

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 14 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

Max: 23.8°C
Min: 21.9°C
RH: 96%
Rainfall: 21.9 mm
Forecast: Light to moderate rains or thundershowers. Max/Min temp. 28/22 °C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+63,557)	(+993)
24,58,295	48,123
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+1,931)	(+11)
TS: 86,475	665
(+ 9,996)	(+71)
AP: 2,64,142	2,367

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,09,40,054
DEATHS
7,49,860
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213
 worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Bahula Dasami till 1.56 pm
Star: Mrigasira full day
Variyam: 11.14 am to 12.55 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.33 am to 9.24 am; 12.46 pm to 1.36 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
 Zulhijja 23,1441 AH
PRAVERS
Fajar: 4.55 am
Zohar: 12.31 pm
Asar: 4.47 pm
Maghrib: 6.49 pm
Isha: 7.58 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.42 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.14 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.39 PM

COUNTER POINT



Free vaccine to all the people if I am voted to power... sponsored by my dearest friend Putin!

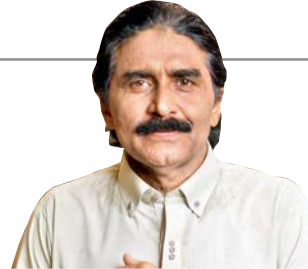
BRIEF

Pranab responds to treatment:

New Delhi: Former president Pranab Mukherjee is slowly responding to medical treatment and all his vital parameters are stable, his son Abhijit Mukherjee said on Thursday. The former President was admitted to the Army's Research and Referral Hospital here on August 10 and was operated upon for removal of a clot in the brain. He also tested positive for Covid-19. Earlier in the day, the hospital said in a bulletin, "The condition of Shri Pranab Mukherjee remains unchanged this morning. He is deeply comatose with stable vital parameters and he continues to be on ventilatory support."

India to get more rainfall: IMD

New Delhi: Large parts of India may receive heavy to very heavy rainfall during the next two-three days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday. The IMD said a low pressure area has formed over northwest Bay of Bengal off north Odisha and West Bengal coasts. There is also a monsoon trough plus a convergence of southwesterly winds with moisture from Arabian Sea is likely to continue during the next two days, which will lead to heavy rains over several parts of the country. Fairly widespread rainfall with heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places are likely in north India.



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Miandad to challenge Imran Khan in politics



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PayTM forays into stock broking

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Shuttler Sikki Covid positive, camp closed



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Highway falls



Trucks and motorists struggle to across the National Highway (NH 163) in Warangal district as the Katakshapur lake overflows due to incessant rains over the past four days. ■ **Full report on Page 3**

— DC

Congress in Rajasthan presents united front

DC CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

The Congress government in Rajasthan led by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is all set to face a vote of confidence on Friday when the state Assembly convenes, and the party high command has asked Sachin Pilot to ensure that the MLAs loyal to him vote for the Gehlot government. Earlier, the Opposition BJP had said that it would move a no-confidence motion in the Assembly.

Congress sources said Gehlot would also seek a trust vote as it would give his government immunity from a similar move for the next six months.

If the Chief Minister moves a confidence motion, under the rules it will supersede the no-confidence motion moved by any other member.

On Thursday, Pilot buried his differences and met Mr Gehlot for the first time after he openly rebelled against the senior leader around a month back.

Party leaders K.C. Venugopal, Avinash Pande, Randeep Surjewala, Ajay Maken



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot flash the victory sign at meeting of MLAs at the CM's residence in Jaipur. —PTI

and new PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasra were also there at the meeting, held at Mr Gehlot's official residence in Jaipur, and posed for pictures together.

Pilot and Gehlot shook hands, marking the return of the sacked deputy chief minister and 18 other dissident MLAs properly to the party fold, after the intervention earlier this week by the top leadership of the Congress in New Delhi.

Sources said that at the meeting, Venugopal is understood to have told the two leaders to ensure

that the government lasts its full five-year term.

Pilot is understood to have said at the meeting that he was deeply hurt by the FIRs against him and the subsequent personal comments made against him by the chief minister, to which Mr Gehlot replied that he had just been trying to save his government.

The meeting with the leaders was followed by the Congress Legislature Party meeting, where sources said Mr Gehlot expressed his desire to seek a trust vote on the first day of the Assembly session itself.

RAM TEMPLE TRUST HEAD WHO SHARED DAIS WITH PM +VE

DC CORRESPONDENT
 with agency inputs
 NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

The head of the Ram temple trust, Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, 80, tested positive for Covid-19 on Thursday.

On August 5, Das shared the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Adityanath, UP Governor Anandiben Patel and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. He was rushed to the Medanta hospital in Gurgaon, officials said.

"A team of doctors tested him after the district administration was informed that he was feeling uneasy," Mathura District Magistrate (DM) Sarvagya Ram Mishra said. Meanwhile, India's Coronavirus count crossed 24 lakh on Thursday with 63,557 fresh cases detected in a day.



Mahant Nritya Gopal Das

Farmers sow record 1.2 cr acres during Kharif season

New projects, good rain may see TS exceed target

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 13

A record of 1.2 crore acres have been sown in Telangana state this year, an increase of almost 30 per cent from the previous Kharif season, on the back of good rains and improved irrigation facilities.

Farmers have completed sowing operations in 1,20,97,825 as on date. Agriculture minister S. Niranjan Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* that during the last Kharif season farmers had sown various crops in 80,02,348 acres.

He said the agriculture department target was 1,25,45,506 acres, but the area will likely to reach 1.30

crore acres during the monsoon season.

The minister said that with the increased availability of water resources apart from the Rythu Bandhu assistance, free power supply and other incentives being provided by the state government, the state has witnessed huge growth in the area sown for cropping.

Niranjan Reddy said the farmers took up agricultural activities as per the regulated farming proposed by Chief Minister K. Chandrababhai Rao.

Responding to the appeal by the Chief Minister, the farmers have taken up cotton as a major crop in more than 50 per cent of the area,

he added.

He explained that normal cotton cultivation area was 44.5 lakh acres, but in this season so far cotton was sown more than 55 lakh acres.

During a recent interaction, the Chief Minister had appealed to farmers that "those cultivating maize during the monsoon should switch over to cotton and grams. Be cautious about the paddy varieties. Cultivate those varieties, which have demand in the market. There is a lot of demand for Telangana Sona variety. Cultivate that. There is an international market for rice of 6.5 mm size. Cultivate that variety."



The ill-fated RTC bus on which a tree fell.

later slid down to the road.

The conductor got injured after she got thrown on the

floor of the bus due to the impact. Along with the driver and the conductor, five passengers were in the bus

at the time of the mishap. Had the tree fallen on the middle portion of the bus, the passengers would have been injured.

Traffic movement was hit on the route for some time before local sub-inspector Rajan Babu arrived at the location with an earth-mover and removed the collapsed tree to clear the road.

The tree got uprooted as a result of heavy rain coupled with strong wind that lashed the district since three days.

TRAVEL | BAN

Relaxation granted after lobbying in US; Indian IT professionals, health workers to benefit

US eases H-1B, L-1 visa curbs with 5 preconditions

Washington, Aug. 13: In a move that could help Indian IT professionals and those working in the healthcare sector, the Trump Administration has announced certain exemptions in H-1B and L-1 travel ban for those continuing employment with the same employer.

The exemptions to the June 22 Presidential Proclamation 10052, commonly referred to as H-1B or L-1 Travel Ban, also includes the family members of the H-1B, L-1 and certain categories of J1 visas.

President Donald Trump, in his June proclamation, banned the entry into the US of workers in several key non-immigrant visa categories, including the H-1B, arguing that they eat into American jobs.

Companies depend on H-1B visas to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The State Department, which issued the revised travel advisory, on Wednesday said that the exemptions were given under national interest category. In its advisory, the State

Department said that H-1B and L-1 visas can now be issued for staff who are "seeking to resume ongoing employment in the US in the same position with the same employer and visa classification."

Forcing employers to replace existing employees may cause financial hardship, it said.

All those on H-1B visas working in the healthcare sector, especially those related to the Covid-19 pandemic, or to conduct ongoing medical research in an area with a substantial public health benefit (e.g.

cancer or communicable disease research) are also exempted from the July 22 travel ban.

Notably in the last few weeks, several lawmakers have written to the Secretary of State to exempt the healthcare sector from the travel ban on H-1B, L1 and J1 visas. Further new factors have been set forth to also allow H-1B visas to be issued when at least two of the five indicators are met, the State Department said. First cases the petitioning employer has a continued need for the services or

labour to be performed by the H-1B nonimmigrant in the United States. Cases where Labour Condition Applications (LCAs) was approved during or after July 2020 OR if the LCA was approved before July 2020, the consular officer must be able to determine from the visa application the continuing need of the employee with the US employer. But, if an applicant is currently performing or is able to perform the essential functions of the position for the prospective employer remotely from outside the

US, this criteria cannot be met, the State Department said. Secondly, the applicant's proposed job duties or position within the petitioning company indicate the individual will provide significant and unique contributions to an employer meeting a critical infrastructure need. Critical infrastructure sectors are chemical, communications, dams, defense industrial base, emergency services, energy, financial services, food and agriculture, government facilities, healthcare and public health, infor-

mation technology, nuclear reactors, transportation, and water systems. Third, the wage rate paid to the H-1B applicant meaningfully exceeds the prevailing wage rate by at least 15 per cent.

Fourth, the H-1B applicant's education, training and/or experience demonstrate unusual expertise in the specialty occupation in which the applicant will be employed.

And finally, the denial of the visa will cause financial hardship to the US employer.

—PTI

IN BRIEF

INTUC UNION
MOVES HC ON
FIELD ASSISTANTSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG 13

The INTUC Field Assistants Union on Thursday filed a writ in the High Court challenging the removal of 8,000 field assistants from their jobs. The petition was filed by the union representatives R.D. Chandrasekhar, Yerragani Naganna Goud, Bolluri Ravi, and Challa Venkateswarulu.

The court, which heard senior counsel Macharla Rangaiah, who represented the union, posted the case for hearing on Monday, after the lawyer representing the government sought some time.

Rangaiah said the field assistants were working under the Employment Gurantee Scheme of 2005 and were not paid for four months and illegally removed. He sought a direction to reinstate the staff and pay their salaries.

TEACHERS FED
SAYS REGULARISE
CONTRACT JOBSHARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13

In the wake of the High Court observations on contract jobs, the Telangana State United Teachers Federation (TSUTF) state committee on Thursday demanded that the government immediately regularise the services of contract and outsourced employees working in various departments and pay them the salaries as mentioned for those posts.

The demands were discussed in the TSUTF state committee meeting held online on Wednesday and Thursday. The demands included seeking of clarity on the powers of school complex headmasters.

It sought appointment orders to be given to sectoral officers selected in the written examination and resolving the crisis of teacher promotions and to provide management-wise promotions.

The federation sought immediate release of the schedule of transfer of spouses and model school teacher transfers. It also wanted regularisation of services of contract and outsourced employees working in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, gurukulas, model schools and mandal resource centres. The committee also asked the government to publish the results of Hindi teachers in TRT-2017.

MASKS, SOCIAL
DISTANCING ONLY
WAY OUT: EXPERT

From Page 1

Apart from this, co-morbid conditions of heart disease, diabetes, kidney and other organ complications have caused rapid deterioration of the health of Covid-19 patients, leading to death in many cases. Apart from the lungs, the load of virus has also been found in the heart, liver, kidney, pancreas, and ejected through stools and tears.

Dr K.K. Aggarwal, president, CMAAO, said, "In India, we have moved from community mitigation to individual containment. Wearing of masks and following social distancing have to be followed strictly. Only this is going to ensure that there are no spurts of new cases. The flare-up of cases in pockets is a matter of concern and they will continue to occur if preventive methods are not followed strictly."

With densely populated pockets in cities and extended urban areas, India has the maximum number of cases in the South Asia region. Bangladesh and Pakistan follow India.

The changing climate has shown that there is no significant cross-reactivity with other respiratory viruses or even coronaviruses. The risk of co-infection has not been noted in the population which is a good sign as the fight is only against SARS-Cov 2.

The issue of negative testing in a CT scan despite high viral load persists in the region. The study said it is very important that the negative test result is not used to rule out infection.

The doubts over a possible relapse of Covid-19 has been negated, as a study of 108 patients in the region has shown that while the test showed positive, culture for the virus was negative. This means the ability of the Coronavirus to reproduce and replicate itself is not present.

For the region to come out of the crisis, surveillance will play a very important role and outbreaks will mean that challenges will persist.

Sample collection



People queue up for Covid-19 tests at the health centre at Musheerabad, Hyderabad. Fewer people came for the tests because of the rain on Thursday, officials said. — S. SURENDER REDDY

Docs oppose contract
based recruitments

Specialists state that permanent appointments must be made

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG 13

Eighty five specialists are being appointed for Gandhi Hospital and Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences on contract basis by the Director of Health and Medical Education, raising a concern on why recruitments are on contract basis.

The one-year contract is being objected to by doctors who state that permanent appointments must be made. Due to Covid-19, there is speculation that

● **THERE ARE** major challenges in absorption to permanent posts after working on contract basis and for that reason many doctors are not willing.

few doctors will apply as there is risk of contracting the infection.

The announcement for permanent posts was expected during the pandemic. The announcement that the recruitment will be on contract basis has angered doctors, who feel that temporarily contract-

ed doctors will not ease the situation.

There are major challenges in absorption to permanent posts after working on contract basis and for that reason many doctors are not willing.

Healthcare Reforms Association president Dr Mahesh Kumar explained, "We want permanent recruitment of specialists as they are not required only for cities but also for the districts. There is a dearth of specialists in districts and that too has to be filled up."

Doctors have been waiting for the recruitment process in the government set-up as there are vacant posts of specialists due to the retirement of senior doctors.

There are an estimated 500 sanctioned posts and most of them are vacant due to lack of recruitment.

With the new hospital having come up in Gachibowli, it has now become important to make it fully functional and that will require specialists.

HC: Pvt hospitals seem powerful

From page 1

The bench also directed government to report to the court if it was facing difficulty in replicating the Delhi model.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy issued the direction while hearing 18 PILs on Covid-19 testing, excessive billing by private hospitals, lack of infrastructure in government notified hospitals and other issues.

Chief Justice Chauhan observed: "it seems that private hospitals are more powerful than the government. The government is making a lot of sound on taking steps against the hospitals for excessive billing. But, except the noise, it seems nothing has been done."

Referring to health min-

ister Etala Rajendar's statement that the 50 per cent of beds in private hospitals will be taken if complaints of excessive billing continue, the bench said: "We have been observing such statements but no action was initiated."

The court quoting from the government affidavit said it had received complaints of excessive billing from 50 private hospitals but notices had been issued to 46 and response received from 16. "The remaining 30 hospitals are silent. Still no stringent action was taken, except against two hospitals," the court said.

Hinting at tough action, the Chief Justice said: "The government should ensure that the GOs issued on capping the prices should be complied with by the private hospitals. In case any private

hospital continues to defy the GOs, the government shall be free to take drastic action. We hope that government will take action in that line. This is a polite way of cautioning by the court."

The court pointed out the grievance over non-availability of hearses to transport the bodies of Covid-19 patients. The government said 61 hearses had been arranged.

Regarding action on private hospitals, the Chief Secretary said the government was given them a chance to reply. Regarding the hearses, he said that families need to call the helpline number 104.

Kumar said the state machinery, doctors and bureaucrats, were working 24x7. "Most of our officials are deprived of sleep, having tremendous workload and exposed to Coronavirus," he said. He

added that they had to furnish information for Central teams arriving at short notice, as well as videoconference held by the Prime Minister, besides to advocates in court cases.

Responding to this, Justice Vijayen Reddy, said "Some family members of this bench and judges are also working on Covid-19 duties and we are aware of their difficulties. Don't think that the court is calling you without knowing the difficulties of the officers. All efforts of the court are to ensure the right to life and right to have medical facilities for the people."

Justice Chauhan said the Chief Secretary and the government should not be take it as criticism by the court. "This court certainly appreciates not only the efforts made by the officials," he said.

Chinese gaming firm
in ₹1.1K cr betting ringBALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG 13

An online gaming and betting racket that was run by a company based out of China involving at least ₹1,100 crore, with prospects of more money being involved, was cracked by the Hyderabad police. The gaming and betting racket is suspected to have led to suicides.

According to police commissioner Anjani Kumar, a series of shell companies, all controlled through a firm called as Beijing T Power Company based out of China, were identified as having been used by the racketeers to siphon money out of India. The police has so far managed to freeze ₹30 crore, Anjani Kumar said.

He announced that four persons, Chinese national Yah Hao, the authorised signatory and head of operations for South East Asia for the Chinese company, Dheeraj Sarkar of Gurugram in Haryana, Ankit Kapoor and Neeraj Tuli of Delhi have been

arrested for their involvement in the racket. The three Indians were directors in the company, Anjani Kumar said.

Investigations began after a case was registered following complaints from individuals that they were cheated in online gaming on the website and lost ₹97,000 and ₹1,64,000 respectively. The cases were registered under Telangana Gaming Act, Section 420 and 120 (B) IPC.

Kumar told reporters that during investigations it was found that online gaming was organised by initiating prospective gamers through Telegram groups. Entry was by reference and members who introduced a certain number of new members were paid a commission.

Once someone took the bait, the players would be directed to websites on which they could place wagers on predicting which colour would appear in a block on the screen.

He said the investigation

revealed that the bank accounts and payment gateways were linked to companies called Linkyun, Dokypay and SpotPay and others. The group running the racket was constantly setting up new companies and move operations from one company to another. The entire technical operation was run by China based directors/partners of these companies.

The payments, he said, were being routed through India-based payment service providers/gateways and in this case, the payments were routed through PayTM and Cash Free services.

Some suicides that were reported in recent times in the state and other parts of the country, and were linked to online will be investigated as part of this case, he said.

In addition, the investigations also indicated that these groups were possibly involved in other cybercrimes such as phishing, running banned apps and dating apps.

Covid cases in Hyd fall to
298, districts record 1,633DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13

Greater Hyderabad witnessed a steep fall in Covid-19 cases with the health department reporting that 298 fresh cases were found till Wednesday evening, down from 479 cases recorded on Tuesday.

In its latest bulletin on Covid-19, the department on Thursday said 1,931 new cases were recorded across the state along with 11 fatalities in the 24-hour period between Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

With the new cases, the total Covid-19 infected people rose to 86,475 while the number of deaths increased to 665.

The department said 1,780 patients had recovered from the disease taking their total number to 63,074 while another 22,736 persons were still undergoing treatment either at their homes or in hospitals.

It said 23,303 tests were conducted in the 24-hour period with results awaited for 706 from these tests. Following the GHMC's 298 new cases, was Warangal Urban district with 144 cases, and Ranga Reddy district with 124 new cases.

The department said 1,633 fresh cases came from all the non-GHMC area districts. The last time in the past week that any district reported zero cases was on August 9 when no new Coronavirus

Charges not fixed
for beds taken over

From page 1

Also, yet to be discussed are details pertaining to billing of patients, and fixation of rates. These issues along with some other options in terms of working out the admission, billing and other details are expected to come up for discussion at a meeting on Friday between health department officials and private hospitals' representatives.

After Thursday's meeting, Rajendar, according to the release from his office, thanked the private hospital managements for coming forward to hand over control of 50 per cent of the beds to the government. He also requested the managements to meet with Director of Public Health Dr G. Srinivasa Rao on Friday to discuss and finalise the modalities of the new arrangement.

It said that from the very beginning of the outbreak of the disease, the government was urging private hospitals to join hands with the government in providing treatment to Covid-19 patients. Though the government fixed rates to be charged for treating such patients, some private hospitals have been disregarding the guidelines and billing patients as they wished.

While many hospitals were issued notices on this front, permission for two hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients was withdrawn following such complaints.

infections were reported from Kurnumbheem-Asifabad district. From August 10, every one of the 33 districts in the state have been recording new cases.

While the government

● **NORMS** over billing for taken-over beds will be fixed today.

A dedicated app will be used to communicate decisions on sending of patients to the private hospitals by the health department, the release added.

said 2,662 patients were undergoing treatment in 56 of its hospitals across the state, a total of 4,453 Covid-19 patients were receiving treatment in 118 private hospitals, the bulletin said.

ISB LAUNCHES
WEB PORTAL ON
ECONOMIC DATADC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13

The Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, on Thursday launched the web portal for its project JumpStartIndia@ISB, which will be a one-stop portal for several high-frequency indicators (HFI) of India's economic recovery.

The portal will provide a range of data on multiple aspects of the economy, including fertiliser sales, trade in agricultural commodities.

The annual plantation drive was held on Thursday at the lush green campus of the Corporate Bhavan premises in Tatti Annaram of Pedda Amberpet. A variety of plants, including parijat, tulasi and night queen were planted by three members of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

The annual plantation drive was arranged by the office of Regional Director (South East Region — AP, Karnataka) in the

NCLT officials join green drive at Corporate Bhavan

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13

An annual plantation drive was held on Thursday at the lush green campus of the Corporate Bhavan premises in Tatti Annaram of Pedda Amberpet. A variety of plants, including parijat, tulasi and night queen were planted by three members of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

The annual plantation drive was arranged by the office of Regional Director (South East Region — AP, Karnataka) in the

Corporate Bhavan premises, under the directions of Regional Director M.P. Shah.

The plantation drive was led by Ratakonda Murali, member judicial, NCLT, Hyderabad Bench, K. Anantha Padmanabha Swamy, member judicial, NCLT Hyderabad Bench, and Bhaskara Pantula Mohan, member judicial, NCLT Amaravati Bench.

Also taking part in the plantation drive were officers of the India Company Law Service (ICLS) cadre of the Union ministry of corporate affairs, including senior officers M.P. Shah, region-

al director, P. Atchuta Ramaiah, joint director, Shashi Raj Dara, joint director, Jose Kutty, Registratr of Companies Hyderabad, Pola Raghunath, Official Liquidator, Hyderabad.

The Corporate Bhavan comprises the offices of the National Company Law Tribunal-NCLT, Hyderabad and Amaravathi Bench, Regional Director (South East Region).

Official Liquidator, attached to the High Court, Registrar of Companies (RoC), Hyderabad, and Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO), Hyderabad.



Officials take part in the annual plantation drive at the premises of the Corporate Bhavan in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Colonies in Khammam, paddy, cotton fields inundated by rain

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM/KOTHAGUDEM, AUG. 13

Incessant rains over the last two days have inundated many fields and residential colonies in Khammam and Bhadradi-Kothagudem districts. Paddy, cotton and green gram crops were submerged in 1,500 acres in both districts.

About 40 rivulets and tanks are overflowing in 26 mandals in the two dis-

tricts, including the Munner, a rivulet of the Krishna, is running full. The Nagarjunasagar Left Bank Canal is full after the release of water from the Palair reservoir.

Housing colonies in Khammam and Kothagudem towns were inundated by rainwater including at Raparthinagar, Edulapuram, Dwansalapuram, Sarathinagar and Pumping Well Road in Khammam. Rainwater entered 15

houses in Raparthinagar. In Khammam district, Karepalli mandal witnessed 12.1 cm rainfall followed by Kamepalli (10.4 cm), Enkoor (8.2 cm), Penuballi (7.2 cm), Rahgunathapalem (6 cm), Kallur (5.7 cm), Khammam Rural (5.6 cm) and Khammam Urban (5.4 cm) mandals. More than 5 cm rainfall was recorded in Konigerla, Vemsoor, Tallada and Sattupalli mandals.

Pedavagu rivulet and Pinjaramadugu tank in Kamepalli mandal were overflowing and the floodwater submerged 100 acres of paddy. Paddy nurseries raised by the farmers were haway in some places.

In Bhadradi district, fourteen streams like Ellannavagu, Nurreduvagu, Pottivagu, Mallannavagu, Edumelikavagu, Jalleru, Kodelavagu and Budidavagu in Gundala and Allapalli mandals were in spate and all the



Gates of Lankasagar at Penuballi in Khammam district were opened.

vater is joining the Kinnersani.

Road connectivity was cut off to 40 habitations in these two mandals. About 17,000 cusecs of water were released from the Kinnersani reservoir.

The Singabhubhalam tank in Sujathanagar mandal was overflowing. Floodwater from Isukavagu and Lothuvagu cut off 16 habitations in Aswapuram mandal. Work in the Sitarama lift irrigation project

were affected by the rains. Rainwater reached the pump house at BG Kothuru.

In Paloncha mandal, the Murreduvagu is overflowing and the floodwater entered 300 acres of paddy, officials said.

It is expected that more damage will be recorded in the mandals of Kamapalli, Karepalli, Gundala, Allapalli, Aswapuram, Paloncha and Enkoor if the rains continue another day.

OTHER STORIES

PONGULETI PUTS
2 PROPOSALS
TO KCRDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, AUG. 13

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former MLC Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy in a letter to Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Thursday put across two proposals.

Mr Sudhakar Reddy asked that the state government write to the Uttar Pradesh government and the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust to allocate land to set up a Telangana Seva Sadan in Ayodhya. He said, "With the completion of the Ram Mandir, the number of devotees going to Ayodhya will increase and they can stay in the Telangana sadan." He asked that the sadan provide food and accommodation.

He also proposed that the idols of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita from Bhadrachalam and Parnasala be sent to Ayodhya to be installed there. It may be recalled that the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust has proposed to instal the idols of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita, by bringing them from various places where the divine couple had visited in those days.

SMART TOILETS
IN SIRCILLA TO
OPEN ON AUG. 15DC CORRESPONDENT,
SIRCILLA, AUG.13

Officials of the municipal department are gearing up to complete the construction works of public toilets on a war foot in the two municipalities Sircilla and Vemulawada in Rajanna Sircilla district.

Municipal minister K.T. Rama Rao held a review meeting recently with the municipal commissioners and officials of the municipal department, and issued orders to construct public toilets in the respective municipalities.

An action plan was prepared and it was decided to construct 108 public toilets initially in Sircilla Municipality, later 17 more were added taking the total to 125 public toilets, of these 100 toilets have been constructed. In Vemulawada Municipality limits, 80 toilets have been constructed in the Sri Raja Rajeshwara Swamy temple premises and 12 in the Vemulawada Municipality have to be constructed.

Meanwhile, officials of the Sircilla Municipality constructed five modern and luxury public toilets in Sircilla town in association with the Ixora FM Corporate services private limited.

The government has taken up construction works of Modern Public toilets with Loo Cafe 2.0 concept in Sircilla town like that in Hyderabad. Of the five modern toilets, three are designated for women and two for men.

Four of the luxury toilets which are established at the main hospital, Kotta Cheruvu Colony, Kotta bus stand, Rythu bazaar have been completed, while construction is in progress of the one at Chandrampet Chowrasta. The five modern toilets in Sircilla town will be inaugurated by Municipal minister K.T. Rama Rao on August 15.

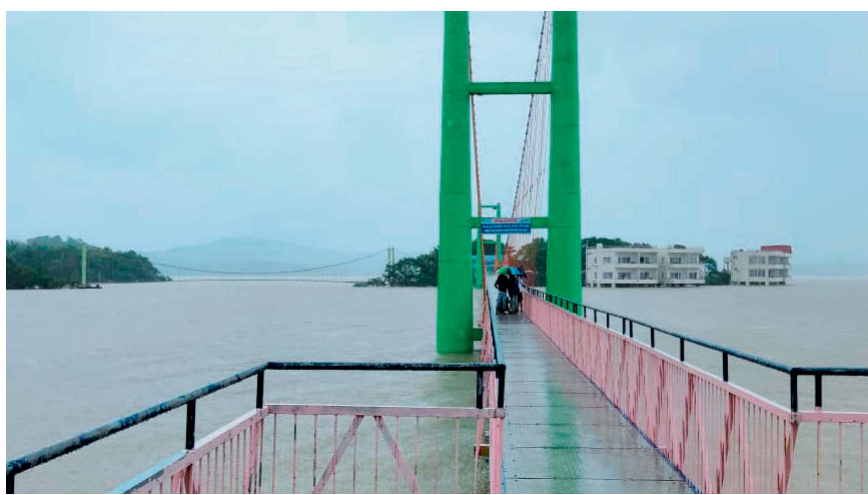
Municipal commissioner of Sircilla Municipality Sammaiah said that 90 per cent of the construction works of public toilets have been completed and the pending 10 percent construction works will be completed within the prescribed time limit.

One public toilet has been constructed for every 1,000 people. With the completion of the public toilets, the dream of the Telangana government will be fulfilled, he said.

■ FIVE MODERN toilets in Sircilla town will be inaugurated by Rama Rao on August 15.



From left: Commuters caught in the sudden rains that lashed Karimnagar on Thursday. Lakhavaram Lake brimming with water on Thursday.



— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Water bodies brimming

Lakhavaram has water till its FRL of 33.2 ft; Ramappa, Pakhal lakes are filling up fast

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, AUG. 13

All major water bodies are being filled by the incessant rains that have affected the undivided Warangal district in the past four days. While the Lakhavaram lake is overflowing, Ramappa and Pakhal lakes are filling up fast.

The Lakhavaram lake in Govindaraopet Mandal of Mulugu district has water till its full reservoir level (FRL) of 33.2 feet. The lake which provides irrigation water to 12,000 acres has 1.2 tmc ft of water.

Water at the Pakhal lake is standing at 27.3 feet against its FRL of 30 feet. Spread over 5,300 acres and holding 3.23 tmc ft, the lake irrigates 28,365 acres.

The Ramappa lake is having water at the 29-foot mark against its FRL of 35 feet. The lake irrigates 5,100 acres.

Meanwhile, the Kaleshwaram Project is receiving huge inflows of water. At the Lakshmi barrage at

Medigadda, 57 gates have been opened to release water. The Godavari and Pranahita rivers are receiving 3.5 lakh cusecs, all of which is being released downstream.

Rain and heavy wind uprooted several trees on the National Highway 163 which connects Hyderabad with Bhupalpatnam in Chhattisgarh, bringing the traffic to a standstill for three hours. The district administration took up measures to remove the fallen trees.

Several rivulets overflowed inundating roads connecting villages.

As a result, interior areas have been cut off in Jayashankar Bhupalpally and Mulugu districts.

Coal production by Singareni Collieries in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district has been hit severely. Mining at opencast sector 1 and 2 has been halted since three days resulting in a loss of about ₹12 crore to Singareni Collieries Limited (SCCL).



Workers try to remove fallen trees on NH 163 at Tadvai on Thursday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Centuries-old-temple under
siege, as rainwater seeps inANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, AUG. 13

Rainwater is seeping through the roof of the 12th century Ghanapeshwaralayam, constructed in Ghanpur in Jayashankar Bhupalpally by the Kakatiya rulers.

The sanctum sanctorum is flooded and the water has nowhere to go due to the outlet being damaged. Officials are manually drawing out the water.

Locally known as Kotagullu, the temple is protected under Hyderabad Ancient Monuments Preservation Act by Heritage Telangana. Restoration was started up in 2009 and 2014 but the work went no further than laying a foundation stone.

The villagers who take pride because in the temple formed a committee to preserve it and have been ensuring daily prayers are held. Nagapuri Srinivas, a member of the committee, said they set up 10 tarpaulin sheets on the roof to avoid the water from dripping inside but it remains a temporary measure.

"Because the temple is about 700 years old, the foundation got disturbed



Floodwater manually being cleared from inside the Ghanapeshwaralayam at Ghanpur village in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district on Thursday.

— DC

and the set-up of the pillars got misaligned, resulting in gaps in the roof. The roof is shaped in a way to hold water; which is now seeping inside the temple. It is high time the government took cognisance of the situation of this historic temple and stepped up measures for its restoration," Srinivas said.

Another member, Koyala Goutham, appealed to the district administration and the local public representatives to act on the issue immediately.

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM/KOTHAGUDEM,
AUG. 13

Covid-19 is spreading fast in rural areas and more than 50 cases are being exposed every day.

Three Covid-19 positive cases were reported in Bonakal mandal. Two persons from Thutikuntla village and a person from Bonakal tested positive. Seven cases were reported in Palair in Kusumanchi mandal and the ST Colony, both of which have been declared as containment zones. Nearly 15 cases were witnessed in the village so far.

The business community in Nelakondapalli is in fear as five businessmen tested positive. Provision shops were closed due to the spread of virus. Five Covid-19 positive cases were exposed in Subledu panchayat in Tirumalayapalem mandal. Two of them were constables working in the Tirumalayapalem police station.

Subledu primary health centre doctor, Vasundhar, said that the patients were asked to stay in home isolation and medicines were given to them. Covid-19 cases were reported in Kakaravai, Tirumalayapalem, Beerolu and Jupeda in the mandal.

The virus is spreading among the miners of the Singareni collieries company limited. About 90 SCCL employees tested positive so far in three areas. About 41 persons in Kothagudem area, 38 in Manuguru area and 11 persons in Yellandu area tested positive. Four positive cases registered in Burugumphad and three in Aswapuram mandal.

Employees working in SBI branch in Sarapaka ITC and postal department tested positive. About 115 cases came to light in Khammam district on Thursday against 125 on Wednesday.

In Bhadradi district, 37 persons tested positive on Thursday against 47 on Wednesday. The PHC doctors were asked to test only persons who had symptoms.

Patients staying in home isolation are being given medical kits. They are advised by the doctors to administer the tablets following the prescribed dosages. There is no mandal in Khammam and Bhadradi districts without Covid-19 cases.

M. Sudhakar, a farmer leader, said that the rapid test teams should be sent to the rural areas to conduct more tests. "The farmers as well as farm labourers fear the spread of the virus in their localities," he said.

Covid spreading fast in rural areas

Household survey to
identify+ve patientsNARENDER
PULLOOR | DC
KAMAREDDY, AUG.13

The Kamareddy district administration has begun a household survey to identify Covid-19 positive patients.

The survey is being conducted jointly with the medical and health and revenue officials. The survey is being held over a period of three days and will be completed by August 14.

After consolidation of the data, medical treatments will be provided to those who are Covid-19 positive.

During the survey, the officials will collect information regarding fever, cold, cough, and breathlessness of the Covid-19 suspects.

As few people are unable to identify seasonal fevers and the symptoms of the Coronavirus, Kamareddy district collector A. Sharath initiated steps to hold the household survey.

■ THE NUMBER of Covid-19 positive cases has reached 1,674 in Kamareddy district. Of this, 1,081 are active cases and 9 persons have died so far.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Kamareddy district medical and health officer Dr P. Chandrasekhar said that the survey will help in the medical treatment of Covid-19 positive patients.

"Asha workers and revenue officials prepared a format for the household survey. The survey will cover 2 lakh households in 600 habitations. Booth level officials will monitor the survey and screening and treatment for Covid-19 positive patients will be done immediately."

Meanwhile, the number of Covid-19 positive cases has reached 1,674 in Kamareddy district. Of this, 1,081 are active cases and 9 persons have died so far.

POLL | OUTCOME

Of the five posts this time, 2 were allotted for minorities and 3 for the general category

TRS wins four, MIM one in KMC co-option post elections

PULI SHARAT KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 13

Out of the five co-option posts in the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation (KMC), the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) won four and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) won the remaining one in the elections that were held on Thursday.

The election was held as per the new panchayat raj Act at a meeting chaired by Mayor Y. Sunil Rao at the Collectorate auditorium.

In the past, only four co-option posts were allotted to the city. Of the five posts this time, two were allotted for minorities and three for the general category. One post in both the categories was reserved for women.

Twenty members filed their nomination papers, who included former corporators, councillors, ward members, municipal retired employees.

Of the 60 divisions of the KMC, the TRS has 41, BJP 15

■ 20 MEMBERS filed their nomination papers, who included former corporators, councillors, ward members, municipal retired employees.

■ SINCE, THE BJP decided not to participate in the elections, the TRS and MIM contested all posts.

and the MIM five. Since, the BJP decided not to participate in the elections, the TRS and MIM contested all posts.

The election was held first for the three posts in the general category. Of the nine contestants, Nandelli Rama Devi, Chennai Ajith Rao and Putta Narendar Kumar from the TRS were proposed by minister Gangula Kamalakara and they were duly elected.

For the two posts in the minority category, seven members contested of

whom five belonged to the MIM. The TRS has allotted only one post to the MIM. Syed Amjad Ali from the TRS and Rafia Sultana from the MIM were elected. They were duly handed over the winning certificates.

Municipal commissioner Valluri Kranthi conducted the oath taking ceremony Rama Devi, Ajith Rao, Narendar Kumar and Rafia Sultana took the oath as per the panchayat raj Act in the presence of Mayor Sunil Rao and minister Kamalakara, while Syed Amjad Ali did not take oath as he was suffering from illness. The elected members were later felicitated.

Karimnagar Mayor Y. Sunil Rao and BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara congratulate the co-option members of the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation elected in Karimnagar on Thursday.

Voters who participated in the municipal co-option elections voted system by raising their hands.



Karimnagar mayor, Y. Sunil Rao and BC welfare minister, Gangula Kamalakara along with the elected co-option members of the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation in Karimnagar district on Thursday.

— YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

SHORT TAKES

VARUN TO
TABLE ORGAN
DONATION BILL

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

Bharatiya Janata Party MP Varun Gandhi will introduce a private member bill — Donation and Transplantation of Human Organ Bill, 2020 — promoting cadaver donation and making it compulsory for all Indian adults to be registered as organ donors unless a person opts out.

The Bill, which also seeks a National Registry of donors, non-donors and recipients which “shall have information as may be prescribed to an ongoing evaluation of the scientific and clinical status of human organs and tissues.”

The Bill also seeks state governments to maintain a registry and non-disclosure of identity of people in both databases in public domain unless regarding a complaint, a court case, bonafide medical research but with the consent of the person.

“According to the WHO estimates, three to four million lives per year can be saved in India if we have such a system and most of these people will be from poor and middle class families who otherwise cannot afford. Let’s say even five per cent of Indian population agrees to donate their organs and tissues, the number can be multiplied by 15 times in organ banks which is a very significant number as compared to the figures which we have now,” said Gandhi, who is likely to introduce the Bill in the monsoon session of Parliament.

COMPULSORY
RETIREMENT FOR
TAINTED BABU

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 13

The Odisha government on Thursday gave compulsory retirement to the suspended director of National Ayush Mission in Odisha, Bibhu Prasad Sarangi.

Bibhu was arrested on July 9 on charges of sexually harassing a woman employee of the Ayush Directorate and remained in judicial custody till July 13. Later on July 21, the Odisha Administrative Service officer was placed under suspension.

“Bibhu Prasad Sarangi was suspended from the government service in view of the gravity of the case and evidence against him. The conduct of Sarangi towards a subordinate woman employee, prima facie, constitutes an act of personal immorality and violation of conduct of rules,” read an official order issued by the state government.

Therefore, after careful consideration and in line with policy of zero tolerance of any act of immorality by any of its employees, the state government ordered compulsory retirement of Sarangi from service with immediate effect, the order read.

NOTICE TO FOREST
OFFICIAL FOR
REMARKS ON LIONS

Ahmedabad, Aug. 13: The Gujarat government on Thursday issued a notice to a senior forest official over his “irresponsible” and “undesirable” statements about the Asiatic lions and their conservation.

The notice was issued to Chief Wildlife Warden of the state Shyamal Tikadar, the government said in a statement. The government said it “does not agree with such personal views, which are far from truth and facts”.

“For his irresponsible statements against the government policies, the Gujarat government has decided to seek his explanation and issue a notice as per All India Service (Conduct) Rules,” the statement said. On the eve of the World Lion Day on August 10, a webinar was organised by the Central Zoo Authority, in which the Chief Wildlife Warden and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) was one of the panelists, it added.

“During this webinar, he spoke about the conservation of Asiatic lions in Gujarat. He presented certain objectionable views and made undesirable comments on various issues,” it said without elaborating. In a video of the webinar, Tikadar, a 1986-batch IFS officer, can be heard suggesting that people should look at lions or wildlife more as “a resource than an asset”.

He termed the Asiatic lions of Gir forest as a “commodity which we have branded, but can not sell”.



Security personnel carry out a flag march in the riot-hit area after a mob went on a rampage on Tuesday over a social media post, allegedly posted by a Congress MLA’s relative, in Bengaluru on Thursday.

Role of SDPI in Bengaluru
violence comes to the fore

Several SDPI office-bearers arrested; RAF contingent holds flag march

Bengaluru, Aug. 13: Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday said the role of the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) behind the Tuesday night violence in parts of Bengaluru, had come to light and investigation will go deep into it and their connections.

The Minister said, four people associated with SDPI have been arrested in this regard and investigation is under way.

“K G Halli and D J Halli are peaceful since Wednesday and there have been no untoward incidents...as the investigation is progressing new information is coming out. I cannot share with you everything, but in the days to come I will share before the media,” Bommai said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, as per the information gathered so far and video footage, most importantly the role of SDPI is coming to light. We are collecting more

information regarding it, we are investigating deeply in this regard.

“Already, several SDPI office-bearers have been arrested. Muzammil Pasha, the SDPI district secretary is the main (person), also Firoz, Afraz Pasha and Shaik Adil, all of them are from SDPI. Their role is completely being investigated and they have been arrested,” he added.

Three people were killed after police opened fire to quell a mob that went on a rampage in a city locality on Tuesday night over an inflammatory social media post allegedly put out by a Congress legislator’s relative.

Pulakeshi Nagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy’s residence and a police station at D J Halli were among those targeted by the angry mob.

The house of the MLA, who was not at home at the time, was allegedly set on fire. The rioters also torched many police and

private vehicles, badly damaged the house and looted the belongings of MLA Murthy and those of his sister. An ATM was smashed into pieces.

After the arson and violence, the entire DJ Halli resembled a war zone.

Nearly 140 people have been arrested so far, in connection with the incident. Bommai said, through some video footage it has come to light that SDPI workers had come from neighbouring areas of K G Halli and D J Halli, and it is being investigated.

“The investigation will look into who are behind the incident, its links with other such incidents in the past. We will go deep into it and will not rest until we break through this conspiracy,” he said.

Officials are also gathering details on cases against the SDPI in Mysuru, Mangaluru and other places, Bommai said, adding that all angles at the local level are also

being looked into like rivalry between and within political parties.

“Everything that might have led to this incident, we will investigate. Whoever is at fault or have supported it, we will take action even if it is an elected representative,” he added. Assuring people of security, the Home Minister said, police have worked putting their life at risk, with Covid on one side and such incidents on the other.

“I appeal to people not to fear and cooperate in maintaining peace and order,” he added.

The SDPI on Wednesday had denied its role in the violence and had blamed police inaction.

The Karnataka government on Wednesday announced that a district magistrate would conduct an inquiry into the violence. The government has also decided to recover losses caused to public property during the violence from the rioters.

Meanwhile, Muzamil Pasha and others have been named as one of the many accused in the FIR.

The police registered at least five FIRs in connection with the incident - two in Devara Jeevanahalli (DJ Halli) and three in Kadugondanahalli (KG Halli) stations.

Besides Pasha, police have named Afran, Syed Masood, Ayaz and Allabaksh in the first FIR at DJ Halli. The second FIR has three names and ‘other 200 persons.’

The police in their FIR charged the rioters with barging into the two police stations with an intention to kill the policeman there and kill the

Pulakeshinagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy’s nephew whose alleged inflammatory post in social media enraged a section of the society.

Meanwhile, a contingent of the Rapid Action Force conducted a flag march in the riot-hit areas.

Youth form
human chain to
protect temple

Bengaluru, Aug. 13: Youth, including those from a minority community, decided to protect a temple when a mob was going on a rampage here after being irked over a social media post on an allegedly communally sensitive issue.

A video of the youth quickly forming the human chain to protect the Hanuman temple on Shampura Main Road has gone viral, even as the mob was indulging in arson.

The human chain was formed on Tuesday night as a result of some quick thinking while violence sent shock waves across DJ Halli, KG Halli and neighbouring areas of Pulakeshinagar.

“We saw the rioters coming in groups towards the temple and their intention seemed to damage it. Then we decided to form a human chain to protect it,” a youth who wished not to be named, said.

He expressed fear that any damage to the temple could have complicated

things further. On Tuesday night, a mob had gone on the rampage at Pulakeshinagar irked over the social media post allegedly put out by a Congress legislator’s relative, with the government terming the violence as a well-planned act.

Three persons were killed when police opened fire to quell the mob and scores of others, including over 50 police personnel, sustained injuries in the violence that stretched till the wee hours of Wednesday.

The mob had set on fire the DJ Halli Police Station, besides damaging Pulakeshinagar Congress MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy’s property for his nephew Naveen had allegedly posted some objectionable content in the social media about a week ago.

State Revenue Minister R. Ashoka had dubbed the violence pre-planned with an intention to spread it in other parts of the city.

Naveen has also been arrested.

All arrested can’t be
guilty: Deve Gowda

Bengaluru, Aug. 13: Former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on Thursday said only those really guilty should be punished for the violence in parts of the city on August 11, as he asked the Congress and BJP not to indulge in a political blamegame on the issue.

Expressing sadness over the attack on Pulakeshi Nagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy’s residence, the JD(S) patriarch also said the government should take action to get justice for him and give him compensation for the losses. “The attack on Pulakeshi Nagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy’s residence is unfortunate and such incidents should not occur in any part of the country.

Police have arrested about 140 people in connection with rioting, but

how many among them are real culprits?” Gowda was quoted as saying by his office in a release. He said, “all of them (arrested) cannot be culprits.

Only those who are really guilty should be held responsible for the incident and merciless action should be taken against them. Innocents should not be punished, this is my request to the police.”

Three persons were killed after police opened fire to quell a mob that went on a rampage in a city locality on Tuesday night over a purportedly inflammatory social media post allegedly put out by the Congress legislator Murthy’s relative.

Urging the government to take action against those guilty, he said, burning down houses, cars and looting the properties related to an MLA was unheard of in the state.

RHEA OPPOSES
CBI PROBE INTO
SSR’S DEATH

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty — alleged to have abetted the suicide by actor Sushant Singh Rajput — has opposed the handing over the investigation into the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Rhea Chakraborty in her submissions has said that the Patna FIR could be regarded as a zero FIR and transferred to Mumbai Police and the transfer of the probe to the CBI at the behest of the Bihar police is “without jurisdiction”

The Maharashtra government has also opposed the CBI probe, pointing out that the investigation by the Mumbai Police was already in an advanced stage.

24-YEAR OLD
LABOURER
BURIED ALIVE

Erode (TN), Aug. 13: A 24-year-old labourer died while he was involved in connecting pipes in an underground drain here on Thursday, police said.

The worker Anandhan was engaged by the Erode Municipal Corporation on contract to install the pipelines to take the sewage, when the soil caved in and he was buried alive.

On seeing this, the other workers raised an alarm. Soon, an earth-mover was pressed into service and the body of the worker was retrieved.

He was taken to a hospital where doctors declared him brought dead, the police said. A complaint has been registered and further investigations have are under way, the police said.

— PTI

Bihar elections likely to
be held in 5 or 6 phases

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

Bihar Assembly elections could be held in five or six phases in November and the Home Ministry is likely to deploy 500-600 companies, roughly 60,000 personnel, of central para military forces for the same. Ministry officials claim they were going ahead with all necessary arrangements anticipating the polls would be held on schedule.

Home Ministry officials claimed that though finalising the poll schedule was the prerogative of the Election Commission, the Centre was going ahead with all security and other necessary arrangements anticipating that Bihar Assembly elections will be held as per the schedule, which is in first week of November.

While the 2015 Bihar

● HOME MINISTRY officials have also assured that all necessary security and health arrangements would be made if Election Commission decides to go ahead with the November elections.

elections were also held in five phases, this time in view of the Corona pandemic, it is believed that the polling would be completed in six phases or maybe even another addition round.

Another big challenge, sources added, this time during elections would be to ensure proper health protocols during both polling and counting in view of the Corona scare. Home Ministry, sources said, will soon hold detailed discussion with the Election Commission, Health

Ministry and other agencies concerned to draw a detail blueprint for the health precautions that would be taken during the elections.

Bihar has seen a sharp increase in number of Corona cases while a large parts of the state have also witnessed heavy rainfall leading to floods. Thus, some regional parties like the RJD and the LJP had approached the Election Commission with a plea to postpone the elections.

However, indications are that the poll panel was likely to go ahead with the elections as per the original schedule. Home Ministry officials have also assured that all necessary security and health arrangements would be made if Election Commission decides to go ahead with the November elections.

SECURITY | MATTERS

Missile launching platform, sniper rifle on the anvil

15 indigenously built weapons launched

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, AUG. 13

Within few days of the Centre’s ban on the import of 101 defence items, 15 indigenously built weapons and products including a missile platform were launched on Thursday for the Indian armed forces.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh launched them in New Delhi.

One of the 15 products

is Nag Missile Carrier (NAMICA), a missile launching platform for the third generation anti-tank fire, using an indigenously produced Infantry Combat Vehicle with amphibious capabilities.

Jointly developed by Ordnance Factory Medak and Defence Research Development Laboratory, the platform can fire six missiles with a gap of 20 seconds.

The NAMICA has the potential for import substitution to the tune of ₹260 cr in the first phase, which may go upto more than ₹3,000 crore.

It is followed by the 14.5/20 mm Anti Material Rifle, developed by the Ordnance Factory Tiruchirappalli.

It is a dual calibre single shot with bolt action sniper rifle for destroying enemy bunkers, light armoured vehicles,

radar systems etc. modular, man-portable and highly accurate.

Another is the 8.6x70mm Sniper Rifle, made by the Rifle Factory Ishapore, which is a light and durable sniper rifle with a range of 1500m using high strength aluminium alloy.

It is the indigenous replacement to sniper rifles being imported from Finland, Italy and other countries.

The list also has the Upgraded Commanders Thermal Imager-cum-Day sight for T-90 tanks which is jointly developed by the Opto Electronics Factory, Dehradun and IRDE for the Indian Army.

It has a range of maximum detection of 8,000 meters at night.

It will also be retrofitted in T-90 Tanks already in service and will lead to substantial foreign exchange savings.



IN BRIEF

Saudi King rests after surgery

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia's King Salman arrived at a planned Red Sea megacity to "rest and recuperate", state media said Thursday, after the 84-year-old ruler underwent surgery to remove his gall bladder. The kingdom has sought to quell speculation over the health of the ageing monarch, who has ruled the top oil exporter and the Arab world's biggest economy since 2015. "The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman arrived in NEOM, where he will spend some time to rest and recuperate," the official Saudi Press Agency said in a brief statement.

US: Iran forces board ship

Dubai: Iranian forces boarded a tanker in international waters in the Gulf of Oman, using a helicopter and two ships to take over the vessel, US officials said. They also posted grainy black-and-white footage of the helicopter hovering low over the vessel and special forces personnel fast-roping onto the deck. "Today in international waters, Iranian forces, including two ships and an Iranian 'Sea King' helicopter, overtook and boarded a ship called the 'Vila'," the US Central Command said in a tweet on Wednesday. A US defence official said the Iranians released the vessel, a Liberian-flagged oil and chemicals tanker, after holding it for four to five hours. It occurred in international waters of the Gulf of Oman, 32 kilometres off the coast of the United Arab Emirates.

Israel halts Gaza fuel supply

Gaza City: Israel announced Thursday it was halting the "import of fuel into the Gaza Strip", the latest punitive measure over a wave of airborne fire bombs from the Palestinian territory. The defence ministry announcement came hours after Israeli jets and tanks hit targets affiliated with Hamas, the enclave's Islamist rulers. No casualties were reported. The latest round of hostilities has seen firebombs attached to bunches of balloons floating into Israel, setting scrubland ablaze. Sometimes kites are used in the makeshift attacks. In response, Israel has closed a goods crossing with Gaza and slashed the territory's permitted coastal fishing zone. The fuel sanction was "in light of the continued launching of incendiary balloons from the Strip toward the territory of the State of Israel and of the undermining of security stability", the defence ministry said.

LEBANON NOD TO EMERGENCY POWERS

Beirut, Aug. 13: Lebanon's parliament on Thursday approved a two-week state of emergency imposed by the government after last week's deadly port explosion that gives it legal authority to suppress resurgent protests.

Calls had circulated on social media networks for protesters to prevent lawmakers from entering the session — the first since the August 4 blast that ravaged swathes of the capital. But turnout was too low on Thursday morning, ahead of official visits by French Defence Minister Florence Parly and David Hale, the top career diplomat at the US State Department. Security forces outnumbered the dozen or so demonstrators who had gathered on a street near parliament.

Demonstrators tried to heckle tinted vehicles dashing to the debate but they could not stop it reaching a quorum.

The colossal explosion that killed 171 people and wounded at least 6,500 others has rekindled calls for the ouster of Lebanon's decades-old political elite, many of whom are former warlords from the 1975-1990 civil war.

There has been widespread anger against a political leadership which allowed a large shipment of hazardous ammonium nitrate fertiliser to rot for years in a port warehouse despite repeated safety warnings.

An AFP investigation found that up until the day before the deadly blast, officials had exchanged warnings over the cargo, but did nothing despite experts' fears it could cause a major conflagration.

As he presented his government's resignation on Monday, Prime Minister Hassan Diab blamed the blast on decades of corruption and official mismanagement.

Biden, Harris vow to rebuild US

V-P nominee says citizens crying out to overcome pandemic, racial bias, poor economy

Wilmington, United States, Aug. 13: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris launched their joint White House bid Wednesday, with the newly minted vice-presidential nominee saying Americans are "crying out for leadership" to overcome the triple crisis of a pandemic, racial injustice and a ravaged economy.

Making their first appearance as running mates, before a small crowd of reporters and staffers at a Delaware high school closed to the public due to coronavirus concerns, the Democratic duo vowed to end Donald Trump's presidency and, in Biden's words, "rebuild this country". "Everything we care about," said Harris. "It's all on the line."

A formidable 55-year-old US senator from California and a daughter of immigrants, Harris has already made history as the first woman of colour tapped for a major party presidential ticket.

Describing a country at the crossroads, she left little doubt of her determination to go on the attack, saying Trump "just isn't up for the job" and has left the nation "in tatters".

"America is crying out for leadership, yet we have a president who cares more about himself than the people who elected him," said Harris.

Despite the awkwardly intimate setting, a far cry from the typical campaign rollout featuring an audience of thousands, Harris appeared telegenic and confident in her first speech as vice presidential nominee — for which she and Biden both arrived wearing facemasks.

"The case against Donald Trump and Mike Pence is open and shut," said the former California attorney general as she assailed the president's "failures of

leadership" on containing the deadly pandemic and an economy hobbled by measures to fight the contagion. The daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants to the United States sought to tap into the nationwide upheaval over police violence and racial disparities.

"We're experiencing a moral reckoning with racism and systemic injustice that has brought a new coalition of conscience to the streets of our country demanding change," she said. For Biden — who leads Trump in most national polls and in swing states like Florida and Wisconsin despite conducting the campaign mostly from his Wilmington, Delaware home — his V-P reveal marks a crucial moment as he aims to build a broad coalition of voters to defeat Trump.

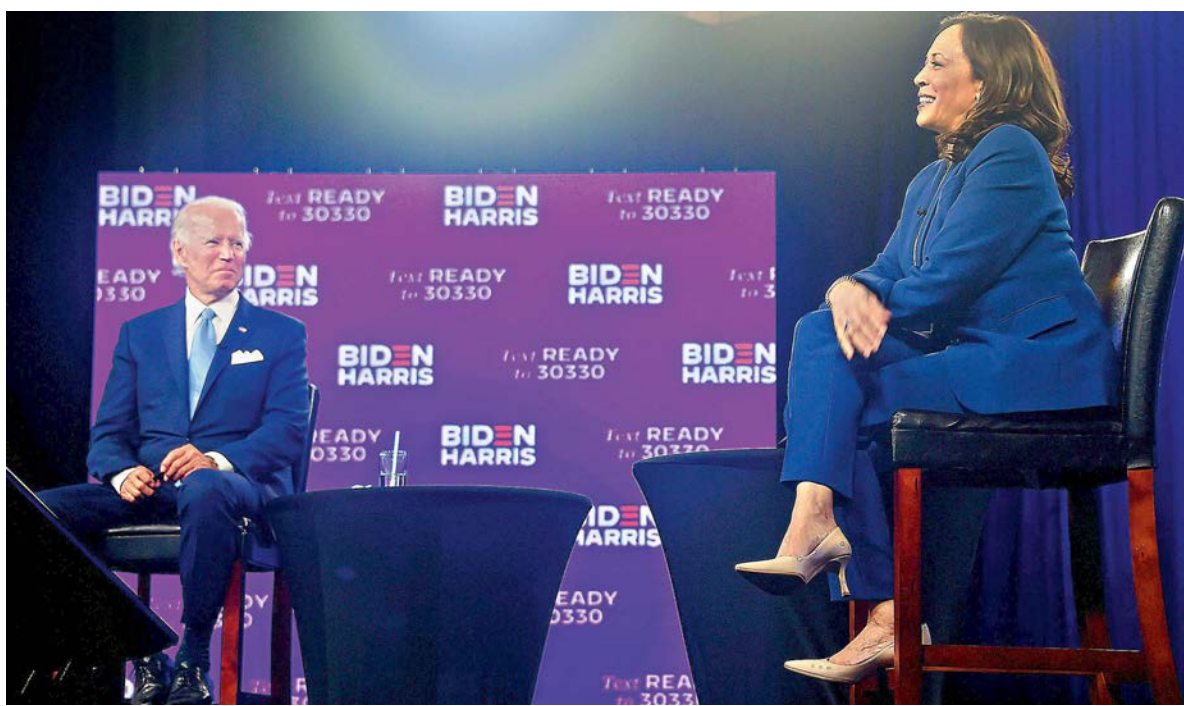
Biden spoke of why he chose Harris as his partner, stressing she was a tough and experienced legislator who is "ready to do this job on Day 1".

And he said that Harris' story as the child of immigrants and a woman of colour who fought her way to the top ranks of US legal and political circles would inspire the country.

"Her story's America's story," Biden said. "She's worked hard (and) she's never backed down from a challenge."

He also laced his remarks with optimism about the future, promising that a Biden-Harris administration will do what it takes to "turn the corner on this pandemic". The event capped a 24-hour flurry since Biden's running mate announcement, with Biden saying they raised an impressive \$26 million during the period, the campaign's one-day record.

— AFP



Democratic presidential nominee and former US Vice-President Joe Biden along with vice-presidential running mate and US California Senator Kamala Harris, participate in a virtual grassroots fundraiser at the Hotel du Pont in Wilmington, Delaware, on Wednesday.

— AFP

Israel ties could ease Obama-era tensions

Jerusalem, Aug. 13: During Joe Biden's first trip to Israel in 1973, he met prime minister Golda Meir, who chain-smoked as she detailed regional security threats days before the Yom Kippur War.

Biden, a newly elected US senator at the time, later described that meeting as "one of the most consequential" of his life.

In the more than four decades since, his career has been marked by a staunch defence of Israel, especially in its handling of the Palestinian conflict.

Biden, set to become the Democratic Party's presidential nominee next week, will face in Donald Trump a president whom Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has described as Israel's best friend to ever sit in the White House.

The warm ties contrast with Netanyahu's acrimonious relationship with Biden's old boss, former president Barack Obama.

But some experts say a Biden win would be welcomed across Israel's political and military establishment — not just by Netanyahu's rivals on the left.

Biden has long been a vocal supporter of the Jewish state, declaring in a 2015 speech that the US must uphold its "sacred promise to protect the homeland of the Jewish people". Kamala Harris, Biden's vice-presidential

nominee, is also regarded as a staunch backer of the Jewish state.

After hosting a delegation from the main pro-Israel lobby AIPAC in her office in California last year, she wrote on Twitter of the "need for a strong US-Israel alliance, the right of Israel to defend itself, and my commitment to combat anti-Semitism in our country and around the world".

A strong commitment to defending Israel is key to winning the trust of Israeli leaders, perpetually sensitive to international criticism. "We like people who love us," said Nadav Tamir, a former diplomat and foreign policy advisor

to president Shimon Peres. "There is no doubt Biden is a friend who has very strong emotions for Israel," he said.

Experts suggested Biden could also restore the traditional American role of interlocutor between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Palestinian Authority has cut ties with Trump, accusing him of egregious bias towards Israel.

Biden "will do much better than Trump on the real issues because he understands that the Israel-Palestinian issue is not a zero-sum game," Tamir said.

Biden served in an Obama administration that often clashed with Israel.

— AFP

HISTORIC PEACE DEAL BETWEEN ISRAEL AND UAE

Washington, Aug. 13: US President Donald Trump, in a surprise announcement, said Thursday that Israel and the United Arab Emirates had reached a peace agreement.

The normalisation of relations between the UAE and Israel is a "HUGE breakthrough" Trump tweeted, calling it a "Historic Peace Agreement between our two GREAT friends." Speaking to reporters later, Trump suggested that more diplomatic breakthroughs between Israel and its Muslim neighbours in the region were expected.

"Things are happening that I can't talk about," he said.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described it as "a historic day and a significant step forward for peace in the Middle East". "The United States hopes that this brave step will be the first in a series of agreements that ends 72 years of hostilities in the region," he said.

In a joint statement, Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan said they had spoken on Thursday "and agreed to the full normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates."

"Israeli and UAE delegations will meet in the coming weeks to sign bilateral agreements," they said.

"At the request of President Trump with the support of the United Arab Emirates, Israel will suspend declaring sovereignty over areas outlined in the President's Vision for Peace."

— AFP

Miandad: Will challenge Imran Khan in politics



Imran Khan

PAK ARMY CHIEF BIDS TO PLACATE SAUDI ARABIA

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUG. 13

Pakistan army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa will visit Saudi Arabia this week-end in a bid to remove misunderstandings as financial support for Islamabad hangs in the balance. Pakistan has long pressed the Saudi-led Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) to convene a high-level meeting to highlight alleged Indian violations in Kashmir. But the OIC has only held low-level meetings so far.

"If you cannot convene it, then I'll be compelled to ask Prime Minister Imran Khan to call a meeting of the Islamic countries that are ready to stand with us on the issue of Kashmir and support the oppressed Kashmiris."

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said last week.

Last year, Islamabad had pulled out of a Muslim-majority countries forum at the last minute on insistence by Riyadh, which said the gathering was an attempt to challenge its leadership of the OIC. Qureshi's remarks have revived Riyadh's anger.

Saudia Arabia had already made Pakistan pay back \$1 billion two weeks ago, forcing it to borrow from another close ally China, and Riyadh is yet to respond to Pakistan's request to extend the oil credit facility.

"The first year (of the oil credit facility) completed on 9th July 2020. Our request for an extension in the arrangement is under consideration with the Saudi side," an official said.

Saudi Arabia is also asking for another \$1 billion back.

backbone of the then Pakistan team and is remembered for many memorable innings.

— PTI



Svetlana Alexievich

NOBELIST SVETLANA TELLS BELARUS PREZ TO LEAVE

Minsk, Aug. 13: Belarusian Nobel prize-winning writer Svetlana Alexievich has condemned police violence against protesters in her country and urged President Alexander Lukashenko to go peacefully. The 72-year-old author won the 2015 Nobel literature prize for her work chronicling the horrors of war and life under the repressive Soviet regime, including the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

In her first public reaction to the protests that have broken out across Belarus over Sunday's disputed presidential election, the writer told Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe that Lukashenko should step down peacefully to prevent a bloody civil war.

"Leave before it's too late, before you've thrown people into a terrible abyss, into the abyss of civil war," she appealed to Lukashenko, whom she has long criticised.

— Agencies

New Zealand mulls lockdown extension as Covid-19 spreads

Wellington, Aug. 13: New Zealand health officials said Wednesday a Covid-19 cluster in Auckland had grown, raising the prospect a lockdown imposed on the country's biggest city after the virus returned will be extended.

National health director-general Ashley Bloomfield said a high school student in Auckland had tested positive, taking the number of confirmed infections to five, with another four probable cases.

"This is someone who was a close contact with one of our existing confirmed cases," Bloomfield told TVNZ.

Health authorities rushed to implement a lockdown in the country's largest city after testing revealed four family members had contracted the virus from an unknown source.

It ended New Zealand's much envied run of 102 days without community transmission, and resulted in a three-day stay-at-home order in Auckland which ends at midnight Friday. Bloomfield said it was "almost certain" more cases would emerge, and teams of health workers were racing to find the cluster's origin.

"We want to find out how large it is as soon as possible, so we've been testing all close contacts, casual contacts, workplace, family related," he said.

New York, Aug. 13: Activists and relief groups in the United States are scrambling to head off a monumental wave of evictions nationwide, as the coronavirus crisis leaves tens of millions at risk of homelessness.

The jobs catastrophe sparked by the global health emergency and the tepid rebound in the world's largest economy have left Americans struggling to pay rent and vulnerable to eviction. Hopes for relief in the form of a fresh aid

package from Washington were dashed as partisan bickering scuppered the latest negotiations.

The housing crisis is "already a tsunami," said Bambi Hayes-Brown of Georgia Advancing Communities Together, a coalition of nonprofit housing and community development groups.

"We got some funding from the United Way and we went through it so fast. We were just inundated," said Mariatou Diallo, who lives in New York.

— AFP

US braces for eviction crisis

"This is what we want to do as quickly as possible to find out how extensive the outbreak is and who the first case might have been." He said any decision on extending the lockdown depended on what the investigations uncovered over the next 24 hours.

"It's too early to say... we'll have a lot more information tomorrow," he said. He played down one line of inquiry investigating whether the virus was imported via freight, then picked up by a male member of the family.

— AFP

— AFP

DUTERTE TO SKIP TRIAL OF RUSSIA VIRUS VACCINE

Manila, Aug. 13: The Philippines will begin large-scale human testing of Russia's coronavirus vaccine in October, but President Rodrigo Duterte will not receive the inoculation until regulators guarantee its safety.

Duterte had offered himself up as a guinea pig for the very first jab. But his spokesman Harry Roque said the president was scheduled to receive the vaccine no earlier than May 1, weeks after the Russian-funded clinical trial is due to end in March.

— AFP

VACCINATION IN RUSSIAN REGION AFTER MONGOLIA BUBONIC PLAGUE

Moscow, Aug. 13: The head of a remote Russian region on Thursday said that herders and other residents of two districts on the border with Mongolia should be vaccinated against bubonic plague.

The order was issued after Mongolia's health ministry said Wednesday that bubonic plague killed a man in the country's west. It was the latest in a

handful of cases to emerge there and in neighbouring China this year.

The leader of the Siberian region of Tuva, Sholban Kara-ool, said all residents of the region's two border districts, Ovyursky and Mongun-Taiginsky, should be inoculated.

The two districts are home to some 14,000 people.

— AFP

FANTASY FILM

Author Woodward made name with coverage of Watergate scam

Trump book to reveal letters with Kim

Seoul, Aug. 13: Kim Jong Un said his relationship with Donald Trump was like a "fantasy film", according to the publishers of a new book on the US president set to unveil 25 private letters exchanged between the two leaders.

The relationship between the pair has been a key driver of recent diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang, veering from mutual insults and threats of war to a declaration of love from Trump.

Investigative journalist Bob Woodward obtained messages between the two leaders "that have not

been public before" for his upcoming book, according to Simon & Schuster.

In the letters, "Kim describes the bond between the two leaders as out of a 'fantasy film', as the two leaders engage in an extraordinary diplomatic minuet", the publisher revealed on the book's Amazon page. The book, titled "Rage" and a follow-up to 2018's "Fear", is due out on September 15. Trump and Kim have met three times, beginning with their landmark summit in Singapore in June 2018, but little progress has been made on efforts to denuclearise the North.

● **TRUMP HAS** sought to discredit several of the claims made in "Fear", which offered an inside glimpse into his chaotic White House and sold 1.1 million copies in its first week. Trump — who was not interviewed by Woodward for "Fear" — has called that book a "joke" and "a scam".

A few months after Singapore, Trump told a rally of his supporters that the two men had fallen in love. "No, really, he wrote me

beautiful letters, and they're great letters. We fell in love," he said. Negotiations have been deadlocked since the collapse of a second summit in Hanoi in February last year. But even with diplomacy at a standstill, Trump has frequently boasted of receiving "very beautiful" and "excellent" letters from Kim. Woodward, a *Washington Post* reporter, made his name with his coverage of the Watergate scandal and the role it played in the Richard Nixon's resignation from the presidency in 1974.

Trump has sought to dis-

credit several of the claims made in "Fear", which offered an inside glimpse into his chaotic White House and sold 1.1 million copies in its first week.

Trump — who was not interviewed by Woodward for "Fear" — has called that book a "joke" and "a scam". But in January this year, Trump said he had sat down with Woodward for the upcoming work. "I was interviewed by a very, very good writer, reporter," Trump said. "I can say Bob Woodward. He said he's been doing something and this time I said, 'Maybe I'll sit down.'" — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

14 AUGUST 2020

Kamala Harris: A smart choice by US Democrats

The Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's pick of running mate in Kamala Harris is historic in more ways than one. Her selection will resonate with a large section of American voters even as it spotlights the growing importance of voters among people of colour (PoC), more so of PoC women who have fought for decades since the suffragette revolution for their voices to be heard and their ambitions given equal opportunity. Her Afro-Caribbean-Jamaican and Indian parentage brings to the centrestage once again the immigrants' American dream and middle class aspirations that have been threatened in four years of Trump and at a time when the world is in the grip of a raging pandemic.

The USA of today is far more of a racial and cultural melting pot than it was when a Chennai woman broke her Indian shackles and set forth to study in the USA back in 1958 and her daughter now represents eloquently the fight for equal opportunity and equal justice. The Democratic ticket needed this burst of energy to back the 78-year-old Joe Biden. Whether he is to be viewed as a transitional leader or not, what Democrats have right now is a Vice-President candidate acceptable to a large section of the population besides the fundraising ability of a prosperous West Coast Senator who is married to a Jew. Far from damaging the handy lead pollsters are giving Biden, she may add value.

Biden's choice predictably ignited the misogynistic, sexist Donald Trump into offending nearly half the US population by bringing back affront to women's dignity in his attitude that is more suited to the Middle Ages. It is at an inflection point in contemporary history of civil strife in the time of the tragic George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement that his death inspired bringing Harris into the limelight and making her presence on the ticket a smart choice indeed. Furthermore, when the Donald Trump administration is seen to be not only ineffective in handling the Covid-19 pandemic but also deliberately and cynically contemptuous of a threat that has killed more than 1.66 lakh Americans, she brings strength with substance and not just symbolism to a Democratic ticket promising at least the much-needed empathy to a difficult situation.

The far right may have reason to believe Harris, brought up more as a PoC kid singing in the church choir than a Tamil Brahmin (and yet mindful of her mother's legacy) is too far to the left while the liberals believe she is, like Biden, too much at the centre. The Chinese are already annoyed by her brave and moral stand on the discriminatory treatment of Uighur Muslims. Harris' strong views on CAA, Kashmir and other home policies may be seen as abrasive by official India. Most Indian-Americans would, however, sense a chance to be more of a mainstream community in their adopted country with their votes likely to be valuable in battleground states. An antidote to the most divisive president in modern history is bound to come with ideologies and philosophies that are principled and it is not only in her animus towards Trump that a politician such as this must be seen as a champion to fight the forces in these conflicted times.

Show no mercy to rioters

The vandalism that followed an inflammatory Facebook post and the police firing which cost the lives of three youngsters in Bengaluru on Wednesday point to the urgent need for the authorities to be on a state of high alert against attempts to flame communal passions and throw life into disarray. Hurting religious sentiments is a punishable offence in India. So, anyone who does it knows about its implications, and as such, must be brought to book. The same logic works for believers, too, and they must know that the legal system is capable of dealing with deliberate attempts to denigrate religious figures.

The Bengaluru rioters deserve no mercy as they torched the home of a legislator, set fire to vehicles and even attacked a police station. The Social Democratic Party of India, which now stands accused of having a role in the violence, has a history of portraying themselves as the champions of the Muslim cause in India while pursuing an often-counterproductive path of violence to achieve their ends. Such forces must be made to understand that rule of law prevails in the country.

The BJP, which is ruling the state, was quick to condemn the riot and blame "appeasement" saying the Congress was silent about the vandalism though a Congress legislator, who is a Dalit, was at the receiving end. The Opposition party must respond to the charge and take an unequivocal stand against communal elements in society.

Bengaluru police stopped the violence from turning into a communal riot. However, the assertions by the ministers and senior police officials that the violence was planned beg the question why the police did not take preventive action. They must do more and prevent its recurrence. This country can ill-afford more calamities, manmade or otherwise.

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Subhani

Why Ayodhya was not like battle for freedom



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

We are limping toward our 73rd Independence Day with little enthusiasm. The mood cannot but be downbeat after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's morale eroding recent Ayodhya foray.

The most narrow-minded Hindu, who (even if inadvertently) takes his cue from an outfit with a militaristic anti-democracy mindset that espouses antagonism toward particular religions, and weakens the core concepts of modern Indian nationhood rooted in our freedom movement, may have been charged up that day. But even such people have to think of their home fires, the pandemic at the door, and the push of expansionist China's army inside our borders.

Their evidently pseudo "Ram bhakti", or devotion to the exalted ideals exemplified by Lord Ram, has no basis in religion. Its fundamentals lie elsewhere — in the corrosive alleyways of politics that seek religion-based domination of society and the political space — as in Pakistan, for instance, and can without exaggeration be called non-sacred devotion to the divine.

The entire Ayodhya temple project has, in fact, been a massive enterprise in the politics of bigotry in which religion is whipped up as a mobilising tool with the aim of acquiring and retaining power on premises that are unconnected with the demands of everyday life. And this is why, eventually, it is likely to prove of little avail against such powerful counter-urges as have been noted above — those of pressing concerns of the country.

Even if an ideologically-crazed and politically greedy Prime Minister is

not ready at present to comprehend this, he is likely to be brought down to earth when ordinary Indians begin to feel the pinch and hold him and his buddies to account.

A (probably modified) Turkish proverb runs thus: "The forest was shrinking but the trees kept voting for the axe, for the axe was clever and convinced the trees that because his handle was made of wood he was one of them." In this the metaphor of our present politics (and indeed that of Turkey) becomes clear as day.

Just 10 days before India was to mark the 73rd anniversary of its freedom from colonial rule — and of attaining in that process the composite identity of a common nationhood, which is an overarching canopy across our complex identities of religion, caste, language and ethnicity — the Prime Minister struck at the fundamental precepts enshrined in the idea of Indian independence. These had even served as a model to many countries as the process of decolonisation unfolded across the world.

It was careful choreography that the temple-building trust (which seems an extension of the PMO) chose August 5 — the very date last year on which the constitutionally-ordained autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, was snatched away by the Centre by adopting illegal and irregular ways that have been challenged in the Supreme Court, and the region brought under militarised suppression with not even a semblance of democratic governance — to lay the foundation of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The Kashmir-to-Ayodhya common template was clearly intend-

ed to overtly demonstrate the suppression of Muslim aspirations in India by the Indian State under the RSS-BJP aegis, although Muslims were equal participants in the freedom movement.

The RSS-BJP cohorts had declared from the start that the temple of their dreams would be erected at the exact spot where the Babri Masjid, a 16th century mosque of no particular significance (the Supreme Court rejected the propaganda that the mosque was on built on the ruins of a temple), had stood and was violently pulled down on December 6, 1992.

This was ruthlessly ensured through an illogical and justifiably condemned decree of the Supreme Court in November last year. A judgment in favour of Ram Lalla (beloved Ram) would hardly have presented a problem since it is widely recognised now that many of democracy's characteristic institutions appear to have been all but superseded by the executive under the Narendra Modi government.

Mr Modi is known to bring communal mobs to their feet without breaking a sweat, and for full theatrical effect he seldom fails to appear in the attire of ancient Hindu sages as depicted in kitsch art. For him, it would have been quite enough to satisfy the faithful by just being around to lay the first symbolic brick for the construction of the temple in Ayodhya, no matter how constitutionally unseemly this is.

And yet, the PM thought it best to make a big deal about invoking the freedom movement, and giving the (patently false) impression that

building the temple was the second edition of the glorious struggle for independence, which is imprinted in the psyche of every Indian. Why did he do so?

The reason seems clear. He wanted to steal the emotional association every Indian has with the long-drawn freedom struggle for an act of violent bigotry at Ayodhya — arguably the most reprehensible in free India. Even if no one dared to inform him of this earlier, the Prime Minister may as well be made conscious that his August 5 speech in Ayodhya eviscerates the ideas that underlie the independence of India.

"The soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance," Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said as the midnight hour struck proclaiming the emergence of India on the world stage as a new kind of free nation, one whose very concept had mesmerised the world on account of its perplexing diversity, plurality, and its ambition for democracy. But the present PM presses the delete button on such thoughts every single day. Yet, nothing bestows legitimacy like favourable allusions to the independence movement.

So, speaking from Ayodhya, Mr Modi engaged in yet another act of misappropriation by falsely linking the temple project with the freedom movement. He sought to portray the construction of the Ram temple as an act of "liberation". But we have been a free country for over 70 years, and no one in India feels enslaved except by caste, class, gender or communal oppression. That makes Mr Modi's "liberation theology" a grand deception.

Truth to tell, the PM has already made his Independence Day address on August 5, and it had little to do with the core values of India and the immediate concerns of all Indians. From the Red Fort on August 15, he can only give us a round of rituals and some more propaganda.

LETTERS

YSR CHEYUTHA

Financial assistance to poor women from all castes except OC will provide relief during this pandemic but productivity for this amount will be zero. Mere monetary help will lead to nothing. It should be linked to skill development activities in any business with government. Otherwise public will wait for the next installment.

V. Chidambar Reddy
Kurnool

WILD GOOSE CHASE

The BJP aspiring to capture power in 2024 will be a wild goose chase, irrespective of whom it allies with. Its nonchalant attitude towards AP is well-known. It needs to convince people that it is genuinely interested in their well-being and progress.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

VIZAG TO KURNOOL

For CM N. Chandrababu Naidu is trying to reason how people from Kurnool, etc., will travel to Vizag if it becomes the capital. Well, people of Vizag could travel to Chennai, Kurnool and Hyderabad in the last 74 years when they were capitals. Has the distance doubled now?

K. Suryanarayana
Visakhapatnam

KAMALA HARRIS

It was a clever move by Joe Biden and the Democratic Party to choose Kamala Harris as his running mate. The California senator can brighten the chances at hustings with her unique credentials. Trump is known for his aversion towards immigrants, his rival duo can take advantage of this.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

Grabbing won't help landless, says PM

NEW DELHI, Aug. 13 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today strongly disapproved the landgrab movement being carried on by some Opposition parties and said it was not the right method to solve the problem of the landless.

Replying to a three-day debate on the Fourt Plan in the Rajya Sabha,

Mrs. Gandhi said the movement would not do any social justice in the long run because it was "based on the feeling of hatred, envy and even promotion of acquisitive spirit."

The Prime Minister emphasised that the land problem could be solved by persuasion and peaceful means.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Cops slug it out to the beat of Bihar poll drum

This looks like a nightmarish end to federalism as we know it. Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput's tragic death has turned into deplorable political one-upmanship. The unprecedented face-off between Bihar Police and Mumbai Police on the investigation of the suicide has far reaching consequences. Many experts are of the view that sending a team of Bihar Police personnel to Mumbai after Rajput's father filed a FIR demanding a probe into the "crime" was out of step. In India, police is a state subject and crimes are investigated by the police depending on where they occurred. If states start to interfere and go after crimes committed against their citizens in another state, we have a recipe for disaster. With the further likely addition of the CBI into this pot, the stew has grown thicker.

Had some worthies shown some prudence, we wouldn't have had to see the DGPs of the two states sling-

ing at each other on the TV news. TV newsrooms or Twitter are not the place to conduct a serious investigation into the death of a popular actor.

The case has grown much bigger with the respective state governments getting into the ring. The Bihar CM has given his nod for a CBI probe, bowing to pressure from the actor's family, while Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray refusing to give in to the demand. Both chief ministers have decided to stick by their police chiefs. The Enforcement Directorate has also opened an investigation into alleged money laundering. It is pretty much a no-holds-barred affair now, teetering dangerously on the edge of turning into a farce.

None of this would have merited so much focus and energy were it not for the Assembly elections in Bihar, due in October. The Bihari "sentiment" seems to have taken the frontstage, a thinly veiled euphemism for votes. The politicisa-

tion of the police is one of those vexing issues that no amount of reform has been able to deal with. The recent Vikas Dubey encounter and the police custodial deaths in Sathankulam town near Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu are already forgotten. The Sushant case will likely drag until it is no longer convenient. Sadly, if this lack of restraint and willful flouting of procedure by the police persists, it will end badly for the country.

CONTROVERSIAL NITI AAYOG EXIT

The repatriation of Niti Aayog adviser Alok Kumar to his cadre state Uttar Pradesh has set tongues wagging. Barely less than two months ago, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet had given Mr Kumar a one-year extension of tenure at the think tank. He was relieved on July 31.

The government's U-turn has left many observers bemused. Some say that since the UP government had

agreed to an extension for Mr Kumar in May, it is unlikely that it would recall the 1993-batch IAS officer. This then implies that the Centre's U-turn may have been caused by some rift among the higher-ups in Delhi over the babu. The buzz is that there are some differences between the Niti Aayog and the health ministry over policy matters, and possibly Mr Kumar was in the middle of the spat. But that may not be the only reason, certainly not enough to warrant this U-turn. After all, Mr Kumar was reportedly handling the majority of the key assignments at the nation's premier think tank. We may never know.

However, some observers believe that Mr Kumar's unexpected exit from Niti Aayog will cast a cloud over the empanelment of 1983 batch IAS officers for additional secretary-level posts at the Centre.

ROOPA K'TAKA HOME SECY

Roopa D. Moudgil is the first woman IPS officer of Karnataka and has

now become the first woman police officer to be appointed the state's home secretary. The decision is unpalatable for IAS officers who might have been eyeing the post for themselves. It's not often that an IPS officer is appointed to a post traditionally associated with the IAS. The violence this week in Bangalore may, however, quieten naysayers.

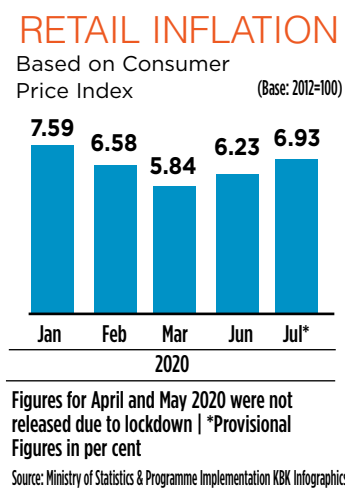
This posting comes amid a major rejig that has been happening within the government. Thirteen senior IPS officers were given different posts, and 19 ranked officers were transferred. This 2000-batch IPS officer, however, has many firsts to her credit, having become well-known for taking up cases that involve either senior IPS officers or politicians, most recently, late ADMDK chief Jayalalitha's aide Sasikala.

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

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,310.49	-0.15
Nifty 50	11,300.45	-0.07
S&P 500*	3,385.05	0.14
Dollar (₹)	74.84	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.87	-0.12
Euro (₹)	88.52	0.62
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,132.11	0.02
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.02	-0.41
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.895	0.011
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.685	-0.001

* As of 9:30 PM IST



SIP inflows hit 22-month low in July at ₹7,830 cr



Investments in mutual funds through systematic investment plans (SIPs) hit a 22-month low of Rs 7,831 crore in July amidst market volatility. This was the lowest level since September 2018, when investment through this route stood at Rs 7,727 crore. Inflows through SIP have slowed down in the past four months. Investment in June 2020 dropped below Rs 8,000 crore for the first time since November 2018.

Cadila launches remdesivir at \$37 per vial

Zydus Cadila launched the cheapest generic version of Gilead Sciences' antiviral drug remdesivir in India to treat Covid-19 following reports of shortages at hospitals. Zydus has priced it at Rs 2,800 per 100mg vial. It will be sold under the brand name Remdac to government and private hospitals treating Covid-19 patients. Officials in some states had a few weeks ago complained of supply issues.

Mi India pledges 2,500 phones to support students

Chinese smartphone major Xiaomi said its arm MI India will distribute 2,500 handsets worth Rs 2 crore to support online education of children. "MI India distribution and retail came up with a fantastic idea. Together they will be contributing 2,500 smartphones to enable children most impacted by the pandemic to access quality education. In this endeavour we found the right partner Teach for India," COO Muralikrishnan B. said.



J&J ties up with Biological E for making Covid-19 vaccine in India

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13

Biological E. Limited, India's oldest biological products company, said on Thursday that it has tied up United States-based Johnson & Johnson to manufacture the latter's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India.

"We are very pleased indeed to collaborate with an organisation like Johnson & Johnson. Given

the magnitude of the Covid-19 pandemic, our ability to mount an effective response will be predicated on the ability to supply the vaccine globally and in significant quantities. This is best achieved through collaboration," said Mahima Datla, the managing director of BE.

J&J is developing a vaccine candidate 'Ad26.COV2.S' for the coronavirus through its pharmaceutical arm Janssen

Pharmaceutica NV. The vaccine candidate is currently in phase 1/2a clinical trials.

The phase 1/2a study will involve more than 1,000 adults aged between 18 and 55. The study will also include testing the vaccine in people 65 and older. Human trials in the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Japan will follow.

Johnson & Johnson chief scientific officer Paul

Our ability to mount an effective response (to Covid-19) will be predicated on the ability to supply the vaccine globally and in significant quantities

— Mahima Datla
MD, Biological E Limited

Stoffels had told a conference call last month that the company expects initial human results in September and phase 3

efficacy testing could start the same month itself. "The vaccine could be ready by early 2021," he said.

The tie-up with Biological E. would help J&J to ramp its manufacturing capabilities in India.

"We look forward to deploying our manufacturing infrastructure to support Johnson & Johnson's commitment to global access for its Covid-19 vaccine," said Narender Dev Mantena, director of BioE Holdings Inc., who heads BE's novel vaccine initiative.

According to the World Health Organisation data, people around the world are working on 42 vaccine candidates for the coronavirus, including two from India, which are at different stages of development. "Six vaccine candidates are in phase-3 trials, two candidates in phase 2 trials. Ten vaccine candidates, including two being developed in India, are at phase 1/2," claims the WHO data as on August 10.

Investigation wing, TDS directorate to decide on surveys Curtains on I-T raids at will

New Delhi, Aug 13: The income tax surveys to collect information for scrutiny assessment will be undertaken only by the investigation wing and the tax deducted at source (TDS) directorate with effect from Thursday, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said.

In an order, the CBDT said officers in Directorate General of Income Tax (DGIT) (Investigation) and Principal Commissioner of I-T (TDS) "only and exclusively" shall be the competent authority for approving survey actions with effect from August 13, 2020. "The survey action u/s 133A of the Act being an intrusive action, it is expected that the same should be carried out with utmost responsibility and accountability," the CBDT said, adding that with faceless assessment the department is moving towards minimal interface with taxpayers.

PM UNVEILS INCOME-TAX REFORMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday unveiled a "faceless" tax scrutiny and appeal system and urged people to pay their due taxes and contribute to nation-building. The Centre launched a new platform to ease the compliance burden and reward "honest taxpayers".

"The country's honest taxpayer plays a big role in nation-building. A faceless tax system will

give the taxpayer confidence on fairness and fearlessness," the PM said in a video address after rolling out the "Transparent Taxation: Honouring the Honest" platform in a big push for tax reforms.

The Prime Minister said a "faceless appeal facility" will be available to all citizens from September 25, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's birth anniversary, and this will strengthen efforts to "reform and simplify our tax system". — PTI

"In effect the powers of the assessment authorities which were exercised in the normal course will now have to be backed by credible evidence to seek such approval from now permitted higher authorities. This shows the govern-

ment intention to ensure only genuinely deserving cases would go through this procedure," he said.

In an I-T survey, tax officers visit business premises of the taxpayer to gather information by way of examination of books of accounts, data stored electronically and also access email communication.

Srivatsan said it can be inferred from the order that the faceless assessment scheme could subject the taxpayer to more rigorous audit based on his profiling and industry situation and requires a careful maintenance of supporting documentation with regard to significant tax positions.

AKM Global's tax partner Amit Maheshwari said it will increase accountability in conducting surveys.

"Surveys by nature are very intrusive and sensitive. Now, only a selected division of the tax department can conduct a survey," he said. — PTI

I-T Charter: Every taxpayer to be treated as honest & with courtesy

New Delhi, Aug 13: The tax department has committed to treat every taxpayer as honest, unless proven otherwise, and provide fair, courteous and reasonable treatment, according to the taxpayers' charter adopted on Thursday. The charter also expects taxpayers to pay taxes on time and be honest and compliant.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the platform 'Transparent Taxation Honoring the Honest' which provides for adoption of a taxpayers' charter, which defines the tax department's commitment and its expectation from the taxpayers.

The tax officers will now be committed to a 14-point charter, which includes

collecting "only the (tax) amount due" as per the law, while taxpayers would have to be "responsible" and fulfill six-point expectations of the I-T Department, including being honest and compliant.

The charter mandates the I-T Department to hold its "authorities accountable for their actions" and states that the department would provide fair, courteous, prompt and reasonable treatment as well as professional assistance to all taxpayers.

The officers shall treat taxpayers as honest "unless there is a reason to believe otherwise", it said.

The charter also bars the tax officers from disclosing taxpayer information unless authorised by law

and also respect privacy of taxpayer.

The department will have to periodically publish standards for service delivery and provide a fair system to resolve tax issues in a time-bound manner.

The charter also mandates the department to allow every taxpayer to choose an authorised representative of his choice and provide mechanism for lodging a complaint, and its prompt disposal.

The charter expects the taxpayers to honestly disclose full information and "fulfill his compliance obligations". Also, the taxpayer is expected to keep accurate records and know what information and submissions are made by his authorised representative.

PAYTM STARTS TRADING PLATFORM

FC BUREAU
MUMBAI, AUG. 13

Fintech firm Paytm announced the launch of stock trading on its online investment & wealth management platform Paytm Money with lower brokerage charges than currently offered by traditional and discount brokers. Cash delivery trades are free and intraday trades are charged at Rs 10 only, the firm said.



fraudulent and deceitful manner and their excess OI positions created a false or misleading appearance in the market.

The SCN further said that Ruchi Global and Ruchi Soya Industries and National Steel & Agro Industries belonged to one distinct group, while Secunderabad Oils and UKS Oils belonged to another distinct group.

"In the absence of any material to show that these two distinct groups were connected to each other and traded in the castor seeds contracts in a concerted manner to manipulate the market, it is not correct to allege that the five noticees together cornered the derivative market in castor seeds contract...in violation of PFUTP Regulations, 2003 and at the expense of other clients," Sebi said. —PTI

NBFC bond sales jump to levels before 2018 crisis

DIVYA PATIL
AUG. 13

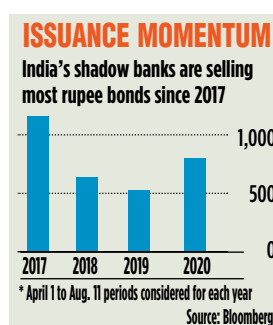
Indian shadow lenders are selling the most local-currency bonds since before a financial crisis engulfed the sector two years ago, in a sign that record stimulus is easing their fundraising burden.

The financiers have raised Rs 81,300 crore (\$10.9 billion) through rupee notes since April 1, making it the best start to a financial year since 2017. Offerings from non-bank firms had declined in 2018 and 2019 as at least three shadow lenders defaulted on their repayments, battering investor demand for the sector's debt.

More cash for shadow banks is good news for the economy, which relies on these firms to provide financing to everyone from tailors to business giants. Non-bank lending is crucial in supporting Asia's third-largest economy, which is forecast to contract for the first time in four decades this year due to fallout from the pandemic.

To help non-bank financiers counter the economic impact of the outbreak, the government in May announced a Rs 30,000 crore credit line for these financiers, and said it will fully guarantee investment-grade securities issued under this plan.

To further assist lower-rated shadow banks, the administration agreed to



also provide a partial guarantee to debt rated AA and below, injecting another Rs 45,000 crore. The central bank, meanwhile, funded banks' purchases of bonds issued by these lenders to the tune of Rs 12,850 crore.

But challenges remain, with signs investor demand for the debt is uneven. It's largely banks, which have to implement the economic stimulus steps, that are buying notes sold by shadow lenders. Other key players in the local credit market, such as mutual funds, halved their holdings of the bonds in the two-year period to June.

Moody's Investors Service warned in June that the stress among these lenders may be deeper and broader than it thought and S&P Global Ratings cut credit scores of several such firms citing liquidity risks.

The financiers are at least benefiting from lower borrowing costs as a result of the stimulus package. — Bloomberg

BROADER MARKET OUTPERFORMS SENSEX, NIFTY

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, AUG. 13

A broader market rally led to outperformance by medium and small sized companies in the stock market while the Sensex and Nifty-50 indices closed in the red for the second day, compared to 1.5 to over 2 per cent gains registered by the mid-cap indices.

The Sensex closed 0.15 per cent or 59.14 points lower and Nifty-50 ended down 0.07 per cent, or by 7.95 points.

The Nifty Midcap-50 Index rose 2.20 per cent and the Nifty Midcap-100 gained 1.57 per cent while the BSE Midcap Index gained 1.59 per cent and the BSE Smallcap gained 0.76 per cent.

Domestic institutions remained net sellers by Rs 763.54 crore while the foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 416.28 crore.

Some big midcap gainers on NSE included Bharat Forge (15.67 per cent), Ashok Leyland (14.46 per cent), BHEL (8.18 per cent), Cholamandalam Investment & Finance (8.07 per cent), Tata Power (5.67 per cent).

Sameet Chavan of Angel Broking said, the Nifty-50 is clearly struggling to surpass the 11350-11400 hurdle.

Maruti Alto crosses 40 L sales milestone

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, AUG 13

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, on Thursday said its entry level small car Alto has crossed the cumulative sales milestone of 40 lakh units in the fiercely competitive India market.

Launched in September 2000, Alto has been the most selling car for 16 consecutive years in the country. "Alto is the preferred

choice of Indian car buyers with 76 per cent of Alto customers choosing it as their first car," the company, which sells one car out of the two bought in the country, said.

Shashank Srivastava, executive director at Maruti Suzuki India, said Alto has been ranked as the No 1 for 16 years in a row. "We are immensely proud to announce another remarkable milestone of 40 lakh cumulative sales. This has become a record," he said.



AMAZE CLOCKS 4 LAKH SALES

Pune, Aug. 13: Honda on Thursday said its popular family sub-compact sedan Honda Amaze has cumulatively sold 4 lakh units since its first introduction in the country in 2013.

The Amaze, now in its second generation, is currently Honda's largest selling model in India.

—Michael Gonsalves



SHORT TAKES

INOX to sponsor India at Olympics

New Delhi: The INOX group will be the official sponsor of the Indian team for the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) announced on Thursday.

The Tokyo Olympics was rescheduled to next year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be held from July 23 to August 8 in 2021. As part of the partnership the Group will also support team's promotions through its entertainment company — INOX Leisure Limited, which owns a chain of multiplexes. IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta said, "We are happy to announce this partnership with INOX Group which will be beneficial for all our athletes and the organisation. I would like to thank INOX Group and Mr. Jain for showing their support for Team India, even under the current circumstances."

INOX Group has earlier supported various sporting events, teams and leagues in table Tennis, football, badminton, running, basketball and cricket, and building awareness among masses through effective promotional initiatives. — PTI

Archery camp from August 25

New Delhi: The national archery camp for Olympic hopefuls will resume at the Army Sports Institute in Pune on August 25, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Thursday. The camp was called off midway in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A total of 16 recurve archers — eight men and as many women, along with four coaches and two support staff will report for the camp on August 25 and undergo the mandatory 14-day period inside the ASI campus before starting their training sessions.

"...in view of the ensuing 2021 Olympics, the Sports Authority of India has sanctioned the National Archery Camp for Olympic-bound athletes from August 25, 2020 at the Army Sports Institute in Pune," the SAI said in a statement.

While the men's team has earned an Olympic quota, the women's team is yet to claim one. The players will strive to seal their Tokyo tickets at the Olympic qualification event in Paris next year.

— PTI

Help for differently abled cricketers

Mumbai: Around 100 needy physically challenged cricketers have been provided financial aid with the help of former Australian skipper Steve Waugh's manager Harley Medcalf during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Physically Challenged Cricket Association of India (PCCAI) announced on Thursday.

PCCAI secretary Ravi Chauhan said each cricketer was provided an amount of ₹5,000.

"Each player was given ₹5,000 during the ongoing tough times," Chauhan said. "The overall aim is to support 400 physically challenged cricketers. PCCAI would like to thank Harley Medcalf, Anand Chukka and one Praveen Nalla for their unrelenting support to this cause," PCCAI said in a statement.

According to Chauhan, Medcalf and Chukka raised the funds, which were then distributed, while Nalla has been providing N-95 masks for the physically challenged cricketers.

— PTI

PEREZ SET TO RACE AT SPANISH GP

Montmelo, Spain: Sergio Perez will race at the Spanish Grand Prix this week after testing negative for the coronavirus. Governing body FIA cleared him on Thursday to return to the paddock for the race in Montmelo on the outskirts of Barcelona.

The Racing Point driver missed the past two races at Silverstone in England after contracting the virus on a visit back home to Mexico last month. He flew by private plane to visit his mother in hospital. "I've definitely missed racing and it was hard to watch from the outside," Perez said. — AP

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Neymar (left) and his Paris Saint-Germain teammate Kylian Mbappe celebrate after Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting scored PSG's second goal during their UEFA Champions League quarterfinal match at the Luz Stadium in Lisbon on Thursday. PSG won 2-1. — AFP

Billions & 25 years

Later PSG make Champions league semis

Barca dial Messi for Bayern tie

Lisbon, Aug. 13: After years of failing to live up to their billing in Europe, Paris Saint-Germain are within 90 minutes of the Champions League final thanks to their dramatic win over Atalanta on Wednesday, and coach Thomas Tuchel now knows "everything is possible" for his team.

PSG were on the verge of another disappointing Champions League exit as they trailed Atalanta 0-1 into the 90th minute in Lisbon.

Mario Pasalic's 27th-minute strike for the Italians was finally cancelled out by Marquinhos, who scrambled in a last-gasp leveller.

Then, three minutes into injury time, Kylian Mbappe set up fellow substitute Eric Choupo-Moting to convert the clinching goal.

The money ploughed into the French champions by their Qatari owners has increased the pressure on PSG to deliver.

After all, Atalanta's entire wage bill is believed to be equivalent to what PSG pay Neymar per year (about 36 million euros, or \$42.5m).

This is the club's first semifinal since 1995 and the first since they were taken over by Qatari owners, who pumped in money for the elusive Champions League trophy.

— Agencies

Madrid, Aug. 13: Lionel Messi never have been faced with a more daunting task at Barcelona than engineering a victory against Bayern Munich in Lisbon on Friday.

The only surviving former winners of European club football's greatest prize — with five titles each — meet in a heavy-weight Champions League quarterfinal behind closed doors at the Estadio da Luz.

It is not often that Messi's Barcelona come into such a big European tie as the underdogs, but they have this time, with Quique Setien's team having lost out to Real Madrid in the Spanish title race while Bayern appeared flawless on the way to winning a German league and cup double.

Messi is now 33, yet Barcelona appear more reliant on him than ever.

He scored twice against Bayern in the quarter-finals in 2009 when Barcelona went on to win the Champions League under Pep Guardiola.

He hit four against Arsenal the following year and five against Bayer Leverkusen in 2012 but on both occasions,

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QUARTERFINAL

Barcelona vs

Bayern Munich

from 12.30 am

(Saturday)

on Sony Ten 2, HD

FORMULA ONE

Spanish Grand Prix

Practice 1 from 2.25 pm;

Practice 2 from 6.25 pm

Star Sports Select 2, HD

● The only surviving former winners, Spain's Barcelona and German's Bayern Munich, of European club football's greatest prize — with five titles each — meet in a heavyweight Champions League quarterfinal behind closed doors at the Estadio da Luz.

Barca were favourites.

Messi also sank Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu in 2011 when his double in the first leg of the semi-final, including one of the finest goals the competition has ever seen, transcended a rivalry that had been dragged to its ugliest point.

And he was part of perhaps the tournament's greatest comeback, the 6-1 destruction of Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 after Barcelona lost 0-4 in the first leg of that last-16 tie. Yet this time threats to be different.

With Luis Suarez and Antoine Griezmann alongside him, Frenkie de Jong and Sergio Busquets behind him and Jordi Alba out wide, Messi should not be on his own. Even in defence, Gerard Pique still has a claim to be the best defender in Spain and Marc-Andre ter Stegen is among the most impressive goalkeepers in the world. But the sense remains that Messi must perform if Barcelona are to defeat Bayern, widely seen as the favourites to lift the trophy on August 23.

It will take something very special not only to lift his own team out of the doldrums but also to neutralise an opponent that many believe are the most complete side in Europe.

— AFP

KOSOVO LETS GO OF TIE DUE TO COVID-19

Nyon (Switzerland), Aug. 13: A club from Kosovo had to forfeit its Champions League qualifier because players tested positive for Covid-19, the first time UEFA had to make such a ruling during the pandemic.

UEFA said on Wednesday that KF Drita must forfeit its preliminary round game in the 2020-21 competition and awarded it as a 3-0 win for Northern Ireland's champion Linfield.

The teams could not play a scheduled game on Tuesday at an empty stadium next to UEFA's headquarters after the Drita squad was put into quarantine.

Two players had tested positive for Covid-19 in Switzerland since last Thursday. UEFA's updated Champions League rules and protocol for playing games safely hold teams responsible if they cannot fulfil qualifying fixtures.

— AP

Sikki, physio test Covid-19 positive

Gopi academy is shut for sanitisation as Coronavirus strikes Games camp

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13



N. Sikki Reddy

Barley a week after probables and Olympics bound shuttlers returned to courts at the Pullula Gopichand Badminton Academy N. Sikki Reddy and physiotherapist Kiran George have tested positive for Covid-19 at the ongoing national camp in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Sikki and Kiran, who have been attending the national camp at the academy, are both asymptomatic.

They had undergone the Sports Authority of India's mandatory Covid-19 test for players, coaches and support staff before the start of training on August 7 at the facility.

With Sikki and Kiran being tested positive for the virus, the Gopichand Academy has been closed for sanitisation, SAI said on Thursday.

"SAI's mandatory Covid-19 test was given to all athletes, coaches, support staff and administrative staff at the badminton national camp, and two campers have tested positive for Covid-19," Gopi said.

"All necessary precautions as per protocol are being taken so that players can come back for training safely and as soon as possible," he added.

Both Sikki and Kiran are from Hyderabad and have

been attending the camp from their homes. All primary contacts of Sikki and Kiran are undergoing the RT-PCR test again.

The badminton camp was allowed by SAI for eight Olympic hopefuls, including Rio Games silver-medallist and world champion P. V. Sindhu, following the approval from the Telangana government on August 1.

Sikki was seen training with three Indonesian doubles coaches — Namrih Suroto, Agus Dwi Santoso and Miftah — besides two sparring partners from that country on August 7.

She was pictured on the first day of training where all of them could be seen along with another physio Johnson Solomon and the Indonesians who also trained with world champion Sindhu and world championships bronze medallist B. Sai Praneeth.



Coco Gauff returns to Aryna Sabalenka during their women's singles match at the Top Seed Open in Lexington, Kentucky (USA), on Wednesday. — AFP

Rusty Coco roars for major victory

Lexington (US), Aug. 13: American teenager Coco Gauff overcame some shaky serving Wednesday to beat No.2 seed Aryna Sabalenka 7-6 (2), 4-6, 6-4 and reach the Top Seed Open quarterfinals with her third career victory over a top-15 opponent.

The 16-year-old Gauff hit 10 double-faults and was broken seven times.

It was a topsy-turvy match that lasted nearly three hours and featured a bit of confusion when Gauff and her father, Cori, got into a discussion with the chair umpire about what sort of coaching is allowed under adjusted rules the WTA put in place recently.

Of more concern to Gauff was the way she was starting off points in her service games. At one point, she implored herself: I've got to make the first serves. Come on.

Gauff's plan after dropping the second set? Just to stay calm and composed, she said in an on-court TV interview afterward, and making her play balls. That worked.

Sabalenka is ranked 11th, behind only No. 9 Serena Williams among the women entered in the hard-court tournament that is the first professional tennis event in the United States since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Gauff is No.53 but should now return inside the top 50.

Next up for her is a match against No. 8 seed Ons Jabeur, who eliminated Olga Govortsova 3-6, 6-2, 6-4. The other quarterfinal on that side of the draw will be Marie Bouzkova against Jennifer Brady, who beat Magda Linette 6-2, 6-3. In another match, Bouzkova defeated Anna Blinkova 6-4, 6-2.

— AP

Englishman Anderson strikes

Southampton, Aug. 13: James Anderson returned to form with a double strike against Pakistan on Thursday as the England great moved closer to becoming the first pacer to take 600 Test wickets.

Pakistan were 85-2 at Tea on a rain-interrupted first day of the second Test at Hampshire's Ageas Bowl.

Anderson had figures of 2-24 in 12 overs, having come into this match, having taken just six wickets in three previous Tests this season at an expensive average of over 41.

Abid Ali, dropped twice in the slips, was 49 not out.

By his own admission, Anderson had not been at his best with a match haul of 1-67 during England's three-wicket win in the first Test at his Old Trafford home ground last week.

In humid conditions conducive to Anderson's bowling, the 38-year-old needed just eight balls to strike and have Shan Masood, fresh from his Test-best 156 last week, lbw for one with an inswinger to the left-hander.

Masood was so clearly out, he did not bother to review the decision.

His exit brought in Azhar, under pressure after a run of just one fifty in 10 innings since becoming skipper in November.

— AFP

Brief Scores (at Tea): Pakistan 85/2 in 33.5 overs (Abid Ali 49 n. o., Babar Azam 7 n. o., J. Anderson 2/28) vs England.



England fast bowler James Anderson celebrates taking the wicket of Pakistan's Shan Masood on the first day of their second Test at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, southwest England, on Thursday. — AFP

Starc eyes India series

Melbourne, Aug. 13: Injury-ravaged Australia pace spearhead Mitchell Starc says he has worked on adding muscle to his body during the Covid-19 forced lockdown to ensure that his efforts to ramp up pace do not cause another breakdown.

During the break, the left-arm pacer trained with his New South Wales teammates, which, he says, allowed him to return to top physical shape ahead of the much-anticipated home Test series against the Virat Kohli-led India.

"At the end of summers, I've been down to 87kg at my lowest and I'm at 93kg at the moment which is where I want to be at," Starc was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"I've started summers around that 90-91kg mark so I'm in a good place now, feeling really strong."

"It's been a good amount of time in the gym and now I'm back bowling and running and have enjoyed the time at home to be able to do that. (I have also managed to) rest the aches and pains of bowling through an eleven-

month tour like the other boys..." he added.

Starc has been prone to injuries throughout his career as he looks to unsettle batsmen with extra pace. He has suffered stress fractures on his foot on multiple occasions, but the 30-year-old fast bowler believes the extra hours in the gym will aid his attempts at generating more pace.

"It would be nice but at the same time the two occasions I've been up around that (160kph) mark I've snapped my foot," he said.

— PTI