

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SATURDAY 8 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 26°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 24
Tithi: Panchami
Star: Uthirathi/ Revathi
Rahukalam:
9 am to 10.30 pm
Yamagandam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.41am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.28 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.49 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.56 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.56 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 10.19 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+61,074)	(+923)
20,86,483	42,564

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,880)
TN: 2,85,024 4,690

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,93,92,607

DEATHS

7,20,702

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info

Young Telangana couple found dead in Kodaikanal

Kodaikanal: A young man and his wife, hailing from Telangana, were found dead here on Friday and it is suspected that they may have killed themselves, police said. The couple, in their mid twenties, were found dead in their rented house by police and the bodies have been sent for autopsy to a government hospital.—PTI

Four die in Kovai road mishap

Coimbatore: Four youths were killed in a road mishap near Anaikatty in the suburbs of the city here in the early hours of Friday, as their speeding car rammed a roadside tree. Police identified the victims as Indhareesh (22), resident of Seeranai-kenplayam, third-year student in a private college, his friends Raju (22) a realtor from Poomarket, Hari (23) from Vadavalli - Kasthuri Naickenpalayam, working in a garment outlet, Pradeesh (23), another third-year student of a private college, and Manikandan (22), from north Coimbatore, went to attend the birthday party of their common friend, Venkatesh, at Kovundampalayam, on Thursday night.

Hockey captain Manpreet, 3 other players test positive for Covid-19

New Delhi: he 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. — PTI

COUNTER POINT



Double trouble, sir... you have tested positive and GDP negative!



Modi to inaugurate Chennai-Andaman & Nicobar submarine cable project

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Trump cites India to ban TikTok, WeChat

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Malik to fly to England if tests negative



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AI plane overshoots runway, breaks into two

■ **Aircraft from Dubai lands in Kozhikode airport amid heavy rain, low visibility**

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG.7

In a major mishap, Air India Express aircraft from Dubai overshoot the runway at the Kozhikode international airport crashed down into a 30 ft pit at its far end before breaking into two pieces on Friday evening.

PTI reported 16 persons including pilot D. V. Sathe died in the mishap. According to officials, the casualties are likely to go up considering the critical injuries sustained by people on board, currently under treatment in various hospitals.

The co-pilot and a majority of passengers who sustained serious injuries, have been admitted to medical college Kozhikode, Malabar Institute of Medical Science (MIMS) and Baby Memorial Hospital.

The Air India Express AXB1344, B737 which took off from Dubai at 4.45 pm landed on runway No 10 at the Kozhikode airport at 7.41 pm amid heavy rains and low visibility. According to DGCA statement, after landing the

Table top runway at Kozhikode

Table top runway: Kozhikode airport has one of the three table top runways in the country. The other being Mangalore and Lengpui in Mizoram. A Boeing 737-800 Air India Express flight from Dubai to Mangalore had crashed after overshooting the runway during landing at Mangalore airport on May 22, 2010, killing 158 people including 152 passengers and all crew members.

The aircraft caught fire after crashing which led to such a large number of casualties in Mangalore mishap.

aircraft continued moving till it dashed against the boundary wall, fell into the valley and broke into two pieces. There were 174 passengers including 10 infants, two pilots and five crew members on board the aircraft

at the time of mishap. No fire was reported at the time of landing.

The front portion of the aircraft from cockpit to the main entrance got ripped off due to the impact of the accident.

The flight was part of Centre's Vande Bharat mission to bring back expatriates from the Gulf region.

Over 60 ambulances from various hospitals of Kozhikode and Malappuram districts rushed to the airport to bring the injured to hospitals.

Since the hospitals near the airport have limited facilities, the seriously injured were rushed to Kozhikode medical college and Malabar Institute of Medical Sciences (MIMS). Several passengers who were trapped inside the aircraft were rescued by police personnel, CISF, fire and local people.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan directed local bodies minister A. C. Moideen and higher education minister K. T. Jaleel to rush to the airport and oversee the rescue operations.

■ **16 people, including pilot, killed, several other passengers injured in crash**



An Air India Express flight with passengers on board en route from Dubai skidded off the runway while landing, in Kozhikode, Friday.

— PTI

IG of north zone asked to coordinate the rescue operations, district admin-

istration of Kozhikode and Malappuram asked to provide medical care to the

injured. The rescue operations were carried out amid heavy rains.

Formal inquiry to be conducted by AAIB

New Delhi, Aug. 7: An Air India Express flight from Dubai with 191 people onboard overshoot the runway at Kozhikode airport on Friday in rainy conditions and went down 35 feet into a slope before breaking up into two pieces, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

He said the Kerala police has reported 11 deaths in the accident.

The minister said he is deeply "anguished and distressed" at the accident and relief teams from Air India and AAI are being immediately dispatched from Delhi and Mumbai.

All efforts are being made to help passengers. A formal enquiry will be conducted by AAIB (Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau)," the minister said on Twitter. — PTI

Chennai's daily case count dips below 1,000

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Fresh coronavirus infections in Chennai city came down to 984 with 24 deaths, though the numbers in the adjoining districts continued to be on a high, when the state had 5,880 new cases and 119 fatalities on Friday.

The districts adjoining Chennai were Chengalpattu 319 with 8 deaths, Tiruvallur 388 with six deaths and Kanchipuram 166 with 5 deaths. Other districts with high numbers were Coimbatore 228, Ranipet 253, Thanjavur 217, Theni 351, Tiruvannamalai 252 and Tirunelveli 200.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has announced the allotment of ₹103 crore for procuring 500 ambulances to quickly

Total fresh cases on Friday
5,880

Chennai **984**

Number of deaths on Friday
119

transport coronavirus infected persons to medical facilities.

He was speaking to the media after a review meeting at the Tirunelveli collectorate on the developmental and coronavirus prevention work carried out in Tirunelveli and Tenkasi districts when he said that the emergency medical technician on board the 108 ambulance and the driver would be paid a monthly amount of ₹ 5,000 each.

Mahinda set to be sworn in Lanka PM 4th time on Sunday

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 constituencies, 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 dis-



appointed during its tenure.

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

Mahinda will be sworn in as the new prime minister for the fourth time on Sunday at a ceremony at the historic Buddhist temple of Kelaniya, a north Colombo suburb, according to an official statement. — PTI



Former Union minister Manoj Sinha takes oath as the new Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, at a ceremony in Raj Bhavan, on Friday.

— PTI



My mission in J&K is to bring peace, end militancy and ensure development without any disparity or discrimination with any section of the people or region. I will stay in direct contact with people of J&K and the media too . There is a need to instill confidence among the aam janata (general public) of J&K in democracy."

— MANOJ SINHA, J&K's new Lieutenant Governor

Jaishankar, Pompeo exchange views on bilateral ties

Washington, Aug. 7: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar and his American counterpart Mike Pompeo have spoken over phone and discussed the bilateral and multilateral cooperation on issues of international concern, including efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic and the Indo-Pacific region, a senior US official has said.

The two leaders reiterated the strength of the India-US relationship to advance peace, prosperity, and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the globe, Cale Brown, Principal Deputy Spokesperson of the State

Department said on Thursday.

India and the US have explored ways to boost cooperation in the resource-rich Indo-Pacific region where China has been trying to spread its influence.

The issue was discussed extensively during the third round of the India-US Maritime Security Dialogue which took place in Goa in 2018.

The US has been pushing for a broader role by India in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region. India, the US and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open

and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's rising military maneuvering in the region.

"Both leaders agreed to continue close cooperation on a full range of regional and international issues and look forward to Quadrilateral consultations and the US-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue later this year," Brown said. In November 2017, India, the US, Australia and Japan had given shape to the long-pending Quadrilateral coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of Chinese influence. — PTI

Bawaria gang? Burglars trigger panic in Kovai suburbs

ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC
COIMBATORE, AUG 7

Residents in the suburbs of the city have been witnessing a series of major burglaries every second day in the last 20 days, as a four-member gang clad in half trousers, are moving around the area triggering panic among the residents.

Sources said thieves ransacked a house near Sulur on August 3 and fled away with jewels and cash, while the house owner, Prabhu, had gone to his in-law's

house to see his new born baby. The same night, the gang had made numerous robbery attempts in the same area. An official said he suspected them to be the notorious 'Bawaria gang' from north India.

Residents posted video clips of the trouser-clad gang on social media, retrieving the footage recorded in CCTV surveillance cameras installed in their houses, yet the gang made daring attempts to burgle houses in the same area, even while house owners were at home.

● **Sources said thieves ransacked a house near Sulur on August 3 and fled away with jewels and cash, while the house owner, Prabhu, had gone to his in-law's house to see his newborn**

Despite numerous complaints, police failed to nab the gang. Meanwhile, late on Thursday night, the same gang made an attempt to enter a house by scaling the compound wall at Irugur. On hearing some noise, a neighbour noticed them from upstairs and raised an alarm, on which the gang escaped.

Later, residents of

Singanallur had witnessed the gang at Kothari Nagar as they were attempting to break open a locked house. The gang leader fled as public raised a cry. But, in a span of 30 minutes, the same gang made its third daring attempt at a house in Kathiravan Nagar, by breaking its doors even as the owner and his family were sleeping inside.

Hearing some sounds, the family woke up and noticed the gang through a window and raised a cry.

The gang quickly left the street and moved to Sruthi Enclave, there they made their fourth attempt, but failed there also as the house owner woke up and the gang fled away.

Residents allege that the gang doesn't bother even if CCTV cameras are installed in houses or places they target. Special police teams have been patrolling round-the-clock on bikes and jeeps to prevent the burglaries.

SHORT TAKES

Decomposed body found

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

The decomposed body of a 45-year-old man was found near Madipakkam on Friday. Police are investigating whether he was murdered in a drunken brawl.

After the residents noticed the body in an abandoned building in Junction road near Madipakkam, they alerted the local police. Police recovered the body and sent it to the Chromepet government hospital for post-mortem. Madipakkam police are investigating the case.

Police said they found empty liquor bottles in the spot and are probing the angle of drunken brawl murder.

7 cops test +ve, Adambakkam station closed

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

After seven police officers of the Adambakkam police station in the city tested positive for novel coronavirus on Friday, the station was closed temporarily.

Seven policemen, including two women, have tested positive. Swab samples of 40 cops from the station were taken for testing on Wednesday. Among the personnel who tested positive were two sub inspectors, one special sub-inspector, two women police officers and two constables.

Police sources said that the officials have been placed under medical observation in VIT, Melakottaiyur campus and all the official works of the police station have been shifted temporarily to another building. The police station is likely to resume functioning after fumigation. Police personnel and others who fear they had come in contact with the infected personnel were advised self-quarantine and to get tested. The family members of all the seven police personnel have been quarantined, sources said.

The department has already lost five police officers to Covid-19 in the city. Over 1,500 police personnel have tested positive for the virus so far across the State. Over 1,250 police personnel have recovered from Covid-19 and rejoined duty.

Sri Lankan don underwent nose job

Coimbatore, Aug 7: Amid efforts to establish the identity of Sri Lankan gangster Angode Lokka, who died last month in the city, it has come to light that he had undergone plastic surgery on his nose on the pretext of acting in movies, police said on Friday. According to police sources, the surgery was performed in a city hospital in February on the request that he wanted to act in films and correct the nose by making it bigger in appearance. Lokka was in the hospital for four days and it was evident after going through the old and new photographs, the sources said. The gangster, who was staying here under the fake identity of Pradeep Singh by forged Aadhaar Card, died following cardiac arrest on July 3 and after post-mortem, the body was taken to Madurai and cremated. Three people, including a Madurai-based advocate, Sivakami Sundari, Dyaneshwaran and Sri Lankan woman, Amani Thanji, were arrested in connection with the case, for allegedly assisting Lokka by forging him the Aadhaar card. CBCID, which is investigating the case by forming seven special teams, has sent his viscera to Chennai for DNA testing, reports of which were expected in another couple of days. —PTI

Ensure vehicle hygiene to thwart Covid: Corpn

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

After vehicles started hitting the city roads in large numbers as a result of relaxed lockdown restrictions, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has urged the automobile owners to strictly maintain precautionary measures to contain the spread of Covid-19.

In a short video, the GCC has asked the vehicle owners to follow tips including cleaning of high touch surfaces such as steering wheel, knobs, switches, screens and buttons with disinfectants, using of right detergent and cold water to wash vehicles, wiping off water with dry cloths and washing of vehicles at least once in a week.

According to microbiologists, it is difficult to predict the transmission of the virus no matter how advanced or expensive the vehicle is. Following necessary precautions by cleaning, sanitising and disinfecting the car to ensure all around safety is extremely important in containing the virus. In addition to this, ensure disinfectants inside the vehicle. Hard surfaces like plastic buttons and knobs can be wiped with a bleach-free disinfectant wipe. It's better to use a milder solution of soap and water and occasionally combine it with a leather conditioner as there is a chance that some of the harsher disinfectants can dry the leather, they said.

"Besides door handle, key fob or steering wheel, dash-

board is another most important part to be kept clean. It is a highly risky spot in terms of virus transmission as the air is constantly being sucked over and circulated inside the car. The outside part of the car, meanwhile, is less susceptible to carrying the virus due to the sun and outside weather can shorten its lifespan. However, it is important to clean door handles and other exterior touch points".

The studies carried out by World Health Organisation (WHO) have found that Covid-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, when an infected person coughs or exhales. These droplets can land on objects and surfaces around the

person. If someone nearby touches these objects or surfaces and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth, the person is likely to be infected.

As per various studies, the interiors of vehicles, especially cars, contain different kinds of surfaces including leather and metal to rubber and plastic. The virus can spread while sharing airspace with an infected person, the surfaces the person touched, and even the airspace after an infected passenger has left as the virus can persist in the air for up to three hours and for two to three days on stainless steel and plastic surfaces.

The virus can also survive on metal and glass surfaces for up to nine days, the studies say.

Getting rain ready



As the arterial GST road was flooded with rainwater recently, the highways department on Friday, using a super sucker machine, removes slush and plastic materials clogging the stormwater drain.

— DC

Traffic diversion for I-Day rehearsal

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Due to rehearsal on Kamarajar Salai ahead of Independence Day at Fort, the traffic police have announced curbs in the movement of traffic on August 8, 10 and 13 from 6.30 am till the end of the rehearsal.

The Kamarajar Salai from Napier Bridge to RBI Subway North on Rajaji Salai and Flag Staff Salai will be closed for all vehicular traffic.

Vehicles coming on Kamarajar Salai and intending to proceed towards Parry's Corner via Rajaji Salai may take the route via Swami Sivananda Salai, Anna Salai, Muthusamy Bridge, Muthusamy Salai, R.A. Mandram and North Fort Salai (NFS) to reach Parry's Corner.

The vehicles coming on Rajaji Salai and intending

The Kamarajar Salai from Napier Bridge to RBI Subway North on Rajaji Salai and Flag Staff Salai will be closed for all vehicular traffic

to proceed towards Kamarajar Salai to Rajaji Salai may take the route via North Fort Salai, R.A. Mandram, Muthusamy Salai, Muthusamy Bridge, Anna Salai and Wallajah Salai to reach Kamarajar Salai.

The vehicles coming from Muthusamy bridge/Anna Salai and intending to proceed towards Parry's Corner/Kamarajar Salai via Flagstaff Salai may take the route via Muthusamy Bridge, Muthusamy Salai, R.A. Mandram and NFS to reach Parry's Corner and Anna Salai, Wallajah Salai to reach Kamarajar Salai.

Milk of kindness



Breastfeeding Awareness Week was celebrated from August 1 to August 7 at the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Egmore. IOG Director Dr Vijaya explained about the healthy and natural foods to pregnant women. Various events and awareness programmes were also conducted in city government hospitals.

— DC

Discoms in dire straits; TN share ₹17, 529 crore

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

The power distribution companies (Discoms) across the country are in dire straits as they failed to receive payment for power supplied to consumers. The Covid-19 lockdown has brought more trouble for them.

Discoms are responsible for the distribution of energy to the consumers (industry, commercial, agriculture and domestic). The country has a total installed generation capacity of 3,56,100.19 MW as on March 31, 2019. The peak load demand of power was 1,75,528 MW in 2018-19.

According to audit reports, Discom losses have grown bigger than earlier estimates. Data from the ministry of power's (MoP)

payment ratification and analysis portal (PRAAPTI) showed that 65 Discoms owed 197 power generators Rs 1,19,900 crore in overdue payments (increased by 5.33% vis-à-vis May 2020). Nearly ₹90,577 crore at the end of March 2020.

Among the states, Rajasthan had the highest overdue payment at ₹ 34,937 crore and Tamil Nadu is next at ₹17,529 crore. Of this, ₹14,911 crore has been overdue for over 60 days. Uttar Pradesh is third, with overdue payments of ₹14,409 crore of which ₹10,485 crore has been overdue for more than 60 days.

Among the southern states, Tamil Nadu's position is most stressed and the state payables are piling up every month, not giving any respite to power generators. The state has

not revised the tariff for many years despite the power debt situation going out of control. The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) owes more than Rs 6,000 crore to Interstate Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

A Few of the IPPs have written letters to TANGEDCO for encashing the Letter of Credit (that has been provided after MoP's intervention last year July) if payment is not released to them promptly.

The Discoms are currently facing a range of issues including operational inefficiency, low tariffs and sharp fall in industrial power demand, which is affecting their ability to pay power suppliers on time putting huge financial stress on generators.

PM Modi to inaugurate Chennai-Andaman & Nicobar submarine cable project on Monday

Port Blair, Aug. 7: Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the Chennai-Andaman and Nicobar Island submarine cable system, which will provide better connectivity to the archipelago, on August 10,

a senior BSNL official has said.

A submarine communications cable is a cable laid on the seabed between land-based stations to transmit telecommunication signals across stretches of ocean

and sea. The project envisages better connectivity from Chennai to Port Blair and seven other Islands - Swaraj Deep, Long Island, Rangat, Hutbay, Kamorta, Car Nicobar and Campbell Bay. —PTI

Virtual court is boon to legal fraternity: HC

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Observing that the virtual court is a boon to the entire legal fraternity, the Madurai Bench of the Madras high court has said even a mofussil advocate residing in a remote village in Kanyakumari can comfortably present his case before this court, the Principal Seat and even before the Supreme Court.

Justice B.Pugalendhi made this observation while hearing the appeals relating to PRP Exports and PRP Granites, filed by the state government against an order of acquittal passed by judicial magistrate, Melur, dated March 29, 2016 in and by which the magistrate has dismissed the complaint filed by the then Madurai district collector.

The judge said when these matters are taken up for hearing, K.P.S.Palanivel Rajan, counsel for the respondents by referring the notification dated July 13, 2020, issued by the Registry of this court, made his submission that this court is not supposed to take up the final hearing cases.

The notification authorizes MACT-OP and certain other cases to be taken up for final hearing and the final hearing in Criminal Appeals and Original Petitions are not referred. By reading the notification, he also insisted that the final hearing stage cases of all classification will be taken up only upon the consent from both side advocates, the judge added.

The judge said this court, politely and humbly, informed the counsel that this notification was made based on the representations from the Bar that during the present Covid-19 situation, they were having certain practical difficulties in getting instructions from their clients, who were residing in far away places and some of counsel were also held up in their native places and remote places,

■ The judge said, "In fact, in the past two months, this court has also witnessed counsel representing their cases sitting in car. Even while traveling in their car, counsel were comfortable in placing their cases before the court. Counsel, who are interested in their cases, even if they are staying in remote places, are reaching out to a place where they are having connectivity and are presenting their case comfortably. When this system of virtual courts are comfortable for admission for the counsel. This court fails to understand why it is difficult for them to conduct the final hearing cases"

where there was no connectivity.

The reasoning, on which this notification was made, cannot be applicable to the present case on hand, since both the respondents as well as their counsel were in Madurai city and Madurai was well connected with internet facility. "Fortunately in Tamil Nadu, we are having good internet connectivity facility in almost all places, including some remote villages", the judge added.

The judge said this court, politely and humbly, informed the counsel for the respondents that the Chief Justice of the Madras high court has assigned the portfolio to this court for this spell, w.e.f July 6, 2020 and in the month of July 2020 alone, this court has disposed of 44 cases (Criminal Revision Cases-21, Criminal Appeals-10, Criminal Original Petitions-10, Writ Petitions-3). Not only this court, but in the entire Madurai Bench of Madras high court, 5020 cases (including 1971 Miscellaneous Petitions) were filed in the month of July, 2020 alone, of which, 4, 832 cases (includ-

HC grants 2 weeks to TN on Pulicat lake report

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

The Madras high court has granted two weeks to the state government for furnishing status report regarding permanent opening of the Pulicat lake mouth in the Bay of Bengal, to facilitate fishing operation by the fishermen.

A division bench comprising Justices Vineet Kothari and Krishnan Ramasamy posted after two weeks, further hearing of a Public Interest Litigation filed by Usha, which sought a direction to the authorities to maintain the Pulicat lake and restore it to its pristine state free from any contamination or pollution or encroachment.

In its interim order, the bench said special government pleader J.Pothiraj submitted that status report has been filed by the District Collector. A copy of the same may be supplied to the counsel appearing for the petitioner. Pothiraj prayed further two weeks to furnish another status report from the director of fisheries department regarding permanent open-

ing of the Pulicat lake mouth in the Bay of Bengal, to facilitate fishing operation by the fishermen, for which purpose, the present Public Interest Litigation has been filed in this regard. Put up the matter after two weeks, as prayed, the bench added.

In her petition Usha sought a direction to the authorities to take steps to ensure that the upstream course of the Pulicat lake at Tiruvallur district was restored and the flow of fresh water was maintained.

In her PIL, Usha submitted that the Pulicat lake, presently spoiled by filth and pollution and the water quality was considered to be highly toxic and completely non-potable. The 2004 tsunami cleaned the mouth of the Lake. However, the lake returned to its usual polluted style within a short period. The authorities who were responsible to maintain the lake have failed to do the same, which resulted in dumping of garbage, sewage and industrial wastes into the water body in violation of environmental laws, she added.

ing the image of this institution that the judges, sitting in ivory towers, are not inclined to conduct the cases. In fact, the decision to conduct the courts through virtual hearing has been made by the administrative committee, taking into consideration of the welfare of all the stakeholders, including advocates, litigants, staff etc., and this system of virtual hearing was proved to be success and the number of filing and disposal made in the last month alone was a proof for the same, the judge added.

HC throws out PIL, seeking removal of government staff

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Pointing out that the affidavit filed in support of the petition is not only bald but also vague and by filing the petition, the petitioner has wasted the time of the court, the Madras high court has dismissed a Public Interest Litigation, which sought a direction to the authorities to immediately remove all the delinquent employees charged under the Prevention of Corruption Act, who are still in service, taking the benefit of a recent GO, which enhanced age of retirement of the government employees in regular service who are due to retire on May 31, 2020, from 58 years to 59 years.

Dismissing the PIL filed by advocate M.Karpagam, a division bench comprising Justices R.Subbiah and Krishnan Ramasamy said, "This is a fit case for imposing exemplary costs on the petitioner for having filed the present vexatious writ petition styled as a Public Interest Litigation, however, we desist from doing so by taking into account the overall facts and circumstances of the case".

The bench said the main grievance of the petitioner is that under the garb of issuing GO dated May 7, 2020, the government had treated alike the employees who have rendered unblemished service and those who are facing departmental proceedings either under the PCA or under the IPC. Thus, it is the contention of the petitioner that equals are treated with unequals in the matter of extension of the age of retirement. According to the petitioner, a person who is facing serious charges under the PCA or other



offences punishable under the IPC should not be conferred with the benefit of extension of service by another year, as it amount to giving a premium to a person with tainted record. It is to be noted that even according to the petitioner, subsequent to the G.O, the government has given a clarification letter dated May 14, 2020. The clarification letter makes it abundantly clear that the G.O has no application in so far as it relates to those government servants whose service are retained under Fundamental Rule 56 (1) ©. "Thus, even assuming that some of the government servants, who are facing departmental proceedings beyond the age of his or her retirement under the garb of the G.O, we are of the view that such extension of service in favour of those government servants would not absolve their delinquency or it will in any manner aid them to get a clean chit in their favour in the departmental proceedings. The retention of the government servant in service beyond the age of retirement is only for the purpose of conclusion of departmental enquiry", the bench added.

The bench said government pleader V.Jayaprakash Narayanan contended that merely because a complaint has

been given or a disciplinary proceeding was pending against a government servant it does not mean that such a government servant was guilty of having committed the delinquency unless and until the charges were proved in the disciplinary proceedings. "We find much force in the submission of the Government Pleader. Merely because charges are pending against a government servant, it does not mean that it should end only in holding the delinquent employee guilty of the offence (s) under the relevant Act or Rules. After conclusion of the disciplinary proceeding, the government servant may be relieved or discharged of the charges framed against him on noticing that the charges framed against him were not proved in the departmental proceedings. Furthermore, the petitioner cannot presume that all the employees, against whom charge (s) is/are pending, are guilty of the charge (s) to deny the benefit of extension of service. Moreover the extension of the age of retirement of the government employees by way of the G.O dated May 7, 2020 is a policy decision taken by the government to streamline the administrative activities over which this court cannot interfere", the bench added. The bench said it also refused to issue any relief in favour of the petitioner in this petition for yet another reason. Even though the petitioner has filed the present petition contending that unequals were treated alike with equals, by virtue of the GO, it finds that the petitioner has not come up with any facts and figures to substantiate the same.

SHORT TAKES

Class 10 results on Monday

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Results for class 10 students would be formally declared on Monday (August 10), when the marks could be known by sending an SMS to number mentioned in the declaration they had submitted in their schools or through the websites: www.tnresults.nic.in or www.dge1.tn.nic.in or www.dge2.tn.nic.in.

Since the marks had been calculated on the basis of the students' performance in the school examinations there would be no scope for a recounting as in regular cases but students can seek a review by submitting a form through the school heads between August 17 and 25. They would receive the response through the school heads.

Mark sheets could be obtained from the schools between August 17 and 21, the official press release said. It may be recalled that the government cancelled the public examinations for the tenth standard students in view of the coronavirus crisis and lockdown and announced that all the students would be declared as pass.

Pay ₹50L for frontline warriors' family: Stalin

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Playing the state government for reducing the solatium to the families of the frontline warriors who laid down their lives in the fight against the coronavirus from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 25 lakh, DMK president M. K. Stalin termed the move inhuman and not the right thing to do.

Stalin accused the government of blacking out the details of the frontline warriors who had sacrificed their lives even in the daily bulletins and said, in a statement on Friday, that their families should be paid Rs 50 lakh relief, besides a job for one person on humanitarian grounds and Rs two lakh for treatment of infected persons.

'E-Yantra' inaugurated in PMIST

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, AUG. 7

The 'Centre for excellence in robotics and embedded systems' in collaboration with IIT, Bombay, named as 'E-Yantra' was inaugurated at Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology (PMIST) here, on Friday.

The centre, a part of ECE department of PMIST, is established with the latest robotic equipment from M/s Nexrobotics Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai. Prof Kavi Arya, principal investigator, E-Yantra, IIT Bombay, made an online inauguration of the centre, on Friday.

Project E-yantra is an initiative to spread education in embedded systems and robotics by IIT, Bombay, sponsored by the Union ministry of human resource development. Four faculty members from PMIST were trained on basics of Robotics at IIT, Bombay. They have also completed the online TBT (task based training) successfully.

The objective is to provide hands on learning to engineering students who have limited access to laboratories and mentors.

Corona: 20 cops back on duty

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, AUG. 7

Corona virus test has been conducted on 10,437 police personnel attached to the Tiruchy city police, as against the total strength of 1,769, said City Police Commissioner Dr J Loganathan, on the sidelines of receiving the 20 police personnel who had resumed duty after fully recovering from corona infection here, on Friday.

Floral tributes



DMK president M.K. Stalin pays floral tributes to late former CM and his father M. Karunanidhi during his second death anniversary on Friday.

— DC



Sanitary and health workers felicitated with garlands and relief materials by DMK members on the occasion of Karunanidhi's death anniversary in Chromepet.

— DC

On MK's death anniv, Stalin vows to enthrone DMK

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Vowing to place the DMK on the throne in Tamil Nadu for the sixth time in 2021, party president M. K. Stalin, on the second death anniversary of former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, said that they were now 'crossing the fire for the nation,' fighting two enemies at the same time.

"We are pitted against a state government against the Tamil people and a Central government opposed to Tamil Nadu and democracy," Stalin said in his speech, released as a video in his social media pages, on the occasion.

"We will win," he said and hoped to be in power when the next anniversary observance came in the speech that listed the vari-

ous achievements of Karunanidhi as a Chief Minister and also traced his growth as a political leader.

In another address, after inaugurating a statue of Karunanidhi at his ancestral home in Tirukuvolai through video conference, Stalin recalled how much the late leader loved his village.

He said they aspired to install statues of the late leader in various places across the state and managed to do it in some places that shaped his career and life.

The one at Anna Arivalayam, the DMK headquarters, was unveiled by Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, while the others were at Erode, where he was trained by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, in Kanchipuram, which is the

town of his mentor C. N. Annadurai and so on, he said.

Other statues were opened at Tiruchi, the place that turned him into a political fighter, Salem, where he started his career in films, Murasoli newspaper office, which is his 'first child,' and Muthamil Peravai, his own creation, he said.

Earlier, Stalin paid floral tributes to Karunanidhi at various premises associated with the late leader. Starting from his memorial on the Marina sands, Stalin visited his homes in Gopalapuram and in CIT Colony, the Murasoli Office and Anna Arivalayam.

Stalin also provided relief to frontline Coronavirus warriors like doctors, nurses and sanitary workers and eulogized their self-less services.

DMK treasurer denies report

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR AND D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

The day after a DMK MLA was forced to come out with a statement that he was not leaving the party, a top leader and party treasurer Durai Murugan was compelled to deny a report in a Tamil newspaper on Friday that he was headed out of the party for greener pastures.

Durai Murugan, in his clarification, said the newspaper did not know about him and his history and elaborated that he was lured into the party by C N Annadurai's 'Dravida Nadu' philosophy in 1953

and that he did not go the party seeking posts like MLA, MP or Minister.

Even without getting any of the posts that were given to him, he would have remained a grassroots level cadre, raising slogans, holding on to the black and red flag, he said, adding that the charge that he was creating a ruckus within the party as he had not been given the general secretary post was aimed at defaming him.

Though this is not the first time that a rumour about a potential defection from the DMK had been spread in the state, this is the first time a newspaper had carried a story specu-

lating about a bigwig's alleged resentment in the party.

Hitherto, it was lower levels leader like MLAs who were targeted by the rumour mongers that too in the social media. One such case was that of Tiurchendur MLA 'Anita' Radhakrishnan, who had to come out with a statement on Thursday denying that he was switching political loyalties.

But now with a newspaper itself coming out with a story of an alleged disillusionment among the DMK top brass, it is evident that the rumour mills have started whirring at a higher decibel level.

500 new vehicles will join ambulance fleet: CM

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, AUG. 7

The state government is planning to add 500 more emergency vehicles of 108 ambulance services to its existing fleet, said Chief Minister Edappadi K Palanisamy, at the Tirunelveli collectorate on Friday, while on a tour to the southern districts of Tirunelveli and Tenkasi. He also announced special assistance to 108 ambulance drivers which is likely to be implemented soon.

In the wake of a rise in the number of Covid patients,



the existing 108 ambulance fleet is said to be highly inadequate. Due to shortage of emergency vehicles, Covid patients were left to spend from their pockets on transportation reach hospitals. This created a lot of

hardships for the poor patients coming from far off places, especially from rural areas. Hence, the demand from several quarters, particularly, from the 108 Ambulance employees welfare association.

To meet the demand, the government has decided to add 500 more emergency vehicles to the 108 ambulance fleet in the state for which Rs 103 crore has been already allotted, for procurement of the new ambulances.

Responding to the tedious formalities in issuing e-passes for travel between

districts, the Chief minister said that Collectors were in charge of issuing e-passes, and have been instructed to make the process easy. Every district would have one more committee to expedite the process.

Comparing the Covid-19 situation with neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Telengana and Karnataka, the Chief minister added that the pandemic in Tamil Nadu was very much under control, and expressed hope that the infection would completely be wiped out soon.

Gold worth ₹18.5 lakh seized at Chennai airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

Chennai customs officials seized gold worth Rs. 18.5 lakhs at the baggage terminal at the airport.

According to a press release from the office of Customs, based on a special alert, the Air Customs seized 388 grams of gold worth Rs 18.5 lakhs from a Chennai passenger's special goods which had arrived from Dubai.

The passenger identified as Shankar (50), who had arrived from Dubai, reached the terminal for the clearance of his person-

al and household goods which had arrived by Air India Express flight IX1644 as unaccompanied baggage. On examination of belongings, a toy car and four watches were found inside one of the cartons. On lifting, they appeared to be unusually heavy. On opening the toy car, a transformer was found inside and on dismantling, it was found to be made of 13, E-shaped & two l-shaped gold plates.

On opening the back cover of the watches, one gold cut ring was found concealed inside each. Total 388 grams of gold of

24K purity valued at Rs. 18.5 lakhs were recovered and seized under Customs Act, 1962. Further investigation is in progress.

It may be noted that in three instances this week, Chennai customs seized around 2 kgs gold from passengers who came from the Middle-East on repatriation flights.

On Monday three persons who arrived from Sharjah were arrested for concealing 1.2 kg gold in a paste form.

The next day, three passengers from Dubai were found hiding one-kilogram gold.

Centre urged to review EIA notification

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, AUG. 7

The association of former central committee members of the State bank staff union has appealed to the Central government to review and revise the draft environment impact assessment notification 2020, as in its present form, it would benefit only corporates and not commoners.

"It is better if it is rejected than retained," said S P Raman, association president, in a letter sent to Prakash Javadekar, Union minister, Environment and

forest and climate change. At a time when people are struck by the pandemic, the Centre has quietly presented the draft EIA notification 2020. "The timing chosen by the government for release of the notification has shocked those interested in the country's welfare," said Raman, in the letter.

The lockdown did not give scope for people to debate on the notification, which should have been done by publishing it in all 22 languages in the country. So, the notification should be published after the pan-

demic in all 22 languages, debated among people, and their views elicited and placed before the standing committee of parliament, and only then, it should be passed in parliament after debate.

Stating that accidents which claim human lives occur due to factories and industries violating environment laws, Raman said that gas leak from L G Polymers at Visakapatnam is one example where the company had been functioning without getting environment clearance.

In tune with wind



Coconut trees seem to sway on a windy day in Annur.

—Balu Mahendran R

Glass unit workers block Bengaluru NH

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

The workers of a private glass manufacturing unit in SIPCOT, Irungattukottai, blocked the Chennai-Bengaluru National Highway on Friday, protesting against inaction by the management regarding negotiation with the union on wages and benefits, revocation of the suspension of two workers among others.

Demanding reinstatement of 28 dismissed workers, revocation of suspension of two workers and negotiation with the union on wage and benefits, the workers began assembling daily in front of the factory. On July

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According to sources, the workers of the glass manufacturing unit had waged a long strike in the year 2019. The strike was withdrawn on 19 June 2019, after a conciliation meeting with the management in the pres-

ence of the District Collector. The management had agreed to discuss with the union about the dismissal of the workers and come to a resolution within 3 to 6 months. However, it has been more than a year and there has been no concerted attempt by the management to resolve these

issues. This has been hard on the dismissed permanent workers whose employment was terminated in 2018.

Due to the inaction by the management, the employees began a strike on July 22 inside the factory. On Friday, the employees blocked the NH to protest against the inaction by the management.

Police rushed to the spot and pacified the protestors in the presence of the management. The police have cautioned the workers not to turn this into a law and order issue. The protest was withdrawn. It led to traffic congestion on the highway for an hour.



Minister Nilofer Kafeel returning home after being cured of Covid is given a warm welcome in Vanniyambadi on Friday.

— K. Senthil Nathan

SHORT TAKES

NEP FOUNDATION OF NEW INDIA, SAYS PM MODI

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

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

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

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

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

ED GRILLS ACTOR RHEA IN MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 7

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

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

SC DISMISSES BAIL PLEA OF ACTIVIST REHANA

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

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

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

—PTI



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

— PTI

15 dead, 50 trapped in Kerala landslide

Police, NDRF get into rescue mode after heavy rains

GILVESTER ASSARY I
DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG. 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

Talacauvery temple chief priest, wife, others missing

SHILPA P. I DC
MYSURU, AUG. 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to eyewitnesses, the incident happened in the early hours of Friday. The landslide originated from the hills near Idamalakudy and completely destroyed the quarters of the tea plantation workers. It also damaged mobile towers and Periyavarai bridge, connecting Rajamalai with Munnar, following which rescue operations were badly affected.

With power outage and no mode of communication in the area, the place was already cut off from the rest of the world.

The incident came to light after some survivors managed to walk up to the nearest forest station after trekking for a couple of hours. The entire area has been experiencing heavy rainfall for the past 24 hours, believed to be one of the major reasons for the landslide.

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

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

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

Elgar case: Du professor sent to judicial custody till Aug. 21

Tharayil to judicial custody till August 21, after going through a report submitted by the NIA.

The report was shown only to the judge and its contents were not disclosed. However, after going through the report the judge in his operative order said it was necessary to remand the accused in judicial custody.

MAHA GOVT FORMS FLYING SQUADS TO CHECK HOSPS

Sonu Shrivastava | DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 7

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

Maharashtra public health minister Rajesh Tope said that the state had issued directives to officials to act on complaints about hospitals and ambulances charging exorbitant rates. He said, "To check if the decisions are being implemented, flying squads have been set up". In this connection, the public health department's principal secretary Dr Pradeep Vyas has sent a letter to all divisional commissioners, district collectors and municipal commissioners and sought a report within next three days. The government, by an order on May 21, had fixed upper limits for charges of private hospitals. The GR stated that the private hospitals are allowed to charge ₹4,000 per day for a general bed and ₹7,500 per day in the intensive care unit.

TELANGANA TALLY CROSSES 75 K MARK; AP IS 2 LAKH PLUS

DC CORRESPONDENTS
HYDERABAD, VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 7

Telangana crossed the 75,000 mark in Covid-19 cases and the toll went past 600 due to the disease on Thursday, according to data released on Friday by the state health department.

The state recorded its highest-ever number of cases at 2,207 and the overall tally stood at 75,257 on Thursday. Reports of 1,539 samples are awaited. Of these 1,675 new cases are from semi-rural and rural areas and the GHMC area reported 532 cases.

The surge outside the GHMC area is the highest in districts on the city outskirts: Ranga Reddy district recorded 196 cases. Warangal Urban reported 142 cases on Thursday and Kamareddy 96. Other districts are recording numbers in the double digits, according to the health department bulletin.

Andhra Pradesh has crossed the two lakh mark of Covid-19 positive cases by registering 2,06,960 with the addition of 10,171 new cases on Friday. The state also witnessed highest number of 89 deaths in a single day rising toll to 1,842 in the last 24 hours.

The health department bulletin said out of 62,938 samples tested, 10,171 individuals have been found infected with Coronavirus. Out of total number of 23,62,270 samples tested so far in the state, 84,654 infected patients are undergoing treatment while 1,20,464 patients have been discharged after recovery.

Cong questions PM silence on border

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

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

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

Claiming that the Prime Minister had crafted an

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

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

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India sees steady recovery rate; fatality rate down

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

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

There were 60,622 new cases and 923 deaths during the day.

The Union health ministry said India continues on the path of Covid-19 management boosted by two significant achievements – continuously rising recovery rate and reducing case fatality rate (CFR) which is much below the global average. The recovery rate on Friday was recorded 68 per cent, while the CFR dropped down to a new low of 2.05 per cent.

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

The average daily recovered cases (seven day moving average) have increased from around 26,000 cases to 44,000 cases in the last two weeks, health ministry officials said.

The recoveries were 13,78,105 after close to 50,000 persons were discharged.

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The recoveries were 13,78,105 after close to 50,000 persons were discharged in one day.

Health economist Rijo M. John said India is expected to add another ten lakh (one million) cases in the next 14 days.

"While some of the big burden states seem to have either reduced the daily new cases or plateaued, at least for now, there are others who see daily new highs. 33 States/UTs now have at least a 1,000 plus Covid-19 cases," he said.

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SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice no.:COM-G-R-BYT-COLONY-CLNG-20-01Date: 05.08.2020
Name Of work: Outsourcing of Batapara railway colony for a period of 03 years excluding Sunday (i.e 939 days). Cost of Tender form: ₹5,000. Tender Value: ₹59,10,783 inclusive of 18 % GST. Earnest Money: ₹1,10,2007. Completion Period: 36 Months
Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to 15.00 hrs on 09.09.2020 only. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders and any such manual offers received shall be rejected. Details are available on our website www.reps.gov.in.

Sr.Divl.Comml.Manager
PR/RS/DCM/AP/68 SECR, Raipur
[f] South East Central Railway [e] secreal@secreal.co

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby given that Mr/Mahaveer Chand Bohara, S/o M.Babulal Jain, residing at New No.20, Old No.19, Umayal Road, Kilapuk, Chennai -600010 have agreed to sell the property mentioned in the schedule hereto. To our client M/s.T.Chandra, w/o. T. Hirunivakarasu, residing at New No.34/4, Old No.70/2B, New Street, 22nd Lane Ayanavaram, Chennai -600023.

All persons claiming any interest in the said property or any part thereof by way of sale, gift, lease, inheritance, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien, trust, possession, easement, attachment or otherwise whatsoever are hereby required to make the same known to the undersigned at his office at No.21, Portus Street, Ayanavaram, Chennai -600023. Within 10 days from the date hereof, failing which the said sale will be completed, without any reference to such claim and the same, if any, shall be considered as waived.

All that place and parcel of the vacant land bearing New Door No.85, Old No.30, Mettu Street, Ayanavaram, Chennai -600023, measuring about 2418 sq.ft. comprised in T.S.No.8 and Block No.27, Ayanavaram village, Ayanavaram Taluk, bearing patia Application LD.No.201901630027/412 within the limits of Greater Chennai Corporation bounded on the North by: Property belongs to Aiyayam Naicker, South by: 4 feet passage East by: Property belongs to Chinnelkannu and West by: Mettu Street Adjoining North by: 78 feet South by: 78 feet East by: 31 feet West by: 31 feet in all measuring about 2418 sq.ft., within the registration district of Central Chennai, S.R.O.Amma Nagar, within the limits of Greater Chennai City Corporation.

M/S.T.R.UDAYA KUMAR
N.Venkatesan,
Advocates
Ph.No:9003259186
9444356338

PEACE DEAL War memorial, separate statute part of agenda

NSCN (I-M) to hold talks in Delhi

MANOJ ANAND I DC
GUWAHATI, AUG 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IN BRIEF

China sentences Canadian to death

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

Malaysia's Mahathir forms new party

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

Bush's new book honours immigrants

New York: A new book by former President George W. Bush will highlight an issue which now sets him apart from many of his fellow Republicans — immigration. Crown announced Thursday that Bush's "Out Of Many, One: Portraits of America's Immigrants" will be published March 2.

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 sensi-

tive, 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. — *Agencies*

Lebanon Prez suspects missile caused blasts

Rejects international probe as an attempt to dilute truth

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

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

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

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

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

ISRAELI ARMY DOWNS DRONE FROM LEBANON

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

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

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

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

Rescuers scour blast zone as arrests made

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*

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 rav-

aged 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. — *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. "It doesn't work that way... Trials come first. That's really important," an expert said.

COFFEE-BREAK

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



Aries: Stay positive for success at work. Don't let distressing situations affect health. A temporary assignment may help showcase your mettle.



Taurus: Expect persistent back pain and weakness in your legs today. Investing in developing properties brings profit. Overindulgence in work affects health.



Gemini: Many good things happen to you simultaneously, with you failing to benefit from them. Keep your cool and work attentively. You have a strong sense of love.



Cancer: People expected to help you will disappoint. You'll feel annoyed. Include sports and entertainment activities to feel better. Avoid social gatherings if you feel like it.



Leo: Use available resources to complete difficult tasks, although all work and no play will leave you dull. Break away from



Virgo: Practise yoga and meditation for physical and spiritual gains. Financial situation stabilises. Avoid real-estate investments. Someone who doesn't care much for your feelings may dominate you.

You share your b'day with

Dustin Hoffman, Hollywood actor. He is best known for his roles in Finding Neverland, I Heart Huckabees, Stranger than Fiction, Meet the Fockers, Little Fockers, All the President's Men, Kramer vs. Kramer and The Meyerowitz Stories.



Libra: Today's an exciting day. Spend extra time dealing with domestic issues. Prepare yourself to experience the good and the bad in personal issues — a positive approach helps.



Scorpio: Act responsibly to benefit from given opportunities. Your mind can decide quickly, but avoid financial risks without second opinions.



Sagittarius: Relationship with others will be in fore. Expect a situation where you talk much but do little. Use your energy and dynamism to win favours.



Capricorn: Jealous people obstruct your work plans. Highly influential people boost your morale. Social gathering bring short-lived romantic opportunities. You'll visit exhibitions.

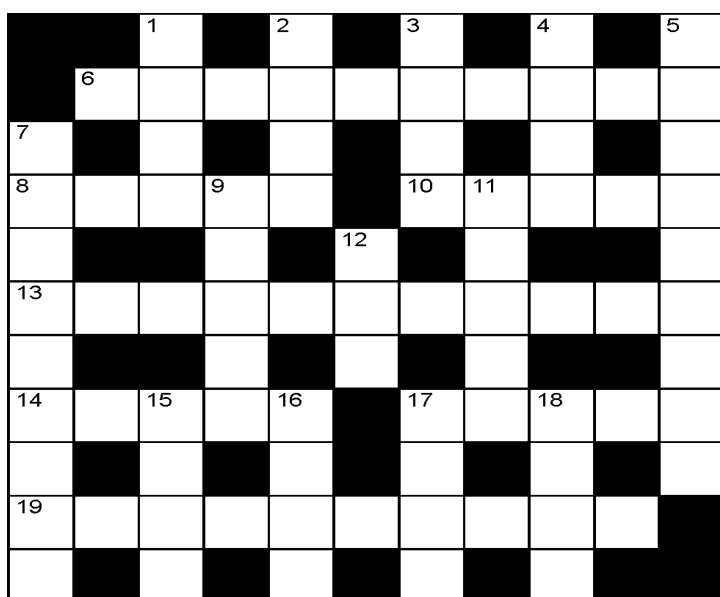


Aquarius: Focus on completing pending jobs, including the many domestic issues. Don't assume everyone understands what you have to say.



Pisces: More work comes your way. Imagine a bright picture to lift your spirits. You are just and noble towards a cause and generous with loved ones. A worrying financial problem resolves positively. Multitasking works if you work hard.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

6. Systematic (10)
8. Expectations (5)
10. Musical note (5)
13. Lift up (11)
14. Domesticated (5)
17. Under (5)
19. Speed up (10)

Down

1. Cry (4)
2. Units of electrical resistance (4)

3. Dutch cheese (4)
4. Religious image (4)
5. Sudden restrictive measure (9)
7. Religious festival (9)
9. Ooze out (5)
11. Silly (5)
12. Brief swim (3)
15. Goo (4)
16. Lacklustre (4)
17. Combust (4)
18. Behind schedule (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Vestry, 3. Hula, 7. Shed, 8. Legend, 10. Prosper, 13. Engaged, 16. Volume, 17. Seer, 18. Luge, 19. Switch.
Down: 1. Vase, 2. Sherry, 4. Used, 5. Addict, 6. Veteran, 9. Tsunami, 11. Weevil, 12. Defeat, 14. Flog, 15. Arch.

Word Mine

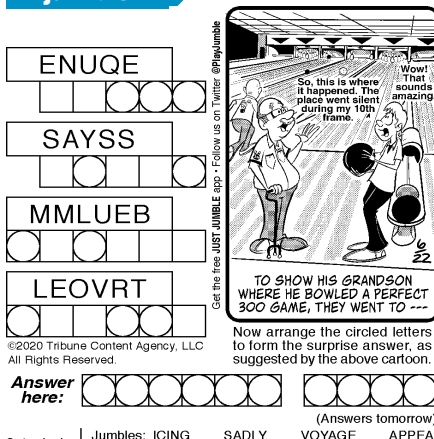


TODAY'S RATINGS: 5 AVERAGE; 6 GOOD; 8 OUTSTANDING

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

North: A K 7 4
D A 8 3
J A 2
West: Q 10 8 5
2
K Q J 10 3
8 9 2
East: J A 8 3
Q J 10 8
G 5
J 10 7 4
South: A K 7 4 3
A 8 2
K 9 3
Dealer: South
Vulnerable: East-West
West North East
1 NT Pass 14 Pass
1 NT Pass 14 Pass
Opening lead: ♦ K

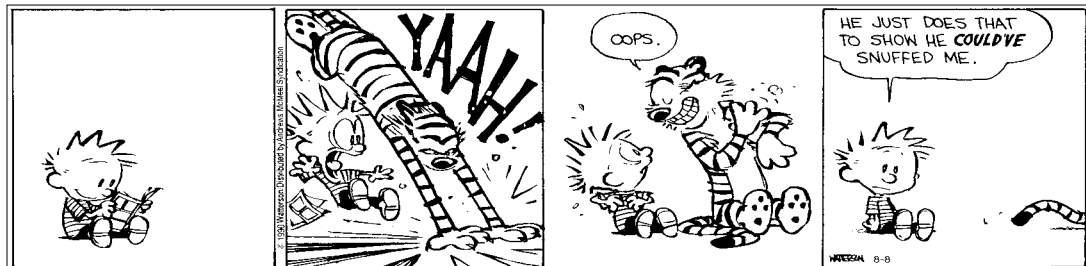
Jumble



(given the good split) three clubs off the top. The right line now is to cash the spade ace-king, ruff a spade in hand and play the three club tricks ending in the dummy. (If East ruffs in, the contract was unmakeable.) Now declarer has taken nine tricks: two spades, two hearts, one diamond, three clubs and one spade ruff. He retains two trumps and two diamonds; East has two high trumps, a diamond and a club. But when

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



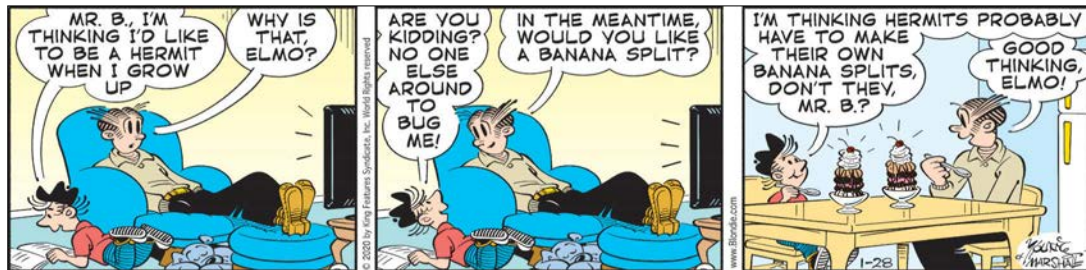
THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & Craig Boldman



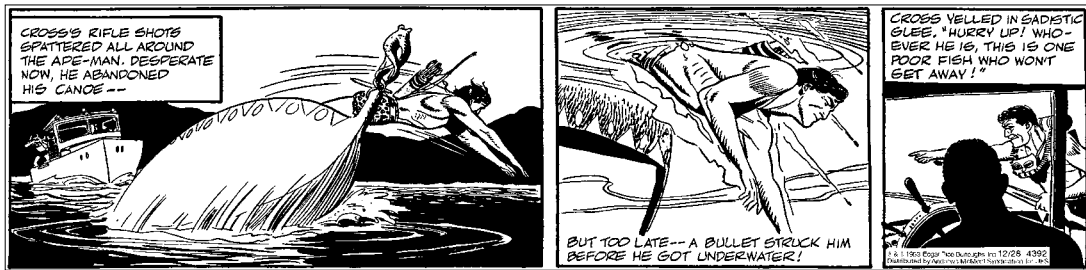
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



PHILLIP ALDER

NINE TRICKS MAY TURN INTO 10

bridge Calvin Colledge said, "If you see 10 troubles coming down the road, you can be sure that nine will run into the ditch before they reach you." If you need 10 tricks to make your contract but can see only nine, do not jump into a ditch. Try to find a 10th winner from somewhere. In today's deal, South is in four hearts. West leads the diamond king. Declarer takes that trick and cashes his two top

hearts, but West discards a diamond on the second round. How should South continue? North's four-heart rebid was questionable. With such a balanced hand, he should have settled for three no-trump (though that contract probably would have gone down). South seems destined to lose two hearts and two diamonds. But how many winners does he have? He has two spades, two hearts, one diamond and

DECCAN Chronicle

8 AUGUST 2020

RBI loan policy spells relief for borrowers

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

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

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

A survey conducted by Finway showed that 45 per cent of people who borrowed from NBFCs and 30 per cent of those who 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.

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Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618
Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatchalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 82, Telefax: (0861) 2348580
Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax: (0878) 2220433
Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax : 0495 4019018
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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

COVID- 19 MONSTROSITY

The article *Pandemic on the rise: More questions than answers* (Aug. 7) strikes a perfect chord, enumerating right from the non-availability of the data of Covid-19 affected cases down to doctors and nurses too becoming vulnerable to the deadly virus, thanks to the total fiasco of state governments in offering only random data. The recent disposal of the dead bodies of the Covid-19 victims — throwing the dead bodies into a pit and carrying dead ones on a crane — bears testimony to the fact that how the virus unleashes its monstrosity rendering humans inhuman.

E.S. Chandrasekaran
Chennai

IT IS PM'S RIGHT

THE WORD 'secularism' has been unfortunately misinterpreted by many politicians to suit their political needs. Many interpret the word to mean even as "atheistic and anti-religious" which is completely wrong and unacceptable. There are persons who say that the PM's participation in the ground breaking ceremonies in Ayodhya as an "anti secular act." The Indian PM, as known to all, is a staunch Hindu and an avid worshipper of God. He had been invited by a private body in charge of the Ram Mandir construction as the chief guest to inaugurate the groundbreaking ceremony as an ardent Ram Bakti. I don't find anything wrong with it.

S. Nagarajan Iyer
Coimbatore

CREDIT GOES TO...

AFTER A prolonged legal battle the brick-laying ceremony was held for Ram temple construction. The question is who should be given credit for the above? Though the BJP had been promising to build the temple at Janmasthan it was late Rajiv Gandhi who had conducted 'Shilanyas' and paved way for the BJP leaders' rath yathras. Mr L.K. Advani and M.M.Joshi should also be accredited since their rath yathras helped the BJP win 184 seats which later came to power. Late Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao too deserves accolades under whose regime the Babri structure was demolished. Mr K Parasaran argued and won the case should be respected.

A. Seshagiri Rao
Chennai

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

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

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

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

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

Justice suffered a blow in

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

Why the foundation ceremony in times of crises?

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

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

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

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

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

run for a third straight win in Lok Sabha elections.

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

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

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

quick BITES

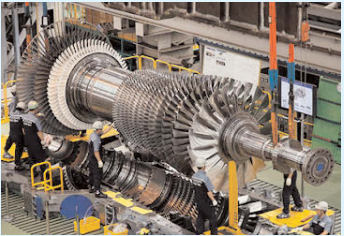
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,040.57	0.04
Nifty 50	1,1214	0.12
S&P 500*	3,346.33	-0.08
Dollar (₹)	74.93	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.12	0.53
Euro (₹)	88.64	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	55,120₹725	1.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.54	-0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.886	0.025
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.531	-0.005

* As of 9:30 PM IST

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

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

BHEL begins civil works at WB power plant



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

FB employees to work from home until July 2021

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

Mitsubishi Motors chairman resigns on health grounds

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

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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,

that period — a drop of 3.6 per cent in 2016. Some analysts, however, expect current economic stresses will soon hit the market harder and predict a fall of roughly five per cent this year to be followed by a bigger drop next year.

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

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

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.

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.

Conversion rate in realty improves in top metros

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 7

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

Site visits too have picked up, though lesser than earlier. However, the site visit-to-sales conversion is higher, finds Anarock Property Consultancy.

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

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

Mindspace REIT lists at premium

FC BUREAU MUMBAI, AUG. 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Holoportation seeks to replace Zoom meet

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

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

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

Each PORTL device is seven feet tall, five feet wide and two feet deep, and can be plugged into a standard wall outlet.

Anyone with a camera and a white background can send a hologram to the machine in what CEO David Nussbaum calls “holoportation.”

“We say if you can't be

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

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

Nussbaum added.

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

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

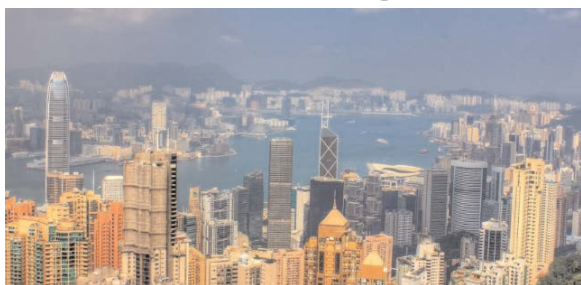
Covid, protests batter Hong Kong's realty market

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

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

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

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



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

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

SHORT TAKES

Manpreet, three others Covid +ve

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

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

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

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

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

London marathon only for the elite

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

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

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

Malik to fly to Eng if tests negative

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

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

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

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

The former Pakistan skipper, who is married to India's tennis star Sania Mirza and has a one-year-old son Ishaan. — PTI

JASON HAS A DAY OUT AT PGA TOURNEY

San Francisco: Australia's Jason Day shot a bogey-free five-under-par 65 to take a share of the lead Thursday in the opening round of the PGA Championship, the first major of the pandemic-interrupted season. The 2015 PGA champion Day rolled in five birdies for a one-shot cushion with co-leader Brendon Todd atop a star-studded crowded leaderboard at the TPC Harding Park course in San Francisco.

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SEVILLA SURGE ON
Blank Roma to make Europa quarterfinals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT
NOD FOR IPL
ALL BUT GIVEN

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

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

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

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

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

Satwik-Chirag to train from Sept.

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

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

"It is great to hear that the training camp has



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

Biggies back for 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



A file photo of S. Dakshinamoorthy with his trainees.

Guru Dakshina is a gift to volleyball

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

The most impressive section in volleyball coach S. Dakshinamoorthy's exhaustive CV is the list of his trainees who have got job appointments in various departments. In his more than three-decade journey as coach, Dakshinamoorthy has touched the lives of many players, on and off the court.

He retired as coach of the Sports Authority of India (Centre of Excellence) in 2017, but continues to contribute to volleyball by identifying and guiding talent from rural areas.

"I was born in a small village from Thanjavur district and I struggled a lot while growing up. I came up without any proper guidance and it was very difficult for me. So my heart always beats for the players from the rural area," said Dakshinamoorthy, who is in the fray for the Dronacharya Award this year.

Dakshinamoorthy has shaped careers of 35 international players, the most prominent being, R. Kamaraj — the only Indian to win the 'Best Player Award' at Asian and World events. Current internationals such as M. Ukkara Pandian, P. Prabakaran, C. Jerome Vinith and A. Muthusami are from Dakshinamoorthy's stable. More than 80 players who trained

● **International players such as M. Ukkara Pandian, P. Prabakaran, C. Jerome Vinith and A. Muthusami are from Dakshinamoorthy's stable. More than 80 players who trained under Dakshina have been placed in different departments across the country through sports quota.**

Dakshinamoorthy have been placed in different departments across the country through sports quota.

Volleyball is a rage in many districts in Tamil Nadu, but factional disputes at state and national level have proved to be a hindrance for the game's growth. The success of the inaugural edition of the Pro Volleyball League brought some cheer, but the Volleyball Federation of India terminated the contract with a sports marketing company much to the disappointment of the players.

Dakshinamoorthy, an FIVB Level-III coach, said the pro league is important for volleyball's growth. "We have a lot of quality players, with imposing height and physique required to match their international counterparts. But they lack motivation without the professional league," said the 63-year-old.

BASKETBALL | LEAGUE

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

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.