

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 18 | AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER



Max: 33°C  
Min: 23°C  
Rainfall: Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Aavani 2  
**Tithi:** Chaturtashi/Amavasai  
**Star:** Aayilyam  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:** 9 am to 10.30 am

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.43 am  
**Zohar:** 12.19 pm  
**Asar:** 3.21 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.30 pm  
**Isha:** 7.44 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.28 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.57 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 4.58 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 6.05 PM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+47,310)	(+762)
26,94,614	51,807

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,890)  
TN: 3,43,945 5,886

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,19,25,786

### DEATHS

7,74,963

COUNTRIES  
AREAS WITH  
CASES

213

worldometers.info

## Parliament monsoon session may begin 1st week of September

**New Delhi:** The monsoon session of Parliament may begin from the first week of September and is unlikely to see the two Houses assembling simultaneously as one is expected to use both the chambers for its sitting in view of the coronavirus pandemic, sources said on Monday.

## Indian-origin physician wins award for Covid-19 work in UK

**London:** An Indian-origin physician is among 19 winners of the UK's Royal Academy of Engineering President's Special Awards for Pandemic Service for exceptional engineering achievements in tackling COVID-19 throughout the UK.

## COUNTER POINT



**No secrets... my life is an open Facebook!**



## STATE | 3

**HC to pronounce verdict in Sterlite case today**



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

## WORLD | 5

**Biden in spotlight as polls near**

## SPORT | 8

**Nishikori tests positive for virus**



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## 'CAREERS CAN'T WAIT ONE YEAR'

# Supreme Court won't defer Neet and JEE

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 17

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to interfere with the conduct of medical and engineering entrance exams — Neet and JEE — scheduled to take place in September saying that life must go on and students can't lose a precious year in the wake of Covid pandemic.

Dismissing a plea by one Sayantan Biswas seeking direction to National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts both the Neet and JEE exams, to postpone them, Justice Arun Mishra, heading a three-judge bench, said that there was "absolutely" no



merit in the plea. "Life cannot be stopped. We have to move ahead with all safeguards and all... Are students ready to waste one whole year? Education should be opened up. Covid may continue for a year more. Are you going to wait another year? Do you know what the loss to the country and peril to the students is?" Justice Arun Mishra said.

The court took on record assurance by the NTA that all necessary precautions will be taken in view of Covid-19 pandemic. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) had on July 13 informed the Supreme Court of its decision to scrap the examination for chartered accountants scheduled to be held in July-August in the wake of worsening Covid pandemic.

Similarly, the CBSE and ICSE had on June 25 told the court about their decision not to hold examinations of remaining papers and award marks to students on the basis of their last three best papers they have already appeared for.



As the government made some relaxations in getting e-passes, heavy traffic at Vandalar after a long time on Monday.

—E.K. SANJAY

## Fresh Covid infections remain high in State

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 17

Fresh Coronavirus infections were at 5890 in the state with 120 fatalities as the spread of the disease remained unabated.

Chennai had 1185 new cases and 24 deaths, while the numbers in the neighbouring districts came down a bit — Chengalpattu 224, Kanchipuram 174 and Thiruvallur

308. The other districts with high numbers were Coimbatore 393, Cuddalore 390, Kanyakumari 209, Salem 268, Theni 279 and Virudhunagar 212.

Meanwhile, Chennai Corporation Commissioner G Prakash said that people admitted to eight Covid Care Centres in Chennai can access Magster website free of cost and read about 5000 digital newspapers.

## Stalin slams opening of Tasmac shops

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 17

DMK President M K Stalin said 'No' to the opening of liquor shops in the area under Greater Chennai Police limits on Tuesday, saying that it would lead to an increase in the spread of coronavirus.

## India, Nepal meet to review aided projects

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 17

Nepalese Foreign Secretary S.D. Bairagi and Indian Ambassador to Nepal V.M. Kwatra co-chaired a meeting of the Oversight Mechanism Monday in a Virtual format to review the progress of bilateral economic and development cooperation projects being carried out with Indian assistance after which it

was decided to expedite implementation of the projects. While both sides issued statements after the meeting, Nepal said both countries "agreed to undertake necessary measures to timely address problems and obstacles in the course of implementation". The meeting was held amid China's efforts to further strengthen its already close ties with Nepal under the Communist Government of Prime Minister K. P. Sha-

rma Oli who is perceived as extremely close to Beijing. Indo-Nepal ties also witnessed considerable strain in the past few months.

The Nepalese Foreign Ministry Monday said, "During the meeting, discussions were held on the status of implementation of the on-going projects under Nepal-India bilateral cooperation covering terai roads, cross-border railways, Arun-III hydropower project, petroleum products, etc.

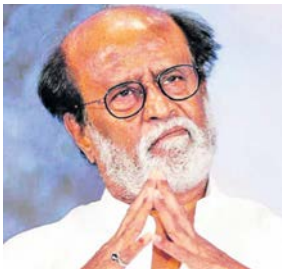
## SUPERSTAR PRAYS

# Rajinikanth wishes SPB speedy recovery

**DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

Popular playback singer S. P. Balasubrahmanyam, battling Covid-19, remained in critical condition and was on life support, the hospital treating him here said on Monday as wishes continued to pour for his recovery.

The veteran singer-actor's son SPB Charan said his father was in "stable" condition while a host of people, including DMK president M. K. Stalin and top actor Rajinikanth, wished



him a speedy recovery even as his lakhs of fans continued to pray for him. Rajinikanth wished Balasubrahmanyam well on his Twitter account saying "Get well soon dear Balu sir."

■ P2

# FB executive gets death threat in Delhi



● **Ankhi Das, who is Facebook's director, Public Policy, India, South and Central Asia, had filed the complaint on Sunday, Delhi police said**

and security of our employees seriously and care for their well-being. However, we do not comment on individual employee matters." In her complaint, Das alleged that several people were issuing "threats, making sexually coloured remarks and defaming her" through online posts. According to the complaint, the threats are in relation to an article dated August 14,

2020 published in the *Wall Street Journal*. In her complaint, Das stated she has been receiving threats ever since. "The content, which even includes my photograph is evidently threatening to my life and body and I fear for my safety as well as that of my family members. The content also maligns my reputation based on a news article and I am subjected to name-call-

ing, cyber bullying and eve-teasing online," she said.

Das alleged that she was intentionally vilified by the accused due to their "political affiliations" and are now engaging in online and offline abuse, subjecting her to "criminal intimidation and making sexually coloured remarks".

The comments came as the ruling BJP and opposition Congress traded barbs over Facebook's alleged bias towards the ruling dispensation. While BJP accused the social media giant of censoring nationalist voices, opposition Congress seized on the Wall Street Journal report that alleged that Facebook's content policies favour the ruling party.

—PTI

# Militants who killed 3 cops gunned down

**YUSUF JAMEEL | DC**  
SRINAGAR, AUG. 17

## KASHMIR VALLEY

● **The police and Army sources said that the critically injured Army jawan died in a military hospital late Monday night. Meanwhile, the operation in Kreeri has been suspended till Tuesday morning**

killed all three assailants "in a swift and meticulous" action, the police

said, adding one of them, Sajad Ahmed Mir alias Haider alias Raja, was a top Lashkar-e-Tayyaba commander. The rifle snatched from the slain policeman was also recovered, the police added.

Two Army soldiers were injured in the gunfight, one of them critically, the police said. IGP (Kashmir range) Vijay Kumar told reporters that at 9.15 am the LeT militants emerged from an apple orchard and target-

ed a police-CRPF party manning a makeshift checkpoint on a road running parallel to a shallow stream with rifle and pistol fire, killing special police officer Muzaffar Ali on the spot and critically injuring two CRPF jawans Lokesh Sharma and Khursheed Khan. They were rushed to hospital but died soon afterwards. In the security forces' retaliatory fire, one assailant was injured, the officials said.

# Pandit Jasraj, 90, passes away in US

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** Indian classical music doyen Pandit Jasraj died on Monday following a cardiac arrest at his home in New Jersey, his daughter Durga Jasraj said. He was 90.

The classical vocalist, who infused life into the most complex ragas and held audiences spellbound with his craft, leaves behind a storied legacy spanning more than eight decades. He is survived by his wife Madura, son Shaarang Dev Pandit and daughter Durga Jasraj, both musicians.

"Bapuji is no more," his daughter Durga told PTI over phone from Mumbai. She was inconsolable and could not speak any more. Pandit Jasraj, who belonged to the Mewati Gharana and was one of India's greatest music legends, was in the US when the coronavirus-led lockdown happened and decided to stay back in that country.

Demonstrating his ability to adapt with the times, his last performance was in April this year. He sang on Hanuman Jayanti for the



Sankat Mochan Hanuman temple in Varanasi through Facebook Live.

"With profound grief we inform that Sangeet Martand Pandit Jasraj ji breathed his last this morning at 5.15 EST due to a cardiac arrest at his home in New Jersey, USA," a statement issued by his family said here.

"May Lord Krishna welcome him lovingly through the doors of heaven, where Pandit ji will now sing Om Namo Bhagwate Vasudevaya exclusively just for his beloved Lord. We pray that his soul rests in eternal musical peace. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers," it said.

Among those who mourned the death of the world renowned maestro were President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

—PTI

# Thousands party at Wuhan water park without masks

**Wuhan, Aug. 17:** Thousands of partygoers packed out a water park over the weekend in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, where the coronavirus first emerged late last year, keen to party as the city edges back to normal life.

The popular Wuhan Maya Beach Water Park was filled with people frolicking in swimsuits and goggles for an electronic music festival, many perched on rubber dinghies or wading up to their chest in water.

The water park reopened in June after Wuhan gradu-

ally opened up after a 76-day lockdown and strict restrictions to try and control the spread of the virus.

The park -- which local media says has capped attendance at 50 percent of normal capacity -- is offering half price discounts for female visitors.

A performer in a stage show at the front of the water waved at the crowd, packed close and waving their arms back, some snapping photos on phones protected in plastic pouches round their necks.

Another performer on a

water jet board entertained his audience by hovering above them with sparks shooting from his back.

Some of the crowd had donned life jackets, but none of the tightly-packed partygoers were seen to be wearing face masks as a DJ in bright yellow headphones played on stage.

—AFP

The water park reopened in June after Wuhan gradually opened

>>>

up after a 76-day lockdown and strict restrictions to try and control the spread of the virus.

—AFP





## IN BRIEF

**Ayush immunity campaign launched**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

More than 50,000 people participated in the event organised by the Union ministry of Ayush to acquaint the people with valuable information about strengths of various Ayush-based solutions for enhancing immunity and preventing diseases.

In the event, organised in the format of a webinar to launch a three month campaign 'Ayush for Immunity', key-note speaker spiritual Sri Sri Ravisankar said that Ayush solutions could lead the entire world to healthier and happier lives.

The other key speakers included Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, secretary, ministry of Ayush; Milind Soman, celebrity and fitness icon; Dr Geethakrishnan, Technical Officer, WHO; and Prof Tanuja Nesari, Director, AIIA.

**Boy dies after TV falls on him**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

A three-year-old boy died after a television set fell on him, while he was trying to take a mobile phone placed on it, at his house in Agaramen near Tambaram in Chennai on Sunday night.

According to the police, the victim has been identified as Kaviarasu, second son of Balaji(31), who runs a grocery shop. The family lives in Annai Sathya Nagar in Agaramen.

Police said an old model television, heavy in size, had been placed on a cement slab in the house. Balaji had allegedly kept his mobile phone on the television and it was being charged. Kaviarasu tried to take the phone by climbing on the cement slab when the television fell on the child and crushed his head.

Family members and neighbours who heard the cries of the child rushed him to the Government Chromepet Hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. Selaiyur police have registered a case of and are investigating.

**SR: No foul play in RRB recruitments**A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

Reacting to the protests against alleged appointment of more than 450 persons, belonging to North India, at Ponnmalai, Tiruchy, the Southern Railway has denied any foul play in the recruitment conducted by the Railway Recruitment Board(RRB).

The railway said reservations were not based on the origin of state or state of residence. The candidates belonging to Tamil Nadu were not only opted for RRB/Chennai but in other RRBs too. During the last few years about 2.2 lakh candidates from Tamil Nadu have applied for RRB/Bengaluru which caters to South Western Railway. The authorities have stated that in recently, there have been protests by railway apprentices in front of Ponnmalai workshop seeking permanent jobs in Railways. It was alleged that there was discrimination against candidates from Tamil Nadu from being recruited for job vacancies in Southern Railway.

Stating that there is a misconception in the minds of public, the

Southern Railway stated there are 21 RRBs across the country. The RRB recruits the technical and non-technical working and supervisory staff (group 'C').

All the RRBs call for applications for various posts through a common centralized employment notification. At the time of applying for any post a candidate has the option to choose any of the 21 RRBs. A candidate is allotted a particular zonal railway based on the RRB he had opted. For example, when a candidate opts for RRB/Chennai at the time of application and after selection he would be allotted railway divisions of Chennai, Trichy and Salem, Southern Railway headquarters and ICF.

On February 3, 2018, a notification was published by RRB for the post of Assistant Loco Pilot (ALP) and technicians. The RRB, Chennai, had confirmed that of the total candidates applied 51 per cent were from Tamil Nadu. A total of 3,218 candidates were selected for the post of ALP and technicians. 17 per cent are from Tamil Nadu. 541 candidates for technicians posts were allotted to

Ponnmalai workshop in Trichy. Candidates were called for certificate verification from August 4, 2020 at Ponnmalai workshop.

Meanwhile, protests were conducted by former Act Apprentices, who had undertaken training at Ponnmalai workshop, demanding employment in the Railways. The railways engage apprentices in workshops and production units and impart them technical training. Employment in Railways is not guaranteed on completion of apprenticeship. However, in 2016 it was decided by Railway Board that 20 per cent of the vacancies in case of direct recruitment to posts in Level-1 shall be filled by giving preference to course completed Act Apprentices. In pursuant to this new rule, 597 vacancies were earmarked for apprentices.

A total of 3,627 applications were received from apprentices and 2,839 appeared for the examination. Of the candidates appeared, 272 were short-listed for physical efficiency test (PET). At the end of PET, 54 candidates were selected based on merit.

**SPB's health remains critical, says hospital**DC CORRESPONDENT  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

Popular playback singer S. P. Balasubrahmanyam, battling Covid-19, remained in critical condition and was on life support, the hospital treating him here said on Monday as wishes continued to pour for his recovery.

The veteran singer-actor's son SPB Charan said his father was in "stable" condition while a host of people, including DMK president M. K. Stalin and top actor Rajinikanth, wished him a speedy recovery even as his lakhs of fans continued to pray for him.

MGM Healthcare, where the 74-year old is undergoing treatment since August 5, said: "Thiru S P Balasubrahmanyam who had been admitted at MGM Healthcare due to COVID-19 continues to be

on life support in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). "His condition remains to be critical. The expert medical team treating him is closely monitoring his vital parameters," a bulletin issued by hospital Assistant Director (Medical Services) Dr Anuradha Baskaran said. Earlier, Charan, also a filmmaker, in a video message said: "Dad is in the same condition as he was yesterday which is stable. Doctors, though, term his health status critical, "he is stable and there are no complications," as such and hence treating physicians feel it as a very good sign, Charan said and thanked well wishers and fans for their prayers.

DMK leader Stalin said in a Facebook post: "The news that Padum Nila (singing moon) S. P. Balasubrahmanyam's health is improving gives joy." Also, Stalin hailed

the veteran singer as one who "treated" the people for their worries through his heartwarming voice. "He should fully recover soon and continue his journey of songs."

Rajinikanth wished Balasubrahmanyam well on his Twitter account saying "Get well soon dear Balu sir." The superstar also posted a short video in which he praised the singer for entertaining people for decades.

"For more than 50 years, respected SPB sang in several Indian languages and brought joy to crores of people through his pleasant voice," Rajinikanth said, noting that the former has crossed the critical phase.

"When I heard that he has crossed the critical phase, I was very happy. I pray to the Almighty for speedy recovery of SPB who is still in intensive care. Thanks," he said.

**Back to school**

Students of Government Presidency Girls Higher Secondary school receive their class 10 marksheets on Monday. — DC

Students waiting for admission in Jai Gopal Garodia Higher Secondary School in Tambaram on Monday. Schools in TN have opened admission of students for classes 1, 6 and 9. — DC

**GH staffer suspended for rude behaviour**SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC  
KRISHNAGIRI, AUG 17

Officials of the health department have placed a male employee under suspension for his rude behaviour with in-patients admitted to the government hospital ward here.

In a statement, the district health department identified the suspended person as Mohan, working in the district headquarters hospital here.

Mohan was suspended after a video of the rude behavior of Mohan with a male patient in a wheelchair, went viral on social media.

Sources said the patient was admitted to the hospital for kidney problems.

**● The district officials assured that the government hospitals are patient-friendly**

He was taken to the duty doctor that day in a wheelchair and brought back to the ward, where the incident took place allegedly on Sunday.

The whole event was filmed by an unknown person and posted on social media. The district officials assured that the government hospitals are patient-friendly because the staff are very much aware that hospitals are service centers, and not power centers as charged by the social media.

**SHRC SEEKS REPORT ON PUSHING PATIENT FROM WHEELCHAIR**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed the Director, Medical and Rural Health Services, Chennai, to file a detailed report in connection with the incident of pushing a patient from a wheelchair in a government hospital in Krishnagiri recently. Based on a newspaper report, the commission initiated suo motu proceedings and directed the official to file a report in three weeks.

According to the report, a health worker brought a

patient to a ward on a wheelchair in government general hospital, Krishnagiri. As the patient was unable to lift himself from the wheelchair he sought assistance from the worker. However, the health worker abused him and pushed him from the wheelchair. A video related to the incident went viral on social media. Following this the worker was suspended and authorities assured that the necessary departmental action would be initiated against the worker soon.

**Plea to transfer Nalini to Puzhal prison**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

Alleging ill-treatment meted out to her daughter by the prison officials, S. Padma, the mother of S. Nalini, serving life sentence in Vellore prison for her involvement in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, has approached the Madras high court, seeking a direction to the authorities to transfer her daughter Nalini, wife of Sriharan alias Murugan from the special prison for women at Vellore to the special prison for women, Puzhal, Chennai.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and V.M.Velumani before whom the habeas corpus petition filed by S.Padma

came up for hearing on Monday, adjourned it by a week.

According to petitioner, her daughter Nalini having been convicted in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case under section 120-B read with section 302 IPC has been undergoing imprisonment for more than 29 years. She was perhaps the longest serving woman prisoner in the country. She used to meet her daughter in prison in the past twice a month. Now, she has been allowed to talk to her daughter via video calls as per rules, she added.

She said her daughter had on February 22, 2020, made a representation to the superintendent of prison, Vellore, asking for her transfer from

the special prison for women, Vellore, to Puzhal on the ground that they would be in a position to meet each other once a week in the event of her transfer from Vellore to Chennai. During the pendency of the said representation, national lockdown was announced with effect from March 25, 2020, and the lockdown continues even today, she added.

She said during lockdown, her daughter was ill-treated by the prison officials and she was not even allowed to talk to her lawyer through WhatsApp video whereas, other prisoners were allowed to talk to their lawyers over WhatsApp video. While talking to her daughter over video, she was informed by

her daughter that her life in prison was miserable because of continuous ill-treatment perpetrated on her by certain prison officials and that she was suffering in prison beyond words. She was also informed that she should take immediate steps to have her daughter transferred from Vellore to Chennai. Due to such torture, her daughter's life was in danger. Therefore, she made a representation dated July 21, 2020, to the authorities praying that her daughter be transferred on humanitarian grounds to Puzhal. Her representation has not so far been considered and decided by the authorities. Hence, she filed the present petition, she added.



Workers get the barricades ready near a Tasmac shop in the on Monday. The government has permitted opening of Tasmac shops from Tuesday with riders. —DC

**Reopening Tasmac: Cash register rings louder than alarm bells?**

Sanjay Pinto

If we thought breaching the psychological barrier of a thousand Covid cases everyday in Chennai was a minor setback, we now need to pray that another cluster does not emerge as the golden goose — Tasmac is set to cackle again. The Tamil Nadu government's decision to reopen the booze floodgates in the city 5 months after the first lockdown and a fortnight before the present restrictions are slated to end, is, in my opinion, ill advised, hasty and disappointing.

Public health which is state subject under the Constitution, gives the Tamil Nadu government unfettered power to take decisions. Article 47 of the Constitution is a directive principle to the state to "endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health." This is under normal circumstances.

During a pandemic, with cases rising each day, is the sale of alcohol — a known immuno suppressant, a priority? In an issue of 'Alcohol Research: Current Reviews' the researchers summarize "the evidence that alcohol disrupts immune pathways in complex and seemingly para-

doxical ways. These disruptions can impair the body's ability to defend against infection." So is the ring of cash registers louder than the sound of alarm bells? Whatever happened to the doctrine of 'Res Extra Commmercium' or 'things beyond commerce'? Or the Supreme Court's scathing reference to businesses that are "inherently pernicious or injurious to health, safety and welfare of the general public" in Khodad Distilleries Ltd Vs State of Karnataka? Kabasura Kudineer in one hand and alcohol in the other?

That parks where people can walk and get fresh air to stay fit remain closed but booze outlets reopen is a telling commentary on our priorities. Churches and temples will remain shut,



funerals must have not more than 20 mourners and weddings not more than 50 people, but 500 folks can trudge to each shop, for their 'elixir' of life. Whether the timings are staggered and the customers walk out staggering, time will tell!

The attempt to regulate sales through 500 tokens

daily may be well intentioned. In its affidavit before the Supreme Court in Tasmac Vs B.Ramkumar Adityan, the liquor retail behemoth referred to G.O. No.223 and enumerated 6 precautions like 6 feet distance between customers, and not more than 5 persons allowed at a time. But if scenes reported in the past of crowds outside Tasmac outlets in other districts were any indication, the expectation of social distancing and proper wearing of masks by local tipplers may seem naive. Is this a risk worth taking?

About 2,000 police officers in Chennai alone have tested positive. Their families are in turn at risk. As the men in khaki would have to ensure compliance with the safety guidelines in the

seven hundred odd shops in the city is it fair to expose them further?

The lockdown has led to a peculiar situation where perpetrators and victims of domestic violence have had to be boxed in together. The city witnesses considerable cases. With earnings depleted in most homes and job losses, is this the time to bring back this social evil? Where does it leave the State's duty to ensure "adequate means of livelihood" to its citizens and the "opportunities and facilities" for children to "develop in a healthy manner" and the "protection of childhood and youth" from "moral and material abandonment", contained in Articles 39 (a) and (f) of the Constitution? Before anyone argues that these are only directive

principles of state policy and are not enforceable, let me remind them that Article 37 makes it clear that these principles are "fundamental in the governance of the country."

If the Supreme Court in state of Tamil Nadu Vs K.Balu could, based on Para 92(2) of the Union government's 'model policy/taxation/act/rules for alcoholic beverages and alcohol' bar liquor sales 100 metres from schools, hospitals or religious places or 220 metres from the middle of the state/national highways, what about domestic violence and its cascading effect on the entire family? I rest my case.

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)

**‘TN NOT EXECUTED PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES’**

Chennai, Aug 17: The Madras high court was informed that in past five months of Covid crisis, nowhere the government has executed the precautionary and preventive measures under the

Disaster Management Act, 2005 by proper implementation of State and District Disaster Management Authority under section 14 and 25 respectively under which the state and district level executive committee are not constituted in terms of the act. Advocate S.Jimraj Milton stated this in his reply affidavit filed in response to the third status report dated July 29, 2020, filed by the state government, before the First Bench comprising Chief Justice A.P.Sahi and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy on Monday. The bench posted after two weeks, further hearing of the case. — DC

**‘INHUMAN TO THINK ONLY OF INCOME’**

FROM P1

Even after knowing that opening the Tasmac shops outside the Chennai limits was a prime reason for the spike in cases, it is a mistake to open them in the city also, Stalin said in a tweet.

"It is inhuman to think only of income and not bother about the health of people," the DMK chief said,



## IN BRIEF

**Held for bid to stage  
illegal stir****DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUCHY, AUG 17

Police here on Monday took into custody some youths owing allegiance to the Neglected Youth Retrieval Rights Federation, when they attempted to launch a hunger strike without police permission, in front of the Golden Rock railway workshop here, condemning the railway authorities for providing more number of jobs in the railway workshop to north Indian youths than the natives of the state. All were released late in the evening with a warning, police added.

**Tasmac staff begin  
5-day stir****DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUCHY, AUG 17

Members of the district unit of the Tasmac employees association, commenced their five-day agitation here on Monday, demanding implementation of their 14 point charter of demands including Rs 50 lakh solatium to Tasmac employees who had lost their lives due to corona infection, and government job for a family member of the Tasmac workers, who died in service. Similar demonstrations will be held in different parts of the district till August 21 and on August 25, they are going to launch a two-hour tool down strike by closing their shops, insisting on their demands. Similar demonstrations were also held in Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvavur and Nagapattinam districts.

**Municipal workers  
awarded****DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

Minister for municipal administration and rural development S. P. Velumani, presented awards to officers and employees who did exemplary work in the prevention and control of coronavirus at Chennai on Monday.

Velumani said that the government had taken up a plethora of measures to control and prevent the spread of Covid-19 and the employees of municipalities and panchayats were fully involved in implementing them. Apart from involving in conducting fever camps, setting up of isolation camps, organizing awareness camps and undertaking preventive measures, the employees also indulged in sanitizing the places, distribution of facemasks and many such activities, he said.

**Nilgiris sees traffic  
snarls again****B RAVICHANDRAN | DC**  
OOTY, AUG 17

While e-pass obtaining facility has been eased since Monday, there has been an increased flow of vehicles resulting in traffic snarls at Burliar, the inter-district border of the Nilgiris and Coimbatore on the Ooty NH.

Also, health care staff have begun the arduous work of lifting swab samples from travelers entering the hills through the inter-district borders, both at Burliar and at Kunjapannai near Kotagiri. Restrictions on e-passes since July had almost brought private vehicle transport to a standstill on the Ooty - Burliar - Coimbatore NH, as well as the Ooty - Kotagiri - Kunjapannai - Coimbatore road, on the south-east side of the hills, both busy roads connecting the hills with the plains. This also made things easy for cops and health care workers at the inter-district check-posts on these two roads, to relax a bit as only a few vehicles crossed the border a day.

# Villagers' best wishes lost in translation

**G. BABU JAYAKUMAR / DC**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

People of Painganadu and Thulasendrapuram villages in Thiruvavur district are delighted so much over the nomination of Kamala Harris as a Vice Presidential candidate in the US elections that they put out colourful posters with her picture wishing her success in the elections but when the photo of the poster was send across to America the message in the text was lost in translation.

"I was sent this from Tamil Nadu where our Indian family is from. It says 'P V

Gopalan's granddaughter is victorious," so tweeted Meena Harris, the 35-year-old California-based niece of Kamala Harris, along with an image of the poster appearing in the obscure village near Mannargudi, whose the people have taken pride in the fact that the maternal grandfather of Kamala originally hailed from there.

Meena Harris also tweeted a photograph of the late Gopalan with a small child and said, "I knew my great grandfather from our family trips to Chennai when I was young - he was big figure for my grandma and I know

● "Curious if you've had any reaction from Jamaica," wondered a Twitter follower of Meena Harris, prompting her to reply "Yep"

they're together somewhere smiling now."

"Curious if you've had any reaction from Jamaica," wondered a Twitter follower of Meena Harris, prompting her to reply "Yep" with a link to a story titled 'Kamala Harris Ignites Pride in Brown Town' in a Jamaican newspaper, *Gleaner* that quoted a 81-year-old histori-

an Omar Mustafa, who had attended the Park School in St Ann with Donald Harris, Kamala's father.

The article also quotes a few persons with the Harris surname and brings out the fact that people of the region from where Donald Harris hailed were excited about her nomination even if they had not put out posters like the people of Painganadu and Thulasendrapuram.

"Thank you! I've received several different translations," replied Meena Harris to another tweep who had given the correct translation in English of the words in the posters, while another

## HC to pronounce verdict in Sterlite case today

**J. STALIN | DC**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

The much-awaited verdict in the case relating to closure of Sterlite Plant in Thoothukudi district, will be delivered by the Madras high court on Tuesday.

The special bench comprising Justices T.S. Sivagnanam and V.Bhavani Subbarayan will be delivering their judgment through virtual court hearing on August 18, 2020.

The bench had on January 8, 2020, reserved orders on a petition filed by Vedanta Limited, which sought a direction to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board to facilitate the immediate opening of its Sterlite Plant in Thoothukudi by immediate de-sealing of the plant with restoration of supply of electricity.

The bench reserved orders after hearing marathon arguments for about 39 days from Senior Counsels Aryama Sundaram, P.S.Raman, G.Masilamani and Ar.L.Sundaresan for the petitioner and Senior Counsel C.S.Vaidyanathan, assisted by advocate Abdul



Saleem and Advocate General Vijay Narayan for Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and State government respectively, besides MDMK leader Vaiko and other counsels including T.Mohan appearing for the impleading petitioners.

After several rounds of hearings, the matter was finally fixed for final hearing by the Special Bench comprising Justices Sivagnanam and Bhavani Subbarayan on June 27, 2019. Senior counsel P.S.Raman, appearing for Vedanta had agreed that the main petitions relating to non-renewal of consent to operate the plant, order relating to the closure of the industry and the other petition relating to the 2013 closure order can be taken up for final hearing. Simultaneously, the miscellaneous petitions can also be heard, he had added. Accordingly,

● A petition filed by Vedanta Limited sought a direction to TNPCB to facilitate opening of its Sterlite plant

the final hearing had commenced on June 27. Senior counsel Aryama Sundaram had extensively made his submissions on the merits of the order passed by the TNPCB and the allegations made by it for the closure.

In its present petitions, the Vedanta Limited also sought an interim direction to the authorities to grant the petitioner access to the petitioner's unit at Meelavittan village, Sipcot industrial complex, Thoothukudi taluk and district, in order to undertake essential care and maintenance activities by granting all approvals, permits, licenses, certificates etc that stood withdrawn or cancelled by the various statutory authorities to facilitate the essential care and maintenance activities.

In its counter affidavit, the TNPCB had submitted that on May 18 and 19,

2018, the unit of the petitioner was inspected by TNPCB and it was found that the unit was carrying out activities to resume its production operation, despite having given an undertaking that it would not do so. The TNPCB was constrained to recommend issuance of directions for closure and disconnection of power supply to the unit. These orders were issued by the Chairman, TNPCB on May 23, 2018. Thereafter, on May 28, 2018, the Government of Tamil Nadu took a policy decision and endorsed the decision of closure of the TNPCB and directed permanent closure of the unit by issuing a Government order. In light of this endorsement, on May 28, 2018, the TNPCB directed sealing of the premises with immediate effect. Consequent to these orders, all incidental licenses of the petitioner's factory were cancelled by the respective departments including the boilers certificate, industrial license, factory license, labour registration and fire license, the TNPCB had added.

## Congress to launch campaign on Thursday

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

The Congress party in Tamil Nadu will launch its election campaign on August 20, TNCC president K. S. Alagiri said on Monday.

The campaign would involve meeting the people in all the 234 constituencies and finding out what their needs were and also holding regular conferences to be in touch with the people, Alagiri told mediapersons.

The party would appoint a party functionary in charge of every two constituencies, he said and added the party's alliance with the DMK was intact

and that M K Stalin would be their Chief Ministerial candidate.

On the number of seats to be allotted to the Congress, the decision would be taken by Stalin and Rahul Gandhi, Alagiri said. Referring to the coronavirus prevention work by the state government, the Congress leader said that the government had failed on that and should bring out a white paper explaining the reasons for the failure.

He urged the government to put pressure on the Centre to withdraw the Neet for the states' medical college aspirants and said that he was opposed to the implementation of the new National Education Policy as it would lead to more school dropout and help only the privileged and rich.

Asked about the demand by some AIADMK leaders on making Madurai the second capital of the State, Alagiri said he welcomed it. When pointed out that Congress MP S Thirunavukarasar had wanted Tiruchi to be second capital, he said that can be made the third capital.

He wished a speedy recovery to H. Vasantha kumar, Congress MP representing Kanyakumari constituency, who has been admitted to hospital due to Covid-19.

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## Siddha Covid care centre opened

**G SRINIVASAN | DC**  
KUMBakonam, AUG 17

A Siddha covid care centre will start functioning at a private college at Kovilachery near here from August 19, said Thanjavur Collector M Govinda Rao, on Monday, after inspecting the vegetable market and corona care centre here. Later, he told presspersons that 50 beds would be available

initially at the Siddha covid care centre which will be increased to 200 subsequently. Those who desire treatment through Siddha medicines can opt for it, he added. As many as 147 persons have opted for home quarantine, and 50 were cured. Testing has been done so far on 1,25,249 persons in the district. A total of 106 containment zones are functioning in the district.

Sale of vegetables have been permitted in eight places in the town. At Darasuram market, where there are 250 vegetable vendors, permission has been given for business in shifts. Eighty vegetable vendors can sell vegetables a week. Deshmukh Kumar Sanjay, SP, Thanjavur district, and Lakshmi, municipal commissioner, were present on the occasion.

## Sivagalai site urns to be opened

**M ARULOLI | DC**  
THOOTHUKUDI, AUG 17

The process of unearthing ancient burial urns from the megalithic site at Sivagalai in the district commenced on Monday.

The Tamil Nadu state department of Archeology launched the excavation work on May 25 at Sivagalai, located just 10 km away from Adhichanallur on the banks of river Thamirabarani in the district, and has unearthed 31 such burial urns.

The urns are believed to

contain human bones, artefacts made of bronze and iron and grains were opened on Monday by a team of archaeological experts headed by Dr R Sivanandam, deputy director, state department of archeology. Stating that it was an elaborate process taking at least a month to open up all the 31 urns unearthed at Sivagalai, Dr Sivanandam said they hoped to find human bones in the urns.

If bones are found in the urns at Sivagalai, they would be taken to the

Madurai Kamaraj University affiliated School of Biological Sciences, where the bone samples will undergo initial tests to find if they were of human or animals, said Prof R M Pitchappan, an expert in genomics. "The genome sequencing of the DNA extracted from the excavated bones however is an expensive and time consuming process," said Prof Pitchappan, who added that it might take about two years to find the genome sequencing.

The period of the earthen pots will be established by thermoluminescence test, while the seeds of the grains if found in the urns, would be sent for DNA testing at Manonmaniam Sundaranar university lab in Tirunelveli, said deputy director, state department of archeology, Dr R Sivanandam, who also added that artefacts made of iron and bronze found from the Sivagalai site would be sent to Bengaluru for metallurgy analysis.



Members of Hindu outfits stage a protest in the city on Monday against state government's ban on installation of idols and Vinayaka Chaturthi rally.

—DC

## Murugan meets CM

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

BJP state president L Murugan called on Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to demand permission of installing Vinayaka idols in public

places on the occasion of Vinayaka Chaturthi celebrations.

Murugan told the media after the brief meeting that he had assured that Chief Minister that they would not take out processions

to immerse the idols in water bodies but just wanted to install them and worship them.

The Chief Minister had told the BJP leader that he would look into his demand and take a decision.

## 46 Bihar workers quarantined in Kovai

**ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC**  
COIMBATORE, AUG 17

Officials have quarantined 46 interstate construction labourers who attempted to enter the city without proper e-pass.

Police said, a team led by Singanallur inspector, Muneeswaran, and traffic sub-inspector Ramakrishnan, were involved in routine inspection on Sunday evening, near the bypass road, when they stopped a van bearing Kerala registration number.

On inspection, police found a group of 46 interstate labourers from Bihar attempting to enter Ramanathapuram area in the city, without proper e-pass.

Police were shocked to know that the gang had travelled via various states without proper e-pass and reached the city's suburbs, to join construction work at a site here, for a

Ramanathapuram-based construction company.

On information from police, concerned village administrative officer rushed to the spot and quarantined the group in a nearby government school premises for the next 14 days. While the locals are struggling to enter neighboring towns without e-passes, the gang had managed to circumvent the obstacles and reach the city, added the source.

While the district including Tirupur and the Nilgiris had recorded 453 positive cases in the last 24 hours, spiking the numbers to 8,967.

As many as 90 workers of a famous jewelry outlet were made to undergo Covid-19 check, out of which 58 tested positive and were admitted to hospital, as the outlet owner tested positive a few days ago. Health officials have requested customers also to undergo Covid-19 tests as a precautionary measure.

## Cow bites crude bomb, dies

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
COIMBATORE, AUG 17

Forest officials have taken five suspects under their custody, and are investigating the death of a cow which was grazing in a forest fringe area near Mettupalayam. The animal had bitten a hand-made country bomb, allegedly installed in the farmland to kill wild boars that ravage crops.

According to forest officials, Mohamed Jafar Ali (45), a farmer residing close to Sengal Padugai

near Kallalar river bank at Mettupalayam, raised a herd of six cows and a bull. A few days ago, Mohamed had left the herd for grazing near the forest fringe area.

Five of the animals returned home in the evening except the cow and Mohamed went in search of the animal. He found the cow lying in a private farmland close to forest fringe area near Kallalar river, and was shocked to see collapsed animal with its mouth severely injured.

## Collector helps visually impaired girl to get college seat

**K. SENTHIL NATHAN**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

Tiruvannamalai district collector K.S.Kandasamy has come to the aid of a visually impaired girl in getting admission in an arts college in Vandavasi. The girl, Saranya of Malaiyittan Kuppan, Vandavasi taluk, secured 404 marks out of 600 in plus-2 examination.

She was planning to join college. However, the girl and parents were not aware of the admission process, which has been changed due to Covid-19. As per the new procedure, the candidates were required to submit the applications forms online. She came to know about it late. Meanwhile, the date for submitting the application forms was over and the admission



process commenced.

The matter was brought to the notice of Collector K.S.Kandasamy, who made efforts to admit her in Sri Akillandeswari Womens' College (SAWCW), Wandiwash, Vandavasi. The management of the college assured that it will not receive fees from her for three years. The girl will receive the admission certificate from the college on Tuesday.



## OPS HOLDS REVIEW MEETING

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 17

Deputy Chief Minister O Panneriselvam held a review meeting of the town planning department with the officers concerned at Chennai on Monday.

He urged the officers to ensure that approvals for building plans and new lay outs were issued without delay. Applications that were received without all the necessary details should also be cleared within the deadline by seeking the left out information through e-mail, it was told.

The meeting also discussed about speeding up work at the 15 new district offices opened under the department



## SHORT TAKES

MUKHERJEE  
CONTINUES  
TO BE CRITICAL

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** The condition of former President Pranab Mukherjee continues to be critical and he is on ventilator support, the Army's Research and Referral hospital said on Monday.

Doctors attending on him said that his vital and clinical parameters are stable and he is being closely monitored.

Mukherjee was admitted to the hospital in Delhi Cantonment on August 10 and was operated for removal of a clot in the brain.

The 84-year-old has been in a coma and continues to remain critical since then. He has also tested positive for Covid-19.

"The condition of Pranab Mukherjee continues to be critical. His vital and clinical parameters are stable. He is on ventilatory support and is being closely monitored," a statement from the hospital said.

According to Mukherjee's family, there has been a slight improvement in his health ever since he was operated upon.

BIHAR EXTENDS  
LOCKDOWN TILL  
SEPT. 6

**Patna, Aug. 17:** The Bihar government on Monday extended the lockdown till September 6 in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the state, as per a notification.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Crisis Management Group chaired by Chief Secretary Deepak Kumar.

Restrictions will remain in place in the district headquarters, sub-divisional headquarters, block headquarters and all municipal areas in the state, according to the notification issued by the Home Department.

Strict measures will be enforced in the buffer and containment zones, it said.

All religious places will remain closed and no congregation will be allowed. Besides, all social and political gatherings will be barred, it said.

Parks and gymnasiums will remain closed and night curfew, restricting the movement of people between 10 pm and 5 am, will be in place, it added.

Inter-state and inter-district bus services will also remain suspended though transportation of goods will be allowed without any hindrance.

The state has so far reported over 1 lakh cases of Covid-19, a ten-fold rise within a period of a month and a half. The government has attributed the sharp spike in cases to a higher number of tests.

10 LAKH CASES  
DETECTED IN  
AUG. SO FAR

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 17**

Out of the total over 26.5 lakh positive coronavirus cases recorded so far, about 10 lakh have been recorded this month alone.

In the last 24 hours close to 58,000 fresh cases were detected and about 1,000 fatalities were recorded.

According to health ministry officials, India, at the same, also reported the highest ever single day recoveries of 57,584 taking the Recover Rate beyond 72 per cent.

"India's Covid-19 recoveries have reached nearly 2 million (19,19,842). This has ensured that the difference between the recovered and active cases continues to expand. It is 12,42,942 on Monday," officials said.

"The actual case load of the country, viz. the active cases (6,76,900 on date) has reduced and currently comprises only 25.57% of the total cases. Early identification of cases has helped to ensure timely and prompt isolation of the mild and moderate cases and hospitalisation of the severe and critical cases thereby leading to timely and effective management of cases. The Case Fatality Rate has further slumped touching 1.92%," officials added.

Meanwhile, the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration on Monday met leading domestic vaccine manufacturers — Serum Institute of India, Pune; Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad; Zydus Cadila, Ahmedabad; Genovax Biopharmaceuticals, Pune; and Biological E, Hyderabad — to discuss the progress of the various candidate vaccines.

"The meeting was mutually beneficial and productive," officials said.

## Safety first



Passengers undergo thermal scanning before boarding a DTC bus amid Covid-19 pandemic in New Delhi on Monday. The number of Coronavirus tests in the capital have gone down in August as compared to July, with the government attributing it to the decrease in the virus infections in the national capital.

— PTI

BJP MP distributes  
Trishuls to youths

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, AUG. 17**

Vowing to end the corruption and misrule of the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal next year, BJP MP of Bishnupur Soumitra Khan has tumbled himself.

He also announced that he would distribute Trishul to 90,000 Yuva Morcha activists for their protection which has, however, triggered a controversy with the Trinamul Congress demanding action against him.

Clad in a saffron attire, Khan performed a yagna alongside the party workers at Sureshwar Mahadev Temple in Dihari village of Bankura on Monday.

"It is my appeal to all the Hindus of West Bengal. In our country people lose their lives to hoist our national flag. So we have resolved to distribute Trishul to 90,000 Yuva Morcha workers for their self-defence," he said later.

The young BJP MP was

● **BJP MP OF** Bishnupur Soumitra Khan tumbled himself and also announced to distribute Trishul to 90,000 Yuva Morcha activists for their protection which has triggered a controversy.

● **SOUMITRA** was earlier in the Congress party before joining the Trinamul.

then seen distributing Trishul among the Yuva Morcha workers.

Senior Trinamul MP of Dum Dum Sougata condemned Khan's announcement of Trishul distribution.

"He can perform yagna, which is fine. But distribution of Trishul, which he spoke about, is however illegal. It can not be done," he said.

"Saumitra was earlier in the Congress before joining the Trinamul. Now he is in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Steps should be taken against him under the Arms Act," Roy added.

## Talks on Naga autonomous councils begin

**MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 17**

In a significant move to resolve the decades old problem of Nagaland, the Centre has started discussion with the governments of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh to sort out certain administrative problems in formation of two Naga autonomous councils that the government has agreed to create after the signing of the Naga peace accord.

Pointing out that central government had fixed the deadline of October 31, 2019 to conclude the Naga peace talks, security

sources said that on request of NSCN (IM) which wanted some more clarity on some rhetorical issues like flag, constitution and greater Nagaland comprising Naga dominated parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, it was extended further.

Informing that then it was decided that the final peace agreement would be signed in the first quarter of this year, security sources, however, said that due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, it was delayed further.

Asserting that it was unlikely that the

Kishtwar faces  
curfew-like curbs

**YUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
with agency inputs  
SRINAGAR, AUG. 17**

Curfew-like restrictions were imposed in communally sensitive Kishtwar district of Jammu region on Monday "as a precautionary measure" in view of heightening tensions over a Hindu activist using insulting remarks against Prophet Muhammad a day ago.

Jammu's Inspector General of Police, Mukesh Singh, said that the accused Satpal Sharma and his colleague Deepak Kumar were arrested on Sunday itself after a video of his (Sharma's) using derogatory words against Islam's prophet went viral on social media.

"We immediately took cognizance of this unfortunate incident, registered a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code against

the accused. No one will be allowed to vitiate the communal harmony in Jammu," he said and warned that strict action would be taken also against those found circulating further the controversial video clip.

A case had been lodged under section 153A IPC (promoting enmity between different groups) and 295A IPC (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) at Pacca Danga police station.

It may be recalled that on Sunday, another video showing a group of so-called cow vigilantes thrashing a local Muslim after his teenaged son had driven cows away from his pasture went viral adding to the tensions.

Several predominantly Muslim areas of Jammu,

mainly in Chenab valley, remained shut and peaceful protests were held at places on Monday against the alleged blasphemy and the act of hooliganism.

The call for the strike had been issued by various local religious and social organisations of Muslims.

Protests were held on Monday also in some parts of Kashmir Valley including Tral and Sogam (Kupwara).

Meanwhile, prominent citizens and religious leaders of all faiths have appreciated the police for taking prompt action against the accused and asked people to cooperate with the law enforcing agencies.

"People are requested not to fall prey to communal hatred and defeat them by maintaining peace and communal harmony," they said.

Bihar ex-minister  
quits, joins RJD

**NAYEAR AZAD | DC  
PATNA, AUG. 17**

Bihar industry minister Shyam Rajak on Monday resigned from the JD(U) over differences with party leadership and joined the opposition RJD.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav along with other senior leaders was present during the occasion. JD(U) sources told this newspaper that he has been upset over being "marginalised" in the party and was also not getting much prominence as a minister.

"This is an emotional moment for me", Rajak said adding that he would continue his fight for the cause of social justice under the leadership of RJD chief Lalu Yadav.

While criticising Nitish Kumar government for its stand on CAA, NRC and other issues he said that "I can never compromise on my ideology and happy to join RJD".

Hinting that others in the JD(U) may quit the party ahead of polls, he said, "you will see what will happen in the coming days".

Rajak, a sitting MLA from reserved Phulwarisharif seat is considered a strong Dalit face. Political experts claim that he also has strong backing from a sizeable Muslim population in his constituency.

Reports suggest that the JD(U) had started promoting a Dalit leader

Arun Manjhi from the constituency. "Rajak quitting NDA is unfortunate", the statement released by LJP said.

On Sunday, after Rajak announced his decision to quit, he was expelled from the JD(U) and sacked from the ministry by the Governor on the advice of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Before joining the JD(U) in 2009 he was with the RJD. During the Lalu-Rabri regime before 2005, he had also served as a minister.

Rajak was made the industry minister when Nitish Kumar returned to NDA fold in July 2017.

Several political parties also raised questions on the timing of his decision to quit JD(U) and join the opposition camp.

BJP spokesperson Nikhil Anand told this newspaper that, "the people of Bihar are wise enough to understand who their actual well-wisher is. The socio-economic growth of subaltern community including Dalits took place because of Nitish Kumar led NDA government's policy. The 2005 onward politics of Bihar has shown that it is not the RJD brand rhetoric of social justice but the policy initiative which has brought a big change in the lives of Dalits in Bihar. The individuals switching parties only to grab ticket without any ideological motivation will have no impact on NDA".

Kerala govt takes  
over church

**Kochi, Aug. 17:** The Kerala government took over a church in Mulanthuruthy in the wee hours on Monday amid strong resistance by followers of the Jacobite church, as part of implementing a 2017 Supreme Court order granting possession of over 1,100 churches to the rival Orthodox faction, police said here.

Police entered the ancient Cathedral in Mulanthuruthy, armed with a recent Kerala High Court order directing to take over it on a contempt of court petition filed by the Orthodox vicar.

Hundreds of Jacobite church followers, led by their priests, had gathered inside and outside the church since Sunday night locking its gate from inside preventing the police from taking its custody.

Police broke open the gate of the church using a cutter and forcefully removed the priests and followers before taking over its control.

Police entered the church wearing PPE kits to protect themselves from Covid-19 infection during the action to take over the Church.

The Jacobite Church condemned the police action, alleging the administration "acted in haste to satisfy the needs of someone".

Several priests and followers were injured in the police action, they

● **POLICE ENTERED** the ancient Cathedral in Mulanthuruthy, armed with a recent Kerala High Court order directing to take over it on a contempt of court petition filed by the Orthodox vicar.

● **THE JACOBITE Church** condemned the police action, alleging that the administration acted in haste to satisfy the needs of someone.

alleged. Early this month, the Kerala High Court had directed the Ernakulam district Collector to take over the Mulanthuruthy church.

In his petition, the Orthodox faction priest had sought to initiate contempt proceedings against the Ernakulam Collector and others for not implementing the court's earlier directive to hand over the administration of the church to the Orthodox faction.

The High Court had pointed out that despite the Supreme Court order and directives by the High Court, the petitioners were not in a position to function and discharge their duties.

In 2017, the Supreme Court had ruled in favour of the Orthodox faction on a dispute with the rival Jacobite faction over control of over 1,100 churches. —PTI

## SKY | WARRIORS

**IAF stepped in by deploying MI17 helicopter after the rescue operation by the local police failed**

## IAF rescues man stuck for 16hrs in flooded dam water

**RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, AUG. 17**

A man in a Chhattisgarh district battled water current in a dam by holding on to a tree for as long as 16 hours before being rescued by an Indian Air Force (IAF) chopper on Monday morning.

Jitendra Kashyap (41), resident of Gidhoridham under Ratanpur police station in Bilaspur district, jumped off the bridge in Khutaghat dam, located close to his place, on Sunday evening and was swept away by the water currents.

He, however, managed to get hold of a tree trunk and a boulder to prevent him from being washed

away by the flooded dam water.

The passersby alerted the local police on the incident following which a rescue operation was launched by the local police.

However, the rescue operation was suspended due to heavy rains and low visibility in the night, a senior police officer posted in the Bilaspur district said.

"We made several efforts to rescue the man. But, the rising level of water coupled with bad weather had hindered the rescue operation," Bilaspur range inspector general of police Dipansu Karba said.

The man had clutched on to the tree trunk while positioning himself firmly

on a rock the whole night of Sunday to save him from being swept away by the gushing water in the dam.

"The man was being watched all night and motivated to keep his spirit high", police said.

Later, the local police sought the help of the IAF to rescue him.

The IAF launched a rescue operation by deploying an MI17 helicopter and fished the man out of the water after a 30-minute-long operation.

"Breathtaking! What seems impossible to us #IndianAirForce makes it look so simple.... The @IAF MCC's #SkyWarrior first himself attempted to go down & bring the man up, risking his own life.



SDRF personnel rescue people from a flood-affected residential area of Chaitanya City at Tilhari in Jabalpur on Monday.

— PTI

But, due to fast wind it was not possible, later the guy was rescued with other technique", Karba narrated the rescue operation in his twitter post. (sic)

The man was subsequently airlifted.

He was later admitted in a private hospital in Raipur. His condition was stated to be stable.

BRIDGES SUBMERGED AS FLOOD  
SITUATION GRIM IN NORTH K'TAKA

**VITTAL SHASTRI | DC  
HUBBALLI, AUG. 17**

The flood situation remained grim in North Karnataka on Monday due to heavy rainfall in catchment areas of Krishna and its tributaries.

Release of over 40,000 cusecs water from Koyana dam in Maharashtra due to torrential rains in the neighbouring state has worsened the situation.

The officials took immediate steps to shift the people living in downstream villages to safety. Thousands of villages were submerged and sev-

eral people had died in similar flood last year.

The outflow from the Almatti dam in Vijayapur district is more than 2,30,000 cusecs as Krishna river is in full flow.

Hundreds of bridges were submerged in border district of Belagavi, Gadag, Bagalkot and Raichur due to incessant rain for last three days in the region.

Almatti dam has total storage capacity of 123 tmc and inflow is expected to cross more than 3 lakh cusecs if rain continued in the region after release of water from Maharashtra.



IN BRIEF

Putin, Erdogan discuss conflicts

**Moscow:** Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the conflicts in Libya and Syria with his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan in a telephone call on Monday, the Kremlin said in a statement. The Kremlin said the call's main focus was on the crisis in Libya, highlighting the need to make real steps towards a sustainable ceasefire.

US choppers attack Syrian army post

**Amman:** Two US helicopters on Monday attacked a Syrian Army checkpoint in northeastern Syria near the Kurdish-held city of Qamishli, killing one soldier and injuring two others, state media said. The incident happened shortly after a US patrol was prevented from passing by an Army checkpoint in the area, state media said.

China welcomes Putin's proposal

**Beijing:** China welcomed on Monday to Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposed summit of world leaders to avoid "confrontation" over a US threat to trigger a return of all UN sanctions on Iran. The United States lost a bid on Friday to extend a UN arms embargo on Iran, Russia and China opposed extending the weapons ban, which is due to expire in October under a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the world powers. Eleven members abstained, including France, Germany and Britain, while the United States and the Dominican Republic were the only two votes in favour.

Japan PM leaves hosp post check-up

**Tokyo:** Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe underwent a medical check-up in hospital on Monday, a government source said, amid concern voiced by a top official that the premier was suffering from fatigue from handling the Coronavirus pandemic. Abe, Japan's longest-serving prime minister, left hospital after the examination, *Jiji news agency* said. He had the check-up at Tokyo's Keio University Hospital, the source familiar with the situation said.

16 killed in hotel attack in Somalia

**Mogadishu:** At least 16 people were killed in an attack on Sunday by al Shabaab on a seaside hotel in Somalia's capital Mogadishu, a government spokesman said, as the Islamist group launched a similar assault on a Somali military base. Sunday's toll includes 11 victims and five assailants, Ismail Mukhtar Omar said in a tweet late on Sunday, adding: "Security forces lost one, 18 people were injured." Militants stormed the high-end Elite Hotel in Lido beach, detonated a car bomb and then opened fire with assault rifles, the latest attack by al Shabaab, which has been battling the country's central government since 2008. Al Shabaab wants to topple the central government and establish its own rule based on its own strict interpretation of Islamic sharia law.

PROTESTOR CHALLENGES THAI MONARCHY

**Bangkok, Aug. 17:** The deafening cheer for Anon Nampa at Thailand's biggest demonstration in years underlined the bookish human rights lawyer's emergence at the forefront of a youth protest movement with his taboo-breaking call for reforms to the monarchy. "He looks quite harmless," Rangsiman Rome, a former activist who is now an opposition member of parliament, said. "But once he gets the microphone and gets on stage or starts working, he becomes a different, serious person." Although the protest movement has no single leader, Anon's August 3 call for curbs on the power of the monarchy shook Thai politics in a way not known in living memory and made him a hero for some and a hate figure for others. His open challenge put Anon at risk of arrest under "lese majeste" charges, which can mean 15 years in jail. "I think there is a need for everyone to be able to talk about the monarchy openly and constructively," Anon said. "I think society is becoming more open about this."

Freedom in the air



Women in masks to help curb the spread of the Coronavirus participate in a tug-of-war game during the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the country's independence in Medan, Indonesia, on Monday.

—AP

Biden in spotlight as polls near

Four-day convention will be held online due to Covid-19 pandemic

**Milwaukee, Aug. 17:** As Democrats on Monday open an unprecedented virtual convention, the party's disparate factions are projecting a united front behind Joe Biden, brought together by their common determination to oust Donald Trump in November's election.

"It is absolutely imperative that Donald Trump be defeated," Bernie Sanders, a former Biden rival and a keynote speaker on the event's opening night, said on Sunday. Adding to the drama, the four-day convention — originally planned for the Midwestern city of Milwaukee but forced online by the Covid-19 pandemic — takes place amid a furor over Trump's efforts to limit mail-in voting.

The president, insisting without proof that mail-in voting fosters fraud, has threatened to block extra funding that Democrats say is urgently needed to allow the US Postal Service to process millions of ballots.

In normal election years, nominating conventions are a raucous scene, attended by tens of thousands of party faithful and designed to inspire the party's base and lure independents and the undecided.

Democrats had picked Milwaukee for its location in the important swing state of Wisconsin. The city had spent millions in preparation. But planners have been struggling to find virtual replacements for the usual roaring applause, circus-like atmosphere and balloon drops.

Viewers are expected to be treated to live feeds from several Democratic "watch parties," some even live-streamed from drive-in theaters or featuring erstwhile Biden rivals

Don will get dirty: Kamala

**Washington, Aug. 17:** Indian-American Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee Kamala Harris has said that President Donald Trump and his campaign will "engage in lies" and "dirty tactics" to distract from the real issues that are impacting the American people.

She was responding to President Trump's promotion of the conspiracy theories about her eligibility to serve as the vice president and president. "They're going to engage in deception. They're going to engage in lies. They're going to engage in deception. They're going to engage in an attempt to distract from the real issues that are impacting the American people. And I expect that they will engage in dirty tactics. And this is going to be a knockdown, drag-out. And we're ready," she said.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden scripted history on Wednesday by selecting Harris, an Indian-American and an African-American, as his running mate in the election on November 3. Born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, California Senator Harris, if elected, would be the first woman Vice-President ever for the country. "What's at stake right now is that we've had over 160,000 people die in the last few months and many of them needlessly ... tens of millions of people who have lost their jobs ... we're in the midst of a hunger crisis in our country. The media isn't covering it so much," she said. "I'm prepared to fight because this is a fight that is for something, not against something. This is a fight for where we need to be ... We need to focus on what can be unburdened by what has been," Harris said. Harris is no stranger to accusations about her race.

**RESPONDING TO Trump's remarks, Harris, 55, said on Sunday that the President and his campaign will engage in deception.**

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Born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, California Senator Harris, if elected, would be the first woman Vice-President ever for the country. "What's at stake right now is that we've had over 160,000 people die in the last few months and many of them needlessly ... tens of millions of people who have lost their jobs ... we're in the midst of a hunger crisis in our country. The media isn't covering it so much," she said. "I'm prepared to fight because this is a fight that is for something, not against something. This is a fight for where we need to be ... We need to focus on what can be unburdened by what has been," Harris said. Harris is no stranger to accusations about her race.

**FEARS RISE OVER UNFAIR U.S. PREZ ELECTION**

**Washington, Aug. 17:** With less than 80 days to go before the US presidential election, it looks like Democratic nominee Joe Biden's race to lose.

Yet, as Democrats nationwide gather online this week to nominate him as their party's choice to challenge President Donald Trump on November 3, many fear Biden may just do that — for factors almost entirely out of his control.

The former Vice-President and his allies have every reason to feel bullish. Polls show Biden has built an expansive lead in nearly every battleground state that Trump won narrowly in 2016, as the Republican's approval numbers tumble amid the Coronavirus pandemic. For the first time in a decade, retaking the Senate — and full control of Congress — is within sight.

like Senator Amy Klobuchar.

The experimental format will allow speakers to address American voters unfiltered — largely shorn of the usual overwrought stagecraft and screaming delegates. Or, some fear, it could make for a more boring show.

Biden enters the convention with significant but tightening poll leads over Trump and amid signs that his history-making pick of Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate — the first woman of colour on a major party's presidential ticket — is widely popular among Democrats.

Harris picks Indo-American as her press secy for V-P rally

**Washington, Aug. 17:** Senator Kamala Harris has roped in Indian-American Sabrina Singh, who previously was the spokeswoman of two Democratic presidential candidates, as press secretary for her Democratic Vice-Presidential campaign.

Singh, 32, headed the press shop of New Jersey Senator Cory Booker and former New York mayor Mike Bloomberg. Last

week, Democratic presumptive presidential nominee Joe Biden, 77, picked 55-year-old Indian-origin Harris as his running mate.

Singh was earlier spokesperson of the Democratic National Committee. She is the granddaughter of Sardar J.J. Singh of the India League of America, a non-profit organisation which champions the interests of Indian-American community in the US.

EU calls for emergency summit over Belarus polls

**Minsk, Aug. 17:** European Council President Charles Michel on Monday convened an emergency summit of EU leaders to discuss the presidential election in Belarus and the crackdown in the wake of the polls.

Noting that the video conference would take place on Wednesday at 1000 GMT, Michel tweeted that "the people of Belarus have the right to decide on their future and freely elect their leader." "Violence against protesters is unacceptable and cannot be allowed," he said.

The 27 EU foreign ministers said on Friday that the elections were neither free nor fair and that they refuse to accept the results of the polls, as announced by the Belarus electoral commission.

Several thousand factory workers took to the streets of Minsk on Monday, demanding the resignation

**THE OFFICIAL RESULTS of the August 9 vote gave Lukashenko 80 per cent of the votes and Tsikhanouskaya only 10%, but the opposition claimed the vote was rigged.**

of authoritarian Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. It was the ninth straight day of protesting against the results of an election that extended his 26-year rule. Nearly 5,000 workers from the Minsk Tractor Works plant, which has been on strike since Monday morning, marched down the streets of Minsk, demanding that Lukashenko step down and cede his post to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the leading opposition candidate.

The official results of the August 9 vote gave Lukashenko 80 per cent of the votes and Tsikhan-

ouskaya only 10%, but the opposition claimed the vote was rigged.

"Lukashenko is a former president, he needs to go," Sergei Dylevsky, the leader of the protest at the Minsk Tractor Works plant, said on Monday.

"Sveta (Tsikhanouskaya) is our president, legitimate and elected by the people." Tsikhanouskaya, a 37-year-old former English teacher, entered the race after her husband's jailing in Belarus. She managed to galvanize nationwide support, drawing tens of thousands to her campaign rallies. Large-scale protests against the vote results continued even after she left the country for Lithuania last week, a move her campaign said was made under duress.

The protests have posed the biggest challenge yet to Lukashenko's iron-fisted rule of the ex-Soviet nation of 9.5 million.

NZ delays election as Covid cases rise

**Wellington, Aug. 17:** New Zealand's Prime Minister postponed the country's general election on Monday by a month to October 17 as the city of Auckland remains in lockdown due to a growing Coronavirus outbreak.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern bowed to pressure to delay the polls after parties complained they could not campaign with nearly a third of New Zealand's 5 million people under lockdown in Auckland. "Ultimately, the 17th of October... provides sufficient time for parties to plan around the range of circumstances we will be campaigning under," Ardern said at a news conference.

The election was scheduled for September 19 and New Zealand law requires it to be held by November 21. Advance voting will now start on October 3.

The Prime Minister ruled out delaying the polls any further, as her Labour Party maintains a strong lead over the conservative National Party in opinion polls. "We are all in the same boat. We are all campaigning in the same environment," Ardern said.

New Zealand on Monday recorded nine new cases of Covid-19, taking the number of active cases to 78. There have now been a total of 1,280 cases in the country, and 22 deaths.

An earlier election would have worked in Ardern's favour, as her success in stifling Covid-19 and keeping the country virus-free for 102 days until the latest outbreak had boosted her popularity.

Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, who had called for a delay, said "common sense has prevailed".

CHINA GRANTS 1st VIRUS CURE PATENT TO CANSINO

**Beijing, Aug. 17:** China's vaccine specialist CanSino Biologics Inc has won a patent approval from Beijing for its Covid-19 vaccine candidate Ad5-nCoV, state media reported, citing documents from the country's intellectual property regulator.

It is the first Covid-19 vaccine patent granted by China, state reports. The paper cited documents published by China's National Intellectual Property Administration saying that the patent was issued on August 11. Saudi Arabia said this month it plans to begin Phase III clinical trials for the CanSino vaccine.

S. KOREA PASTOR TESTS POSITIVE AMID VIRUS SPIKE

**Seoul, Aug. 17:** A conservative South Korean pastor who has been a bitter critic of the country's president has tested positive for the Coronavirus, health authorities said on Monday, two days after he participated in an anti-government rally in Seoul that drew thousands.

More than 300 virus cases have been linked to the Rev. Jun Kwang-hun's huge church in northern Seoul, which has emerged as a major cluster of infections amid growing fears of a massive outbreak in the greater capital region.

Pak Army chief visits Saudi to revive ties

**Riyadh, Aug. 17:** Pakistan's Army chief arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday amid a row between the two countries that has threatened Riyadh's financial lifeline to Islamabad. General Qamar Javed Bajwa's visit was "primarily military-affairs oriented," a Pakistani Army spokesman said.

and government officials have said that Gen. Bajwa would use his good offices to try to calm the situation that if not reversed could badly hurt Pakistan's central bank foreign reserves.

A traditional ally, Saudi Arabia gave Pakistan a \$3 billion loan and \$3.2 billion oil credit facility to help its balance of payments crisis in

late 2018.

Irked by Islamabad demands for Riyadh to convene a high-level meeting to highlight archival India's alleged human rights violations in the disputed Kashmir region, Saudi Arabia has forced Pakistan to pay back \$1 billion prematurely and is demanding another \$1 billion of the loan.

Riyadh has also not responded to Pakistani requests to extend the oil facility, military and finance ministry officials said.

The head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), General Faiz Hameed, was accompanying Bajwa, a Pakistani military source said.

—Agencies

WEB ALERT Tech giant's warning in 'Open letter to Australians' after draft law to make it pay for news

Aussies could lose free search services, warns Google

**Canberra, Aug. 17:** Google warned on Monday that the Australian government's plans to make digital giants pay for news content threatens users' free services in Australia and could hand users' data to media organisations.

The US-based company's warning, contained in what it called an "Open letter to Australians," comes a week before public consultations close on Australian draft laws that

would make both Google and Facebook pay for news siphoned from commercial media companies.

"A proposed law... would force us to provide you with a dramatically worse Google Search and YouTube, could lead to your data being handed over to big news businesses, and would put the free services you use at risk in Australia," Google Australia and New Zealand managing director Mel Silva wrote.

Google owns YouTube, a video-sharing platform.

Both Google and Facebook have condemned the proposed legislation, which was released last month and aims to succeed where other countries have failed in making them compensate media businesses for news content. Australian competition watchdog Rod Sims, chair

of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which drafted the laws, said Google's letter "contains misinformation." "Google will not be required to charge Australians for the use of its free services such as Google Search and YouTube, unless it chooses to do so," Sims said in



a statement. "Google will not be required to share any additional user data with Australian news businesses unless it chooses to do so," he added.

Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, the minister responsible for the consumer watchdog, said in a statement that the draft law "remains open for consultation, providing an opportunity for media companies and digital platforms to provide

feedback" until August 28. Swinburne University senior lecturer on media Belinda Barnet described the Google letter as a "cynical exercise" designed to "scare Google users."

"I see no merit in any of the arguments," she said. "One of the most ironic arguments is that they're going to have to hand over some data to news organisations — for example which article people have read and how long they

may have read it for — and this coming from the world's major privacy violator and certainly the world's largest data aggregator is a bit rich," Barnet added.

Google has been battling the Australian consumer watchdog on two fronts. Last month, the watchdog launched court action against Google for allegedly misleading account holders about its use of their personal data.

—AP



## DECCAN Chronicle

18 AUGUST 2020

### Misuse of social media a threat to democracy

Democracy and the life it seeks to assure its stakeholders are under increasing threat of being undermined by the reckless use of social media by vested interests. The threat includes the issue of external forces making a charade of the electoral process. Allegations ran thick and fast about how such media undermined the 2016 United States presidential elections. There are also instances of violence breaking out based on misinformation or deliberate and provocative messages, claiming lives and disrupting normal life of unsuspecting innocent people. The recent riots in Bengaluru is the latest example.

It is against this background that the demand of the Congress party for a joint parliamentary committee to investigate the allegations that social media platform Facebook has been violating its own policy to favour the rabble-rousers and hate-mongers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gains relevance. The allegation is based on a report that appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* which alleged a "broader pattern of favouritism" towards the BJP by Facebook. The report named BJP leaders who posted hate-filled messages against Muslims on several occasions, including before the Delhi riots. The company's top public-policy executive opposed the application of the hate speech rules of the company against at least four BJP leaders and groups who were "flagged internationally for participating in violence", saying it "would damage the company's business prospects in the country". The report said the company "acknowledged that the official had raised concerns about the political fallout that would result from designating the BJP leader a dangerous individual".

The business model of social media is directly and instantly proportional to the reach of their contents. This will be best served by pandering to and often engaging extremist elements in society and polity who will ensure such stuff gets widest publicity. With little checks and balance in place, the social media has the power to break into smithereens the social fabric that has been woven for decades or even centuries.

The allegation, though denied by Facebook, is not about partisan politics; it's about the sanctity of the country's democracy and democratic processes, which should be a matter of concern for the government as well as the Opposition. The response of the government, however, has been less than forthright. Instead of addressing the issue, Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has sought to level personal allegations against former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and advance a whataboutery that the Opposition was in the dock during the Cambridge Analytica scandal. This denial is not enough. Mr Prasad and the government must understand that no mature democracy would allow outsiders to violate the law and manipulate systems. The heads of social media organisations, including Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, had been hauled up before the US congressional committee for alleged unethical business practices. India, priding itself to be a global leader, must do whatever it takes to protect the sanctity of the democratic process. Giving in to the Opposition demand would reinforce our democratic processes and enhance the national prestige.

### Covid strikes cricket

Cricketer, cricket administrator and politician Chetan Chauhan has created a distressing record as the first Test player to die of Covid-19. The death of a son of an Indian Army doctor is illustrative of the insidious power of the coronavirus to inveigle itself into the human body despite all the precautions a person of knowledge might take against it. His case is a tragic reminder that the battle against Covid-19 is far from over in India and that complications the virus creates in multiple organs in some people, especially in the most vulnerable 70-plus section of the population, are not easily fought off even with specialised medical care.

Born just a few weeks before independence was attained, Chauhan became famous as the diligent yet stodgy other half of an opening partnership with the world record breaking Sunil Gavaskar that helped erase the memories of eras symbolised by the retreating back foot in the face of hostile fast bowling, without the benefit of protective gear of course. Chauhan was the unglamorous but sincere second fiddle who was reluctant to stage the walkout in Melbourne in 1981 just because Gavaskar was given out Leg Before Wicket (LBW), perhaps wrongly. India went on to stage a remarkable comeback victory in the Melbourne Test to square the series.

Having experienced life in Australia for a few years, Chauhan felt the tug of his homeland and returned to daringly step into the politics of Delhi cricket, which is a kind of crash course before real politics of the electoral kind. With his engaging quality of having time to listen to everyone, Chauhan fared well as an MP and became a UP minister too. He may have helped overturn the belief that there is no place for a decent man in the quagmire of UP politics. To serve in public life was Chauhan's credo. As a batsman he was a cricket tragic in the sense that he never managed a Test century, 97 being his best. But he tried for India in every sense under all the hats he wore.

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Kishwar Desai  
London Diary

### Of 'staycations' & cheap meals: Will Christmas be merry again?

Only those who were sensible enough to opt for a staycation did not get their holidays wrecked. Oh, to think that just a year ago we could fly endlessly around the globe. And now taking even a short holiday is like a complicated military manoeuvre, where every possibility has to be measured and prepared for. Just a fortnight ago, people were told to travel abroad to European countries with which the UK had "air bridges". As holidays typically end by the beginning of September, Brits rushed off to Italy, Greece, Spain and France. Now comes the ruling that France is a no-go, as is Spain, which has seen a second wave of infections. If you have been or are in France and get delayed in returning, then you face a fortnight of quarantine at home upon return.

This means kids will miss opening days of school. That is, in case the schools open at all. The Teachers Union is not sure if their members or their pupils will be safe. But not to worry. Pubs are open and restaurants have been cheered up by Rishi Sunak's scheme of meals at half-price if you eat out. As the old rock

### The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh headed off to Balmoral, their castle in Scotland.

song said: "We need no education". Cheap meals is all we need! But whether this will be enough to ensure that restaurants will survive is difficult to say - as the subsidies cannot last for too long.

Each society has its own way of dealing with Covid-19. In India we have families bonding even more and the sale of noodles and pasta is shooting up as people home-cook. And many feel it is time to bring back the joint family. But in London it is difficult to keep anyone at home while the pubs continue to overflow.

Like others, the royal family too have opted for a staycation. The Queen, 94, and the Duke of Edinburgh, 99, headed off to Balmoral, their Scottish castle where the weather is, if anything, more severe than in Windsor, where they were isolating themselves. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has also chosen Scotland for his holidays

but that is more because he knows that there is yet again a rising demand in Scotland for independence. Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister (like chief minister) managed the Covid episode much better than Boris did for England and is likely to win the elections in Scotland. So we are bracing for yet another referendum on Scottish independence.

Even so the government in Scotland did not do better than England when it came to exam results of school leavers waiting to go to universities. Teaching was disrupted due to lockdowns. Schools tried teaching online but as usual the private schools did better than state funded schools. Proper examinations could not be held. So they had mock exams in many parts of the country. The students also have teachers' assessments to send forward with their university applications. With no proper exams, what would the final grades be? If anything worse than the pandemic policy can be imagined, we have had it. The Scottish Education Authority used an "algorithm" which resulted

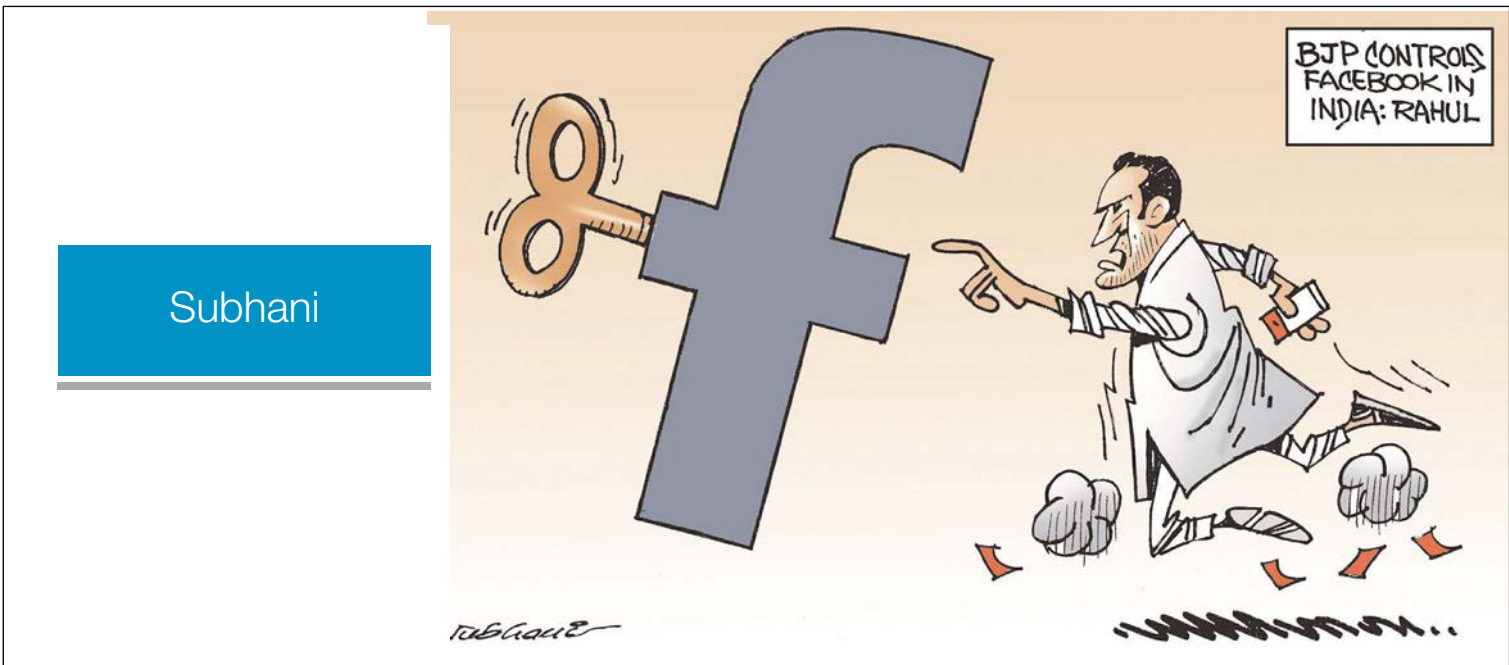
in massive downgrading of students. There was such a furore that the minister had to apologise and rescind the results. Better decisions are awaited and students feel cheated and angry. So they will appeal. With only four weeks left before the university admissions are decided, an unhappy holiday is what students can look forward to. For young people all over the world, 2020 has brought huge uncertainty.

There are many reasons to celebrate or commemorate August 15 — which is also Victory over Japan (VJ) Day, but it gets celebrated much less than the Victory in Europe (VE) Day. In India it is rarely mentioned, though one of the most crucial land battles, that in Kohima, took place in India, which Japan lost and then retreated from Southeast Asia. It means a lot in Australia and New Zealand but not in other places which should commemorate it.

The one good news among many sad ones is that theatres are about to reopen. In a dramatic gesture, Andrew Lloyd Webber volunteered to be a test case for the

Covid-19 vaccine because like many, he thinks that until there is a vaccine the problem of social distancing will trouble theatres. He had to close the long-running Phantom of the Opera (which I saw it for the first time 20 years ago), but no doubt he will rebound with something else. But even with their capacity reduced to one-third of normal, venues like Bridge Theatre and the National will open in the autumn. Bridge would show a new play by David Hare and later it will revive Talking Heads by Alan Bennett. The National will open only the Olivier Theatre with a new one-person play Death of England: Delroy. It is an unusual play about racism written by two black playwrights. Art galleries are also reopening. Tate Modern has opened as has the National Gallery. The British Museum and the British Library are back but with limited capacity. Perhaps by Christmas, life may, finally, be merry again.

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author.



Subhani



Mohan Guruswamy

The so-called Naga peace talks are now floundering. National Socialist Council of Nagaland leader Thuingaleng Muivah reiterated on August 14 from New Delhi that going by the 2015 Framework Agreement signed between his outfit, the NSCN(I-M), and the Government of India: "Nagas can co-exist with India, but will not merge with it. We are not asking (for a) Naga national flag and constitution from the Government of India. Recognise them or not, we have our own flag and constitution. Flag and constitution are ingredients of our recognised sovereign entity and the symbols of Naga nationhood."

Not long ago I had a conversation with an RSS figure conversant with the Naga issue. He was confident Narendra Modi would soon find a "creative solution" to this vexed problem. I asked him if it meant the dismemberment of Manipur, as the dominant Tangkhul faction of the NSCN (I-M) was mostly based around Ukhrul in Manipur? And the dismemberment of Arunachal Pradesh as the Konyak Nagas, who mostly owe allegiance to the NSCN's Khaplang faction, are mostly in Tirap and Changlang divisions of that state? He didn't answer, except saying wait and see - Modiji has a "creative solution".

Whatever it was, the "creative solution" is now clearly unravelling. The NSCN(I-M) has now demanded that Prime Minister Modi's longtime Naga interlocutor R.N. Ravi, now Nagaland's governor, must be removed from the talks. The severely ailing 86-year-old Isak Muivah is now in New Delhi for health reasons and is also in talks with the powers that be. What can they

now offer him after scrapping Article 370 and dismembering J&K and putting Jammu and Kashmir under Central rule as a Union territory? How far removed is Article 371 from Article 370?

The Naga quest for a separate identity independent of India burst into an armed conflict in January 1956 when A.Z. Phizo assumed full control of the Naga National Council, which was championing the Naga cause. Immediately after Phizo took over, the Naga Hills was declared a disturbed area and put under the Indian Army's control.

At that time eminent Indians like Jayaprakash Narayan chastised Jawaharlal Nehru for sending the Army to "pacify" the Naga Hills. Nehru assured critics that the Army would be in the area for just a few months. The Indian Army is still deployed in the region and 3 Corps is permanently headquartered in Dimapur. From time to time news would filter out that the contours of a settlement were visible, but nothing of consequence came out. On August 3, 2015 the Narendra Modi government announced that an agreement was concluded and that its details would be kept secret. Why the details of the accord must be secret is best known to it, and what exactly it is has been the subject of much speculation.

While the details of the "historic agreement" are still shrouded in secrecy, it is believed the immediate deal only covered the territory of Nagaland. It seemed agreed that the question of the other areas of "Greater Nagalim" would be resolved consensually via dialogue with Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. It was thought the deal would pave the

### The Naga quest for a separate identity independent of India burst into an armed conflict in January 1956.

way to an election where the NSCN (I-M) or a successor political party would be facilitated to secure power through polls, as done in Mizoram.

In a paper published on March 30, 2017 in a widely read blog "Indian Security Affairs" maintained by Maj. Gen. P.K. Mullick (Retd), Lt. Gen. J.R. Mukherjee (Retd), a former corps commander with extensive experience and connections in Assam and the Northeast, wrote: "Unauthenticated leaks from reliable sources indicate that points agreed are: A separate constitution? Flag for Nagaland, separate currency and passports for Nagas. Nagaland would have a UN representative, foreign affairs and defence will be a joint subject; a pan-Naga government to cover all Naga-inhabited areas." This is why Manipur is agitated, as it will leave it with just the Imphal Valley. The unabashed misuse of the office of governor following the recent elections to install a BJP-led government lends credence to a certain urgency to implement the deal, as the talks have been going on for almost two decades.

We constantly worry about the Chinese hand at play since the days when Mowu Angami went to Yunnan. But what we need to worry more about is the American hand at work. The first missionaries went there in 1836, when Rev. Miles Bronson set up a mission in Namsang, now in Arunachal Pradesh's Tirap subdivision. But the real impetus to Christianity came after the advent of an American Baptist missionary, Rev. E.W. Clarke. The Baptists never looked back since then and now maintain over 800 churches and have a majority of Nagas

under their fold. While it must be acknowledged the missionaries played a pioneering role in establishing modern health-care and educational facilities, we must not remain unaware of the Baptist Church's role in creating a new awareness and sense of oneness among the Naga tribes.

While the armed forces may have learnt from their experience, our political and bureaucratic leadership never seemed to have learnt anything, or worse, forgotten anything. We have since Nagaland's formation in December 1963 lurched from one compromise after another. Consequently, the Naga Hills region - Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal - have had the most uncaring and corrupt state governments with little to show on the ground despite India's highest per capita development expenditures.

India's long-term security interests, and the steady expansion of Chinese influence in Myanmar in the areas abutting our borders, equally require our military and administrative presence in the Naga Hills as it does a general stability. The answers to these can only be found in new and innovative political and administrative arrangements that factor not just the culture of Naga tribes but the geography of the Naga Hills. Article 371A of the Constitution does offer some safeguards, but clearly these do not satisfy the Nagas.

But a separate constitution, flag, currency and UN membership might be going a bit too far. Will this not have consequences in other parts of the country like Jammu and Kashmir, where a secessionist war is raging, and even in states like Tamil Nadu where regional nationalism is extremely strong?

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

#### LETTERS

### DEADLY DECISIONS

The decision of the Tamil Nadu government to issue e-passes to everyone who applies is not in the right direction. It will increase the spread of coronavirus in Chennai in the coming days. The opposition parties too are to be blamed for putting pressure on the government to issue e-passes to everyone. The argument by the opposition parties, especially the DMK, that there are no restrictions on issue of passes in other states is absurd as Tamil Nadu stands second in the list of most infected cases in India. The decision to open Tasmac shops from August 18 in Chennai seems to be another blunder by the insensitive TN government. There will be a reverse trend and infections in Chennai will zoom in the coming days when compared to the other districts.

M.C. Vijay Shankar  
Chennai

### GENTLEMAN CRICKETER

THE PASSING AWAY of former Indian cricketer Chetan Chauhan is a huge loss not only to the cricketing fraternity, but also to Indian politics, as he served as a minister with distinction in UP, associating with the illustrious Sunil Gavaskar, Chohan, with his patience and dogged determination, stitched many century partnerships. As his longest serving partner in Tests, Gavaskar, in his tribute to the gutsy opener, has said, "It's so hard to believe that his laughter and cheerful banter won't be there the next time I go to Delhi." The past few days somewhat have been gloomy for Indian cricket, as it witnessed a brilliant and a gentleman cricketer leaving the game after serving it with distinction and a former opener succumbing to Covid-19 related complications.

R. Sivakumar  
Chennai



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,050.78	0.46
Nifty 50	11,247.10	0.61
S&P 500*	3,382.57	0.29
Dollar (₹)	74.88	0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.97	-0.09
Euro (₹)	88.62	0.21
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,611.340	0.63
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.03	0.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.975	0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.688	-0.021

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

Seafood exports  
in FY20 pegged  
at 12,89,651 mt

India shipped 12,89,651 mt of seafood worth Rs 46,662.85 crore (\$6.68 billion) during 2019-20, largely cushioning the adverse impact of the pandemic, the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) said in Kochi. Frozen shrimp remained the major export item in both quantity and value followed by frozen fish while the USA and China were the major importers. Exports improved in rupee term by 0.16 per cent.

■ Disbursements dip 90% in April-June  
MFIs take a hard  
knock in first qtrSANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, AUG. 17

Micro-finance disbursements dropped by 90 per cent in the June quarter to all-time low levels and the gross loan portfolios of all micro-lenders shrank by 2.42 per cent compared to the March quarter. However, collection rates, which had fallen to all-time low of 35 to 40 per cent in March, have started picking up.

All the microlenders together disbursed Rs 6,235 crore in the lockdown-hit June quarter, which was down 91 per cent from Rs 72,528 crore in the March quarter and 88 per cent below the disbursement of Rs 54,127 crore in June 2019 quarter, according to the data from Sa-Dhan.

The share of NBFC-MFIs, in quarterly disbursement, fell to a dismal 97.5 per cent to Rs 529 crore from Rs 21,927 crore in the March quarter. Though banks accounted for a major share of the disbursements at Rs 4,233 crore, it was still 88 per cent down from the March quarter disbursement of Rs 35,194 crore. Small Finance Banks too saw 88 per cent decline from Rs 10,746 crore in the March quarter to Rs 1,281 crore in the June quarter.

"During the lock-down we were not contemplating disbursements. We started disbursements only after the June first week. Our strategy has been to disburse to exist-



ing clients and not to new clients," said S. V. Raja Vaidyanathan, MD of Asirvad Microfinance.

Lower disbursements dragged down the combined gross loan portfolio of micro-lenders in end-June to Rs 2,24,595 crore from Rs 2,30,165 crore in the March quarter.

The overall collection rate in April had fallen to an all-time low of 35-40 per cent, which was lower than the repayment rate during demonetisation. By May it improved to 45-50 per cent and in July to 65-70 per cent. Sa-Dhan expects that collection rates will move up to 80-85 per cent by August-September.

"By September, when the moratorium ends, there will be a jump in collections as the 20 per cent customers who have availed of moratorium, will start repaying. By the end of the year, collection rates should return to pre-Covid levels," said

Vaidyanathan.

Collections rates were 99.08 per cent in the March quarter and 98.11 per cent in June 2019.

The overall write off ratio, which stood at 0.52 per cent in the March quarter and 0.90 per cent in June 2019, shot up to 2.57 per cent in the last quarter. Uttarakhand recorded a write-off ratio of 10.31 per cent, Delhi 8.35 per cent, Maharashtra 5.88 per cent, Gujarat 5.53 per cent and Uttar Pradesh 4.72 per cent. Industry-wide portfolio at risk-30 days deteriorated to 1.89 per cent from 1.78 per cent in March.

"Nationwide lockdown and extension of moratorium led to lower repayments in April, however after relaxations and opening up of the economy, now the repayment rate is at 65-70 per cent and is expected to increase to 80-85 per cent in August and September," said P Satish, Executive Director, Sa-Dhan.

Taxpayers  
don't have  
to report big  
transactions

New Delhi, Aug. 17: Taxpayers will not be required to mention their high-value transactions in their income tax returns, officials in the know of the development said.

"There is no such proposal to modify income tax return forms," an official said, responding to reports of a proposal to expand reportable financial transactions to include hotel payments over Rs 20,000, life insurance premium payment over Rs 50,000 and health insurance premium payment over Rs 20,000, donations and payment of school/college fees over Rs 1 lakh a year.

Any expansion in reporting under the statement of financial transactions (SFT) will mean that such reporting of high-value transactions to the I-T department will be done by financial institutions, they said.

Only third parties would report high-value transactions to the I-T department as per the Income Tax Act. Such information would be used to identify people who are not paying up due taxes.

"There is no such proposal to modify income tax return forms," an official said. "The taxpayer would not need to mention his/her high-value transactions in his/her return."

— PTI

Retail investors play the  
market in June quarterRAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, AUG. 17

## BUYING UP

- Retail holding rises in 1,018 companies in Q1
- HNI holdings in NSE firms rise to 1.84%
- Insurers holdings up 25.28% to ₹7.02 L cr
- FPI holdings fall to 21.05% from 21.17%
- In top 10 firms, FPIs have 52.29% stake, DIIs 38.64% and MFs 36.05%

Retail investors have entered the stock market in a big way during the lockdown period, as evidenced by a rise in their stake in more than 1,000 companies during the April-June 2020 quarter.

"Retail holding went up in 1,018 companies listed on the NSE in the last quarter. The average stock price of these companies too increased by a slightly higher 61.08 per cent," according to Prime Database.

"Unlike seen in previous quarters and years wherein retail would typically buy at the peak and sell at lows, the last quarter saw heavy buying by retail making use of the steep fall in share prices due to the coronavirus pandemic," said Pranav Haldea, managing director, Prime Database Group.

Holdings of high net worth individuals (HNIs) — individuals with more than Rs 2 lakh shareholding — in companies listed on the NSE also increased to 1.84 per cent by value as on June 30, 2020 from 1.78 per cent as on March 31, 2020.

Among the domestic institutions, holdings of insurance companies, in absolute value terms, went up by 25.28 per cent from the March quarter to Rs 7.02 lakh crore as on

June 30, 2020. Life Insurance Corporation of India's holding — across 292 companies where its holding is more than 1 per cent — stood at Rs 5.40 lakh crore in the June quarter, an increase of 26.93 per cent over the previous quarter.

The holding of private promoters in companies listed on the NSE reached an all-time high of 44.43 per cent by value, increasing from 44.25 per cent in March. Private promoter ownership has been steadily increasing for the last 11 years, having increased from 33.61 per cent in June 2009.

While Indian private promoters' holding has gone up from 26.45 per cent to 34.86 per cent over the last 11 years, foreign promoters' holding has gone up from 7.16 per cent to 9.57 per cent.

On the other hand, the holding of the government in companies listed on the NSE hit an all-time low of 6.36 per cent as on June 30, 2020, down from 6.56 per cent as on March 31, 2020.

"Since June 2009, hold-

ing of government has been steadily declining, from 22.71 per cent as on June 30, 2009, due to the government's divestment programme, not enough new listings as also lacklustre performance of many CPSEs relative to their private peers," according to Haldea.

Holdings of domestic mutual funds in companies listed on the NSE reduced to 7.81 per cent by value in June from 7.96 per cent in March.

Holdings of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) also fell from 21.17 per cent in March to 21.05 per cent in June 2020, despite net inflows of Rs 29,516 crore during the quarter. FPI ownership stood at Rs 28.60 lakh crore as on June 30, 2020.

FPIs are the largest non-promoter shareholders in the Indian market and their investment decisions have a huge bearing on the stock prices and overall direction of markets. It is thus time that complete details of all their holdings are made mandatory to be disclosed in India, Haldea said.

"Institutional money continues to incrementally get more concentrated to the top 10 per cent companies by market cap, reflecting a heightened risk-off environment, Haldea said, adding, "The top 10 per cent companies by market capitalisation accounted for 52.29 per cent of overall FPI holding, 38.64 per cent of overall DII holding and 36.05 per cent of overall mutual fund holding."

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** Persistent neck pain gets annoying. Prioritise to enjoy romantic company. Meditate to relieve anxieties. Spending time with old friends and loved ones brings joy.



**Taurus:** Too much travelling could put some in a frenzy. Appreciating your spouse's achievements boosts his/her morale. Avoid smoking and drinking.



**Gemini:** Today's the finest for romance. Stay vigilant of your opponents — they might try to harm you. Train your team members to achieve targets timely.



**Cancer:** Money becomes your focus. Be ready to hit the ground running. You aren't ready to move with vigour yet. Tie up loose ends on ongoing projects.



**Leo:** You'll change your mind about a job offer. Today heralds a new era in your closest relationship. Get a job that allows you control over your finances.



**Virgo:** Once made, you won't change a decision. You'll ignore those trying to convince you that your stance is wrong. Expect a big step up to a far better position in your career.

## You share your b'day with

**Gulzar, Indian lyricist and poet. He is best known for his works Raazi, Haider, Jab Tak Hai Jaan and Slumdog Millionaire.**



**Libra:** You'll draw up big goals and concrete plans. Be kind to yourself always. You may consider making a complete break if talks don't work, but be philosophical.



**Scorpio:** You'd be working closely with someone who holds the keys to your future. You'll increasingly interact with university professors and officials today.



**Sagittarius:** You'll get another chance at raising money. Try to deal with a difficult authority at work. You'll emphasise on partnership strongly and move assertively in life.



**Capricorn:** Watch your nutrition and overall health to avoid feeling drained. You're getting stronger and more independent every day. You've to make a big career negotiation.

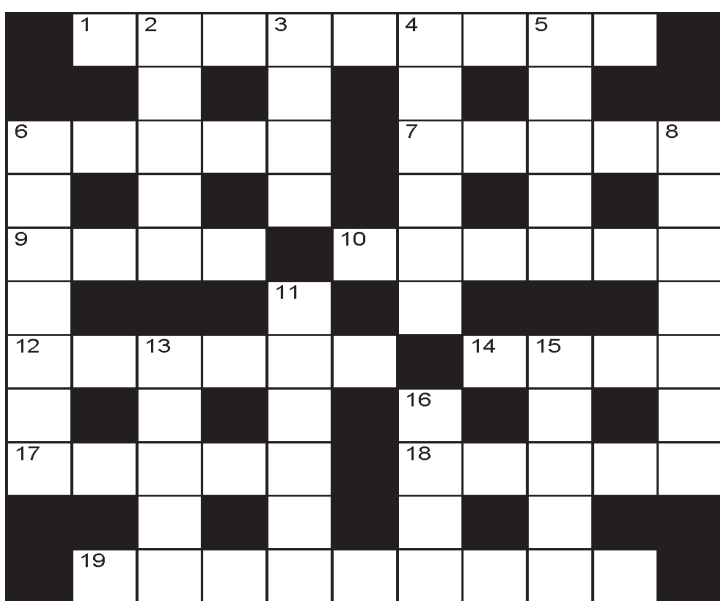


**Aquarius:** Unexpected sources bring profits, easing financial pressures. A friend might upset you. Spiritual gains bring mental peace for some.



**Pisces:** You may lose interest at work and won't pursue your targets. Domestic relations may suffer. Backache may keep troubling. You'll have serious problems with authorities and bosses; avoid unnecessary arguments.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



## Across

- Tendency to expect the worst (9)
- False blow (5)
- Sudden increase (5)
- Lawsuit (4)
- Investigated (6)
- Alternative (6)
- Old wound mark (4)
- Surly youth (5)
- Shun (5)
- Fatigue (9)

## Down

- Goes (5)
- Satisfy fully (4)
- Wretchedness (6)
- Small tree (5)
- Industrial plant (7)
- Put up with (7)
- Hue (6)
- Furniture item (5)
- Wooden shoes (5)
- Principal (4)

## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

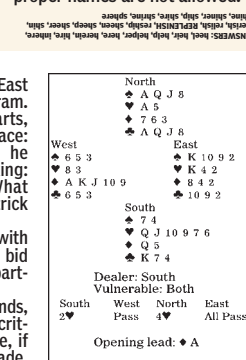
- Across:** 1. Summoned, 7. Reins, 8. Satin, 9. Tiered, 10. Also, 12. News, 14. Thrive, 17. Envoy, 18. Brace, 19. Graduate.
- Downs:** 1. Seize, 2. Master, 3. Out, 4. Extol, 5. Pretended, 6. Uncovered, 11. Phobia, 13. Waver, 15. Inane, 16. Eyed.

## Word Mine

H  
R  
S  
I  
P  
E  
E  
L  
N

TODAY'S RATINGS: 18 AVERAGE: 20  
GOOD: 22 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.



## Jumble

REUVC  
TOHOP  
FNELEN  
EEESDC

Answers: JOINT SHAKY BITTER ABRUPT

Answer: To name the body of water Magellan traveled through, she needed to — THINK 'STRAIT'

the contract goes down. But if he switches to a club or leads a third diamond, declarer gets home, his spade loser eventually being discarded on dummy's fourth club.

How does West know? By watching East's cards. After signaling discouragement at trick one with the diamond two, East could play either the four or the eight on the second round. Here, East follows suit with the eight, his higher card being a suit-prefer-

ence signal for spades, the higher of the two remaining side suits. Alternatively, if East had had the club king, he would have played the diamond four at trick two.

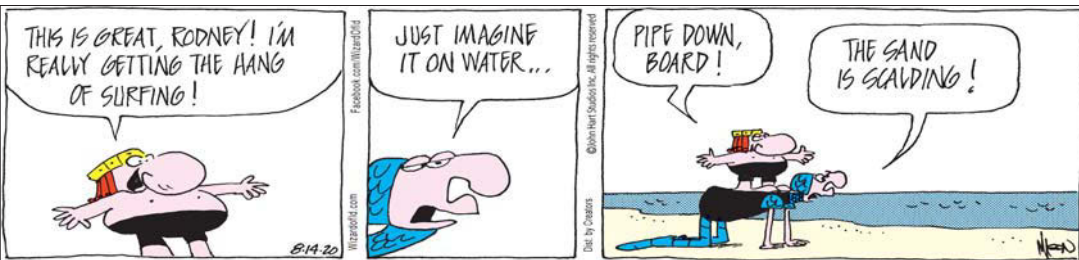
These signals apply only if the defender's cards cannot win a trick. Do not waste critical cards.

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

bridge  
PHILLIP  
ALDER

**SIGNAL WHILE  
YOU  
FOLLOW SUIT**

Napoleon Hill, who was a self-help author, wrote, "When defeat comes, accept it as a signal that your plans are not sound, rebuild those plans and set sail once more toward your coveted goal."

Today's deal features an important defensive signal that is not employed by most players below the expert level. But it isn't so difficult to benefit -- as long as you and your partner carefully watch each other's cards.

Over the South and East hands in the diagram. Against four hearts, West leads the diamond ace: three, two, five. Next, he cashes the diamond king: six, eight, queen. What should West lead at trick three?

After South opened with a weak two, North bid what he hoped his partner could make.

After two top diamonds, West's next play is critical. As the cards lie, if West switches to a spade,



## SHORT TAKES

## Ronnie wraps up sixth World title

**Washington:** Ronnie O'Sullivan became world snooker champion for the sixth time and at the age of 44 by beating fellow Englishman Kyren Wilson 18-8 in the final.

O'Sullivan moved to within one of the all-time record of world titles, held by Stephen Hendry, and tied the number won by Steve Davis and Ray Reardon.

Regarded as the most talented player ever, O'Sullivan had a tough run to the final, beating Chinese star Ding Junhui in the second round, former world champion Mark Williams in the quarterfinals, and then three-time winner Mark Selby in a spectacular semifinal that went to a decider.

The best-of-35-frame match against Wilson, a first-time finalist, ended up being a procession after O'Sullivan won seven straight frames in Sunday's afternoon session from 10-8 up. Returning for the evening session at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, O'Sullivan needed just one more frame for the win and sealed it with a break of 96. — AP

## Nagal in Prague pre-quarterfinal

**Prague:** India's Sumit Nagal advanced to the pre-quarterfinals of the Prague Challenger tennis tournament after his opponent Jay Clarke of Britain retired hurt here on Monday.

Nagal, ranked 127 in the world, was leading 6-3, 5-7, 4-1, when Clarke decided to call it quits in the second round match after playing for over two hours.

The 22-year-old Indian, playing his first competitive match since his Davis Cup encounter against Croatia's Marin Cilic in March, had received a bye in the opening round.

Nagal, seeded sixth in the tournament that also features three-time Grand Slam winner Stanislas Wawrinka, will face local favourite Jiri Lehecka in the Round of 16.

Other Indians in the fray include Divij Sharan and N. Sriram Balaji, who will be competing in the doubles events with separate partners.

Sharan will partner Dutchman Robin Haase and they were seeded number one. Balaji will join hands with Belgium's Kimmer Coppejans. — PTI

## Alex grabs points at Austrian GP

**Spielberg, Austria:** A trying day at the Red Bull Ring with a red-flag interrupted race, but Alex Marquez salvaged points to continue his top 15 run in the MotoGP. Stefan Bradl's participation in next week's Styria GP is now confirmed as Marc Marquez continues his recovery.

Weather forecasts were once again proven wrong as glorious sunshine beat down on the Red Bull Ring for the fourth MotoGP race of the year. Both Repsol Honda Team RC213Vs shot off the line, Alex Marquez and Stefan Bradl immediately gaining positions and joining the group battling for the top ten. But a red flag for a dramatic crash at Turn 3 saw the race stopped, restarted and run over 20 laps.

Alex made another strong start from 13th on the grid with the restart, immediately moving into the top 10 as the field roared through the opening corners. The fighting was fierce in the first laps and the MotoGP rookie found himself shuffled down the order after his lightning start. But Alex's consistency saw him stay free of trouble afterwards and benefit from the mistakes of others, moving back into the points.

## Live on TV

## CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Trinidad Knight Riders vs Guyana Amazon Warriors from 7.30 pm; Barbados Tridents vs St Kitts & Nevis Patriots from 3 am (Wednesday). Both matches on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL

Paris-Saint Germain vs RB Leipzig from 12.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## NBA PLAYOFFS

Milwaukee Bucks vs Orlando Magic from 11 pm; Oklahoma City Thunder vs Houston Rockets from 4 am (Wednesday); Los Angeles Lakers vs Portland Trailblazers from 6.30 am (Wednesday). All matches on Sony Six, HD.

United they fall again  
Manchester lose another semifinal, this time in Europe

**Cologne (Germany), Aug. 17:** Manchester United made it an unwanted hat-trick of semifinal defeats this season after losing 2-1 in the Europa League to Sevilla. After losing in the last four of the FA Cup and EFL Cup, United failed to convert a string of chances before Luuk de Jong scored the winning goal for Europa League experts Sevilla.

The Spanish club has won all five of the finals it's reached in Europe's second-level cup competition. Sevilla has the chance to win a record-extending sixth title on Friday in Cologne when its opposition will be either Inter Milan or Shakhtar Donetsk, who play Monday.

Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine Bounou kept his team in the semifinal at 1-1 with crucial saves either side of halftime, before de Jong won it.

With the game at 1-1 and heading for extra time, Sevilla substitute de Jong made the breakthrough in the 78th minute. A cross by Jesus Navas fell kindly for the tall Dutch forward to score his first European goal of the season from close range.

United had taken the lead in the ninth minute with yet another penalty in a season packed with them. Diego Carlos tangled with Marcus Rashford as the United forward had his shot saved, and then Bruno Fernandes stepped up to send the penalty into the top-left corner.

— AP



Sevilla players celebrate after Suso (second from left) scored their first goal during the Europa League semifinal against Manchester United in Cologne, Germany, on Sunday. Sevilla won 2-1. — AP

## Paris giants train guns on Leipzig

**Lisbon, Aug. 17:** The similarities between Paris Saint-Germain and Leipzig end with both clubs trying to reach the Champions League final for the first time.

The French powerhouse will head into Tuesday's semifinal match with its high-profile squad, while the German club comes with a team of mostly untested players.

At the Stadium of Light in Lisbon, it will be

Neymar, Kylian Mbappé and his teammates taking on a Leipzig squad with little Champions League experience.

Leipzig have almost nothing to lose. For PSG, anything short of the title will feel like a disappointment for a club where a priority aim has been to break through with the European title after years of dominance in France.

Leipzig reached the Bundesliga in 2016 and

the Champions League a few years later. In their second Champions League appearance, the German club eliminated Tottenham in the Round of 16 and Atletico Madrid in the quarterfinals.

PSG, managed by German coach Thomas Tuchel, got past Borussia Dortmund in the Last 16 and Atalanta in quarterfinals.

PSG enter the semifinals with the feeling that this finally could be the time

they triumph in Europe.

PSG was eliminated in the Round of 16 in the last three seasons, and in the quarterfinals four straight times before that.

Its last semifinal appearance was 25 years ago, when they lost to AC Milan.

"We don't talk about history, we live at the moment. We are here because we played a great Champions League season," Tuchel said. — AP

## CHAUHAN LAST RITES WITH FULL HONOURS

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** Former India cricketer and Uttar Pradesh cabinet minister Chetan Chauhan, who died of Covid-19 related complications, was on Monday cremated with state honours in Garhmukteshwar, Hapur.

Chauhan was 73 and breathed his last at a Gurugram hospital after battling the dreaded infection for over a month. His body was first taken to his residence in Mayur Vihar before the last rites were performed in Garhmukteshwar.

Chauhan was serving as the Minister of Sainik Welfare, Home Guards, and Civil Security in the Uttar Pradesh cabinet. He is survived by his wife and son Vinayak, who lit the pyre after arriving from Melbourne on Sunday.

"He was cremated with full state honours. The funeral was attended by several bureaucrats and a sizeable crowd gathered to pay their last respects," a Delhi and Districts Cricket Association official, who attended the funeral, said.

Chauhan was the legendary Sunil Gavaskar's longest serving opening partner and together the duo scored more than 3,000 runs, including 12 century stands.

He played 40 Tests for India and was the first Test cricketer to finish his career with over 2,000 runs but without a century.

He became the second UP minister to succumb to Coronavirus. — PTI

## RAINA TOLD BCCI HE QUIT, A DAY LATE

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** Suresh Raina communicated his retirement decision to the BCCI a day after he made it public, the Board said on Monday, lauding the former India all-rounder for being a key player in the limited-overs format.

Minutes after the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni announced his international retirement on August 15, 33-year-old Raina followed his mentor in doing the same, surprising many.

"Attacking left-hand batsman Suresh Raina officially communicated to BCCI on Sunday about his decision to retire from international cricket," said the BCCI in a statement.

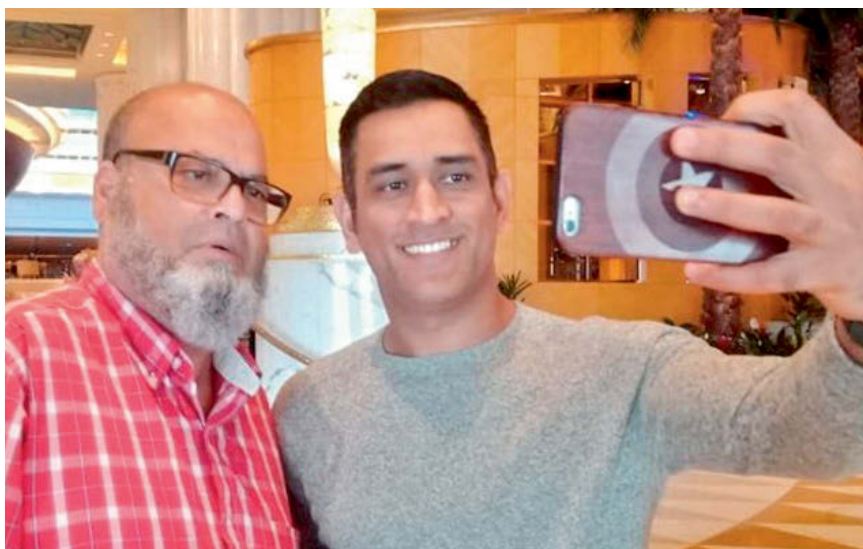
The usual norm is players informing the BCCI before announcing retirement.

Raina represented India in 18 Tests, 226 ODIs and 78 T20Is in an international career spanning 13 years. He also had the honour of captaining the team briefly.

"Under his captaincy, India registered a 3-2 series victory in West Indies and a 2-0 win over Bangladesh in ODIs and a 2-0 T20 International series win in Zimbabwe," the statement added.

Raina, who scored a century on debut in Tests, is also the first Indian to slam hundreds in all three formats of the game and his centuries were scored outside India.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah paid a glowing tribute to the southpaw. — PTI



Former Indian cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni clicks a selfie with Mohammad Bashir Bozai, his Chicago-based Pakistan-born fan, in this file photo.

## Dhoni's fan from Pakistan will quit watching cricket

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** In Karachi-born Mohammad Bashir Bozai's vow to give up watching India-Pakistan play at ICC events, obsessive fandom follows Mahendra Singh Dhoni into retirement, adding to things like jersey number and disciples such as Suresh Raina.

Travelling the world to watch the arch-rivals in action doesn't make sense anymore to Bashir, aka 'Chacha Chicago', who endured abuses from Pakistani fans while cheering for Dhoni.

The well-known *chacha*, instead, plans to visit Ranchi to meet the man whose sphere of influence spreads far and wide.

"Dhoni has retired and so have I. I don't see myself travelling for cricket again with him not being around. I loved him and he loved me

**Dhoni has retired and so have I. I don't see myself travelling for cricket again with him not being around.**

— MOHAMMAD BASHIR BOZAI  
M. S. Dhoni fan

back," Bashir said from Chicago, where he runs a restaurant.

"All great players have to call time one day but his retiring makes me sad and brings back a lot of precious memories. He deserved a grand send-off but again he is beyond that," he added.

The unspoken bond between Bashir and Dhoni blossomed after the 2011 World Cup semifinal between India and Pakistan. A ticket for arguably the biggest game of the Cup in Mohali was a precious commodity but

Dhoni arranged it for the 65-year-old, enough for him to "unconditionally love" the World Cup-winning captain for life.

For someone who survived three heart attacks and cris-crossed the globe to see Dhoni in flesh and blood, cricket will never be the same. Now that he is done attending live games, his next stop is Ranchi. "I will go to his house in Ranchi when things get normal (post Covid-19 pandemic). That is the least I can do to wish him all the best for the future. I will also ask Ram Babu (another super fan, from Mohali, to come with me). I would have travelled to see him in the IPL but there are travel conditions and with my heart condition, it is not safe to do so," said Bashir, whose wife hails from Hyderabad (India). — PTI

## COVID | SCARE

## Simona says no to Grand Slam

**New York, Aug. 17:** Wimbledon champion Simona Halep will skip the US Open, saying she is putting her health first and prefers to stay in Europe amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

Halep, a former top-ranked player who is currently No.2, won the title in Prague on Sunday.

"After weighing up all the factors involved and with the exceptional circumstances in which we are living, I have decided that I will not travel to New York to play the (at)usopen," Halep wrote on Twitter.

"I always said I would put my health at the heart of my decision and I therefore prefer to stay and train in Europe," she wrote.

Six of the top eight women in the WTA rankings won't play in New York. No.1 Ash Barty and defending champion Bianca Andreescu have also withdrawn from the tournament. Other women who won't be playing include No.5 Elina Svitolina, No.7 Kiki Bertens and No.8 Belinda Bencic.

Rafael Nadal, the men's defending champion, has also withdrawn from the tournament, but Novak Djokovic has said he will play. The US Open is scheduled to start at Flushing Meadows on Aug. 31.

Irina Khromacheva of Russia will replace Halep in the main draw, according to the United States Tennis Association. — AP

## NISHIKORI TESTS POSITIVE FOR VIRUS

**New York, Aug. 17:** Japan's Kei Nishikori, the 2014 US Open runner-up, said he has contracted Covid-19 and has withdrawn from an ATP event in New York with this year's US Open only two weeks away.

World number 31 Nishikori said he took the test and received the positive result on Sunday in Florida and will isolate himself despite few symptoms. He and his team plan more tests.

"I have some unfortunate news. This morning, while still in Florida, I got tested for Covid-19 and tested positive," Nishikori said in a statement posted on social media.

**Boxer Sarita Devi is Covid positive**

Back in India, former world champion boxer L. Sarita Devi on Monday tested positive for Covid-19 along with her husband Thoiba Singh but both of them are asymptomatic. The couple are based in Imphal. "Me and Sarita have tested positive. We are right now moving to a Covid-19 care facility in Imphal. Both of us have no symptoms at all," Thoiba said. — PTI

## FAN FRAME



Ravindra Sharma (centre) took this photo with former Indian cricket captain Gundappa Viswanath (left). Viswanath scored 6,080 runs in the 91 Tests he played between 1969 and 1983, scoring 14 centuries and 35 half-centuries in 155 innings.

## BRADY BAGS BRAGGING RIGHTS AT LEXINGTON

**Lexington (Kentucky, USA), Aug. 17:** Wearing a pandemic-appropriate mask, Jennifer Brady walked over to accept the first WTA trophy of her career, making sure to apply hand sanitiser before raising the new hardware overhead.

Brady claimed her initial tour-level title at the Top Seed Open on Sunday, overcoming some shaky serving and using a five-game run to seize control for a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Jil Teichmann in the final.

It was the first professional tennis event in the United States since the start of the Coronavirus outbreak, and no spectators were allowed. The unusual circumstances did not bother Brady at all.

She did not drop a set throughout the hard-court tournament and ceded only 24 games in all. It was a perfect way to prepare for the US Open, which begins August 31 in New York. — AP

## Bucks, Lakers in focus at playoffs

**Miami, Aug. 17:** An NBA season unlike any other shifts into high gear with the start of the playoffs in the league's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

In a season reshaped by the Coronavirus pandemic, home court advantage is just a memory.

Fans are banned from the campus where the league has so far successfully operated without a positive Covid-19 test. But the price is that players know that the deeper their teams' playoff run the longer they remain isolated from their families and friends.

"This is going to be the toughest championship you could ever win," Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo, the reigning Most Valuable Player, had said.

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