

SHORT TAKES

Man held for robbing his wife's phone

New Delhi: The police have arrested a 38-year-old man who robbed the mobile phone of his wife to teach her a lesson after she left him, officials said on Friday. The accused has been identified as Vinod, a resident of Badarpur, they said. He was earlier involved in 51 different cases, including robbery, snatching and theft, police said. The man and his wife had been living apart for the last five to six months. The accused had shifted to Faridabad in Haryana, a senior police officer said. On Thursday, a woman named Nisha, also a resident of Badarpur, filed a complaint that a man with knife in his hand had entered her house forcibly and robbed her mobile phone. Later, she said her husband Vinod had robbed her phone. She also said Vinod had also threatened her with dire consequences, police said. "Police got information that Vinod was seen in Basantpur in Faridabad and he was apprehended after a trap was laid near Lakhpat Colony," DCP (southeast) R P Meena said. During interrogation, Vinod told the police that he along with his associates Chandan, Rajesh and Ravi used to steal mobile phones in buses.

2 members of 'Thak Thak' gang arrested

New Delhi: The Delhi police has arrested two alleged members of Thak-Thak gang and recovered jewellery worth over ₹1 crore, officials said on Friday. The accused have been identified as Sandeep (22), a resident of Inderpuri, and Santosh (20), a resident of Madangiri, they said. The police said that an incident of snatching of jewellery by the 'Thak-Thak' gang was committed on Wednesday at Rani Jhansi Road. "The police received information regarding the two suspected persons involved in the crime. Thereafter, a trap was laid near Central Market and the accused were apprehended," DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said. During interrogation, both the accused disclosed that they indulged in several cases of theft and robbery by using the same modus operandi. They threw some oil on the bonnet of the targeted car, which gave out fumes and foul smell upon heating, the DCP said.

BSES launches AC replacement scheme

New Delhi: The BSES discoms have launched a replacement scheme for its consumers in Delhi to have energy-saving air conditioners and fans for substantial discount, a company spokesperson said. The BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) and the BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) have been promoting energy conservation by promoting safer and sustainable technologies, according to the spokesperson. Under the scheme, consumers in south, west, east and central Delhi can exchange their old ACs with the new energy-efficient five-star rated ACs at a substantial discount of up to 64 per cent. The BRPL has also launched a fan replacement scheme, wherein consumers can replace old fans with energy-saving ones at discount up to 67 per cent. A similar scheme may also be launched for BYPL consumers of east and central Delhi, he said. The consumers can avail the schemes by calling on the helpline numbers or visiting websites of the discoms, the BSES spokesperson said.

50-yr-old car driver killed in road crash

Noida: A 50-year-old man was killed after his speeding car collided with a truck on a highway in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, police said on Friday. Maan Singh Tomar was on his way to Ghaziabad when the incident occurred in Badalpur police station area on late Thursday night, the police said. "Tomar was a resident of Ghaziabad and he had come to Dadri in Greater Noida. He was returning home alone in the car when it collided with the truck near Accheja village. He died on the spot," a police official said. The truck involved in the incident has been impounded while its driver managed to flee the spot, the official said. The body has been sent for post-mortem and further proceedings are underway, the police said.

City's electric vehicle policy aims to tackle pollution

Incentives of up to ₹1.5 lakh for cars ■ ₹30K benefits for autos & 2-wheelers

SANJAY KAW
New Delhi, Aug. 7

The AAP government, on Friday, notified the electric vehicle (EV) policy, which aims to reduce pollution and generate employment opportunities in the national capital.

Under the policy, the government will provide incentives of upto ₹1.5 lakh for the purchase of new electric cars. An incentive of up to ₹30,000 will be provided for autos, e-rickshaws, two-wheelers, and freight vehicles.

This makes Delhi the first region in the country to have a dedicated policy to promote electric mobility.

The AAP government had announced the EV policy in 2018 and it was passed by the Cabinet last year after long deliberations with experts and considering public feedback. The policy will be valid for three years, following which it will be reviewed.



► The government will provide incentives of upto ₹1.5 lakh for the purchase of new electric cars. An incentive of up to ₹30,000 will be provided for autos, e-rickshaws, two-wheelers, & freight vehicles.

The incentives being provided by the Delhi government will be in addition to the subsidies offered by the Centre through the FAME II (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid) and Electric Vehicles) scheme. Along with all these, the Delhi government will also waive off road tax and registration fee on all new EVs.

The Delhi EV policy includes a scrappage policy that will offer purchase incentive when a customer will scrap an old ICE (internal combustion

engine) vehicle and purchase a new electric vehicle. This makes Delhi government the first to announce a scrappage policy in the country.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "We are also going to give a scrapping incentive for those wanting to exchange their petrol or diesel-run vehicles. In the country, this is the first time that scrapping incentive is being given."

The government will also establish a State EV Board which will be chaired by the city trans-

port minister. A dedicated cell will be tasked with the execution of the policy and a separate fund will be created to finance it.

In order to amplify the usage of EVs, the government will also be working on the infrastructure development as well and expects 5 lakh vehicles to be registered in the next five years. It is also planning to set up 200 charging stations in one year and install an electric station every 3 km.

Underlining the need to have more EVs on Delhi roads, Mr Kejriwal said that the need to have clean mobility is crucial in the battle against pollution.

He said, "We have worked towards bringing down pollution by 25 per cent but we are not satisfied. The lockdown period revealed clear skies and now that we are moving back towards normalcy, we don't want that kind of development that contributes to pollution."

APPOINTMENT OF BJP DIST PRESIDENTS

'Those trying to influence process will be punished'

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7



Adesh Gupta

After Lok Sabha MP Gautam Gambhir questioned the way feedback exercise is being carried out to shortlist names for the post of district presidents in the party, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said that those who tried to influence the process will be punished.

Last month, agitated over a section of leaders who were trying to sabotage the process, Mr Gambhir raised the issue with the party's leadership.

Mr Gupta told this newspaper that he had a word with Mr Gambhir and that his concerns will be addressed before the formation of a new team of Delhi BJP.

"I talked to Mr Gambhir and discussed the concerns raised by him. A proper inquiry will be done to find out the truth. Anyone found guilty of influencing the exercise will be punished with

strict action for sabotaging a free and transparent exercise," Mr Gupta added.

Sources in the party pointed out that Mr Gupta is unhappy and agitated after it came to his notice that some senior office bearers were trying to influence a participatory process of selecting district presidents.

On July 22, this newspaper had reported that Delhi BJP vice president and co-observers, for seeking probable names for president of Shahdara district, Rajiv Babbar called a party leader to suggest three names for the post.

► **LAST MONTH**, agitated over a section of leaders who were trying to sabotage the process, Gautam Gambhir raised the issue with the party's leadership. Adesh Gupta said that he had a word with Mr Gambhir and that his concerns will be addressed before the formation of a new team

"As per the direction of the state leadership, the said party leader suggested three names on phone and within 10 minutes state unit general secretary Kuljeet Chahal called the same leader and asked why the former did not suggest names he gave and also used some strong words," a party leader had said.

It is also learnt that Mr Gambhir, under whose Lok Sabha constituency Shahdara district of the party falls, called Mr Babbar and pointed out that being a party observer he must have maintained some confidentiality.

1,192 new Covid cases take tally to 1.42L

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Delhi recorded 1,192 fresh coronavirus cases on Friday, taking the tally in the city to over 1.42 lakh, while the death toll from the disease mounted to 4,082, authorities said.

Twenty-three fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours, as per the latest health bulletin released on Friday.

On Thursday, the count of daily cases was 1,299 while 15 deaths were reported. The tally of active cases on Friday rose to 10,409 from 10,348 the previous day.

On June 23, the national

► **23 FATALITIES** have been recorded in the last 24 hours. The tally of active cases on Friday rose to 10,409 from 10,348 the previous day. The positivity rate on Friday stood at five per cent while the recovery rate was over 89 per cent. number of containment zones stood at 477.

capital had reported the highest single-day spike of 3,947 till date.

The death toll from coronavirus in Delhi stood at 4,059 on Thursday.

The bulletin on Friday said the death toll from

coronavirus infection has risen to 4,082 and the total number of cases has climbed to 1,42,723.

The positivity rate on Friday stood at five per cent while the recovery rate was over 89 per cent, as per the bulletin.

According to the Friday bulletin, out of the total number of beds in Covid hospitals, 10,502 were vacant.

Also, 2,278 beds in Covid care centres are occupied by persons under quarantine, including travellers who have returned by Vande Bharat Mission and bubble flights, it said.

According to the bulletin, 1,28,232 patients

have recovered, been discharged or migrated so far.

The number of people in home isolation stands at 5,367.

The number of Rapid Antigen Tests conducted on Friday stood at 17,773 while the RT-PCR, CBNAAT and True NAAT tests figures were 5,612, in all adding to 23,385, according to the bulletin.

The total number of tests done till date in Delhi stands at 11,43,703.

The number of tests done per million, as on Friday, was 60,194, it said.

On Friday, the number of containment zones stood at 477.



Delhi Congress workers protest against alleged non-payment of salaries to sanitation workers, marshals, nurses, doctors and others by the government, outside the residence of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

Liquor shops to remain open for 1 more hour

New Delhi, Aug. 7: The Delhi government has extended timings for opening of liquor shops in the national capital by one hour. An official said the move will also help increase the government's revenue.

Before the coronavirus-forced lockdown, liquor shops in the city used to remain open till 10 pm. However, the timing for their operation had been curtailed by an hour when they were allowed to open again in May.

According to an order issued by the excise department on Thursday, liquor shops in the city will now open from 10 am to 10 pm instead of the earlier timing of 10 am to 9 pm. "In pursuance to guidelines issued by chairperson, state executive committee, Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Government of NCT of Delhi vide order no. Dated 31.07.2020, all L-6, L-7, L-8, L-9 and L-10 liquor vends are allowed to open from 10 am to 10 pm instead of 10 am to 9 pm with immediate effect till further orders," the order stated. — PTI

Sexual assault case: 12-yr-old's condition remains critical

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The 12-year-old girl, who was sexually assaulted and has suffered severe head injuries, will need another surgery and her condition continues to remain critical, sources at AIIMS, where she is undergoing treatment, said on Friday. Sources said her platelet count is low and she is admitted at the neurosurgery ICU of the hospital.

"She is in the neurosurgery intensive care unit currently and has to be operated, but then her platelet count is very low. Her condition is being closely monitored. She has a severe head injury," sources said.

On Tuesday, the girl was sexually assaulted at her west Delhi home by 33-year-old Krishan, who also hit her on the face and head with a sharp object.

Her rectum and intestines were injured severely by some kind of impalement for

which she needed immediate intervention and that is why she was operated upon as soon as she reached the hospital, a senior doctor at the AIIMS had said on Thursday.

The brutality involved in the crime has led to an outrage with Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal describing the incident as 'barbaric'.

On Thursday, the Delhi Police arrested Krishan. He told the police that he had entered the girl's house on Tuesday with the intention of burglary.

The gate of the house was partially open and he had entered the premises. He took a suitcase and was leaving the house when the girl saw him and raised an alarm.

The accused took a sewing machine and threw it on the victim. The girl still tried to fight, following which the accused caught her and stabbed her with a scissor several times and fled the spot, a senior police officer said.

DU's online open book exam plan gets HC nod

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The Delhi high court, on Friday, gave its nod to the Delhi University for conducting online open book examination (OBE) for final year undergraduate courses from August 10 with a slew of directions.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said the question papers be made available to students through email and the varsity's portal and they be given extra time to upload the answer sheets. The varsity is directed to send an auto-generated email informing the students that their answer sheets have been received


► **HIGH COURT** said the question papers be made available to students through email and the varsity's portal and they be given extra time to upload the answer sheets. The varsity is directed to send an auto-generated email informing the students that their answer sheets have been received

that their answer sheets have been received, said the high court, which was pronouncing the judgement through video conferencing. "I wish the students

and Delhi University all the best for the exams," Justice Singh said.

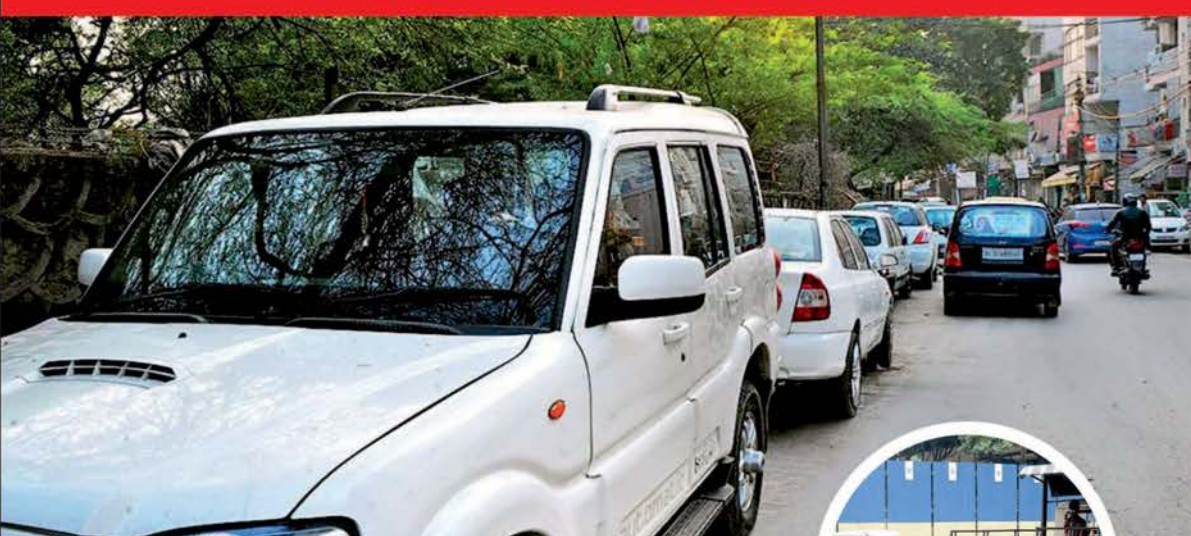
The court passed the verdict on a plea challenging the varsity's decision to hold online OBE, as per the UGC guidelines, for final year undergraduate courses which will be in long form exams.

The Delhi University is scheduled to hold final year undergraduate online OBE from August 10-31. Students who will be left out of the online exams will be given an opportunity to appear in offline exams, to be held sometime in September.




DELHI POLICE
SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

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SHORT TAKES

Bhojpuri actress commits suicide

Mumbai: Bhojpuri film actress Anupama Pathak allegedly committed suicide by in Mumbai's Dahisar suburb on Thursday. The 40-year-old-actor was found hanging at her rented flat on August 2. Police said that a suicide note has been recovered from the late actor's residence. Pathak hailed from Patna and had shifted to Mumbai to work in Bhojpuri films and TV shows. A day before her death, she had shared a Facebook video and said that she felt cheated and was unable to trust anyone. In the video, she spoke about not having friends who can be of help. She allegedly killed herself when her husband was not at home, police said. Reports said that the late actress has mentioned in her suicide note that she invested ₹10,000 in a company named Wisdom Producer Company in Malad, but she did not get the money after maturity date.

Ancient gold coins found in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: An ancient gold coin has been recovered by a farmer in Radhanagar village under Dharmaasala tehsil of Jajpur district. According to reports, when Benudhara Nayak, a farmer, was on Thursday carrying out agricultural activities in his field, he stumbled upon the ancient gold coin. The coin, according to local historians, belongs to 7th Century AD. Weighing about 7.5 gram, the gold coin has two holes on it. While on one side of the coin a king holding a torch has been embossed, the other side features an animal. The local Sarpanch Akkur Charan Nayak said something has been written on both sides of the coin in Mandarin language. "Besides, may be the image of a Chinese king has been embossed on the coin," the sarpanch added.

Birsa Munda statue vandalised

Ramgarh: A statue of freedom fighter Birsa Munda was vandalised in Jharkhand's Ramgarh district, leading to protests demanding action against the culprits, officials said on Friday. The statue was situated along the National Highway-33 near Paikni village in Kuju police outpost area. As the statue was found vandalised, locals protested and blocked the highway that connects Ranchi to Patna for hours, they said. Ramgarh's Sub-Divisional Officer Kirthi Shree said an investigation has been started and those behind the incident will be arrested soon. The building construction division has been asked to repair the statue, he said. — PTI

2 killed, 4 hurt in cross-LoC shelling

Srinagar: Two civilian were killed and four others injured in cross-LoC shelling in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara and Poonch districts on Friday. The Indian and Pakistani armies clashed at a few places along the Line of Control (LoC) also in neighbouring Baramulla and Poonch districts earlier during the day, the reports received here said. Defence spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said that Pakistani troops initiated an "unprovoked ceasefire violation" in Kupwara's Tangdhar sector early Friday and then also in neighbouring Machael sector. While mortar guns and other weapons were used to target the Indian forward posts and civilian areas in Tangdhar, the Pak Army fired small arms and automatic weapons in Machael, he said adding "befitting responses are being given" in both sectors.

Three drug peddlers arrested in J&K dist

Jammu: Three men alleged to be drug peddlers were arrested and 60 kilograms of poppy recovered in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district on Friday, police officials said. During a routine checking, a police team stopped a Punjab-bound truck on the national highway at Jakhani, they said. During the vehicle search, 60 kg of poppy was seized from its driver identified as Sukhpreet Singh along with Jagdev Singh and Jagroop Singh, they added. — PTI

15 die, 50 missing in landslide as heavy rains pound Kerala

Idukki (Kerala), Aug. 7: At least 15 people were killed and around 50 others feared trapped in debris after a landslide triggered by heavy rains flattened a row of dwelling units of tea estate workers at Pettimudi in Rajamala in this high-range district in Kerala early Friday, police and officials said.

Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said 15 people who got trapped in the debris were rescued and a special officer has been appointed to coordinate the relief operations.

The incident is said to have occurred in the wee hours when a huge mound of earth fell on the "row houses" and two children and five women were among the deceased, most of whom were plantation workers from neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

Efforts were underway amid continuing rains to



A devotee near the flooded Aluva Shiva Temple after heavy rains in Kochi on Friday. The entire district was put on red alert for extremely heavy rainfall. — PTI

locate the missing people in the first major rain-related mishap since the onset of South West monsoon last month that brought back memories of devastation caused by floods and landslides in the previous two years in the state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Union

Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed anguish at the loss of lives in the landslide.

Three injured have been admitted to a private Medical College Hospital in Kolenchery in Ernakulam district and one in Tata General Hospital at Munnar. Cooking utensils buried in mud, asbestos and tin

sheets strewn around were all there to be seen at the area, which was the habitation of around 80 odd workers at the picturesque area near a tea plantation, about 30 kms from the tourist town of Munnar. Big boulders are also scattered around the site.

Addressing a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram, the Chief Minister said 15 people died in the mishap.

Teams of National Disaster Response Force personnel were on their way to Pettimudi for joining the rescue operations and the government has also sought an Indian Air Force helicopter to assist in the mission, he said.

Crime Branch IG Gopesh Agarwal has been appointed as special officer for coordinating the rescue and rehabilitation operations in Pettimudi, Vijayan said.

Condoling the death of

workers in the tragedy, the chief minister announced initial solatium of ₹5 lakh each for the kin of the dead. Treatment expenses for the injured will be borne by the government, he said.

In view of the Pettimudi incident, the district collectors have been directed to ensure safety and security of the workers staying in dwelling units in the tea estates.

The Prime Minister's Office said in a tweet that an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh each from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) would be given to the next of kin of those killed in the landslide. ₹50,000 each would be given to those injured.

"Pained by the loss of lives due to a landslide in Rajamalai, Idukki. In this hour of grief, my thoughts are with the bereaved families," PM Modi tweeted. — PTI



Showik Chakraborty, brother of Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty, arrives at Enforcement Directorate office for questioning in Mumbai on Friday. — PTI

ED grills Rhea Chakraborty in laundering case

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 7

CBI officials will visit Patna soon

New Delhi: A day after registering an FIR against six accused and others in the death case of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, the CBI is all set to collect relevant documents from Bihar police in a day or two, sources said. The agency, sources said, may send a team of its officials to meet family members of late Sushant Singh Rajput and others in Patna on Saturday. It is also believed that after collecting relevant documents from Bihar Police, CBI sleuths may meet Krishna Kishore Singh, the 77-year-old father of Rajput.

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

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

The actor arrived at the ED office in south Mumbai around noon accompanied by her brother Showik Chakraborty and manager Shruti Modi. The ED case is based on the FIR filed by the

Bihar police after the statement of Rajput's father. The agency is also probing some companies that were floated with addresses registered at residential premises. These companies were non-functional, making them likely shell firms, a front to launder money.

"The verification of these companies is underway to check if they acted as fronts for laundering any funds. Other aspects including funds' transfer are also being probed," said ED officials.

Gehlot govt lost people's confidence, says Poonia

Jaipur, Aug. 7: BJP state president Satish Poonia on Friday said the Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan has lost people's confidence as it has no concern for them.

Mr Poonia said MLAs are enjoying their stay in a five-star hotel in Jaisalmer by revelling in music but have no concern for the people who are suffering due to "misgovernance".

Congress MLAs are enjoying music in Jaisalmer. They are mocking the public. The governance has totally failed, Mr Poonia said. He claimed the activities of MLAs clearly show that they have no concern for people.

Replying to a question related to the allegations of phone tapping, Poonia said that few incidents in the past have made it clear that the government gets phones tapped. He alleged that the state government did not follow the legal procedure for phone tapping and has been doing it illegally. The Rajasthan police clarified that it did not tap the phone number of any legislator, after a social media message alleged that at least six MLAs holed up in the Jaisalmer hotel have been put under surveillance. — PTI



Tourists visit Gaganachukki Falls gushing with after water was released from Kabini Dam following heavy rain-fall in neighbouring Kodagu district in Mandya district on Friday. — PTI

Court orders in-camera hearing

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 7

MP HONEYTRAP

▶ FIVE WOMEN and a man were arrested in connection with the high profile honey trap and blackmailing scandal that was busted in in September 2019

▶ SEVERAL BABUS and politicians were found involved in the case

proceedings in the case.

The division bench of Justice S C Sharma and Justice Vivek Russia set August 13 as the next date for hearing in the case,

while hearing the case on Thursday. The special investigation team (SIT) constituted by the state government to probe the sensational issue submitted its status report on it in three sealed envelopes before the court.

The status report contained video statements of the accused and the witnesses in the case, copy of hard disks and electronic materials seized, and names of persons that cropped up during investigation into the scandal.

While pleading for in-camera hearing of the

case, the advocate general said several people were found to be in conversations with the accused during the investigation.

But, conversations between them cannot be a crime and whether some crime has taken place or not, is needed to be probed and therefore, their names should not be made public, he argued. Five women and a man were arrested in connection with the high profile honey trap and blackmailing scandal that was busted in the state in September 2019.

Cong seeks probe into H'yana 'liquor scam'

Chandigarh, Aug. 7: The Congress on Friday sought a high court judge-monitored investigation into the alleged liquor scam in Haryana, saying the BJP-JJP government was trying to sweep things under the carpet.

The state government had formed a special enquiry team in May this year after the alleged theft of liquor from two Sonipat godowns.

The SET submitted its report on July 31 and its contents were made public

by Home Minister Anil Vij on Thursday.

Addressing a joint press conference from separate venues digitally, senior Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala and state party chief Kumari Selja said the Khattar government has been hatching a conspiracy to safeguard the real culprits involved in the liquor scam.

While we had been maintaining that the special enquiry team does not have the powers to investigate and only a special

investigation team (SIT) had such powers, the government went ahead and constituted an special enquiry team two days after announcing an SIT," he said.

Now, under the operation cover-up to sweep things under the carpet, they have said the Vigilance Bureau will conduct further probe based on the SET's observations but we don't expect a fair inquiry and demand a high court judge-monitored investigation, said Surjewala. — PTI

IAF vice chief visits forward air bases

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

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

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

PLA is already unhappy with the construction of 255-kilometer Darbuk-Shayok-Daulat Beg Oldie road, which ends near the airstrip. It provides

all-weather road connectivity with Leh.

Air Marshal Arora visited forward air bases in Ladakh sector of Western Air Command (WAC), said IAF in a statement.

Besides reviewing the operational preparedness at these bases, he interacted with air force personnel of the combat units currently operating at these locations. He was briefed about the operational readiness of IAF assets deployed in the area. He asked IAF personnel to ensure a high state of combat readiness at all times.

During the visit, Air Marshal Arora also flew Chinook and Light Combat Helicopter. IAF has already deployed Sukhoi-30MKI, Mirage 2000 and Jaguar fighter aircraft to advanced positions to counter the threat from China.

Jaishankar, Pompeo discuss Sino-India military stand-off

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The current Sino-Indian military stand-off as part of "recent destabilising actions in the region" by China was understood to have been discussed during a phone call between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo on Friday. During the conversation, both nations also decided to hold a meeting in the four-nation "Quadrilateral" format—involving India, the US, Japan and Australia—in what appears to be a clear intent to increase cooperation amid increasing Chinese military assertiveness in the region.

The US State Department's Principal



S. Jaishankar

Deputy Spokesperson Cale Brown said, in a statement, "Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo spoke today with Indian Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar to discuss ongoing bilateral and multilateral cooperation on issues of international concern, including efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, support the peace process in Afghanistan, and address recent destabilising actions in the region."

The US added, "Secretary Pompeo and Minister Jaishankar reiterated the strength of the United States-India relationship to advance peace, prosperity, and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the globe. Both leaders agreed to continue close cooperation on a full range of regional and international issues and look forward to Quadrilateral consultations and the U.S.-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue later this year." Meanwhile, EAM Jaishankar tweeted on Friday, "A wide-ranging conversation yesterday night with @SecPompeo. Reviewed our bilateral cooperation including working of relevant mechanisms. Shared assessments on regional and global issues."

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All the interested Manufacturers in All Over India may visit <https://konugulu.ap.gov.in> and www.apscsil.in to view and download tender documents at free of cost.

Interested tenders to submit bids should be registered in website <https://konugulu.ap.gov.in> and should Digital Signature Certificates from any Certifying Authority in India. The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature Certificates are mentioned in the website <https://konugulu.ap.gov.in> or contact the helpdesk of Konugulu platform, Phone number: 08645246370/71/72/73/74.

Last date for registration and completion of formalities for the e-auction shall be up to 5:00 PM of 19.08.2020 and the tentative date of online e-reverse auction through AP E-Konugulu platform would be 24.08.2020 from 11 AM onwards.

Sd/- VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
Office of the Ex. Engineer (M-III) Shah-North
LIG Flats, East of Loni Road, Shahdara-Delhi
NIT No. EE(M)-II/SH(N)/TC/2020-21/04 Date : 06.08.2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Executive Engineer M-III/Shah(N) invites tender on behalf of Commissioner EDMC from registered contractors of MCD :-

S.No. : 1. Name of Work : Restoration of road cut made by DJB.

Sub Head : Restoration of road in balance portion of Ward No. 259 and 260 in Babarpur AC-67 NE-III [-] by pdg. RMC from in Ward No. 50-E Shah. (N) in Babarpur. **Eard of Account :** 66/1076. **Tender Amount :** Rs. 36,17,985/- **Earnest Money :** Rs. 72,400/- **Time of Completion :** 03 Months, **Validity of Rates :** 05 Months. **Tender Cost :** Rs. 500/-, **Tender No. :** 319058, **Last Date & Time of Download of Tender Document :** 24.08.2020 upto 14.00 P.M.

The detailed documents can be seen & downloaded by the registered contractors from website <http://mcdetenders.com>. The tender will be opened in the office of E.E.-[M Shah (N)]-III on 26.08.2020.

R.O. No. 36/DPI/East/2020-21 EE-M-III-Shah.(N) Zone

EDMC's Citizens Helpline No. : 155303

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:

1. Name of Work with its location	Manning and Housekeeping of 16 Nos. Traction Substations over Delhi Division.
2. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 2,89,88,369/-
3. Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 2,95,000/-
4. Date & Time of Pre-Bid Meeting	13.08.2020 (11.30 Hrs.)
5. E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	19.08.2020 (00.00 Hrs.) to 02.09.2020 (15.00 Hrs.)
6. E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	02.09.2020 (15.00 hrs.)
7. Fund Allocation	070-410-32
8. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in

E-Tender No.: 08-TRD-NDLS-2020-21 Dated 06.08.2020 1715/2020

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE						
Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	GMDA, GURUGRAM	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF WATER SUPPLY, GURUGRAM. "DESILTING OF S&S TANK NO. 1 INCLUDING EXCAVATION / REMOVAL OF SLUSH AND DISPOSAL OF WITHIN 2 KM FROM WTP, BASAL, AND ALL OTHER WORKS CONTINGENT THERETO." (4RD RE-CALL) + 1 OTHER WORK	06.08.2020 26.08.2020	286.16 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0124-2746623 xen3.infra2.gmda@gov.in
2	GMDA, GURUGRAM	REFLECTORLESS MOTORIZED ELECTRONIC TOTAL STATION (ETS)	05.08.2020 25.08.2020	EMD 241000/-	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	headqes.gmda@gov.in
3	GMDA, GURUGRAM	CONSTRUCTION OF KABARDI PRACTICE HALL/SHED OF SIZE 20 X 20 METRS IN TAU DEVI LAL STADIUM, SECTOR 38, GURUGRAM	21.08.2020	17.71 LACS	https://www.gmda.gov.in/	xen3infra1.gmda@gov.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in
R/O No. SAMVAD-Advt. No.-13/2021/77600000/82146

SHORT TAKES

SAD RS MP Gujral tests Covid positive

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha member Naresh Gujral tested positive for the novel coronavirus on Friday, a day after he had attended a parliamentary standing committee meeting along with several other MPs. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader said he was asymptomatic and fine and that he had informed the Rajya Sabha Secretariat about his infection. The meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on personnel, public grievances, law and justice was held following social distancing norms and members wore face masks during it, he said. After reports came in that Gujral tested positive for COVID-19, TMC Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien again raised the demand for holding meeting of parliamentary standing committees virtually, asserting that there was enough scope to tweak rules. — PTI

7 men climb plant chimney for jobs

Chandrapur: Maharashtra energy minister Nitin Raut on Friday asked seven protesting project-affected persons demanding permanent jobs in Chandrapur Super Thermal Power Station (CSTPS) to come down from the facility's chimney. The seven youth, on stipend work in CSTPS currently, climbed up the chimney of unit number 8 and 9 three days ago and have been perched there since, with appeals by local officials and leaders to call off the protest going unheard. "The government will take a positive decision to resolve the problems of the agitators who have climbed up a chimney. However, protesters should also cooperate with the government and step down from the chimney of CSTPS," Raut was quoted as saying. — PTI

1,074 new Covid cases in Gujarat

Ahmedabad: The count of coronavirus cases in Gujarat rose to 68,885 on Friday with 1,074 new patients being reported since previous evening, the state health department said. Twenty-two COVID-19 patients died during this period, taking the death toll in the state due to the pandemic to 2,606, it said. But in good news, the number of patients who were discharged from hospitals after recovery was more than fresh cases. 1,370 persons were discharged on Friday, taking the total of recovered patients to 51,692. Gujarat coronavirus figures are as follows: Positive cases 68,885, new cases 1,074, deaths 2,606, discharged 51,692, active cases 14,587 and people tested so far 9,30,373. — PTI

BSY responding well to treatment

Bengaluru: Karnataka chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa continues to be stable and is responding well to treatment, the hospital treating him for Covid-19 infection, said on Friday. Yediyurappa's vital parameters are within normal limits, Manipal Hospital Director Dr Manish Rai said in a statement. "He is comfortable, attending to his duties from his room. Our team of specialists are monitoring him closely," the statement said. Since his admission on August 2, the chief minister continues to be stable and is responding well to the treatment, it added. According to CMO officials, the chief minister is engaging in official works like signing files, holding reviews with senior ministers and officials from his hospital room. — PTI

R.S. Prasad tests negative for Covid

New Delhi: Minister for IT and Communications Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday said he has tested negative for Covid-19. Prasad, who is also the Law Minister, had earlier this week gone into self-isolation as per protocol, after he met Home Minister Amit Shah on August 1 evening. In a tweet on Friday, Prasad said, "Friends! My COVID test is negative. The report came today. I was in isolation for the last one week because I had attended a meeting with Amit Shah Ji a day before he was found positive". — PTI

SP seeks Yogi apology over mosque remark

Lucknow, Aug. 7: The Samajwadi Party on Friday sought an apology from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over his remark that he would not attend the inauguration of the mosque to be built in Ayodhya, replacing the demolished Babri Masjid.

After the bhoomi puja for a Ram temple in Ayodhya, Adityanath had said on television that as a yogi and as a Hindu he couldn't go for the inauguration of a mosque.

Reacting to the remark, the opposition SP said he should seek an apology from the people of the state. When contacted, a UP Congress spokesperson, however, refused to comment on the chief minister's remarks over the mosque.

"If you ask me as a chief minister, I have no prob-

lem with any belief, religion or community. If you ask me as a yogi, I will definitely not go because as a Hindu I have the right to express my 'upasana vidhi' (way of worship) and act accordingly," Adityanath had said.

"I am neither 'vaadi or prativadi' (petitioner nor respondent). That is why neither will I be invited, nor will I go. I know, I won't be getting any such invitation, he said.

The day they invite me, secularism of many will be in danger. That's why I want that their secularism should not be in danger and I continue to silently work to ensure that everyone benefits from government scheme without any discrimination," he said.

He claimed that the Congress never wanted a solution to the dispute.



Yogi Adityanath

They wanted the dispute to continue for their political benefit."

"Attending roza-iftar with a skull cap is not secularism. People also know that this is drama. People know the reality," the CM said.

SP spokesperson Pawan Pandey criticised Adityanath over his remarks, charging that he has violated the oath he took while assuming charge as the chief minis-

ter. He is the CM of the entire state, and not only of the Hindu community. Whatever the population of Hindus and Muslims in the state, he is the CM of all. This language of the CM lacks dignity, he said.

He should seek an apology from the people for this," Pandey said. UP Congress media cell convenor Lalan Kumar said, "We don't have any comments on his mosque statement."

But he credited the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi for opening the locks on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid.

Referring to the ruling BJP, the Congress spokesperson said, "They play politics of fake Hindutva. The Congress has always talked about whatever is in the interest of people. Lord Ram is

everyone's, but the BJP wants to show that Ram is theirs alone, he added.

Yogi Adityanath had attended the groundbreaking ceremony Wednesday for a Ram temple in Ayodhya, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the main guest.

Last November, the Supreme Court had settled the Ayodhya land dispute, allowing the construction of the temple at Ram Janmabhoomi by a trust.

The apex court had also ordered the allocation of a five-acre plot of land elsewhere in Ayodhya for the construction of a mosque, in place of the Babri Masjid which was demolished by kar sevaks' in 1992.

A trust has been formed by the Sunni Waqf Board for building this mosque.

— PTI

'Ram Mandir will stand for a thousand years'

Ayodhya, Aug. 7: A member of the trust overseeing the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Friday said its structure will be earthquake resistant and withstand natural calamities for a thousand years.

Addressing reporters at Ayodhya's Karswakkuram, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra general secretary Champat Rai said the foundation of its pillars will be deep as the bridges built on rivers, making the temple earthquake resistant. The temple will be strong enough to withstand nature calamities for a thousand

years, he added. Rai said Larson and Turbo, the company tasked with construction of the temple, has told him that the plan of its foundation will be ready soon as it is in its final phase. We will get the plan passed by the Ayodhya Development Authority after paying the due fee. We don't want any exemption," he said. Champat Rai said the sculptures found during the digging and leveling of the land will be put on display at the temple. He also said the trust has so far around Rs 42 crore in its bank account and people are donating from ₹1 to ₹1 crore.

— PTI

■ '100m doses for India' SII: Coronavirus vaccine will cost about ₹225/dose

New Delhi, Aug. 7: Serum Institute of India (SII) on Friday said it has entered into a new partnership with international vaccine alliance Gavi and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to accelerate manufacturing and delivery of up to 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines for India as well as other low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

"The collaboration will provide upfront capital to SII to help them increase manufacturing capacity now so that, once a vaccine, or vaccines, gains regulatory approval and WHO prequalification, doses can be produced at scale for distribution to India and LMICs as part of the Gavi COVAX AMC mechanism as early as the first half of 2021," SII said in a statement.

The company has set an affordable ceiling price of \$3 (around ₹225) per dose, it added.

The funding will support at-risk manufacturing by SII for candidate vaccines from AstraZeneca and Novavax, which will be available for procurement if they are successful in attaining full licensure and WHO prequalifica-

tion, the statement said. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, via its Strategic Investment Fund, will provide at-risk funding of \$150 million to Gavi, which will be used to support the SII to manufacture the potential vaccine candidates

Market Commitment (AMC), the statement said. "In an attempt to make our fight against COVID-19 stronger and all-embracing, SII has partnered with Gavi and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to advance the manufacturing and delivery of up to 100 million doses of future COVID vaccines for India and low- and middle-income countries in 2021," Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla said.

— PTI



Boats anchored at a Ganga ghat due to Covid-19 pandemic in Varanasi on Friday.

— PTI

'People sans masks to be humiliated'

Chandigarh, Aug. 7: People who step out without a mask in Punjab will face public humiliation, made to stand at the spot for an hour, according to instructions issued by CM Amarinder Singh who also announced a longer curfew in three cities.

According to a government statement, the instructions regarding the mask will be implemented for a week on a trial basis. The violators will be made to stand at the spot for an hour with a mask on, it said.

The CM also announced

PUNJAB

to increase the duration of the night curfew by two hours in Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Patiala after a surge in coronavirus cases, it said.

Currently, the night curfew in the state remains in force from 11 pm to 5 am. But in the three cities, it will be implemented from 9 pm to 5 am.

While answering questions in his weekly #AskCaptain Live session on Facebook, Chief Minister Amarinder

Singh also directed to prepare an integrated management plan for the treatment of the disease at both government and private facilities in all big cities or towns. The instructions were issued as the state witnessed it steepest single-day spike

of 1,063 cases, taking the coronavirus tally to 21,930. Twenty-three fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 539. He urged people not to rush to a private tertiary care facility directly since good treatment is available in government hospitals. There are ade-

quate testing facilities available in the state, he said, adding that four new testing labs will become operational on Monday.

The delay in testing and treatment is the main cause of increasing number of COVID deaths, he said. Expressing concern over a steady increase in infections, the chief minister said with the peak projected to come in Punjab by the end of August or early September, one could not be certain how high the peak of daily cases may go.

— PTI

Nath 'saffronising' Cong, says Digvijay's brother

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, AUG. 7

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

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



Kamal Nath

He was referring to the call given by Mr Nath to all Congress leaders in Madhya Pradesh to recite 'Hanuman Chalisa' and 'Sunderkand' in their houses and nearby temples on August five when Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed the groundbreaking ceremony for Ram temple in Ayodhya.

In fact, Mr Nath had changed his twitter profile by posting a picture showing him in saffron robes, besides organising 'Hanuman Chalisa' recitation in his official residence here on the day.

"We Congressmen are Gandhians. We should not project ourselves as devotees of Lord Ram in public or wearing saffron clothes in public. This will not fetch votes for the party. Instead, this will hurt the image of the party", he said.

"Congress should raise issues of people in public and not try to cultivate an image as pro-Hindutva party," he warned.

SC to govt: Can 4G be restored in some areas of Kashmir?

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the government if there a possibility that that in some areas of Kashmir 4G Internet services can be restored as the court was informed that as per its earlier directions, a high level committee to review the withdrawal of faster 4G internet services have been set-up.

Observing "We cannot say what is happening on the ground, but is there anything that can be done", Justice N.V. Ramana sitting with Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice B.R. Gavai said, "Whats the basis for



Former Union minister Manoj Sinha takes oath as the new lieutenant-governor of Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar on Friday.

— PTI

the decision that has been taken? Is there a possibility that in some areas it can be restored?

The court asked the Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to take instructions and directed the listing of

matter on August 11 for further hearing. The court also asked Attorney General K.K. Venugopal to be present on the next hearing of the matter. Seeking time to take instructions, Mehta told

the court, "The earlier Lt. Governor Girish Chandra Murmu gave a press interview. Now the new L-G has been appointed. We need time to file a response."

The hearing saw, Solicitor General Mehta telling the court that they have viled the status report and as directed by the court a committee to review curbs on the 4G internet services has been constituted and thus there is no contempt as alleged by the petitioner Foundation for Media Professionals.(FMP)

The Solicitor General also informed the court that the directions for periodic review of the decision to curb 4G services too have been complied

with. Objecting to government taking time on one pretext or the other, senior counsel Huzefa Ahmadi told the court that in the last hearing of the matter Solicitor General appearing for J&K took time to go through the rejoinder filed by the petitioner FMP and now they are taking time again.

In the last hearing of the matter on July 28, 2020, the petitioner the Foundation for Media Professionals had told the top court that J&K's L-G Murmu has favoured the restoration of 4G Internet services in the J&K. The J&K administration by its March 26 order had temporarily restricted the Internet speed in the Valley to 2G.



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar during his visit to inspect Gandak Barrage on the India-Nepal border at Valmiki Nagar in West Champaran district on Friday.

— PTI

Send me body if you have killed him: Jawan's father

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, AUG. 7

The father of Army jawan Shaker Manzoor, abducted by suspected militants in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Kulgam district last week, on Friday asked his captors "send me his dead-body if you have killed him".

In a purported audio message uploaded on social media, Manzoor Ahmed, father of the Territorial Army soldier, said, "If my son is not with you, tell me...but if you have killed him send me his body."

Shaker was reportedly abducted by gunmen after

they intercepted his car while he was travelling through Damhal Hanjipora, a militancy-infected area of Kulgam, on Sunday evening. Before taking him along forcibly, the suspected militants reportedly torched his Maruti Brezza, the police sources here had said. Next day his parents while appealing for his release said that they needed him the most "to stay alive". The J&K police and the Army had said that a massive search operation was soon launched in the area to secure the release of the soldier who is a resident of Harmain village of Shopian district.

THE ASIAN AGE

8 AUGUST 2020

RBI loan policy spells relief for borrowers

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

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

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

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

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

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

When documents disappear

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

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

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

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



Playing cops & robbers in Mumbai-ishstyle drama



Shobhaa De

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

MEAGRE PRASAD

It would be facile to miss the political undercurrent of the Ayodhya *bhoomipujan* ceremony. But then a decade is too long in politics to be sustained by a lone majoritarian theme. This event could have carried more political traction had it come later down the line and not chosen to leverage votes for the Bihar election. Even here, much of its effect could get neutralised by the weakening charisma of Nitish Kumar and by anti-incumbency. A struggling economy reckoning with Covid will yield but a meagre puja prasad for the government.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

DELHI SHOCKER

A REPREHENSIBLE CRIME has taken place in the capital that has pierced the conscience of the nation. A 12-year-old was attacked and sexually assaulted on Tuesday by a robber who injured her so badly that she needed two surgeries to save her life. A 33-year-old man has been arrested who confessed to the crime. But such attacks have become commonplace and police and society must work together to pinpoint the causes.

B.O. Changa
Murshidabad

FIGHT DEPRESSION

MELANCHOLIA is a common malaise in Bollywood. Treated in its most casual form as anxiety and mood swings, it is often seen as a generic representation of the volatile human mind. However, it has robbed movie fans of artistes of the calibre of Guru Dutt and Sushant Singh Rajput. Ashutosh Bhakre, Sameer Sharma and Anupama Pathak are the latest to join that list. Beware the malaise and fight back.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

BEHIND THE BLAST

APROPOS THE EDITORIAL, "In Beirut, avoidable tragedy" (August 7), the devastating blast in Beirut has taken a heavy toll on a city scarred by civil war. While the cause of the explosion is still not certain, prima facie, negligence, not foul play or terrorism, is the culprit.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Manan Kumar



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Justice suffered a blow in

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

Why the foundation ceremony in times of crises?

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

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

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

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

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

run for a third straight win in Lok Sabha elections.

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

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

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

IN BRIEF

China sentences Canadian to death

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

Malaysia's Mahathir forms new party

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

Bush's new book honours immigrants

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

Iran is No. 1 sponsor of terrorism: US

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

BOY SWEEPED OUT TO SEA SURVIVES WITH FLOATING SKILLS

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

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

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

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

Trump cites India to ban TikTok, WeChat



Donald Trump

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Agencies

Global virus cases top 19 million, deaths top 7 lakh

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP

Russia's race for virus cure raises concerns

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

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

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

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

— AP

GERMAN STATE SHUTS 2 SCHOOLS AFTER NEW CASES

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

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

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

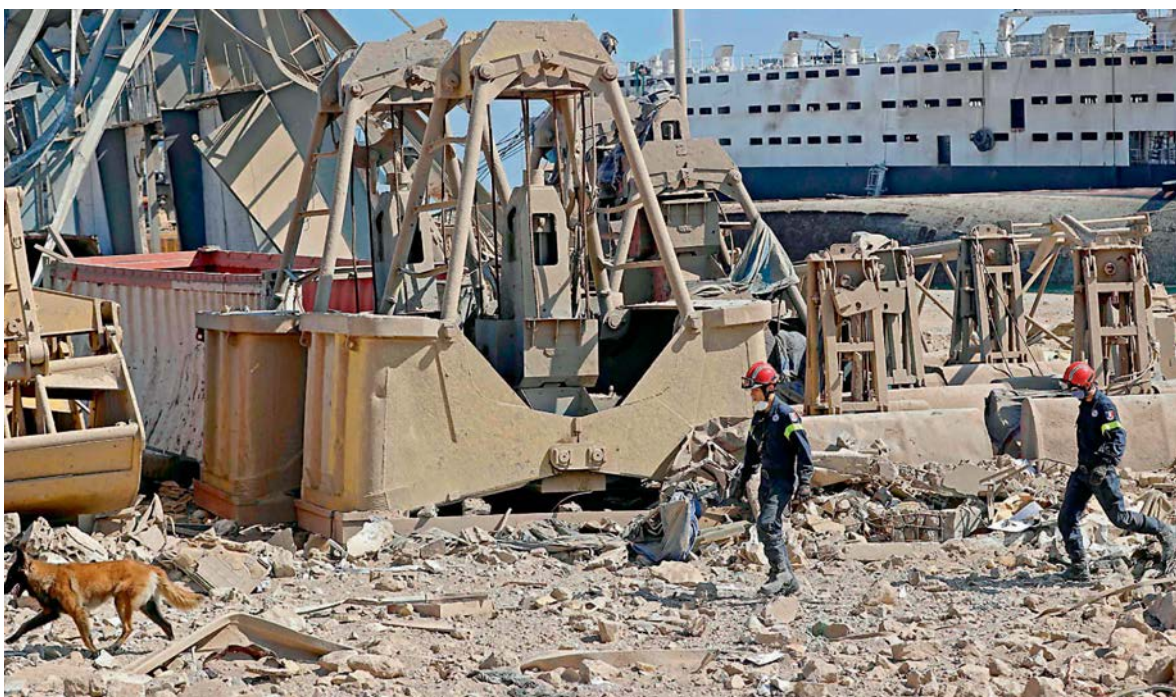
— PTI

BEIJING SEES FIRST NEW LOCAL VIRUS CASE IN WEEK

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

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

— PTI



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

— AFP

Lebanon Prez suspects missile caused blasts

Rejects international probe as an attempt to dilute truth

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

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

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

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

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

ISRAELI ARMY DOWNS DRONE FROM LEBANON

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

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

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

— AFP

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

What ignited the massive shipment of fertiliser remains unclear — officials have said work had recently begun on repairs to the warehouse, while others suspected fireworks stored either in the same place or nearby.

Near the seat of the explosion, by the carcass of the port's giant grain silos, rescue teams from

Rescuers scour blast zone as arrests made

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

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

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

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

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

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

Four bodies were uncovered near the port's control room, where a significant number of people were expected to have been working at the time of the blast.

— AFP

JUDGE DISMISSES TRUMP BID TO DELAY LAWSUIT

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

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

— AP

Afghans meet on freeing prisoners

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AP



Lord Palmerston. — Twitter

RESIDENT CAT PALMERSTON SET TO RETIRE IN UK

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

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

— PTI

LANDSLIDE | VICTORY

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

Rajapaksa clan wins 2/3rd majority in Lanka polls

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

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

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

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

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

stand disappointed during its tenure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI



Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa greets Buddhist monks at his home in the southern town of

quick BITES

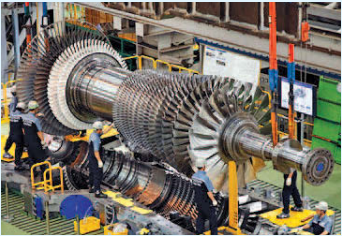
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,040.57	0.04
Nifty 50	1,1214	0.12
S&P 500*	3,346.33	-0.08
Dollar (₹)	74.93	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.12	0.53
Euro (₹)	88.64	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	55,120₹725	1.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.54	-0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.886	0.025
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.531	-0.005

* As of 9:30 PM IST

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

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

BHEL begins civil works at WB power plant



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

FB employees to work from home until July 2021

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

Mitsubishi Motors chairman resigns on health grounds

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

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Higher loans for gold may put banks at risk

■ NBFCs too demand similar relaxation in LTV for them

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Increasing loan-to-value ratio to 90 per cent for gold loans will put the portfolio under risk for banks. NBFCs, which were left out from the LTV decision, have sought parity from the RBI.

RBI had on Thursday allowed banks to increase the LTV of gold loans for non-agricultural purposes from 75 per cent to 90 per cent till 31 March 2021.

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

● **PRINCIPAL AND** interest components will not be fully covered by the collateral if the bank provides 90 per cent of the value of the gold as loan.

● **IF THE gold prices** fall from their record high levels, it will drag down the value of the collateral even lower. This will increase the chances of borrower defaulting or renouncing their asset.

est components will not be fully covered by the collateral if the bank provides 90 per cent of the value of the gold as loan.

Further, if the gold prices fall from their record high levels, it will drag down the value of the

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

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

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

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

“Now RBI has gone back on what it has been teaching us,” said a gold loan industry veteran. The NBFCs have made a representation to the RBI governor seeking parity in LTV.

A maximum 75 per cent LTV against 90 per cent by banks will dent the market share of NBFCs, finds Brickwork.

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

RBI appoints panel on debt restructuring

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With demand far outstripping supply, prices for Hong Kong private homes have surged more than six times since 2003. There has only been one year of annual decline in that period — a drop of 3.6



erties belonging to a mainland Chinese investor recently sold at discounts of 25 per cent and 12 per cent to their respective purchase prices of around HK\$30 million (\$3.9 million) and HK\$20 million, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter. The person declined to be identified discussing client matters. Henry Choi, a director at

China: Buy local to skip foreign food

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

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

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

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

THE GREAT FACE-OFF

Trump told to act on China firms

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

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

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

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

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

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

FC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 7

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

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

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

The collaboration will

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

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

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

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

Under the new collaboration, AstraZeneca's candidate vaccine, if successful, will be available to 57 Gavi-eligible countries. Novavax's candidate, if successful, will be available to all 92 countries supported by the AMC.

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

Kia to enter compact SUV space with Seltos

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

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

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

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

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

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

M&M reports 94% decline in Q1 profit

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 7

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

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

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

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

The company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation declined 67.9 per cent to ₹575.7 crore, while Ebitda margin contracted to 10.3 per cent from 14 per cent.

Mahindra's passenger vehicles sales fell 78 per cent year-on-year during the quarter compared with an 81.5 per cent drop seen across the industry.

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

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

— Reuters

Holoportation seeks to replace Zoom meet

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

The device made by PORTL Inc lets users talk in real time with a life-sized hologram of another person. The machines also can be equipped with technology to enable interaction with recorded holograms of historical figures or relatives who have passed away.

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

“We say if you can't be

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

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

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

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

— Reuters

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

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

Both speculative

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Manpreet, three others Covid +ve

New Delhi: The Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh and three other players have tested positive for Covid-19 ahead of the national camp's resumption in Bengaluru, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Friday. Besides Manpreet, defender Surender Kumar, Jaskaran Singh and drag-flicker Varun Kumar have also tested positive for the deadly virus. "I am self quarantined on the SAI campus and I am very happy with the way SAI authorities have handled the situation...I am doing fine and hope to recover very soon," the 28-year-old Manpreet said in the statement issued by SAI. "I am very happy that they made the testing of athletes mandatory. That proactive step helped in identifying the problem right in time."

The players tested positive after returning to the national hockey camp at the SAI South Centre in Bengaluru following a month-long break. They were earlier stranded at the centre for over two months (till June).

— PTI

Bindra to join India Run As One

Mumbai: India's only individual Olympic Gold Medalist Abhinav Bindra will be participating in the 'Sunfeast India Run As One' initiative. The movement was initiated by Procam International in collaboration with Givelandia dedicated in support of livelihoods through a digital media conference on Thursday (July 30). The registrations for the event began on August 1 and the movement will commence on August 15. Bindra expressed that through the movement, the people of our country have an opportunity to stand in solidarity with those who have lost their livelihoods due to the COVID 19 pandemic. "Many of us have been lucky to have a phone or a laptop as we sit comfortably at home. Others across the country have not been so lucky. With the 'Sunfeast India Run As One' campaign, we have an opportunity to stand and run in solidarity with those who have lost their livelihoods or are in danger of losing their livelihoods. So, register for 'Sunfeast India Run As One' and be a part of this initiative," he said.

Sports stars join hands for a cause

Mumbai: The sports personalities like ace gymnast Dipa Karmakar, sprinter Hima Das, Indian women's hockey team captain Rani Rampal, para-badminton shuttler Sukant Kadam, star paddler Manika Batra along with Bollywood celebrities came forward and extended their support to the movement HelpYourHelp. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted livelihoods of many sections of the society, of which, domestic workers comprising our house-help, security guards, senior citizen caregivers, cooks, cleaners, drivers, nannies, gardeners and many others, have been the worst hit. Over 10 lakh domestic helpers have lost their jobs in the ongoing pandemic. www.HelpYourHelp.com is an initiative from Edelweiss to empower the unorganized community, over the long-haul. It is a digital platform comprising a digital repository collating over 20+ government welfare schemes.

JASON HAS A DAY OUT AT PGA TOURNEY

San Francisco: Australia's Jason Day shot a bogey-free five-under-par 65 to take a share of the lead Thursday in the opening round of the PGA Championship, the first major of the pandemic-interrupted season. Day rolled in five birdies for a one-shot cushion with co-leader Brendon Todd atop a star-studded crowded leaderboard at the TPC Harding Park course in San Francisco. Day and Todd are just in front of a group of nine players that includes four former major champions, including two-time defending PGA champ Brooks Koepka and Germany's Martin Kaymer. The other two former major winners are Zach Johnson and England's Justin Rose. — AFP

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SEVILLA SURGE ON
Blank Roma to make Europa quarterfinals

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

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

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

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

Sevilla next faces a quarterfinal Tuesday against Wolves after the English team squeezed past Olympiakos 1-0 on the night and 2-1 on aggregate for its first European quarterfinal in 48 years. Bayer Leverkusen earned a quarterfinal against Inter Milan, beating Rangers 1-0 on Thursday thanks to a powerful shot from Moussa Diaby for a 4-1 aggregate win.

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



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

Biggies back for Champions league

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

The southern Italians head for the Camp Nou on Saturday with a first ever Champions League quarterfinal berth beckoning. Both sides are 1-1 after the last 16, first leg in the San Paulo Stadium in February.

But Lionel Messi's

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

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

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

In Naples, more than

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

BAYERN TAKE ON CHELSEA AT HOME

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

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

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

— AFP

LIVE ON TV

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

INDIA TO HOST 2021 T20 WC, Oz IN 2022

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

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

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

ENGLAND'S INDIA TOUR PUT OFF TILL 2021

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

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

— Agencies



Pakistan's Asad Shafiq (left) dives to catch the ball to dismiss England's Dominic Bess (centre) during the third day of their first Test at the Old Trafford in Manchester on Friday. — AP

Pakistan's spinners set up trap, English on backfoot

Manchester, Aug. 7: England were bowled out for 219, a 107-run first innings deficit, after losing six wickets to Pakistan's leg-spinners on the third day of the first test at Old Trafford on Friday.

At tea Pakistan stretched its lead by another 20 runs to take control despite Shan Masood's duck.

Ollie Pope's 62 was as good as it got for the England batsmen, with the majority of those runs scored on Day Two, with Yasir Shah claiming

4-66 and Shadab Khan taking the last two wickets.

England resumed the day on 92-4 with Pope and Jos Buttler hoping to continue the rescue mission they had started the previous evening.

Pope had 46 to his name when he walked out but almost fell short of his half-century, deflecting Shaheen Afridi over the top of the stumps in an early scare. He got there soon after, off 81 balls, but the first hour was little more than a trial for the home side.

Just nine runs came off

the bat in that time, outscored by the 10 extras Pakistan contributed, with the three-pronged pace attack of Shaheen, Mohammad Abbas and Naseem Shah working up a head of steam. Buttler edged the third ball of Naseem's spell just short of second slip but after that it was a string of plays and misses. — AP

Brief scores: England 219 in 70.3 overs (O. Pope 62, J. Buttler 38, S. Broad 29*, Y. Shah 4/66, S. Khan 2/13, M. Abbas 2/33) vs Pakistan 22nd innings (20/1) lead by 127.

Back on court



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

Satwik-Chirag to train from Sept.

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

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

"It is great to hear that the training camp has

resumed but we will have to wait for a couple of weeks before we take a call on joining the camp," the 23-year-old Shetty, who alongwith Rankireddy won the Thailand Open and finished runners-up at the French Open last year said.

World champion P. V. Sindhu, B. Sai Praneth and N. Sikki Reddy were among the handful who hit the courts for training under safety protocols at the SAI Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad. — PTI

WOMEN'S | TENNIS

Martic rallies for a place in Last 8

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

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

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

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

Martic will next face another qualifier, Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

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

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

Italian wild-card entry Elisabetta Cocciaretto.

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

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

— AP



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

Bucks bring down the Heat in NBA

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

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

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

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

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

and Heat could meet in round two of the playoffs.

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

LEONARD STARS AS CLIPPERS TRIUMPH

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

HARDEN FIRES ROCKETS PAST LA LAKERS

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

— AFP

BOTTAS SETS THE PACE AT BRIT GP PRACTICE-1

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP