on efficient treatment of hospitalised patients through the standard of care incorporated in the clinical treatment protocol issued by the Centre, have effectively ensured improvement in the recovery rate.

The average daily recovered cases (seven day moving

average) have increased from around 26,000 cases to 44,000 cases in the last two weeks," health ministry officials said.

The recoveries were 13,78,105 after close to 50,000 persons were discharged in one day. Health economist Rijo M. John, India is expected to add another ten lakh (one million) cases in the next 14 days. "While some of the big burden states seem to have either reduced the daily new cases or plateaued, at least for now, there are others who see daily new highs. 33 States/UTs now have at least a 1,000 plus Covid-19 cases," he said.

IAF VICE-CHIEF VISITS AIRFIELD AT DAULAT BEG OLDI

PAWAN BALI I DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Indian Air Force Vice Chief Harjit Singh Arora on Friday visited Daulat Beg Oldi Advanced Landing Ground (ALG), where Chinese have intruded in the Dopsang plains in an attempt to dominate this strategically important sector which is near Aksai Chin.

This is one of the world's highest airstrips, built in 1962 and reactivated in 2008. This airstrip could play an important role in case of any armed confrontation with China in providing logistic support to the Indian Army.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army is unhappy with the construction of the 255-kilometre Darbuk-Shayok-Daulat Beg Oldi road which ends near the airstrip. It provides all weather road connectivity with Leh. China is sensitive to India building its capability at Daulat Beg Oldie as it is near CPEC in PoK.

Air Marshal Arora visited forward air bases in Ladakh sector of Western Air Command, said IAF in a statement. Besides reviewing the operational preparedness at these bases, he interacted with air force personnel of the combat units currently operating at these locations. He was briefed about the operational readiness of IAF assets deployed in the area.

He asked Air Force personnel to ensure a high state of combat readiness at all times. During the visit Air Marshal Arora also flew the Chinook and the Light Combat Helicopter.

Maha govt forms flying squads to check hosps

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 7

Amid the complaints of hospitals and ambulance operators overcharging the Covid-19 patients, the state government on Friday has set up flying squads to keep a check on the medical bills of hospitals and ambulance service charges across the state.

Maharashtra public health minister Rajesh Tope said that the state had issued directives to officials to act on complaints about hospitals and ambulances charging exorbitant rates. He said, "To check if the decisions are being implemented, flying squads have been set up". In this connection, the public health department's principal secretary Dr Pradeep Vyas has sent a letter to all divisional commissioners, district collectors and municipal commissioners and sought a report within next three days.

The government, by an order on May 21, had fixed upper limits for charges of private hospitals. The GR stated that the private hospitals are

allowed to charge ₹4,000 per day for a general bed, ₹7,500 per day in the intensive care unit (ICU) and ₹9,000 per day in ICU with a ventilator. Another order, on June 30, fixed rates for private ambulances. But despite government orders, private hospitals are still charging exorbitant rates. Besides this, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana has been extended to all in view of the Covid-19 pandemic from May 23. The state also acquired 80 per cent beds of the private hospitals for Covid patients.

A senior official said that the flying squads will verify if the government decisions aimed at providing relief to Covid-19 patients are being implemented by hospitals. They will check, among other things, if private hospitals have displayed the government orders at their main gates, he added.

There should be a system to audit the final bills issued to coronavirus patients by private hospitals and rates charged by private ambulances should also be audited, the health minister said.

NATH ACCUSED OF 'SAFFRONISING' CONGRESS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, AUG. 7

Veteran leader Digvijay Singh's brother Lakshman, a sitting Congress MLA, on Friday accused former chief minister Kamal Nath of 'saffronising' the party by trying to cultivate his image as a devotee of Lord Ram.

In a statement issued here, Singh, a 5-time MP and 3-time MLA, said it was fine for Congress leaders to don saffron robes while visiting temples. But, the leaders should refrain from projecting them as devotees of Lord Ram in public.

He was referring to the call given by Nath to all Congress leaders in MP to recite 'Hanuman Chalisa' and 'Sunderkand' in their houses and near-by temples on August 5 when PM Narendra Modi performed the groundbreaking ceremony for Ram temple in Ayodhya.

PEACE DEAL War memorial, separate statute part of agenda

NSCN (I-M) to hold talks in Delhi

MANOJ ANAND I DC
GUWAHATI, AUG 7

The Prime Minister's envoy for Naga peace talks, R. N. Ravi, also the Governor of Nagaland, will be leaving for New Delhi next week to hold talks with the collective leadership of the nationalist Social Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM) led by its general secretary, Thuinga-leng Muivah, to sort out variances on rhetorical issues like flag, separate constitution for Nagaland and setting up a memorial of arms and ammunition of Naga

rebels at Kohima. Disclosing that a delegation of NSCN (I-M) has left for New Delhi on Friday to join its 86-year-old general secretary, Th. Muivah, who is in New Delhi and also battling health issues, security sources however clarified that the NSCN (I-M) delegation was asked to reach New Delhi early because of Covid-19 restrictions.

Asserting that consensus has already been created on majority of issues, security sources said that NSCN (I-M) has been insisting on rhetorical issues like a flag and

separate constitution of Nagaland, besides a museum or war memorial of the arms and ammunition of Naga armed rebels at Kohima.

Indicating that the government of India may allow NSCN (I-M) and other stakeholders to have their own flag, security sources said that all the terms and conditions for surrender of arms and ammunition and disbanding the armed rebel group have already been finalised.

Pointing out that all the arms and ammunition surrendered by Naga rebels would be in the cus-

tody of the government, security sources said that the government of India may agree to set up a memorial of arms and ammunition surrendered by all the rebel groups.

Clarifying a report in a section of media that government of India was prepared to sign the peace accord with Naga rebel groups by August 15, security sources said that it was not possible as a lot of constitutional and legal exercises relating to the resolution of Naga issues have to be completed before the signing of the peace accord.



IN BRIEF

China sentences Canadian to death

Beijing: China has sentenced a fourth Canadian citizen to death on drug charges in less than two years following a sharp downturn in ties over the arrest of an executive of Chinese tech giant Huawei. Ye Jianhui was sentenced on Friday by the Foshan Municipal Intermediate Court in the southern province of Guangdong. Ye had been found guilty of manufacturing and transporting drugs, the court said in a brief statement. Another suspect in the case was also given the death penalty and four others sentenced to between seven years and life in prison. Death sentences are automatically referred to China's highest court for review.

Malaysia's Mahathir forms new party

Putrajaya: Two-time former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced on Friday that he is forming a new ethnic Malay party more than two months after he was sacked from his previous party during a political struggle with his successor. Mahathir, 95, quit as prime minister in protest in late February after fellow party member Muhyiddin Yassin withdrew their Bersatu party from the ruling coalition, triggering its collapse less than two years after a historic victory in 2018 national polls. Muhyiddin was sworn in as new prime minister in March with a new government supported by ex-Prime Minister Najib Razak's corruption-tainted party that was ousted in 2018.

Bush's new book honours immigrants

New York: A new book by former President George W. Bush will highlight an issue which now sets him apart from many of his fellow Republicans — immigration. Crown announced Thursday that Bush's "Out of Many, One: Portraits of America's Immigrants" will be published March 2. The book includes 43 portraits by the 43rd president, four-color paintings of immigrants he has come to know over the years, along with biographical essays he wrote about each of them. Bush, who served as president from 2001-2009, has often praised the contributions of immigrants, a notable contrast to President Donald Trump's rhetoric and policies.

Iran is No. 1 sponsor of terrorism: US

United Nations: The US ambassador to the United Nations called Iran "the world's number one sponsor of terrorism" on Thursday and warned Russia and China that they will become "co-sponsors" if they block a resolution to extend the UN arms embargo on Iran. Ambassador Kelly Craft said the United States hopes Russia and China "will not be co-sponsors of the number one state that sponsors terrorism" and "will see the importance of peace in the Middle East." But she said the partnership between Russia and China, not only on backing Iran, is very clear: "They're just going to be promoting chaos, conflict and mayhem outside their borders, so we have to just corner them."

BOY SWEEPED OUT TO SEA SURVIVES WITH FLOATING SKILLS

London, Aug. 7: A 10-year-old Indian-origin boy, who was swept out to sea during a family trip to the beach in northern England, has spoken about how he survived using the floating advice he picked up on a television documentary show.

Ravi Saini was able to battle the waves for more than an hour and even earned praise from the rescuers who found him on his back, with his arms and legs spread, shouting for help in the water near Scarborough, on the North Sea coast, on July 31.

As someone who takes weekly swimming lessons and is a fan of the BBC documentary 'Saving Lives at Sea', Ravi says that is where he saw the 'Float to Live' technique of lying on your back, staying calm and spreading out like a starfish.

"I felt like 'yeah I finally got a second chance to live'," said Ravi, in reference to his rescue. The schoolboy from Leeds had been at the beach in South Bay with his father, Nathu Ram, 37, his mother, Puspita Devi, 34, and his nine-year-old sister, Muskan.

Trump cites India to ban TikTok, WeChat



Donald Trump

Washington, Aug. 7: President Donald Trump, citing India's recent ban on Chinese social media apps, has signed executive orders that would prevent TikTok and WeChat from operating in the US as they threatened America's national security and economy.

The ban comes into effect in 45 days, Trump said in two separate executive orders signed on Thursday. India was the first country to ban TikTok and WeChat, citing national security concerns. India has banned as many as 106 Chinese apps, a move welcomed by both the Trump administration and US lawmakers.

"The United States must take aggressive action against the owners of TikTok to protect our national security," Trump said in his executive order. In his next executive order he said the country must take "aggressive action" against WeChat to protect America's national security. In a communique to the Congress, Trump said the spread in the United States of mobile applications developed and owned by companies in China continues to threaten the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the country.

Trump noted that these risks have led other countries, including Australia and India, to begin

restricting or banning the use of TikTok and WeChat. TikTok which has up to 80 million active monthly users in America - has exploded in popularity in recent years, mostly with people under 20. TikTok, a video-sharing mobile application owned by the Chinese company ByteDance Ltd, automatically captures vast swaths of information from its users, Trump said.

This data collection threatens to allow the ruling Chinese Communist Party access to Americans' personal and proprietary information - potentially allowing China to track the locations of federal employees and contractors, build dossiers of personal information for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage, he alleged.

TikTok also reportedly censors content that the Chinese Communist Party deems politically sensitive, such as content concerning protests in Hong

Kong and China's treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.

The US will end its reliance on China and other foreign nations for pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, President Donald Trump has said, asserting that Beijing would have to pay the price for the wound it has inflicted on America and the world by spreading the deadly Coronavirus.

President Trump and leaders of several countries have accused China of not being transparent in reporting the deadly disease, leading to huge human casualties and economic crisis across the world.

China, however, has denied US' accusation of covering up the extent of its Coronavirus outbreak and accused America of attempting to divert public attention by insinuating that the virus originated from a virology laboratory in Wuhan.

"What China did is a terrible thing. Whether it was incompetence or on purpose, it was a terrible thing that they did not only to the United States, but to the world. A terrible thing," Trump told reporters at the White House on Thursday before flying to Ohio to visit a Whirlpool manufacturing plant has over one billion users worldwide, including users in the United States. — *Agencies*

Global virus cases top 19 million, deaths top 7 lakh

Berlin, Aug. 7: Coronavirus cases worldwide passed 19 million on Thursday, as European nations imposed new travel restrictions and containment measures with fears growing over a second wave of infections.

Global deaths from the pandemic have topped 7,00,000, and Europe remains the hardest-hit region worldwide with more than 2,00,000 fatalities since the virus first emerged in China late last year. More than half of Africa's cases are in South Africa, which has the fifth highest number of infections in the world, after the US, Brazil, India and Russia.

Nevertheless the African continent remains one of the least affected, according to the official figures, with only Oceania registering fewer Covid-19 cases.

As governments across the globe struggle to salvage economies ravaged by months of lockdown, many have been forced to look at new measures to curb outbreaks of Covid-19 since they lifted initial containment orders.

In Australia, the second-largest city Melbourne entered the country's toughest lockdown yet on Thursday, closing non-essential businesses and requiring hundreds of thousands more people to stay home.

The pandemic has killed at least 7,12,315 people worldwide with the United States recording the most deaths with almost 1.60,000, followed by Brazil with nearly 1,00,000. Globally, 40 percent of all cases have been recorded in the two countries. Germany is the latest to introduce mandatory tests for travellers returning from designated risk zones. — *AFP*

Russia's race for virus cure raises concerns

Moscow, Aug. 7: Russia boasts that it's about to become the first country to approve a Covid-19 vaccine, with mass vaccinations planned as early as October using shots that are yet to complete clinical trials — and scientists worldwide are sounding the alarm that the headlong rush could backfire.

Moscow sees a Sputnik-like propaganda victory, recalling the Soviet Union's launch of the world's first satellite in 1957. But the experimental Covid-19 shots began first-in-human testing on a few dozen people less

than two months ago, and there's no published scientific evidence yet backing Russia's late entry to the global vaccine race, much less explaining why it should be considered a front-runner.

"I'm worried that Russia is cutting corners so that the vaccine that will come out may be not just ineffective, but also unsafe," said Lawrence Gostin, a global public health law expert at Georgetown University. "It doesn't work that way... Trials come first. That's really important." — *AP*

GERMAN STATE SHUTS 2 SCHOOLS AFTER NEW CASES

Berlin, Aug. 7: Officials in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania have shut down two schools after new cases of Coronavirus were confirmed only days after the northeastern German state became the country's first to resume classes.

The *dpa* news agency reported on Friday that a high school in Ludwigslust was shuttered after a teacher tested positive for the virus and a primary school in Graal-Mueritz was closed after a student was confirmed to have Covid-19.

Schools fully reopened on Monday with no mask or distancing requirements, but with children divided into fixed groups. — *PTI*

BEIJING SEES FIRST NEW LOCAL VIRUS CASE IN WEEK

Beijing, Aug. 7: China's capital is reporting its first new case of locally transmitted Covid-19 in a week. State media said on Friday the case in Beijing is linked to a recent outbreak in the northern port city of Dalian. Beijing has registered only a few scattered new cases since containing a June outbreak linked to a wholesale food market.

China's northwestern region of Xinjiang has 26 new cases as authorities continue to fight to curb an outbreak through travel restrictions and the lockdown of some residential areas. The semi-autonomous city of Hong Kong reports 95 new cases and three additional fatalities reported. — *PTI*



French rescuers search the Beirut port on Thursday, three days after a massive blast there shook the Lebanese capital. Rescuers combed through the rubble in a search for survivors watched breathlessly by relatives of the missing, after an investigation. — *AFP*

Lebanon Prez suspects missile caused blasts

Rejects international probe as an attempt to dilute truth

Beirut, Aug. 7: Lebanon's president on Friday rejected any international probe into the catastrophic port blast, saying a missile or negligence could have been responsible as rescuers desperately combed the rubble for survivors.

The entrenched ruling class has come under fire once again since Tuesday's explosion, which killed at least 154 people and devastated swathes of the capital.

The revelation that a huge shipment of hazardous ammonium nitrate fertiliser had languished for years in a warehouse in the heart of the capital served as shocking proof to many Lebanese of the rot at the core of their political system.

Even Lebanese President Michel Aoun admitted Friday that the "paralysed" system needed to be "reconsidered." "We are facing changes and reconsidering our system, which is built on consensus, after it was seen to be paralysed and incapable of swiftly executing decisions," Aoun told reporters.

He pledged "swift justice" but rejected widespread calls for an international probe, telling a reporter he saw it as an

ISRAELI ARMY DOWNS DRONE FROM LEBANON

Jerusalem, Aug. 7: The Israeli army said it had shot down a drone overnight on Thursday into Friday that came from Lebanon, a border on heightened military alert due to recent skirmishes.

Israeli troops overnight "identified a drone which infiltrated into Israeli airspace in the Mount Hermon area, along the Israeli side of the Blue Line" demarcating the Jewish state and Lebanon, the army said.

"The drone was monitored and downed," it said, adding Israeli troops were conducting searches in the area. — *AFP*

attempt to "dilute the truth." "There are two possible scenarios for what happened: it was either negligence or foreign interference through a missile or bomb," he said, the first time a top Lebanese official raised the possibility that the port had been attacked.

What ignited the mas-

Rescuers scour blast zone as arrests made

Beirut, Aug. 7: Rescuers combed through the rubble of Beirut port on Friday in a search for survivors watched breathlessly by relatives of the missing, with authorities making five new arrests in a high-profile probe.

Shock has turned to anger in Lebanon since Tuesday's colossal explosion killed at least 154 people and devastated swathes of the capital, with security forces firing tear gas at demonstrators who gathered near parliament late on Thursday.

The revelation that a huge shipment of hazardous ammonium nitrate fertiliser had lan-

guished for years in a warehouse in the heart of the capital served as shocking proof to many Lebanese of the rot at the core of their political system.

What ignited the 2,750 tonnes of fertiliser is still unclear — officials have said work had recently begun on repairs to the warehouse, while others suspected fireworks which were stored either in the same place or nearby.

Near the seat of the explosion, by the carcass of the port's giant grain silos, rescue teams from France, Germany, Italy and other countries coordinated their search efforts. — *AFP*

JUDGE DISMISSES TRUMP BID TO DELAY LAWSUIT

New York, Aug. 7: A New York judge knocked down President Donald Trump's bid to delay a lawsuit from a woman who accused him of rape, ruling in a decision released Thursday that the presidency doesn't shield him from the case.

Pointing to a recent US Supreme Court ruling that the president isn't immune from a New York prosecutor's criminal investigation, Manhattan judge Verda Saunders said the same principle applies to E Jean Carroll's defamation suit, in which Trump's lawyers have argued that the Constitution bars presidents from being dragged into lawsuits in state courts. "No, it does not," Saunders wrote. The decision allows Carroll — who's seeking Trump's DNA as potential evidence — to keep pursuing her suit. — *AP*

Afghans meet on freeing prisoners

Kabul, Aug. 7: A traditional council met on Friday in Kabul to decide whether to release a final 400 Taliban prisoners, the last hurdle to negotiations between Afghanistan's political leadership and the Taliban under a peace deal the insurgents signed with the United States earlier this year.

The meeting of the council of elders, known as Loya Jirga, was initially expected to last three days but could end as early as Saturday.

The Kabul-Taliban negotiations are seen as a critical step toward lasting peace in Afghanistan and a roadmap to what the country might look like after decades of war, with the Taliban joining the political mainstream. They are also to decide what constitutional changes would be made

in a post-war Afghanistan, and how the rights of women and minorities would be protected.

The negotiations would also determine the fate of the tens of thousands of heavily armed men on both sides of the conflict — the Taliban on one side, and the warlords and armed militias loyal to Kabul on the other. The Taliban have rejected Friday's gathering in Kabul, claiming it had no legal status.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a statement late Thursday saying the 400 prisoners had to be released if peace talks with the Taliban were to move forward.

"We acknowledge that the release of these prisoners is unpopular," Pompeo said. — *AP*

Lord Palmerston. — *Twitter*

RESIDENT CAT PALMERSTON SET TO RETIRE IN UK

London, Aug. 7: The resident cat at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London, dubbed "Lord Palmerston the Chief Mouser" in reference to its mouse-catching duties, is to retire from diplomatic service, the FCO said on Friday.

Lord Palmerston, famed for regular territorial tiffs with neighbouring Downing Street mouse-catcher Larry, will see out his retirement in the English countryside, where he has been spending lockdown already at the home of a member of Foreign Office staff. — *PTI*

LANDSLIDE | VICTORY

Mahinda will be sworn in as the new prime minister for the fourth time on Sunday

Rajapaksa clan wins 2/3rd majority in Lanka polls

Colombo, Aug. 7: Mahinda Rajapaksa will be sworn in as Sri Lanka's Prime Minister for the fourth time on Sunday after his party registered a landslide victory in the general election, securing two-thirds majority in Parliament needed to amend the Constitution to further consolidate the powerful Rajapaksa family's grip on power.

The Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP), led by prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, won in 145 con-

stituencies, bagging a total of 150 seats with its allies, a two-thirds majority in the 225-member Parliament, according to the results announced by the election commission on Friday.

It won all but four of the 22 electoral districts on offer, polling 6.8 million votes (59.9 per cent).

The 74-year-old Prime Minister Mahinda thanked the Sri Lankan people for putting their faith in the SLPP and said that the country will not

stand disappointed during its tenure.

"Heartfelt gratitude to all Sri Lankans for placing their trust in President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, myself and the Podujana Party and voting for the 'Saubhagya Dakkama' election manifesto in overwhelming numbers. We will ensure Sri Lanka will not stand disappointed during our tenure," he said.

Mahinda will be sworn in as the new prime minister for the fourth time on Sunday at a ceremony at

the historic Buddhist temple of Kelaniya, a north Colombo suburb, according to an official statement.

He created a record in polling over 5,00,000 individual preference votes, the highest ever recorded by a candidate in the history of elections.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first world leaders to congratulate Mahinda on the outcome of the elections and said the two sides will work

together to further advance all areas of bilateral cooperation and to take their special ties to ever newer heights.

"Thank you PM @narendramodi for your congratulatory phone call. With the strong support of the people of #SriLanka, I look forward to working with you closely to further enhance the long-standing cooperation between our two countries. Sri Lanka & India are friends & relations," Mahinda tweeted. — *PTI*



Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa greets Buddhist monks at his home in the southern town of Tangalle on Friday. — *AFP*

DECCAN Chronicle

8 AUGUST 2020

RBI loan policy spells relief for borrowers

The Reserve Bank of India's decision to allow banks to restructure retail and corporate loans to mitigate unexpected financial damage caused by Coronavirus to individuals and companies will give a great relief to stressed borrowers. The move fulfils the demand of bankers, who sought a one-time recast of loans accounts instead of a further extension of a loan moratorium.

While the six-month-long moratorium offered relief to thousands of people, it impacted the fund flow of banks and, more importantly, Non-Banking Financial Institutions (NBFCs). A longer pause of loan repayments could make it difficult for NBFCs to service debt, which could have a cascading effect on the fundamentals of the Indian economy. A loan restructuring, on the other hand, could allow the banks to extend the tenure of the loan, thereby making Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) smaller and, therefore, easy on the borrower's pocket.

While industrial activity has picked up pace, it is nowhere near the old normal. The RBI's Monetary Policy itself admits that the economic growth could be in the negative territory for some time. With several sectors, such as hospitality, food and beverages, construction, infrastructure, travel and tourism reporting subdued performance, lakhs of people, if not crores, have either lost their jobs or are facing reduced incomes on account of salary cuts or lower business income.

A survey conducted by Finway showed that 45 per cent of people who borrowed from NBFCs and 30 per cent of those who borrowed from banks had applied for the loan moratorium till August 30. Most of them were found to have applied for the moratorium as they were unsure of the future and wanted to hold on to cash in the uncertain times.

Additional liquidity window provided by the RBI to the National Housing Bank, the home loan refinance, hints at stress in financial institutions. An offer to restructure corporate loans mirrors the strain on their fund flow. The higher loan-to-value ratio for gold loans too indicates that the RBI is cognizant of the financial stress faced by a significant number of people. Apart from these concerns, RBI fears that inflation too could be on the rise.

In such a scenario, it would be a grave mistake on the part of bankers to expect a regular repayment of EMIs. When faced with a choice between basic essentials required for his and his family's survival and his commitment to pay EMIs regularly, an average person would use the money for his survival. It would be prudent on the part of bankers to restructure loan repayment to ensure that borrowers are not forced to default — which is obviously not good either for the borrower or the lender. So the RBI giving a green-signal to loan restructuring is a step in the right direction. However, it should ensure that such loan restructuring does not affect the credit rating of an individual. Otherwise, it would leave people with no option but to default on EMIs or get debt-trapped by borrowing at higher rates. The RBI hopefully has its ear to the ground.

When documents disappear

In what looks like an attempt at damage control via obfuscation, executed in a tearing hurry, the defence ministry, without an explanation, removed from its website a document containing its first official admission that China had "transgressed" into Indian territory in May.

The move has sparked some consternation. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi flagged it on Twitter, bluntly accusing the Prime Minister of "lying" to his citizens. At an all-party meeting called by the government on June 19, the PM had famously said, "Neither has anyone intruded into our frontier there, neither is any intruder there, nor is any of our posts occupied by someone else." That was good news for Beijing — the Chinese media had then used it to justify its assault on Indian soil. The statement was indeed contradicted by 14 Corps Commander Lt Gen Harinder Singh as well as external affairs minister S. Jaishankar who earlier called for restoration of status quo ante. It dishonoured the sacrifice made by 20 Indian soldiers in Galwan valley on the night of June 15. The disappearance of the document, which had thus crossed Mr Modi's line, acts as a face-saver for him and his government. It also keeps intact the triumphalism following the egregious *bhoomi puja* gathering at Ayodhya on Wednesday.

Following the Galwan valley face-off, there have been five rounds of talks between India and China. China has resisted putting Pangong Tso on the table in the latest round. Beijing is firm in its assertion that it is on its own territory and has, citing a road constructed by it during the 1999 Kargil war to stake claim, asked India to pull back instead. The ministry's document, too, reflected this reality as it had mentioned a "protracted stand-off". So all isn't glory and hunky-dory in days ahead.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



Playing cops & robbers in Mumbai-ishstyle drama



Shobhaa De

The tragic SSR suicide saga was raging away, with two state governments (Bihar and Maharashtra) battling each other aggressively and publicly, to control investigations and dominate the case. Till — trumpets and bugles, please — a monster was introduced. Enter the Dragon: the CBI! Meanwhile, the main protagonist, 34-year-old actor Sushant Singh Rajput, has been reduced to three letters of the alphabet. And we remain as clueless about his untimely death today as we were when the controversy broke. This week, all the loose ends were supposed to be tied up neatly by the Mumbai police, but wait! The Bihar police dramatically arrived in Mumbai to rain on their parade. The focus shifted to the Cops vs Cops confrontation, and totally idiotic voices started taking sides while pointing fingers at just about anybody remotely connected to the tragedy. Overnight, the spotlight was turned on Bihar. I was vastly amused by the dramatic arrival of an IPS officer from the state, Patna SP Vinay Tiwari, who made his Mumbai debut in style! There he was, a slim and trim young man with so much swag! I loved his attitude. And above all, I loved that he kept his sunnies on while addressing the media, even though it was 8.30 pm. He came with *bhaari* backing from his bosses back home and didn't mince words as he criticised the sloth/ineptness of his Mumbai counterparts. He all but accused them of messing up a sensitive case, and everybody cheered. Everybody, that is, who is not politically aligned.

By now, the case had ceased to be an open and shut suicide investigation. Murder! They said. There were wild rumours and wilder names flying around. All eyes were on the son (Aaditya Thackeray) of a top politician (Uddhav Thackeray), known for his self-declared close connections to Bollywood. Bandra folks talked about late night parties and fights, leading up to the tragedy... and a whole new can of worms got opened. What was already a shocking death by hanging, suddenly became a much grislier story — involving money, fisticuffs, booze, drugs, girls, assaults, gangsters, coverups and more. A masala script, with a terrible ending.

Why can't our Mumbai cops be smarter? And develop a spine? The thing is — left to themselves, they are smart, competent AND bloody good at what they do. But the political interference they have to endure completely stymies their best efforts. Left to their own devices, and permitted to do their job, our police force is second to none. Unfortunately, the political environment being toxic and corrupt, they are forced to compromise, and in so doing, they end up looking like clowns. Mumbai's legendary top cop Julio Ribeiro has written often and forcefully about unseemly political involvement, especially when it comes to transfers and appointments in the police force. He has mentioned an urgent need for police reforms, combined with more autonomy granted to the cops. Does anyone listen or care? In this case, it is obvious how hard political foes of the current lot controlling Mantralaya are working to discredit

the government in power and topple it. Back in Bihar, the stakes are equally high, with elections around the corner. What better than a juicy, high-profile case like this one, to fling mud, make allegations and divert attention from the real issues that both Maharashtra and Bihar are facing? Surprisingly, the glamorous wife of a former CM of Maharashtra, Amruta Fadnavis, pitched in with her own personal dig aimed at the present CM and his minister son, taking the battle directly into the opponent's camp.

Meanwhile, the lady at the centre of the controversy — SSR's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty — has turned invisible! Easily and smoothly. Initially, the Mumbai police confessed they were "unable to locate" her or her family members — all of them in the eye of the storm, after being accused by SSR's father of being responsible for his son's death. Some said Rhea had left for Canada on a private jet, while others scoffed, joking that she was hiding under a *chappoi* in the suburbs. At the time of writing, she, her kin and two associates have been booked by the CBI and an FIR filed. And she is being questioned by the ED. Mr Tiwari, the dashing, straight-talking SP from Patna, ignominiously packed off to quarantine himself at the SRPF Guest House in the suburbs by Mumbai's cops, must have chewed his nails in frustration till he was allowed to leave on Friday. The other four cops had slyly managed to give everybody the slip and were already back in Patna.

What better than a juicy, high-profile case like this one, to fling mud, make allegations and divert attention from the real issues that both Maharashtra and Bihar are facing?

Phew! All this drama just to fix Uddhav Thackeray, get the CBI to handle the SSR case, and have the BJP back in the saddle in Maharashtra! Had Mumbai's police commissioner been a tougher person, with no political patronage involved (as is alleged), this investigation would not have taken such a strange turn.

The real tragedy is that SSR's death is being used by so many agencies to further their own agendas. He has become incidental! What started off as a much-needed debate on showbiz nepotism and how Bollywood can destroy the dreams of people who are not considered a part of the power structure, soon disintegrated into a sleazy crime thriller, with wild conjecture and crazy theories floating around. The chances are, a week from now, this too will become one more high-profile death with nothing further to push the narrative to the next level. Unless, of course, there is a fresh development involving Aaditya Thackeray — will he be summoned? People are taking bets on this. Nobody is actually interested in solving the mystery of either SSR's money, or his horrific death.

Meanwhile, there is a lot of irresponsible talk about his fragile mental health, with publicity-seeking psychotherapists showing up on television shows and disclosing confidential client information. This is shockingly intrusive and unprofessional. Prominent television anchors too have made utter idiots of themselves commenting on whether or not SSR had "looked depressed". Like depression is a "look". Nearly everything about this awful incident has been trivialised and bowlderised in the most vulgar manner. Surely, Sushant Singh Rajput deserves better.

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

LETTERS

NEW SECRETARIAT

The ₹400 cr sanctioned for the Secretariat will surely raise many questions (₹400 crore sanctioned for Secretariat, DC, Aug. 7).

Was a new Secretariat necessary? The Osmania General Hospital is in dire need of funds to treat poor people. I wonder why TRS is neglecting it.

Syed Amjad Ali
Secunderabad

HOSPITAL SAFETY

It is shocking that 90 per cent hospitals in the GHMC do not have basic fire safety equipment (90% hospitals in Hyd face fire risk, DC, Aug. 7). The government must be ashamed of neglecting hospitals. It must rectify its failure irrespective of whether Corporate or an ordinary hospitals. Patients need to be careful and enquire about fire safety and complain to the government.

Ajay Kranthi Reddy
Hyderabad

COVID VACCINE

Minister K.T. Rama Rao's request for an action plan on the Covid-19 vaccine is timely and appropriate (KTR asks Centre for vaccine plan, DC, Aug. 7). As proposed by him, a high-level empowered committee is the need of the hour to monitor, coordinate and expedite the development of a vaccine. Funds must be released and assistance provided for logistics and approvals by setting up a simple and transparent regulatory system to help biotech industry.

P. Panduranga Rao
Hyderabad

Email your letters to info@deccanmail.com, editor@deccanmail.com. You can also send to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Israel, UAR agree to ceasefire

WASHINGTON, August 7 Israel and Egypt have agreed to a full ceasefire effective at 2200 GMT today (0330 hrs IST—Saturday) Secretary of State William Rogers announced.

Mr Rogers said that the two countries had accepted the US proposal for a stand-still ceasefire.

Discussing action on the Israeli-Jordan front, officials stressed that neither Israel nor Jordan had followed the United Nations; ceasefire resolutions adopted at the end of the 1967 June war.

Manan Kumar



Progressives must unite to expose govt's 'Ram' narrative

Notwithstanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's impressive address in Ayodhya to build an inclusive India based on the ideals of *Ramrajya* of social harmony, justice, piety, love and peace, the edifice of the Indian republic remains damaged.

By performing *bhoomipujan* for Ram Mandir, PM Modi junked his constitutional oath of office that makes it mandatory for him to "discharge all duties faithfully and conscientiously" for the Union and "do right to all manner of people in accordance with the Constitution and the law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will". The very act signals a resolve to replace constitutional virtues of justice, secularism, equality and fraternity with equivalent concepts acceptable to Hindu majoritarianism.

There is no parallel of such gross departure from the Constitution in the history of independent India. Only two acts come close enough — installation of Somnath temple after its renovation in May 1951 by President Rajendra Prasad and,

Rajiv Gandhi's approval to open Babri mosque's locks (where idols were surreptitiously installed in 1949) in 1986.

The first act was strongly opposed by Jawaharlal Nehru. After cautioning his minister K.M. Munshi of the dangers of "Hindu revivalism", Nehru told Rajendra Babu, "I confess I do not like the idea of you associating yourself with a spectacular opening of the Somnath temple. This is not merely visiting a temple... but rather participating in a significant function which unfortunately has a number of implications."

Nehru's warning, not to mix religion with statecraft, proved prophetic. The blunder by his grandson led to *shilanyas* of the temple in 1989 and a militant movement to release the idols from "captivity". It prompted L.K. Advani to launch Ram Rath Yatra in 1990 that culminated in demolishing Babri Mosque, thus, badly scarring the syncretic fabric of India. Innumerable communal riots and rise of extremist Islam in the immediate aftermath bear a testimony of this folly.

Justice suffered a blow in

November 2019 when the Supreme Court overturned Allahabad high court judgement and handed over the entire 2.77 acres of land to the deity despite no archaeological evidence to back such a claim. With this, it removed the final hinge holding the secular character of India to pave way for a *de jure* Hindu Rashtra.

Why the foundation ceremony in times of crises?

The answer lies in the word — crises. The Hindutva forces chose August 5 precisely to smother the rising anger against the blunders the Modi government committed through draconian demonetisation, faulty GST, accosting crony capitalists at the expense of public exchequer and erroneous handling of Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite efforts to hide and manipulate data, the ground realities show the deep crises India has been sucked into. PM Modi managed to hide poverty by constructing a wall around a shanty alongside President Trump's route from Gandhinagar Airport to Motera stadium but walls

cannot be built across India. A rosy picture cannot be painted in the midst of a plunging economy when millions start marching to villages for fear of dying of hunger.

In such a scenario, any people-centric government would pull all stops to tackle the crises. But what a government would do whose sole concern is to win elections to forward its bigoted agenda? It will do what it knows best, build a smokescreen to divert people's attention from real issues and keep them on a high with a sense of purpose to win elections.

This is precisely what the Modi government has done despite the dangers of Covid-19 that is now growing fastest in India. The rest of the agenda has already been put to practice. A web of pliant television channels and an army of social media trolls will try to keep the public discourse limited to Ram Mandir and PM Modi's aura to help BJP win upcoming elections in states of Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. The ultimate aim is to keep crises shrouded in this smokescreen until the inauguration of Ram Mandir in 2024 to ensure a dream

run for a third straight win in Lok Sabha elections.

The onus to save Indian democracy now squarely lies upon Opposition parties and democratic, progressive liberal forces that lie scattered on the Indian political scene. It has been made a wee bit more difficult by PM Modi's smart move to change the narrative, from militant Hindutva to Ram's inclusivity. Yet they can still do the impossible by getting together to pull down this smokescreen and help people see the reality that lies exposed everywhere.

By doing so they will do justice to the *Maryadapurshottam* who gave up his throne and embraced exile to help his father satisfy the whims of crafty stepmother, Kaikeyi. He is again being used to break the *maryada* of the Constitution to establish a New Republic by an equally crafty political party. Hey Ram!

The writer is a senior journalist with over 22 years of experience in reporting on politics, internal security and social issues

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,040.57	0.04
Nifty 50	1,1214	0.12
S&P 500*	3,346.33	-0.08
Dollar (₹)	74.93	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.12	0.53
Euro (₹)	88.64	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	55,120*725	1.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.54	-0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.886	0.025
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.531	-0.005

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Amara Raja Q1 net profit falls 56% to ₹62.5 cr

Amara Raja Batteries Ltd on Friday reported a 56 per cent decline in consolidated profit after tax at ₹62.49 crore in the first quarter ended June 30 impacted adversely by the coronavirus pandemic. The company had posted a consolidated profit after tax of ₹140.73 crore in the same period last fiscal. Consolidated revenue during Q1 stood at ₹1,151.22 crore as compared to ₹1,814.95 crore.

BHEL begins civil works at WB power plant



State-owned engineering firm BHEL on Friday said it has commenced civil works at 660-MW Sagardighi supercritical thermal power project in West Bengal. Following the strategic completion of pre-engineering activities, ground breaking has begun on zero date itself, a BHEL statement said. This is a major achievement as conventionally it takes a few months after the zero date to initiate civil works on-site.

FB employees to work from home until July 2021

Facebook Inc will allow employees to work from home until July 2021 due to the coronavirus outbreak and will give them \$1,000 for home office needs, a spokeswoman said on Thursday. The company joins other big technology firms that have taken similar steps recently. Late in July, Alphabet Inc's Google said it would allow employees who do not need to be in the office to work from home until June 2021.

Mitsubishi Motors chairman resigns on health grounds

Mitsubishi Motors Corp said on Friday Osamu Masuko resigned as chairman due to health reasons and has handed over the role to CEO Takao Kato on a temporary basis. A veteran of the Mitsubishi conglomerate, Masuko joined the automaker in 2004, and became president in 2007. He oversaw the creation of the partnership between Mitsubishi and Nissan in 2016, which saw Nissan take a controlling stake in the firm.



Higher loans for gold may put banks at risk

■ NBFCs seek relaxation in loan-to-value for their customers

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Increasing loan-to-value ratio to 90 per cent for gold loans will put the portfolio under risk for banks. NBFCs, which were left out from the LTV decision, have sought parity from the RBI. RBI had on Thursday allowed banks to increase the LTV of gold loans for non-agricultural purposes from 75 per cent to 90 per cent till 31 March 2021.

Though this will help the borrower with additional liquidity and will increase retail lending avenues for banks sitting on excess liquidity, such lending is not devoid of credit risk for banks. Both principal and inter-

● **PRINCIPAL AND** interest components will not be fully covered by the collateral if the bank provides 90 per cent of the value of the gold as loan. ● **IF THE GOLD prices** fall from their record high levels, it will drag down the value of the collateral even lower. This will increase the chances of borrower defaulting or renouncing their asset.

est components will not be fully covered by the collateral if the bank provides 90 per cent of the value of the gold as loan. Further, if the gold prices fall from their record high levels, it will drag down the value of the

collateral even lower. This will increase the chances of borrower defaulting or renouncing their asset.

“Gold loans with an LTV of 90 per cent would result in a negative carry for banks as the total exposure will exceed the value of the pledged gold. It could adversely impact the recoverability and asset quality of banks in the case of a weakening in the borrower credit risk profile or sharp decline in gold prices,” said Vydianathan Ramaswamy, director, Brickwork Ratings.

Earlier, when gold prices had started falling from their 2011 highs, RBI, anticipating a systemic risk, had brought in a series of regulations, which saw lowering of pe-

rmissible LTV and diversification of businesses by gold loan companies. The latest LTV hike is not applicable for non-banking finance companies.

“Now RBI has gone back on what it has been teaching us,” said a gold loan industry veteran. The NBFCs have made a representation to the RBI governor seeking parity in LTV. A maximum 75 per cent LTV against 90 per cent by banks will dent the market share of NBFCs, finds Brickwork.

However, Thomas George Muthoot, director of Muthoot Fincorp begs to differ. “Our kind of customers do not go to banks to pledge gold. If not us, they will go to pawn brokers,” he said.

RBI appoints panel on debt restructuring

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 7

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced the names of the members of the expert committee to oversee the resolution of stressed loan accounts resulting due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The committee under the chairmanship of K.V. Kamath will recommend financial parameters to be factored in the resolution plans, along with sector specific benchmark ranges. It shall also undertake a process validation for the resolution plans to be implemented under this framework, without going into the commercial aspects, in respect of all accounts with aggregate exposure of ₹1,500 crore and above at the time of invocation.

The other members of the committee are Diwakar Gupta, who is completing his term as Vice President, ADB; TN Manoharan, who is completing his term as Chairman of Canara Bank; and Ashvin Parekh, Strategy Advisor and CEO, Indian Banks' Association, as the member secretary.

A day earlier, Shaktikanta Das, governor of the RBI, in his monetary policy address had announced a 'Resolution Framework for Covid19-related Stress' as a special window. The scheme will be open for borrower who are under stress due to the pandemic and the loans were classified as standard as on March 1, 2020.

The model would be manufactured at company's facility in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh and would also be exported to other markets. Sonet, which is Kia's third product in India after Seltos and Carnival, would compete with the likes of Hyundai Venue, Maruti Vitara Brezza, Tata Nexon and Mahindra XUV300 in the domestic market.

The segment is also going to be more products like Toyota Kirloskar Motor's Urban Cruiser and Nissan's Magnite. With its aggressive and modern design language,

China: Buy local to skip foreign food

Beijing, Aug. 7: China stressed the importance of keeping the people's "rice bowl" filled with domestically grown grain at a time when available farmland is shrinking, the weather's turning more extreme and imports are cheaper.

"If you have enough grain, you don't need to panic," agriculture minister Han Changfu wrote in an opinion piece in the *People's Daily* on Friday. "Chinese people's rice bowls must always be held firmly in our own hands, and should be full mainly of Chinese grain."

The country buys hefty amounts of soybeans, corn, cotton and pork from the US, and the comments come as tensions escalate with Washington over everything from cyber security to Hong Kong. US President Donald Trump has signed executive orders prohibiting American residents from doing business with the Chinese-owned TikTok and WeChat apps beginning 45 days from now.

China, the biggest consumer of agricultural commodities, should always be self-sufficient in rice and wheat, while maintaining an "appropriate volume" of imports, Han said. The minister's opinion piece appears about a week before a review of the phase-one trade deal with the US. While China has committed to honouring the agreement, purchases of farm products during the first half of the year were only about 20 per cent of the target.

THE GREAT FACE-OFF

Trump told to act on China firms

Washington, Aug. 7: Trump administration officials have urged the President to delist Chinese companies that trade on US exchanges and fail to meet U.S. auditing requirements by January 2022, Securities and Exchange Commission and Treasury officials said on Thursday.

The remarks came after US President Donald Trump tasked a group of key advisers, including Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and SEC Chairman Jay Clayton, with drafting a report with recommendations to protect US investors from Chinese companies whose audit documents have long been kept from US regulators.

It also comes amid growing pressure from Congress to crack down on Chinese companies that avail themselves of US capital markets but do not comply with US rules faced by American rivals.

"We are simply leveling the playing field, holding Chinese firms listed in the US to the same standards as everyone else," a US Treasury official told reporters in a briefing call about the report.

The Trump administration's recommendations, if implemented via an SEC rule-making process, would give Chinese companies already listed in the United States until January 1, 2022, to ensure the US auditing watchdog, known as the PCAOB, has access to their audit documents.

Serum to sell Covid-19 vaccine for ₹225 a dose

FC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Serum Institute of India (SII) has decided to cap the price of its future Covid-19 vaccine at \$3 (approximately ₹225) per dose for low and middle-income countries, including India.

Partnering with Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, SII will manufacture up to 100 million doses for these countries.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, through its Strategic Investment Fund, will provide at-risk funding of \$150 million to Gavi, which will be used to support the SII to manufacture the potential vaccine candidates from AstraZeneca and Novavax.

The collaboration will

● **THE BILL** and Melinda Gates Foundation, through its Strategic Investment Fund, will provide \$150 million to Gavi, which will be used to support the SII to manufacture vaccine candidates from AstraZeneca and Novavax.

provide upfront capital to SII to help them increase manufacturing capacity so that, once a vaccine or vaccines gain regulatory approval and WHO prequalification, doses can be produced at scale for distribution to India and LMIC as part of the Gavi COVAX AMC mechanism as early as the half of 2021.

The Gavi COVAX AMC, which is currently seeking at least \$2 billion as initial seed funding, will

meet at least part of the cost of procurement for the vaccine doses. Last week the Gavi Board agreed to the final list of 92 countries that will be supported by the AMC.

Under the new collaboration, AstraZeneca's candidate vaccine, if successful, will be available to all 92 countries supported by the AMC.

"The rampant spread of the virus has rendered the entire world in an unimaginable halt of uncertainty. And to ensure maximum immunisation coverage and contain the pandemic, it is important to make sure that the poorest countries have access to affordable cure and preventive measures," said SII CEO Adar Poonawalla.

Kia to enter compact SUV space with Seltos

New Delhi, Aug. 7: South Korean automaker Kia Motors Corporation on Friday globally unveiled its sub-four metre compact SUV Sonet which it plans to launch in India next month.

The model would be manufactured at company's facility in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh and would also be exported to other markets. Sonet, which is Kia's third product in India after Seltos and Carnival, would compete with the likes of Hyundai Venue, Maruti Vitara Brezza, Tata Nexon and Mahindra XUV300 in the domestic market.

The segment is also going to be more products like Toyota Kirloskar Motor's Urban Cruiser and Nissan's Magnite. With its aggressive and modern design language,

fun-to-drive dynamics, and Kia's latest high-tech features, the Sonet puts an exclamation point on our ambition to make Kia the brand of choice, especially among millennial and Gen Z consumers," Kia Motors Corporation president and CEO Ho Sung Song said.

The model fills a need in the growing SUV market, in India and further afield, and will attract a wider number of consumers to the Kia brand, he added.

Kia Motors India MD and CEO Kookhyun Shim said that after the success of the Seltos and Carnival, the company is confident that it will revolutionise another market segment in India with the Sonet by addressing the unmet needs and aspirations of customers. — PTI

M&M reports 94% decline in Q1 profit

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 7

Mahindra and Mahindra, India's auto major on Friday saw its quarterly profit nearly wipe out as the Covid-19 pandemic hit the supply chain.

India's biggest tractor maker's net profit fell 97 per cent year-on-year to ₹68 crore in the June quarter, according to an exchange filing. M&M results include the financials of Mahindra Vehicle Manufacturers.

The company had seen a ₹3,255-crore loss in preceding three-month period because of a one-time impairment.

Mahindra's revenue fell 56.4 per cent over the year ago to ₹5,589 crore in the April-June period, compared with the ₹5,567-crore forecast, dragged by a low inventory pipeline and challenges in reviving production amid mounting coronavirus cases.

The company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation declined 67.9 per cent to ₹575.7 crore, while Ebitda margin contracted to 10.3 per cent from 14 per cent. Mahindra's passenger vehicles sales fell 78 per cent year-on-year during the quarter compared with an 81.5 per cent drop seen across the industry.

The company in June, however, recorded the second-highest tractor sales it has ever seen, aided by rural demand.

Mahindra's tractor sales for the quarter fell 22 per cent year-on-year.

Conversion rate in realty improves in top metros

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 7

As serious buyers start enquiries for residential properties in top cities, conversion rates have increased. In the top cities, enquiries for housing properties have now reached 50 per cent of pre-Covid-19 levels. Recovery is fastest in Bengaluru, where enquiries have reached 70 per cent, followed by Gurugram with nearly 65 per cent.

Site visits too have picked up, though lesser than earlier. However, the site visit-to-sales conversion is higher, finds Anarock Property Consultancy. In Gurugram, site visits are back to pre-Covid-19 levels with a sharp increase in conversion ratios - from nearly 5 per cent earlier to 10 per cent now. In Noida and Ghaziabad serious end-user enquiries have increased to 40 per cent of pre-pandemic levels and site visits are increasing steadily. July alone saw more than half the number of sales recorded between April and June.

Similarly, in Mumbai site visits were back to nearly 50 per cent towards July-end, from predominantly serious buyers. July alone witnessed 40 per cent of sales seen in the April-June period. In Pune too, enquiries have reached nearly 50 per cent, site visits are increasing steadily and conversions have moved up from 9-10 per cent on an average earlier to nearly 12 per cent now. This

Mindspace REIT lists at premium

FC BUREAU MUMBAI, AUG. 7

Mindspace Business Park's second real estate investment trust (REIT) public offer has made a successful debut on the stock exchanges at ₹304, a 10 per cent premium to issue price of ₹275.

The units traded in a narrow range of ₹299 on the lower side and ₹308.90 on the higher side on the BSE and finally closed at ₹303.87 up 10.50 per cent.

Mindspace REIT's market capitalisation on the close of first day's trading stood at ₹18,020.04 crore.

Mindspace REIT public offer raised ₹4,500 crore last month, the

issue was subscribed 12.96 times. India's first REIT listing by Embassy Office Park has a market capitalisation of ₹29,259.23 crore.

Real estate consultants and market analysts expect more REIT offerings in near future as it's a good asset class to invest for post tax benefits and also helps channelise fund flow into the real estate sector.

"The MindSpace REIT listings at a 11 per cent premium is a great sign for the future of commercial real estate in India as it shows market and investor confidence for the long term," said Shishir Baijal, chairman and MD, Knight Frank India.

has helped sales volumes reach more than 40 per cent of pre-Covid levels.

Conversions have gone up from 8 per cent on an average earlier to nearly 15 per cent in Hyderabad and site visits have touched 40 per cent of earlier levels.

"Despite site visits far from the previous levels, the site-visit-to-closure conversion rate has increased considerably as only serious buyers are venturing out, with casual window shoppers fairly dormant currently," said

Prashant Thakur, director and head, research, Anarock Property Consultants.

Customers also prefer larger sized units and 2BHKs and 3BHKs are in highest demand. While buyers in Bengaluru, Gurgaon, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Noida are more inclined towards 3BHKs and upwards, Mumbai has a higher preference for 2 BHKs over the previous 1BHK. Work-from home and online classes have increased the demand for additional space.

Holoportation seeks to replace Zoom meet

Los Angeles, Aug. 7: Looking for a new way to communicate during the pandemic? A Los Angeles company has created phone booth-sized machines to beam live holograms into your living room.

The device made by PORTL Inc lets users talk in real time with a life-sized hologram of another person. The machines also can be equipped with technology to enable interac-

tion with recorded holograms of historical figures or relatives who have passed away.

Each PORTL device is seven feet tall, five feet wide and two feet deep, and can be plugged into a standard wall outlet. Anyone with a camera and a white background can send a hologram to the machine in what CEO David Nussbaum calls "holoportation."

"We say if you can't be

there, you can beam there," said Nussbaum, who previously worked at a company that developed a hologram of Ronald Reagan for the former president's library and digitally resurrected rapper Tupac Shakur.

"We are able to connect military families that haven't seen each other in months, people from opposite coasts," or anyone who is social distancing to fight the coronavirus,

Nussbaum added.

Prices for the machine start at \$60,000, a cost that Nussbaum expects will drop over the next three to five years. The company also plans a smaller tabletop device with a lower price tag early next year.

The devices can be equipped with AI technology from Los Angeles-based company StoryFile to produce hologram recordings that can be archived.

Covid, protests batter Hong Kong's realty market

Hong Kong, Aug. 7: Some Hong Kong foreclosed homes have been recently sold at steep discounts, adding to signs that the world's most expensive housing market could be heading for price declines both this year and next.

With the economy hit by anti-government protests and the coronavirus pandemic, foreclosures in the Asian financial hub jumped 54 per cent in the first seven months of the year to 675, according to property auctioneer Century 21 Surveyors.

Both speculative investors and ordinary people are walking away from their mortgages, financing companies and auctioneers said. Some warn foreclosures could surge next year to their highest levels since the global financial crisis.

Unlike Hong Kong's commercial property market which has seen a 30 per cent drop in building values in the past year, home prices have so far been relatively resilient due to strong demand, even edging up 1.8 per cent in the first half of this year.



But two foreclosed properties belonging to a mainland Chinese investor recently sold at discounts of 25 per cent and 12 per cent to their respective purchase prices of around

HK\$30 million (\$3.9 million) and HK\$20 million, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter. The person declined to be identified discussing client matters.

Henry Choi, a director at Century 21 Surveyors, also said his company has had three recent cases where banks put auctions on hold after deciding to go back to court to ask for a lower base price.

"The original valuations were too optimistic and they would be hard to sell now in this market," he said.

With demand far outstripping supply, prices for Hong Kong private homes have surged more than six times since 2003. There has only been one year of annual decline in

that period — a drop of 3.6 per cent in 2016.

Some analysts, however, expect current economic stresses will soon hit the market harder and predict a fall of roughly five per cent this year to be followed by a bigger drop next year.

Industry sources also note foreclosures last month were artificially low as courts have been processing cases very slowly for several weeks due to social distancing measures imposed after new outbreaks of the virus.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Manpreet, three others Covid +ve

New Delhi: The Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh and three other players have tested positive for Covid-19 ahead of the national camp's resumption in Bengaluru, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Friday.

Besides Manpreet, defender Surender Kumar, Jaskaran Singh and drag-flicker Varun Kumar have also tested positive for the deadly virus.

"I am self quarantined on the SAI campus and I am very happy with the way SAI authorities have handled the situation... I am doing fine and hope to recover very soon," the 28-year-old Manpreet said in the statement issued by SAI. "I am very happy that they made the testing of athletes mandatory. That proactive step helped in identifying the problem right in time."

The players tested positive after returning to the national hockey camp at the SAI South Centre in Bengaluru following a month-long break.

They were earlier stranded at the centre for over two months (till June). — PTI

London marathon only for the elite

London: The pandemic-delayed London Marathon will be staged on October 4 using a different route than usual and with only elite runners participating.

Rather than starting in Greenwich in east London, there will be a looped 26.2-mile (42.2-kilometre) course featuring 19.8 laps around St James's Park within a biosecure bubble with spectators excluded. It will finish in the traditional place in front of Buckingham Palace. Times will be eligible for qualification for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, which had to be rescheduled until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Olympic marathon champion Eliud Kipchoge and Kenenisa Bekele are expected to feature in the men's race. The women's field is headlined by world record holder Brigid Kosgei. Manuela Scher and David Weir will feature in the wheelchair event.

The London Marathon usually takes place in April, but organizers have already pushed back the 2021 event until October 3 to maximise the possibility of a mass race. — AP

Malik to fly to Eng if tests negative

Karachi: T20 specialist Shoaib Malik will need to clear two Covid-19 tests before he can leave on August 15 to join the Pakistan team at Southampton ahead of the three-match series against England beginning August 28.

"The PCB is planning to fly-out T20 specialist Shoaib Malik to Southampton on 15 August, provided he returns two negative Covid-19 tests as per the agreed protocols and processes," the Board said in a statement.

The T20 series, which follows the ongoing Test rubber between the two nations, will be held in a bio-secure environment in Manchester on August 28, August 30 and September 1.

The PCB had allowed Malik permission to join the squad in England late as he wanted to spend time with his family in UAE. — PTI

JASON HAS A DAY OUT AT PGA TOURNEY

San Francisco: Australia's Jason Day shot a bogey-free five-under-par 65 to take a share of the lead Thursday in the opening round of the PGA Championship, the first major of the pandemic-interrupted season.

The 2015 PGA champion Day rolled in five birdies for a one-shot cushion with co-leader Brendon Todd atop a star-studded crowded leaderboard at the TPC Harding Park course in San Francisco.

Day and Todd are just in front of a group of nine players that includes four former major champions, including two-time defending PGA champ Brooks Koepka and Martin Kaymer. The other two former major winners are Zach Johnson and Justin Rose. — AFP

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SEVILLA SURGE ON
Blank Roma to make Europa quarterfinals

Duisburg, Aug. 7: Sevilla beat Roma 2-0 in the round of 16 to stay in the hunt for a record sixth Europa League title, as Wolverhampton, Bayer Leverkusen and Basel also qualified for the quarterfinals.

Sergio Reguilón gave Sevilla the lead with a surging run through the Roma defense and a shot past keeper Pau Lopez in the 22nd minute. Youssef En-Nesyri added the second just before halftime, tapping in a low cross from Lucas Ocampos.

Sevilla could easily have scored more, with two shots hitting the crossbar and a goal overturned for offside on video review. Playing after a packed run of Italian league games, Roma didn't muster a single shot on target in the first half and just one in the second.

It was a single game at a neutral venue in Germany because no first leg was played in March before the season was suspended amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

Sevilla next faces a quarterfinal Tuesday against Wolves after the English team squeezed past Olympiakos 1-0 on the night and 2-1 on aggregate for its first European quarterfinal in 48 years.

Bayer Leverkusen earned a quarterfinal against Inter Milan, beating Rangers 1-0 on Thursday thanks to a powerful shot from Moussa Diaby for a 4-1 aggregate win.

Basel already had a 3-0 lead from the first leg and made the quarterfinals after Fabian Frei scored the only goal of the game in a 1-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt. — AP

GOVERNMENT NOD FOR IPL ALL BUT GIVEN

New Delhi, Aug. 7: An "in principle" government approval has come for the BCCI to take the IPL to the UAE this year and the eight franchises have started their preparations by initiating quarantine and Covid-19 testing protocols for their players and support staff.

A BCCI source confirmed that the permission in writing is due to come any time in the next few days. "We have got the approval in principle to go ahead and the papers will be landing anytime," a top source said.

Most of the franchises will be leaving base after August 20 mandated by the BCCI. The Chennai Super Kings are set to leave on August 22.

The Mumbai Indians, on the other hand, has quarantined its Indian players at its base. Some franchises are arranging Covid-19 tests for their players in their respective cities before heading for departure bases (Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru) for UAE.

"It's always good if they have a PCR-Test done and land with a negative report. Then they can have two tests done 24 hours apart as the BCCI SOP mentions before we fly to the UAE," a senior franchise official said. — PTI

Satwik-Chirag to train from Sept.

New Delhi, Aug. 7: Wary of the Covid-19 threat, Olympic hopefuls Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy will wait for another couple of weeks before deciding on joining the national badminton camp, which resumed in Hyderabad on Friday.

The men's doubles pair is currently apart with Shetty at his home in Mumbai and Rankireddy lodged at his base in Amalapuram in Andhra Pradesh.

"It is great to hear that the training camp has



Sergio Reguilón (right) of Sevilla scores his side's first goal during their Europa League Round of 16 match at the Schauinsland-Reisen-Arena in Duisburg, Germany, on Thursday. Sevilla won 2-0. — AP

Biggies back for Champs league

Milan, Aug. 7: Gennaro Gattuso's reign as Napoli coach may have started amid turmoil but the former Italy international has put the Italian club on the path towards a potential Champions League triumph against Barcelona.

The southern Italians head for the Camp Nou on Saturday with a first ever Champions League quarterfinal berth beckoning.

Both sides are 1-1 after the last 16, first leg in the San Paulo Stadium in February. But Lionel Messi's

Spaniards have not been beaten at home in the Champions League in seven years as they target a 13th consecutive quarterfinal berth.

Barcelona finished second in Spain while Napoli were seventh in Italy, but having secured a Europa League spot thanks to their Italian Cup victory.

The big question will be how to stop six-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi, a problem which former AC Milan midfielder Gattuso would have happily tackled as a player.

In Naples, more than

rage he has brought calm to a locker room traumatised after a disastrous first half of the season under Carlo Ancelotti, his former coach in Milan.

BAYERN TAKE ON CHELSEA AT HOME

Bayern Munich are hoping Champions League success can convince Thiago Alcantara and David Alaba, who are stalling over extensions, to stay. Bayern host Chelsea on Saturday in the last 16, second leg of the Champions League holding a 3-0 lead after

hammering the Blues in London in February when Serge Gnabry scored twice in a gala display.

Since then, Bayern have secured an eighth straight Bundesliga title and lifted the German Cup putting them on course for the treble, having won all 11 games post lockdown. — AFP

LIVE ON TV

■ **Champions League Round of 16, second leg:** Bayern Munich vs Chelsea from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 1; Barcelona vs Napoli from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2.

INDIA TO HOST 2021 T20 WC, Oz IN 2022

Dubai, Aug. 7: India on Friday retained the right to host the 2021 T20 World Cup while Australia will conduct this year's postponed edition in 2022, the ICC announced after its board meeting, straightening out a schedule that went topsy-turvy due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The International Cricket Council (ICC) today confirmed that the T20 World Cup 2020 that was postponed due to Covid-19 will be held in Australia in 2022. India will host the T20 World Cup 2021 as planned," the ICC stated in a press release.

The global body also confirmed that next year's women's ODI World Cup in New Zealand has been postponed until February-March 2022.

ENGLAND'S INDIA TOUR PUT OFF TILL 2021

India's white-ball series against England, scheduled at home in September-October, was on Friday postponed until early 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Both teams were scheduled to play three ODIs and as many T20s and the matches could now be held after the Test series between the two in India early next year. — Agencies

WOMEN'S | TENNIS

Martic rallies for a place in Last 8

Palermo, Aug. 7: Top-seeded Petra Martić rallied past Russian qualifier Liudmila Samsonova 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 to reach the Palermo Ladies Open quarterfinals Thursday in the first tournament following a five-month break due to the coronavirus.

"The struggle was real out there today," Martić said after the two-hour match.

"She's not the type of player I like to play. She plays really fast, hits really flat and low. And especially on these (clay) courts it can be tricky," she added.

"Overall I didn't really enjoy myself out there. But I realised right away that it was not going to be easy and I was going to have to fight," she said.

Martić will next face another qualifier, Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

Also advancing was fourth-seeded Anett Kontaveit, who also had to come from behind to defeat Laura Siegemund 3-6, 6-2, 6-2. Kontaveit's quarterfinal opponent will be

● **Top seed Petra Martić had to overcome a stubborn opponent in Liudmila Samsonova 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, in a match that lasted over two hours, to make the quarterfinal at the Palermo Ladies Open.**

Italian wild-card entry Elisabetta Cocciaretto.

In yet another three-set comeback win, Italy's Camila Giorgi eliminated Slovenian qualifier Kaja Juvan 3-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Players and officials for the tournament are being tested every four days for Covid-19 and one player who tested positive withdrew over the weekend. New protocols include fewer ball kids, a limited number of fans and no post-match handshakes between opponents. — AP



Kyle Kuzma (in yellow) of the Los Angeles Lakers makes a backward shot against the Houston Rockets during their NBA game in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, on Thursday. The Rockets won 113-97. — AP

Bucks bring down the Heat in NBA

Miami, Aug. 7: Giannis Antetokounmpo says the biggest challenge in the championship quest for the Milwaukee Bucks, who clinched a top seed in the NBA playoffs on Thursday, isn't a rival, but the Bucks themselves.

The 25-year-old Greek forward scored 33 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for Milwaukee as the Bucks rallied from a 23-point deficit to defeat Miami 130-116 and clinch the top seed in the Eastern Conference at an NBA-best 55-14.

The Bucks, who won their only NBA title in 1971, could face Miami in the second round of the playoffs with Toronto, Boston, Indiana and Philadelphia threats as well. But Milwaukee's star forward sees the Bucks' main worry as playing to their potential.

Khris Middleton had 33 points and eight assists and combined with Antetokounmpo to shoot 22-of-31 from the floor.

Duncan Robinson scored 21 points to lead the Heat, who are fourth in the East at 43-26. If the standings stay as they are, the Bucks

and Heat could meet in round two of the playoffs.

It was the feature of the eighth day of NBA games in a quarantine bubble at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, to finish a regular season shut down on March 11 by the Covid-19 pandemic.

LEONARD STARS AS CLIPPERS TRIUMPH

Kawhi Leonard, who led the Toronto Raptors to an NBA crown last year, scored 29 points to lead the Los Angeles Clippers over Dallas 126-111, pulling them a game ahead of Denver for second in the Western Conference.

HARDEN FIRES ROCKETS PAST LA LAKERS

NBA scoring leader James Harden poured in 39 points and passed around 12 assists while grabbing eight rebounds to ignite the Rockets over the Lakers 113-97. Anthony Davis had 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers, who were 2-of-19 from 3-point range while Houston went 21-57 from beyond the arc.

— AFP

BOTTAS SETS THE PACE AT BRIT GP PRACTICE-1

Silverstone, Aug. 7: Valtteri Bottas set the fastest time in the first practice session for the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone on Friday, just ahead of his Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton.

Bottas posted a lap of 1 minute 26.166 seconds, beating Hamilton's best time by .138 seconds. Max Verstappen was third-fastest for Red Bull in 1:26.893.

Nico Hulkenberg placed fourth as the German stands in at Hacking Point for Sergio Perez, who has tested positive for the Coronavirus.

Ferrari was again off Mercedes' pace, with Charles Leclerc fifth-fastest and Sebastian Vettel seventh. Mercedes has won every race so far this year.

The race marks the 70th year since the Formula One championship began. — AFP



Coach Park Tae-Sang (from left), chief coach Pullela Gopichand and P. V. Sindhu are all smiles on the first day of resumption of training camp at the SAI Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad on Friday.