

IN BRIEF

22-year-old woman found dead at home

Noida: A 22-year-old woman was found dead at her house in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida on Friday in a suspected case of dowry death, police said. The woman, Musaida was married to Nadeem (24) and they lived in Shadipur Chhidoli village, under Badalpur Police Station area, they said. "The incident was reported to the police at around 6 am.

One of the women in the family said she woke up at 3 am to drink water when she found Musaida unusually lying on a cot on the terrace.

Soon she woke up other family members and they all realised she was dead," a police officer said. The couple had been married for nearly two years now, the police said. The cause of the death is yet to be ascertained and the body has been sent for post mortem, they added. An FIR has been lodged under relevant provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act following a complaint by the family of the deceased woman and further proceedings are underway, the police said.

Extortion racket busted, 5 arrested

New Delhi: Five people have been arrested by the Delhi Police for allegedly running an extortion racket by impersonating as officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the central probe agency said on Friday. It said the five, in the age group of 24-35 years, are residents of Delhi-NCR and were arrested by the crime branch of the Delhi Police on a complaint from the ED. They were produced before a court here on Thursday and sent to a three-day police custody, the ED said in a statement. "The five accused have been arrested on the basis of a complaint from a Maharashtra-based individual alleging that somebody approached him with a fake notice of the ED and demanded money for settlement of their purported case in the ED. "This complaint was forwarded by the ED to the Delhi Police and on the basis of proactive action and swift investigation, the culprits involved in the racket have been apprehended by Delhi Police," it said.

Noida: Child found dead under flyover

Noida: The body of a child was found under the Mahamaya flyover in Uttar Pradesh's Noida, police said on Friday. Aged between 8 to 10 years, the child's body was spotted Thursday afternoon in a green belt under the usually busy flyover in the city and its identity ascertained later in the day, they said. "The child's body was found under the Mahamaya flyover. His family, which lives in Sector 44's Chhalera village, has been traced. A probe is on and police team are enquiring about the incident from the locals," DCP, Noida, Rajesh S. said. It was not clear how the child died and the body was sent for post-mortem, the officer said, adding other details would be available only after the autopsy. The autopsy report was yet to reach the police, an police official said.

CISF launches app for retired personnel

New Delhi: The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), on Friday, launched a mobile application for its pensioners as part of an e-office initiative introduced in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, officials said. "Pension Corner will be available in both web and android platforms with the facility for pensioners to access their data on the move. The new app will also have an SMS invitation system for the pensioners on important events taking place at their nearest CISF unit," a spokesperson for the force said. He said an iOS version of the app for Apple phones will be developed soon. "Apart from an inbuilt grievance redressal mechanism, all important circulars like job opportunities and benefits relating to pensioners will be available on the app that has been created in-house," he said. "Reaching out to the ex-force personnel through this digital platform will motivate and increase the self-esteem of personnel who devoted their lives in guarding the nation's assets," CISF director general (DG) Rajesh Ranjan said.



Traffic snarl near Shivaji Stadium due to waterlogging on roads following monsoon shower in New Delhi on Friday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

■ 'Unfortunate that world's largest party needs faqir'**Anna declines BJP offer to join stir against AAP govt**

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

In a major embarrassment to Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, social activist Anna Hazare on Friday termed his request to join a "public movement" against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government as "unfortunate".

On August 24, Mr Gupta wrote to Mr Hazare to support the mass movement against the Arvind Kejriwal government in the city. The decision to invite Mr Hazare was criticised by a large section of Delhi BJP who said that the party which also used to boost its cadre has surrendered in front of the Kejriwal government in absence of strategy and now sought support of Mr Hazare for its "public movement".

In reply to Mr Gupta's letter, Mr Hazare wrote: "I felt sorry to read your letter to the media. BJP has been ruling at the Centre for more than six years. It is unfortunate that the party which claims to be the world's largest is calling an 83-year-old fakir who is

▶ On Aug. 24, Adesh Gupta wrote to Anna Hazare to support the mass movement against the Kejriwal government in the city. The decision to invite Mr Hazare was criticised by a large section of Delhi BJP

▶ Mr Hazare said that he felt sorry to read Mr Gupta's letter. BJP has been ruling for more than six years. It is unfortunate that the party which claims to be the world's largest is calling an 83-yr-old fakir

without power or wealth for a movement". Mr Hazare posted the letter on his verified Facebook page.

Pointing out that multiple administrative issues of Delhi are under control of BJP ruled Central government, Mr Hazare asked: "CBI, Delhi Police and vigilance are under the Central government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi claims that the Central government has taken strong steps for eradicating corruption. Why does your government not take stringent legal steps if the Delhi government has indulged in corruption or the Central government making empty tall claims to control corruption".

Mr Hazare mentioned that the 2011 movement

was started against the increase in corruption cases which had made life difficult for the people. "It prompted people to join the movement. In 2014, your government came to power promising a corruption free country. But people have not felt any relief. Those in power find faults in other parties. Sometimes an introspection is needed to correct itself," Mr Hazare wrote.

Reacting to Mr Hazare's reply to his letter, Mr Gupta said that the BJP is committed and capable to fight every battle against corruption and request those who have been fighting against corruption to join our movement.

After Mr Hazare's reply, several senior Delhi BJP

leaders once again questioned about the need of inviting the social activist to lead the public movement. "Mr Gupta's act caused huge embarrassment to the party and it is not the first one. Earlier they inducted protesters from Shaheen Bagh in the party and now due to his letter Mr Hazare is questioning works done by Prime Minister Mr Modi to check corruption. Mr Gupta must take every-into confidence before writing such a letter which causes embarrassment," said a senior Delhi BJP leader.

Another Delhi BJP leader pointed that in his three months this one was the third blunder of Mr Gupta. "Firstly after two protests, 'Bijli Janaandolan' was stopped and no one talked about it. Second the political blunder of 'Shaheen Bagh' which gave political ammunition to AAP and thirdly 'letter bomb'," he added pointing that it all happens due blindly following the advice of Courtiers, who are not allowing right voices to reach Mr Gupta.

Heavy rain leads to traffic snarls, waterlogging in city**Yamuna level swells further after downpour**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

Heavy rains in Delhi on Friday led to waterlogging in several parts of the city, according to municipal reports. In north Delhi, waterlogging took place at seven different locations in areas, including Karala, Burari and Prem Nagar.

Trees fell at four different locations, according to a monsoon report released by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation.

In south Delhi and east Delhi too, waterlogging occurred in several areas.

In areas falling under the South Delhi Municipal Corporation, water stagnation was recorded at Devli Extension, Nizamuddin West Market, among other places, the SDMC report said.

Falling of trees was reported from seven different locations, including Madangir, Maharani Bagh and Saket Court area.

Meanwhile, the water level of the Yamuna in Delhi rose to 204.41 metres on Friday, precariously close to the warning mark

▶ **THE WATER** level of the Yamuna in Delhi rose to 204.41 metres on Friday, precariously close to the warning mark of 204.50 metres following heavy rains

of 204.50 metres following heavy rains, officials said.

The water level rose because of rains in Delhi and neighbouring areas, he said.

"The water level was recorded at 204.41 metres at the Old Railway Bridge at 5 pm. It was 204.30 metres at 9 am on Friday morning and 203.77 metres at 10 am on Thursday," an official of the Irrigation and Flood Control department said.

Besides, more water was released from the Hathnikund barrage on Tuesday. The flow rate was 36,557 cusec at 5 pm on Tuesday, the highest in the last three days, he said.

The water discharged from the barrage — which provides drinking water to Delhi — normally takes two-three days to reach the capital.

Water was being released

into the Yamuna at the rate of 13,871 cusec cusec at 4 pm on Friday.

"The flow rate has remained between 10,000 cusec to 25,000 cusec over the last two days, which is not very high," the official said.

One cusec is equivalent to 28.32 litre per second.

However, the water level may rise further if rains continue in the catchment areas, the official said.

The river had swelled to 204.38 metres on Monday, which was just a metre below the danger mark of 205.33 metres.

Normally, the flow rate at the Hathnikund barrage is 352 cusec, but the discharge is increased after heavy rainfall in catchment areas. Last year, the flow rate had peaked to 8.28 lakh cusec on August 18-19, and the water level of the Yamuna had hit the 206.60 metre-mark, breaching the danger mark of 205.33 metres.

The Delhi government had to launch evacuation and relief operations after the overflowing river submerged many low-lying areas.

BJP leader moves HC challenging Jain's election

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

Bharatiya Janata Party leader S.C. Vats on Friday moved the Delhi high court challenging the election of Delhi health minister Satyendra Jain for allegedly indulging in "corrupt practices".

Mr Vats lost to Mr Jain in the 2020 Delhi Assembly elections from Shakur Basti constituency here.

The Bharatiya Janata Party leader, in his plea filed through advocate Sahil Ahuja, has sought that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader's election be declared as null and void.

The petition alleges that Jain "bribed" voters of his constituency that prevented them from exercising their right to vote in a free and fair manner. It also claimed that Mr



Satyendra Jain

Jain did not disclose his actual expenses incurred during the election campaign and exceeded the cap on poll expenditures.

It seeks that the Aam Aadmi Party leader's election be set aside and Mr Vats be declared as the successful candidate from that constituency.

The petition also seeks that during pendency of the matter, Mr Jain be prevented from attending the legislative assembly and drawing employments or any other payments.

BJP announces presidents for 14 district units

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

The Delhi BJP on Friday declared the names of new presidents of its 14 district units in the national capital, repeating Ram Kishore Sharma from Shahdara and Rohtash Bidhuri from South Delhi.

Releasing the list, Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party president Adesh Gupta said the appointments will immediately take effect.

Delhi BJP Media Cell head Ashok Goel said all the new presidents of 14 district units were appointed after extensive consultation and feedback process.

He said two district presidents, Mr Sharma and Bidhuri, were repeated.

Man attempts to rape 7-year-old girl, arrested

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NOIDA, AUG. 28

A 42-year-old man has been arrested for alleged rape attempt on a seven-year-old girl from his neighbourhood at a village in Uttar Pradesh's Noida, police said on Friday.

The incident had taken place on Wednesday evening and an FIR was lodged in connection with the case at Sector 39 police station Thursday night, they said.

"The accused and the victim are neighbours. An FIR was lodged after the family's complaint was received and the accused arrested immediately," a police spokesperson said.

The FIR has been lodged under Indian Penal Code section 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and under the POCSO Act, the official said.

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UP Police constable, aide held for abducting & robbing man

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 27

A Uttar Pradesh Police constable was arrested along with his associate for allegedly abducting a man and robbing him off his valuables at gun-point here, the Delhi Police said on Thursday.

Shreekant (30), the constable, is the alleged mastermind while his associate, Raghu Khosla, was previously involved in more than 100 cases, they said. Khosla usually targeted passengers in Rajdhani and Shatabadi expresses stealing items having value more than ₹1 lakh in each journey, police said.

According to police,

▶ **THE ALLEGED** abduction-and-robbing incident happened on August 17, with a resident of Sonipat when he was waiting for someone in his car at Mukarba Chowk, Karnal by-pass

the alleged abduction-and-robbing incident happened on August 17, with a resident of Sonipat when he was waiting for someone in his car at Mukarba Chowk, Karnal by-pass.

Around 5:30 am, a man asked him to open the window of his car and threatened him with a firearm. Soon, two others came and abducted

him in his car, the police said.

They robbed the man off his mobile phone, money, and ran away with his car, they said.

Police also said that upon technical surveillance and analysis of call detail record of the accused, they found that constable Shreekant was actively involved in this crime.

He was arrested and the robbed mobile phone was recovered from his possession, a senior police officer said.

Khosla, a resident of Ghaziabad, was also arrested by the police from his hideout in the area of Jama Masjid, Old Delhi, he said.

2 injured as car falls off flyover

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

Two persons were injured when their car fell off a flyover in West Delhi's Vikaspuri area, police said on Friday. The accident took place around 11 pm on Thursday night, they said. "One of the injured was shifted to DDU hospital while the another hospital," deputy commissioner of police (West) Deepak Purohit said.

A case has been registered at Vikaspuri police station and investigation is in progress, police said.

Delhi records 1,808 Covid cases

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

As cases continue to rise, health minister Satyendar Jain, on Friday, asserted that the Delhi government is committed to double Covid-19 testing to find out all the positive cases in the city.

As many as 1,808 new cases and 20 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours in the national capital. Of the total 1,69,412 cases in the city, 13,550 are active and 1,51,473 patients have recovered.

▶ **THE FATALITIES** have gone up to 4,389. Satyendar Jain said that the government plans to scale up the tests from around 20,000 to 40,000 per day

been extended to five hours from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm. Even if dispensaries conduct on average 100 tests per day, the target of scaling up testing to daily 40,000 from the current 20,000 will be met," he said.

He pointed out that the

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He pointed out that the

government will also create awareness about this move and testing in containment zones and districts will go side by side.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, earlier this week, directed double Covid-19 testing in view of the increase in corona positive cases in the city.

"Delhi has the highest rate of per million testing in the country. We are working on the strategy of aggressive contact tracing and testing and corona will be completely checked if the strategy succeeds. By doubling the number of tests to 40,000, we will trace and test all the contacts of Covid-19 patients," he said.

Mr Jain said that the recent increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in Delhi was due to various reasons including outside patients, return of the migrants who left the

city during lockdown, as well as increased testing.

"Presently, out of the 3,700 corona patients in Delhi government hospitals, around 30 per cent patients are from other states. Also, the number of tests were lower as people stayed home during the recent festivals and now tests have increased and so has the number of positive cases," Mr Jain said.

According to him, Delhi is still "halfway behind" the peak of the pandemic and the rise in the number of positive cases in the last few days was not a second wave of the Covid-19 infection in the city as was claimed by some experts.

"It's a short duration rise. Delhi is still halfway behind the peak. The positivity rate is around seven per cent which at one point of time was 30 per cent," he said.

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PROJECT(SHAH-N)-II

1st floor, Opp. Shayam Lal College, G.T. Road Shandara, Delhi

D/EE(PR)-II Shah (N)/20-21/542 Dated 27/8/2020

Online Item rate tenders from eligible contractor of MCD are invited vide NIT No.D/EE-Pr.SHN II/TC/2020-21/01 dated 27.08.20 for the works of Providing Green Cover to curb Air pollution in AC 69, Shahdara (N) Zone. Sub-Head: (1) Providing and laying Interlocking Paver Block and tree Guard from Govind Vihar main road to Gutta Factory at Karawal Nagar Road in Shahdara (N) Zone. (2) Providing and laying Interlocking Paver Block and tree Guard from Harsh Trading Co. to Govind Vihar at Karawal Nagar Road in Shahdara (N) Zone. (3) Providing and laying Interlocking Paver Block and tree Guard from Shiv Vihar Pulia to MLA office at Karawal Nagar Road in Shahdara (N) Zone. (4) Providing and laying Interlocking Paver Block and tree Guard from MLA office to Hariom Timber shop at Karawal Nagar Road in Shahdara (N) Zone. (5) Providing and laying Interlocking Paver Block and tree Guard from Shyam sweets to Harsh Trading Co. at Karawal Nagar Road in Shahdara (N) Zone.,

Tender amount: Item rate, Earnest Mondy: Rs. 147,100/-, Head of A/c: UDF Tender No.: 319125.

Other details can be seen and download from the website <http://mcdetenders.com> on or before 09.09.20. **Tender cost @ Rs. 1000/-** each and earnest money will be submitted upto 11.09.20 upto 15.00 hrs and tender will be opened on 11.09.20 at 15.01 hrs in the office of EE Project-II Shah (N), 1st floor, Opp. Shayam Lal College, G.T. Road, Shahdara, Delhi.

Sd/- R.O. No. 46/DPI/EDMC/2020-21 EE (PR)-II Shah (N)

EDMC'S CITIZENS HELPLINE NO. 155303

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer-(E&M)

Disaster Management Centre, Ghaziapur, Delhi-96

NIT No.EE-E&M/EDMC/ENGG./2020-21/12 Dated: 26.08.2020

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer (E&M) on behalf of Commissioner, EDMC invites tenders in e-tendering in two stage system i.e. Stage:- 1 Documents related to eligibility criteria and Stage :- 2 Financial bid for **Name of Work:-** (1) Supply Installation Testing and commissioning of two Nos. Hydraulic driven Anti Smog Gun. **Head of Account: XL-III-D-IV, Tender Amount: Item Rate, Earnest Money: Rs. 57,400/-, Tender Cost: Rs.1,000/-, Time of Completion: One Month. Rate shall hold good for: 120 days, Tender No.: 319124.** The last date of re-encryption of online bid is 16/09/2020 up to 1500 Hrs.

NIT No. EE-E&M/EDMC/ENGG./2020-21/13 Dated: 27.08-2020

(2) Operation & Comprehensive Maintenance of 6 Nos. Sewer Line suction cum jetting machines for four years in EDMC. **Head of Account: XL-III-D-IV, Tender Amount: Item Rate, Earnest Money: Rs.8,61,150/-, Tender Cost: Rs.2,000/-, Time of Completion: Four Year, Rate shall hold good for: 120 days, Tender No.: 319128.** The last date of re-encryption of online bid is 18/09/2020 up to 1500 Hrs.

Non EDMC registered contractors opting for e-tendering will have to register in the e-tendering system of EDMC. Other details/ information can be seen on website www.mcdetenders.com. **Sd/- R.O. No. 44/DPI/EDMC/2020-21 Ex. Engineer (E&M)**

EDMC'S CITIZENS HELPLINE NO. 155303

SHORT TAKES

AP crosses 4L mark in Covid-19 cases

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh on Friday went past the grim mark of four lakh Covid-19 cases as over 10,000 were added afresh for the third straight day. The number of people cured of the infection increased to over three lakh, the latest government bulletin said. It took just 10 days, the shortest span so far, for the number of coronavirus cases to swell from three to four lakh in the state. Going by the pace at which new cases are being added, AP is expected to climb to the second spot, behind Maharashtra, in the overall national tally, surpassing neighbouring Tamil Nadu, which had crossed the four lakh mark on Thursday, in a day or two. As on Friday, the Covid-19 count in AP read 4,03,616 total cases, 3,03,711 recoveries and 3,714 deaths. The active cases stood at 96,191. — PTI

Assam okays ₹50L insurance for journo

Guwahati: The Assam Cabinet on Thursday approved insurance coverage to the tune of ₹50 lakh for journalists, home guards and casual employees who succumb to Covid-19 while on duty. A meeting of the the council of ministers, chaired by chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, approved the proposal to provide insurance coverage to these categories, industry and commerce minister Chandra Mohan Patowary told reporters. The Cabinet also decided to increase the upper age limit for state government jobs for Group-III and Group-IV by two years to 40 years. The Assam Skill Development University Bill was also approved for setting up the Skill University in Mangaldoi at an estimated cost of ₹900 crore, Mr Patowary said. Among other decisions, the Cabinet cleared the Assam Heritage Protection and Preservation Bill. — PTI

Punjab House moves against 'farm laws'

Chandigarh: The Punjab Assembly on Friday passed a resolution against the three agriculture marketing ordinances notified in June and a proposed Bill to boost private sector investment in the power sector, urging the Centre to withdraw them. Moving the resolution, chief minister Amarinder Singh claimed the ordinances spelled economic ruin for Punjab's farmers, particularly the 70% who owned less than five acres of land. He also compared the possible impact of the central ordinances to that of river water-sharing under the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal project, opposed by his Congress government. Singh also argued that the state could descend into the chaos of the 1980s, an apparent reference to Khalistani terrorism. — PTI

SMALL MINERS TO PROTEST MINES ACT AMENDMENT

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

Small miners, known as "merchant miners" are up in arms with the new amendment to Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 2015 that came into being. They are planning to take up the issues with the Central government soon. The main grievance that they have is that there are large conglomerates who are strategising methods to gain immensely from the new changes as the government is also experiencing the impact of auctions for the first time. Early this year, there were record bids to 21 merchant blocks offered for online auctions in Odisha. The merchant miners complain that these went at a premium of more than 150 per cent and they were not able to compete as "the new policy is lopsided in favour of big players". Merchant miners claim that any mine bagged at a premium in excess of 100 per cent would inevitably run into losses for merchant producers. They further add that big players can absorb the enhanced costs into their finished steel products, they can also invest in slurry pipelines to cut costs of ore transportation. But the merchant miners are not able to compete. Incidentally, there is a demand by big players in the industry to reduce royalty and attempts to change the existing law of GST on premium.

Mantri attacks Pak 'terror hypocrisy'

Produces terrorists but paints itself as victim: Jaishankar

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

Lashing out at Pakistan without naming it, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Friday said "sustained pressure through international mechanisms to prevent the movement of funds for terror groups and their front agencies can work" and "has eventually compelled a state complicit in aiding, abetting, training and directing terror groups and associated criminal syndicates to grudgingly acknowledge the presence of wanted terrorists and organised crime leaders on its territory".

The obvious reference was to Pakistan which was seen to have recently in effect admitted to the



All the while, states that have turned the production of terrorists into a primary export have attempted, by dint of bland denials, to paint themselves as victims of terror.

— S. Jaishankar, minister for external affairs

presence of terrorist and criminal Dawood Ibrahim on its soil as part of measures to free itself from the greylist of global anti-terror funding watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The EAM was delivering the Presidential address at the 19th Darbari Seth Memorial Lecture.

In an obvious reference to Pakistan, EAM Jaishankar said, "All the while, states that have

turned the production of terrorists into a primary export have attempted, by dint of bland denials, to paint themselves as victims of terror. But as we have seen last week, sustained pressure through international mechanisms to prevent the movement of funds for terror groups and their front agencies can work. It has eventually compelled a state complicit in aiding, abetting, training and

directing terror groups and associated criminal syndicates to grudgingly acknowledge the presence of wanted terrorists and organised crime leaders on its territory."

He added, "Nineteen years from the tragedy of '9/11' and 12 years from our own '26/11', we have a range of mechanisms in place to contend with terrorism. These include the Financial Action Task Force, various UN Sanctions Committees and the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate. But we still lack a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, with the membership of the UN still wrestling with certain foundational principles."

New Kashmir curbs: Shia devotees held in Srinagar

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, AUG. 28

The police on Friday detained dozens of Shia mourners to foil repeated attempts made by them to take out a Muharram tazia procession through the streets of uptown Srinagar.

The mourners had earlier emerged of dark alleys of the City's Batamalo, Shaheed Gunj and Dal Gate areas, chanting slogans and rhymes in praise of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, who was martyred along with 71 of his family members and companions in the Battle of Karbala in October 680.

The witnesses said that as the police came in their way, the mourners offered stiff resistance and marched ahead but only to be overpowered by the cops, bundled into police vans and then driven to Shaheed Gunj and Kothi Bagh police stations.

The police sources said that 68 people were detained for violating an official ban on Muharram processions and rallies in the Valley announced by Kashmir's Divisional Commissioner, Pandurang K. Pole, earlier in view of the spike in Covid-19 deaths and positive cases.

The sources said that among the detainees are two youths who raised a banner reading "Free Kashmir" while attempting to march along Srinagar street. Earlier this week, the police had arrested two youth on charge of raising pro-freedom slogans at one of the Muharram tazia processions on the outskirts of Srinagar.

SC junks plea that sought deferment of Bihar elections

New Delhi, Aug. 28: Stating that Covid-19 cannot be a ground for postponing elections, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a PIL seeking to defer the Bihar assembly polls till the state is free of the novel coronavirus.

The Election Commission of India will consider everything, a bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said.

The bench, also comprising Justices R.S. Reddy and M.R. Shah, said it is a premature petition as no notification for the assembly polls has been issued till now.

The petitioner, Avinash Thakur, had sought a direction to the Chief Election Commissioner to postpone the polls due to the COVID-19 pandemic on the ground that the Representation of the People Act provides for the deferment of polls in extraordinary situations.

How can we ask the Election Commission of India (ECI) to not hold elections? COVID cannot be a valid ground for postponement of elections, the bench stated.

The petitioner's counsel said the RP Act provides for the deferment of polls due to an extraordinary situation.

To this the bench said it is for the ECI to decide and the court cannot direct the poll panel to not hold elections.

The petitioner's counsel also argued that elections are not paramount but human life is, and even MLAs and common people are suffering due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The bench said it cannot pass orders for the deferment of polls and the ECI

BJP welcomes SC observation on holding polls

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, AUG. 28

The BJP on Friday welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to dismiss the petition seeking deferment of Assembly elections slated to be held this year.

"We welcome the Supreme Court's decision to reject the petition seeking a stay on the Bihar assembly elections. It's the prerogative of the election commission to decide when and how to hold elections. We also welcome the way election commission is working hard to conduct fair and safe elections during this corona pandemic," BJP spokesperson Nikhil Anand told this newspaper.

During the hearing, the Supreme Court observed that "COVID-19 cannot be a valid ground to postpone elections".

Opposition parties RJD and Congress have been expressing strong reservations against holding assembly polls in the middle of a pandemic. Later Jamui MP and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) Chief Chirag Paswan had joined the opposition in demanding the postponement of elections in Bihar.

The Bihar Assembly completes its current tenure on November 19.

It said no writ can be applied like this and dismissed the PIL.

— PTI

No fuel without PUC: SC sets aside NGT order

Top court says tribunal lacks jurisdiction

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

The Supreme Court on Friday said that vehicles not possessing or displaying valid pollution under control (PUC) certificate can't be debarred from being supplied with fuel by any petrol pump or fuel outlet as the same is not contemplated under the Central Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 and 1989 he Rules framed under it.

"Stoppage of supply of fuel to vehicles not complying with the requirement to have and/or display a valid PUC Certificate is not contemplated either in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, or in the NGT Act. Motor Vehicles not complying with the requirement of possessing and/or displaying a valid PUC Certificate can-

▶ **THE TOP** court said this as it set-aside the 2015 National Green Tribunal's order to MP government directing it to issues instruction that no fuel would be given to vehicles not possessing or displaying valid pollution under control certificate

not be debarred from being supplied fuel" said a bench comprising Justice Arun Mishra and Justice Indira Banerjee.

Speaking for the bench, Justice Banerjee said, "There can be no doubt that strong measures must be taken to protect the environment and improve the air quality whenever there is contravention of statutory rules causing environmental pollution. Stringent action has to be taken, but

in accordance with law."

The top court said this as it set-aside the 2015 NGT's order to Madhya Pradesh government directing it to issues instruction that no fuel would be given to vehicles not possessing or displaying valid pollution under control certificate and asking the state government to deposit ₹25 crores as a security to ensure the compliance of its orders.

Holding that there is no provision in the NGT Act for the deposit of security to secure compliance of an order of the Tribunal, Justice Banerjee referred to the CMVR, 1989 framed under framed under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, saying that they provided for the temporary suspension of the registration of vehicles, fine or imprisonment or both but no stoppage of the supply of fuel.

Next batch of 3-4 Rafale jets to reach India in October

Rafale induction in IAF on Sept. 10

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

Indian Air Force will formally induct five Rafale fighter jets on September 10 at a ceremony in the Ambala air base.

India is expecting the next batch of 3-4 Rafale jets to reach Ambala air station in October which will further boost Air Force's capability.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh will be the chief guest during the induction ceremony next month. French defence minister



Rafale jet

Florence Parly has also been invited to attend the ceremony.

The first five Rafale fighter aircraft had arrived in India from France on July 29. Indian Air Force has

been working to operationalise these Rafale jets quickly in view of military stand-off with China in the Eastern Ladakh. Rafale jets have already flown over the Ladakh sector and some other regions where they are expected to undertake operations.

These five Rafale jets include three single seater and two twin seater aircraft. After India received Rafale jets, two Chinese J-20 fighter jets were spotted at Hotan airbase which is around 200

miles from Ladakh. J-20 is China's most advance fighter jet.

In 2016, India had signed a Rs 59,000 crore deal for 36 Rafales which will be based in Ambala and Basimara (West Bengal) air bases.

The 4.5 generation fighter aircraft, capable of carrying nuclear weapons provides IAF unmatched air superiority with its advanced avionics and deadly weapon package which include Meteor, Scalp and HAMMER missiles.

Kerala BJP's role under lens in gold smuggling case

AGE CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 28

The ruling CPM in Kerala on Friday said the allegations regarding BJP's links in the gold smuggling case has gained further strength with the questioning of Mr Anil Nambiar, the coordinating editor of party backed Malayalam TV channel by customs officials.

The state secretariat of CPM said the details coming out in the media in connection with Nambiar's questioning are grave. The statement of the accused before Customs reportedly mentioned that it was Nambiar who asked her (Swarna) to tell the Customs that the bag from which gold was seized at the airport was not "diplomatic baggage." Right from the beginning union minister of state Mr V Muraliedharan has also maintained the same stand that "it's not diplomatic baggage."

The CPM said it was notable that despite the union home ministry and NIA clarifying that

smuggled gold was seized from diplomatic baggage, the union minister is not ready to change his earlier statement. It may be recalled that 30 kg of gold was seized at the Thiruvananthapuram airport on July 5 from a diplomatic baggage addressed to the UAE consulate here.

Is Mr Muraliedharan indirectly giving direction to the accused on what stand should be taken in connection with the case? At least the evidence given by the accused so far raises this suspicion.

The CPM said if the probe went in the right direction the heart beats of many people would raise. The main accused in the case Sandeep Nair is a BJP worker. Now with the party backed news channels editor's links with the accused coming out in the open, the BJP leadership cannot shy away from its responsibility.

The BJP cannot fool the people by trying to publicly distance itself from the channel and its functionary at this stage.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE						
SR. No.	NAME OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, KATHAL	SELECTION OF CONTRACTOR FOR REMEDIATION AND RECLAMATION OF EXISTING DUMPSITE AT KHURANA, KATHAL	27.08.2020 02.09.2020	NIL	http://etenders.hry.nic.in	96717-90078/ himanshu_latakg@gov.in
2	GENERAL MANAGER, HARYANA FOREST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. GURUGRAM	FELLING OF TREES FROM FOREST AND NON-FOREST AREAS WITH EXTRACTION OF STUMPS, CONVERSION, MEASUREMENT, RECORDING, LOADING, CARRIAGE, UNLOADING & STACKING (MAKING LOTS) IN SALE DEPOTS AND ALL RELATED WORKS AS MENTIONED IN S.O.R. WITH ADDITIONAL REQUIRED WORKS FOR LOGGING OPERATIONS.	26.08.2020 03.09.2020	EMD 50000	http://etenders.hry.nic.in	, 0124-2305348 gm.gurgaon@hfdc.gov.in
3	GENERAL MANAGER, HARYANA FOREST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. GURUGRAM	ENGAGING THE SECURITY/PLACEMENT AGENCY FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR EMPLOYMENT OF PERSON ON OUTSOURCING/CONTRACT BASIS	26.08.2020 03.09.2020	EMD 30000	https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO GM/HFDC/GGM/02/2020-21	0124-2305348 gm.gurgaon@hfdc.gov.in
4	GENERAL MANAGER, HARYANA FOREST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. GURUGRAM	E-TENDER SALE OF INDUSTRIAL PLOT OF 4000 SQ. M. AT IMT, BAWAL, DISTRICT REWARI	27.08.2020 04.09.2020	471 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO GM/HFDC/GGM/03/2020-21	0124-2305348 gm.gurgaon@hfdc.gov.in
5	MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE PATAUDI	CONST OF BOUNDARY WALL FOR DROPPING OF CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION WASTE NEAR SLAUGHTER HOUSE PATAUDI + 3 OTHER WORKS	27.08.2020 06.09.2020	EMD 27256	https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO 2020_HRY_141593_1 + 3 OTHER	0124-2672869
6	H.S.A.M. BOARD PANCHKULA	SPECIAL REPAIR OF INTERNAL ROADS IN NGM/NGM, SEC.-20, PANCHKULA + 1 OTHER WORK	CLOSING DATE 14.09.2020	4.22 CRORE	http://etenders.hry.nic.in	Executive Engineer
7	MC HISAR	EARTH FILLING IN THE VARIOUS STREETS OF MAHABIR COLONY EXTENTION-1 NEAR RADA KRISHI FARM IN WARD NO. 8 HISAR + 8 OTHER WORKS	CLOSING DATE 08.09.2020	7.23 CRORE	http://etenders.hry.nic.in	xemchissar@gmail.com
8	HVPNL, ROHTAK	CREATION OF 01 NO. 132 KV BAY AT 132 KV S/STN. MUNDLANA TO ACCOMMODATE FEEDING OF 132 KV TSS MUNDLANA BY HVPN AS A DEPOSIT WORK OF RAILWAYS.(R-8) (CIVIL WORKS)	CLOSING DATE 17.09.2020	21.30 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
9	HVPNL, PANCHKULA	PROCUREMENT OF 220V, 200AH, DC DISTRIBUTION BOARD.	31.08.2020 30.09.2020	7.84 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
10	HVPNL, ROHTAK	CREATION OF 132 KV LINE BAY AT 132 KV SUB-STATION ASSAUDA TO ACCOMMODATE THE 132 KV S/C LINE FROM 220 KV SUBSTATION SAMPLA AND CREATION OF ONE NO 132 KV BAY AT 132 KV SUBSTATION MUNDLANA TO ACCOMMODATE FEEDING OF 132 KV TSS MUNDLANA	CLOSING DATE 04.09.2020	7.64 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
11	HVPNL, PANCHKULA	PROCUREMENT OF 220V, 200AH, DC DISTRIBUTION BOARD.	31.08.2020 30.09.2020	7.84 LACS	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
12	HVPNL	CLEANING OF MOISTURE AND PROVIDING INSULATION COATING ON 11KV BUS BAR OF 11KV VCBs OF 25/31.5MVA 66/11KV T/F T-2 AT 66KV S/STN. HVPNL, JATHLANA.	CLOSING DATE 07.09.2020	14.57 LACS	https://www.hvpn.org.in Tender No. 2020_HRC_141593_1	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
13	HVPNL	CONSTRUCTION OF ODGS FOUNDATION AT BAY NO. D-5 FOR PANCHGAON TO ROZKA-MEO LINE AT 220KV SUB-STATION, PANCHGAON (GURUGRAM)	CLOSING DATE 17.09.2020	2.51 LACS	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
14	HVPNL	CONSTRUCTION OF ADDL. ODGS & ODCT FDNs. OF 66KV LINE BAY FROM 220KV S/STN. SEC.-1 IMT MANESAR TO 66KV S/STN. OLD MANESAR AT 220KV S/STN. SEC.-1, IMT MANESAR.	CLOSING DATE 16.09.2020	8.28 LACS	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
15	HVPNL	CONSTRUCTION OF ADDL. ODGS FOUNDATION & ODCT FOR 66KV LINE BAY FROM 220KV S/STN. SEC.-1, IMT MANESAR TO 66KV S/STN., OLD MANESAR AT 66KV S/STN., OLD MANESAR (R-14)	CLOSING DATE 17.09.2020	5.15 LACS	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
16	HVPNL AMBALA	PROVIDING SUBMERSIBLE TUBEWELL WITH 400 FEET BORE AGAINST FAILED BORE AT 66 KV S/STN HVPNL MOHRA	28.08.2020 10.09.2020	3200 FOR FIRMS AND 1600 FOR CO-OP SOCIETIES	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

SAMVAD-ADVT-13/2021/82509 DATED 28.08.2020

SHORT TAKES

Doctor dies after battling with Covid

Bhubaneswar: A doctor in Odisha's Sundargarh district on Friday lost his life after battling with the Covid-19 for nearly three weeks. The Covid warrior who was serving at Lathikata Primary Health Centre (PHC) died while undergoing treatment at KIMS Hospital in Bhubaneswar early in the morning. As per reports, Lathikata PHC medical officer Rahas Bihari Mohapatra had tested positive for the virus on August 3 and immediately admitted to Hi-Tech Covid Hospital in Sundargarh. However, he was shifted to KIMS Hospital after his condition deteriorated. The doctor was staying with his wife at Utkal Nagar in Fertilizer Township of Sector-22 here while his children reside in New Zealand. After his death, wife Manju, who is also reportedly sick and being treated here, has appealed to chief minister Naveen Patnaik to make arrangements to send his body to Rourkela.

8 injured in acid attack, 2 arrested

Sehore: Eight persons were injured in an acid attack following a petty dispute at a dairy farm in a village in Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh, the police said on Friday. The incident took place in Khaikheda village on Thursday night, when accused identified as Rahul and Dipak, sons of the dairy farm owner, allegedly threw acid during a scuffle, additional superintendent of police (ASP) Sameer Yadav said. At least six injured persons were rushed to Hamidia Hospital in Bhopal, he said. The injured men, aged between 18 to 40 years, sustained burns on their hands and faces, the official said. The acid thrown by the accused, who were also injured in the incident, was meant for checking fat content in milk at the dairy farm, he said. The two accused were arrested under section 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means) of the IPC and probe is underway to ascertain the reason for the dispute.

Covid strikes CSK camp in Dubai: 10 +ve

■ **Continued from Page 1**
According to sources, a net bowler and a member of the social media team had to be dropped from the contingent after they tested positive in Chennai. CSK have travelled with a fat contingent of 55 members. All of them were tested upon arrival at the Dubai airport followed by three more tests on days 1, 3 and 6 at the hotel. "The infection could have been picked up either from those left out from the squad or the airport. Those who have tested positive are mostly asymptomatic. The BCCI-appointed healthcare officials have begun procedures to trace the contacts," said the team source. Jittery BCCI officials have called for an informal meeting with franchise representatives.

77,266 cases in a day as more areas to reopen

■ **Continued from Page 1**
related deaths, taking the death toll in the state to 3,294, while 5,447 new cases pushed the infection tally to 2,13,824. The Covid-19 tally of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 3,018 on Friday as 33 more people tested positive for the infection, while one more fatality pushed the Union territory's coronavirus death toll to 42, a health official said. All the new cases were detected in contact tracing. In view of the rising cases, the Haryana government modified its earlier order to shut offices, shops and malls on weekends and said these will be shut on Mondays and Tuesdays now. The state has nearly 60,000 cases, out of which about 1,300 were detected in the last 24 hours. The government has, meanwhile, allowed airlines to serve pre-packed meals and beverages on domestic flights and hot meals on international flights depending on the duration of the flight. The civil aviation ministry has said only single-use disposable trays, plates and cutlery should be used while serving food.

No degrees without exam, SC backs UGC

Top court upholds July 6 UGC circular on exams

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

In a yet another set-back to those resisting the holding of examinations in the midst of Covid pandemic, the Supreme Court on Friday ruled that the states and universities cannot promote the students in the final year/terminal semester without holding the examinations as it brushed aside the suggestion that students be awarded marks based on their previous performance and internal assessment.

Upholding July 6 circular of University Grant Commission directing universities and colleges across the country to conduct final year examinations by September 30, a bench comprising Justice ashok Bhushan, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah, however, said that the decision of the State Disaster Management Authority not to hold final examina-

tion by September 30 would prevail over the UGC deadline. In the instant case Maharashtra State Disaster Management Authority has decided against holding final year examinations by September 30, 2020. The court ordered that if any State/Union Territory taking recourse to Disaster Management Act 2005 has taken a decision that it is not possible to hold exams by September 30, then it would approach the UGC for the extension of deadline and the same would be considered by the Commission and rescheduled date communicated to that State/UT at the

earliest. Justice Bhushan pronouncing the judgment said that it was beyond the jurisdiction of the State Disaster Management Authority to decide to promote the students in the final year by awarding marks based on previous performance and internal assessment, Justice Bhushan said, specifically directed to conduct the final year/terminal semester examination which shall override such contrary decisions of the state government or State Disaster Management Authority. The court said this while disposing of a batch of petition challenging July 6 UGC circular instructing universities/colleges to hold final year examination by September 30, 2020. Justice Bhushan in 160 page long judgment said that the UGC's revised guidelines of July 6 were issued with the object that "a uniform academic calendar be followed by all the varsities."

Listen to student voices: Sonia on NEET and JEE

New Delhi, Aug. 28: Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday urged the government to listen to the voices of students on the issue of conducting NEET and JEE and act according to their wishes.

Various Opposition parties, including the Congress, have demanded that the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) be deferred due to the Covid-19 pandemic and floods in parts of the country, even as the Union government has made it clear that they will be held as per schedule with due precautions.

Six ministers of opposition-ruled states on Friday also moved the Supreme Court seeking review of its order permitting the Centre to conduct NEET and JEE this



Sonia Gandhi

year amid the persisting pandemic. As part of the Congress' day-long campaign of holding protests and voicing Opposition on social media to holding of the entrance examinations, the party posted Sonia Gandhi's message to students and the government on the issue of conducting the exams. "I feel for you because you are now facing a very difficult situation. The issue of your exams, of when they should be taken up is the most important issue, not only for you but for your fami-

ly," Mrs Sonia Gandhi said in a video addressing students.

"You are our future. We depend on you to build a better India," she said.

Therefore, if any decision has to be taken regarding students' future, it is important that it is "being taken with your concurrence", the Congress leader said.

"I hope the government listens to you, listens to your voices and acts upon your wishes. This is my advice to the government," she said in the nearly minute-long video posted on the Congress' Twitter handle with the hashtag 'Speak Up For Student Safety'.

While the NEET is slated to be held on September 13, engineering entrance exam JEE-Main is scheduled between September 1-6.

Pained to hear about Abe's ill health: Modi

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

Just hours after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced his resignation on health grounds, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Mr. Abe as a "dear friend", saying he was pained to hear about his ill-health. PM Modi pointed out that under the "wise leadership and personal commitment" of PM Abe, "the India-Japan partnership has become deeper and stronger than ever before". The two leaders have also enjoyed a great personal rapport with each other over the years. It may be recalled that the Japanese PM had cancelled his visit to Guwahati last December for the proposed India-Japan Annual bilateral Summit following the violence over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in Assam then. But Japan continued to retain its special focus on India's north-eastern region and had also strengthened its financial assistance.



Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

ing former chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and the other with Mr Bora who is also the agriculture minister in the BJP led alliance government.

About the court order, AGP general secretary Kamalakanta Kalita said, "We received the order at 12:45 pm, while our session ended at 11:45 am. We have requested senior advocate Bijon Mahajan to look into the legal aspect of the order."

It is significant that regional AGP has gone through several splits since its inception.

Asserting that party was ignoring the sentiment of grassroots workers, sources in the regional party admitted that a large section of party workers and supporters are of view that AGP should come out of ruling alliance.

Students take to Twitter over exams during Covid

New Delhi, Aug. 28: Many students have taken to Twitter to express their concern over holding of JEE and NEET during the Covid-19 pandemic, amid a plea by opposition leaders on Friday seeking review of the Supreme Court's order allowing the Centre to conduct the entrance exams in September.

The hashtag 'speakup-forstudentsafety' has been trending since Friday morning with at least 2.25 million posts on the microblogging site.

While many students in their tweets pointed out the challenges of making it to examination centres under the present circumstances, others talked about their inability to cope with the stress of having to appear for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), especially when coronavirus cases are on the rise.

On Friday, ministers of six opposition-ruled states also moved the Supreme Court on seeking review of its order permitting the Centre to conduct NEET and JEE amid the persisting pandemic.

The top court on August 17 had refused to interfere with the conduct of medical and engineering entrance exams — NEET and JEE — scheduled to take place in September saying that life must go on and students can't lose a precious year due to the pandemic.

500 cases: Complete lockdown. 75000 cases: Students forced for exams! #SpeakUpForStudentSafety, a Twitter user posted.

— PTI

Sushant death case: CBI grills Rhea for first time

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 28

A week after taking over the probe of Sushant Singh Rajput suicide, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) grilled his girlfriend and prime accused Rhea Chakraborty on Friday.

The questioning comes a day after the agency questioned her brother Showik in the case. The officials also grilled Rajput's flatmate Siddharth Pithani and house manager Samuel Miranda apart from Chakraborty on Friday.

The investigating team began questioning shortly after 10.30 am at their DRDO guest house base. She was asked to provide her financial details which she produced after arriving. The officials are in the process of getting clarity on the allegation raised against her by Rajput's father.

"Chakraborty's family will be questioned at a later stage and if needed they will be grilled together," said an officer privy to the investigation.

Before questioning



Trinamul Congress Chhatra Parishad activists holds posters during a protest against the Union government for conducting NEET and JEE exams amid the coronavirus pandemic in Kolkata on Friday.

— PTI

Don't hold NEE, JEE, says Baghel

Raipur, Aug. 28: Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Friday strongly opposed the Centre's decision to hold NEET and JEE entrance exams amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said it was not appropriate to conduct examinations when the pandemic is at its peak in the country.

Various Opposition parties, including the Congress, have demanded that the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) be deferred due to the Covid-19 pandemic and floods in parts of the country, even as the Union government has made it clear that they will be held as per schedule with due precautions.

"This is a difficult phase for the entire country. While the country has been fighting the coronavirus crisis, the Central government is adamant on conducting NEET and JEE exams," Baghel said in a video message posted on Twitter.

"The examination,

UP govt in favour of holding exams: Yogi

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government is in favour of holding the NEET and JEE, chief minister Yogi Adityanath said on Friday. The statement comes following opposition parties including the Samajwadi Party and Congress demanding that the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for medical colleges and Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for engineering colleges be deferred due to Covid-19

which was to be held in May was deferred (due to the pandemic). Now, when the corona crisis is at its peak, it is not appropriate to conduct the examination. "We are trying everything possible to ensure that the exams are not held during this period and postponed. We strongly oppose the Centre's move," he added.

— PTI

WB weighing options on exams before puja: Mamata

Kolkata, Aug. 28: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday said that her government was weighing the pros and cons of holding final-year college and university exams before Durga Puja in October.

She slammed the Centre over its decision to conduct JEE and NEET exams in September, and said the Union government's "adamant approach" will add to the Covid-19 woes.

"I have told our education minister to look into the possibility of conducting the final-year exams in universities and colleges before Durga Puja in October. The options of both online and offline exams should be looked into."

"We are not against any exam; we are just saying that a pandemic is on, and it could put lives of students at risk," Banerjee said while addressing a virtual rally of Trinamul Congress Chhatra Parishad (TMCP).

The Supreme Court ruled earlier in the day that states and universities cannot promote students without holding final-year exams by September 30.

— PTI

Aero India to be held in Feb: DefMin

New Delhi, Aug. 28: The defence ministry has decided to host the next edition of Aero India — considered Asia's largest aerospace exhibition — in Bengaluru in February, notwithstanding the coronavirus pandemic, officials sources said on Friday.

The ministry took the decision to hold the biennial event as scheduled following inputs from major stakeholders including the domestic defence industry and global aerospace majors, they said. The sources said the main event will be held from February 3-5 while the exhibition will be thrown open for general public on February 6 and 7. Defence minister Rajnath Singh has already held a number of internal meetings including one on Friday on hosting of the event in Yelahanka.

— PTI



Rhea Chakraborty

Chakraborty, the CBI grilled Rajput's flatmate Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh and domestic help Deepesh Sawant. The suicide probe is also being simultaneously followed up by the money laundering probe by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and drugs probe by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), which also registered a fresh case. The FIR was filed based on alleged findings of drug consumption and peddling at his Bandra residence, where he was found hanging on June 14.

The electronic gadgets of the actor and the messages he had sent and received from others are also under the scanner.

Beijing is keen to protect Sino-Indian economic ties, says Weidong

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

In remarks indicating that China wants to return to business as usual with India on trade ties despite Chinese troops refusing to pull back in the Ladakh sector, Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong

has said "it is unreasonable to link the boundary question with normal bilateral cooperation", adding that both countries "should put the boundary

question at an appropriate place in our bilateral relations and not allow differences to disturb the relationship". The remarks made during an interview to a business TV channel are yet another indication that Beijing is keen to protect Sino-Indian economic ties to avoid any "decoupling" of the two economies due to military tensions.

Referring to the "unfortunate" deadly Galwan valley clash between Indian and Chinese troops



Sun Weidong

in mid-June, the Chinese envoy said it would be a "miscalculation" for India to treat China as an enemy or as a threat "only by one issue or one incident", adding that "any action that enlarges and compli-

cates the contradiction will not help solve the problem".

But significantly, when asked about the stalling of the disengagement process between troops of the two sides in the Ladakh sector due to Chinese troops not moving back, the Chinese Ambassador said "it is the legitimate right of every country to safeguard its own sovereignty and territorial integrity" but that "this is not the same thing as expansionism", adding

that "China should not be labeled as 'expansionist'." He however said that "negotiations are in process that takes time".

On economic ties, Ambassador Sun said that "India's exports to China increased by nearly 31 percent, (while) the share of (Indian) exports to China in its total exports climbed to 9.71 per cent, which almost doubled", adding that "this once again shows that an open China means huge opportunities for India".

THE ASIAN AGE

29 AUGUST 2020

GST meet: Has govt failed its citizens?

During the GST Council meeting on August 27, the government of India has invoked the *force majeure* clause (a phrase in French for superior force or the act of God) to renege on its statutory obligation to make good the loss incurred by states on account of switching over to the Goods and Services Tax. The Centre argued that the shortfall in revenue collection was because of an extraordinary situation caused by a pandemic and that it is not bound to make good loss caused by an act of God.

The Central government's argument was based on two factors — one, the promise that it made to states to make good its revenue loss on account of the GST rollout, and two, a contraction that the Indian economy is expected to witness this financial year (FY2020-21). The Narendra Modi government believes that the revenue shortfall would be considerably more because of the Covid-19 drag on the economy and should not be attributed to the GST.

If the states had not acceded to the GST regime, they would have been free to raise revenue depending on their local circumstances

According to the Union finance ministry's estimates, the loss to states on account of GST rollout is ₹97,000 crore, while the overall shortfall in revenue is ₹2.37 lakh crores. Since the overall loss of revenue is more than double the loss caused by the GST rollout, the Centre refused to bail out states using funds from its coffers. This argument, however, glosses over one crucial point. While agreeing to the GST regime, the states had sought compensation for the loss caused to them on account of relinquishing their financial independence. If the states had not acceded to the GST regime, they would have been free to raise revenue depending on their local circumstances. They would not have been forced to stand before the GST Council with a begging bowl.

The Centre also cannot wash its hands of the revenue shortfall because of the decline in the economic growth had started in the last financial year itself. It would, therefore, be entirely wrong to blame God because coronavirus did not emerge in the country suddenly out of blue. Even if we accept that God has sent coronavirus to punish us, he has given enough opportunity for India to take steps to protect itself from the most infectious pathogen. However, it was overconfidence of the Narendra Modi government that was busy in welcoming US President Donald Trump and unseating the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh which brought the country to this pass.

Since the Narendra Modi government has invoked *force majeure* to escape its responsibility, one wonders if the ordinary citizens too would have an opportunity to escape their contractual responsibility to pay loan instalments without attracting legal action by banks. Why should there be different yardsticks for the Central government and its citizens? After all, the Bhagavad Gita says, "Whatever actions great persons perform, common people follow. Whatever standards they set, all the world pursues". Will Sangh Parivar ideologues advise Prime Minister Narendra Modi and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to let citizens follow examples set by them?

Protect tribes in Andamans

The pandemic figures spelled bad news and worse for Indians on Friday morning. After topping 75,000, the number of daily cases recorded in India rose to 77,500 and counting so that, statistically speaking, now at least one Indian citizen in every random 400 has come in contact with the Covid-19 virus. The virus this week also infected 10 members of the dying Great Andamanese tribe of just 53 people. This calls for urgent action. The government, at the Centre and the Union territory level, is morally bound to protect its citizens. Many among the infected used to travel to Port Blair where they hold government jobs. With a population of around four lakhs, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has reported 2,268 coronavirus cases so far, with 37 deaths.

The government is obliged to protect the Great Andamanese from the latest epidemic also for historical reasons. The Great Andamanese are an endangered tribe whose numbers have dwindled from 8,000 in 1858 to the paltry figure of the present day. This happened because the British settlers coercively altered their hunter-gatherer lifestyle, in the process introducing diseases among them. Successive epidemics of syphilis, measles, conjunctivitis and other diseases blinded and decimated huge populations. It included the Jangil tribe of Rutland Island, which became extinct in 1931.

Epidemics, in fact, are a major threat to tribes that newly emerge from isolation. This was last witnessed when, three years after they were socialised, in 1999, the Jarawa tribe got almost wiped out by a measles epidemic. The population of Jarawas stands between 250 and 400 today. The Onges number no more than 100. Thus, containing the coronavirus at this stage is vitally important, seeing as the Great Andamanese tribe, along with the Onges, Jarawas and the uncontacted Sentinelese, form part of the Indian chapter of the human genome project. Should these people disappear, the key to solving the mysteries of human evolution will be lost forever.

The administration of Adm. D.K. Joshi (Retd), the formal naval chief who is now lieutenant-governor of the Andamans, should, therefore, swing into patrol, conduct a risk assessment and ensure complete eradication of the disease from one island to the next in a deadline-driven manner before the crisis gets out of hand.

THE ASIAN AGE

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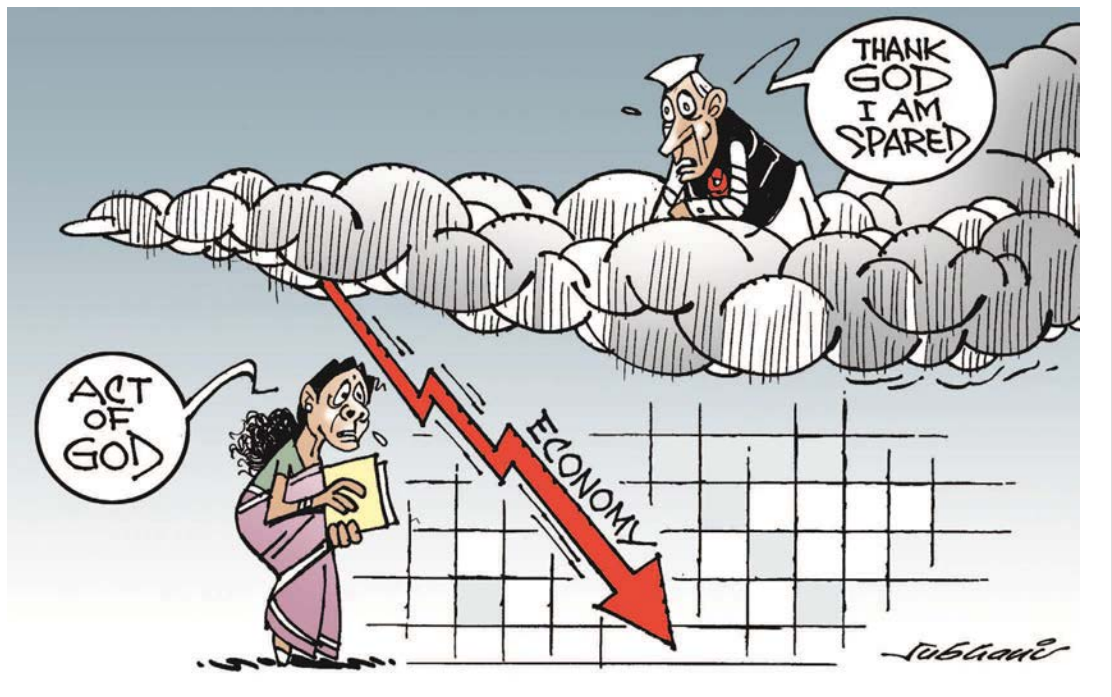
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Subhani



Chinese mischief likely in Himachal, U'khand



Claude Arpi

After China's People's Liberation Army had crossed the Line of Actual Control, which for years has been considered as the de facto border between the two countries, in Ladakh, China's ambassador to India Sun Weidong had the gall to say that the two countries should be partners, not rivals.

On July 10, he added that the June 15 Galwan Valley clash was a "situation that neither China nor India would like to see... Currently, our frontline troops are disengaging on the ground."

All this does not tally with the facts.

Mr Sun also insisted: "China has all along advocated that peace is of paramount importance. We are neither a warlike state nor an assertive country."

It seems to be a bad joke. While multiple rounds of negotiations have been held between the Indian corps commander and his Chinese counterpart, not much hope remains for a "pre-April" solution before winter sets in. When Beijing suggested that both sides go back equidistantly from the Finger 4 area in Ladakh, this was rejected by New Delhi.

In the meantime, Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat has declared that the "military option" was on the table if the diplomatic option failed.

But what is far more worrying is the possibility of the PLA opening a second front in the central sector of the 4,056-km Sino-Indian boundary. On May 17, IANS reported that Chinese helicopters had violated Indian airspace twice in Himachal Pradesh in April: "The first intrusion was reported on April 11 and the second on April 20. In both incidents, a Chinese heli-

copter was observed flying on the Indian side of the international border close to Sumdoh in Spiti subdivision," an official was quoted as saying.

Most of the Indian media reported the area was not "disputed" by China, but that isn't the case. This area, called Chuva and Chuje by Beijing, has since the mid-1950s been on China's long list of places selected to extend its territory.

In fact, there are five "disputed" areas in the central sector, which stretches over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand: Chuva-Chuje, Shipki-la, Nilang-Jadhang, Barahoti-Lapthal and Lipulekh (recently engulfed in Nepal's new maps).

On July 30, 1980, the now-defunct historical division of the external affairs ministry sent a Secret Note to the East Asia division, dealing with China. This was with reference to the claims/occupation by China of some Indian areas in the central sector.

This note described the Sino-Indian boundary in the middle sector. "This sector of the boundary also has natural features of watersheds, mountain passes and river valleys. Its location is as follows: starting from the terminal point of the western sector, it runs southward along the watershed west of the Pare River and Chuva River, passes by the converging point of Pare River and Spiti River, crosses the Sutlej River west of Shipki Pass, continues southward along the watershed."

The historical division said at the 1960 talks with China, Indian officials brought forward clear and conclusive evidence "to show that the alignment as shown by them in the middle sector had, throughout its length a

It's difficult to talk to China, they always play by their own changeable rules, promoting their own interests

traditional and customary basis reaching back through many centuries, and that, in addition, this boundary had been... confirmed through diplomatic exchanges, treaties and agreements".

However, every year, intrusions are reported in Barahoti, another area "perceived" by China as its territory; even though the small basin is located south of the watershed marked by the Tunjun-la.

Let us remember that in April 1954, India and China signed the infamous "Panchsheel" agreement, with New Delhi giving away its rights in Tibet and getting nothing in return.

It took only two months for India to discover that everything had not been solved. The first Chinese incursion in Barahoti, in today's Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, occurred in June 1954; the ink had hardly dried on the agreement when the Chinese trespassed in the area. The irony is that it was China who complained about the incursion of Indian troops — on Indian territory!

In a way, Barahoti could be explained by the fact that Indian negotiators had omitted to notify Tunjun-la as a border pass in the 1954 Tibet agreement; this gave an opportunity to the Chinese to claim the Barahoti plains, south of the pass.

In April 1958, for the first time, officials of India and China sat together to try and resolve the issue. But as an unnecessary compromise, India agreed that Chinese "unarmed" patrols could visit the place in summer till the matter was solved; Beijing never respected that and repeatedly sent armed soldiers to Barahoti. Today, 62 years later, the Chinese still cross Tunjun-la and walk into the desolate area.

Then there is the area south of Shipki-la (pass) in

Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. This is another tenuous claim from China, with no historical, cartographical or geographical backup. It is now a dormant claim, but with Beijing in the mood to claim Tajikistan's Pamir region and Vladivostok (and Ladakh), it could well be revived. It is a plain violation of Indian territory, without any justification as it was mentioned in the 1954 agreement, which meant that north of the pass was Tibet and south India.

Other places "disputed" by China in the central sector are Nilang (Nelang) and Jadhang, located south of Tsangchok-la. It was the only area disputed by the Tibetan government before independence; but it was a "gentle" dispute between neighbours sharing the same values. No troops were ever involved.

For Tibetans, their claim was based on the fact that the 13th Dalai Lama is supposed to have said the border was located at a bridge on the Gungum nala on the way to Gangotri.

For British India, the principle of the watershed was the prime deciding factor and thus Tsangchok-la was the border (India has since Independence followed the same principle).

During the 1960 talks, China added two more "disputes" — Lapthal and Sangchamalla, areas adjacent to Barahoti.

What is strange is that these claims are not based on any of the principles normally used to demarcate a boundary — watershed, river, customary routes, grazing rights, etc.

That is why it's difficult to talk to China, they always play by their own changeable rules, promoting their own interests.

These claims could indeed be pretexts for China's adventurism in future; and India should be ready to respond.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

LETTERS

CAST IN STONE

Caste is a construct whose time has gone. Yet, surprisingly, even though we call ourselves "progressive", caste crimes are shooting up. I'd like to narrow it all down to a single state — Uttar Pradesh. Cases of atrocities against women and girls have increased during the lockdown. Most of these cases involve caste. Dalit women and girls are often the ones who bear the brunt of injustice. When they try to seek justice, their voices are disregarded. They are suppressed immediately by people in power. As a society, are we moving backwards?

Subhashini Ramasamy
Mumbai

TOO MUCH STRESS

AS PER A MENTAL HEALTH survey carried out over the last three months, over 50 per cent people in the city of Mumbai are under stress due to the coronavirus lockdowns and shrinkage of business due to shutdown of shops and industries. Many of them have been admitted to hospital for treatment of depression. Some are living under fear of death due to coronavirus, and everyone faces an uncertain future, having realised that the government in power has failed its people. It is now each to themselves. The constant stress and anxiety has also led to heart problems. There is a spurt in suicides. If the Covid-19 situation does not come under control by the end of this year, we are heading for a disaster.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

INDIA'S LOSS

JAPAN'S LONGEST-SERVING Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday announced his resignation at a nationally televised press conference, citing his declining health. Significantly, in a strong support to India over its border standoff with China in eastern Ladakh, Abe said Japan opposed "any unilateral" attempts to change the status quo in the region. What is India's loss is China's gain.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Ayesha Khaliq



Marriage age tweak won't meet gender, health goals

The Prime Minister's announcement to raise the legal marriageable age limit for girls from 18 to 21 years has been hailed by advocates as a historic move. Proponents argue that the future law would address serious concerns like population control, early pregnancy and motherhood, maternal mortality, lack of opportunities for higher education, careers and gender justice. Equally strong views of disagreement are being articulated by scholars, NGOs, activists and opinion-makers, the author included. The opponents hold the view that the proposed law is not likely to succeed in changing the socio-cultural realities at the ground level and the gender barriers against women in achieving its intended goals. The structural inequalities and prejudices of the society that are the root causes of the problem cannot be adequately addressed only through legal interventions.

As per the Unicef, at least 1.5 million girls under the age of 18 are married each year — making India home to the largest number of child brides. The ongoing Covid-19 crisis will further increase the number of child marriages in the country. As seen in the aftermath of Ebola in affected countries, child marriage rates increased drastically, for reasons of

deteriorating economic opportunities and future uncertainties. The sudden and prolonged March lockdown has hit hard a very large section of our country's population; leading to economic deprivation. As a result, poor parents, out of work due to Covid, are marrying off minor daughters to reduce financial burden. The closure of schools has aggravated the problem. Tragically, poor parents see this as an opportunity to get their minor daughters married at a lower cost on ceremonies and dowry. Overall, the current situation will further undermine efforts of past years to combat child marriages in India. Families coming from lower socioeconomic strata, particularly in rural areas, are thus being compelled to marry their offspring early. Raising the legal age of marriage is not going to make any favourable impact on this section of the society.

Thus the proposed law is not a panacea for gender injustice. Though well-intentioned, it will not easily translate into desired outcomes. The law will not effectively target the underlying causes that lead to child marriages, overpopulation, malnutrition and maternal mortality. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and the Young Lives in 2018 noted that the high prevalence of child marriages in India is

mainly due to poverty and lack of education. In addition to this, it is equally necessary to address cultural and sociological reasons behind the phenomenon.

The multiple factors that are responsible for child marriages, despite a law prohibiting it, include caste, class, custom, coercion, economy, education and poverty. The most significant factor is gender inequality and the low value associated with girls and women in India. The discrimination against girls starts from the womb and continues to reflect in their access to food, education, employment and other resources. The cultural and patriarchal values ingrained in our society view them as a social and economic burden on the family. Child marriage is also a part of this systematic unfairness. In rural communities, structural inequalities and patriarchy are perpetrated in the guise of custom. Societal pressure forces families into marrying daughters early to prevent them from becoming sexually active before marriage. The low priority assigned to providing resources for a girl's education contributes to their further marginalisation. The families that want to educate their daughters are unable to do so, due to inadequacy of resources and, in many cases, lack of neighbourhood schools.

Instead of raising the legal marriageable age, girls need to be provided with equal opportunities to continue their education. Though the Right to Education Act assures education until the age of 14 years, an incremental move would be to ensure quality education till the age of 18, access to higher education, job opportunities and training. Education provides a stepping stone for girls to move out of inter-generational poverty. This approach will make girls economically independent and strengthen their agency to make informed decisions regarding their career, reproductive health, life, and whether to marry or not.

The existing laws have not so far succeeded in curbing the problem of child marriage. Even though the minimum age of marriage is 18 years, in rural and backward areas, minor girls as young as 12 or 13 get married. The proposal will only lead to a change in the law, but will not change the societal realities. Effectively addressing it requires enormous effort and resources. The state and society together have to challenge gender stereotypes and socio-cultural barriers to women's empowerment. They may act through well-planned interventions and awareness drives with parents and communities. The focus of gov-

ernment policies and advocacy should be on enhancing capabilities, skills, education, and employability of the girls and women. Additionally, advocating and promoting the sexual and reproductive health for girls and women would be an ideal approach to address their overall well-being and achieve desired population control. This will enable them to make informed decisions on contraceptive services, abortion, and family planning. The social empowerment of women is needed foremost to progress towards gender equality and their emancipation. Our society needs to deconstruct existing prejudices and treat women as autonomous individuals, equal at the household and community levels. The focus needs to be oriented towards their empowerment by providing them with education, vocations, and equal opportunities. This approach will help better address the problems related to early marriages, a skewed sex ratio, maternal mortality and population.

The writer is an alumnus of the MSc social policy studies programme at the London School of Economics and the sociology masters programme from Delhi School of Economics. She is currently working with Women Power Connect.

IN BRIEF

Aus PM 'open' to repatriate gunman

Sydney: Canberra is open to the idea of New Zealand sending the Australian-born gunman behind the Christchurch mosque massacre back home to serve his life sentence, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Friday. White supremacist Brenton Tarrant was sentenced to life without parole on Thursday for the attacks on two mosques last year that killed 51 Muslim worshippers. Soon after the punishment was handed down, New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters said Tarrant, 29, should be transferred to the Australian prison system. "The Islamic community and all of New Zealand has already suffered enough without having to pay astronomical prison costs to keep him safe in our prison system," Peters said.

Turkish lawyer dies on hunger strike

Ankara: A human rights lawyer on hunger strike in a Turkish prison to demand a fair trial for herself and colleagues has died, an attorney's group said. Ebru Timtik, 42, died in an Istanbul hospital late Thursday, the Progressive Lawyers' Association said. She had been fasting for 238 days. The lawyer and 17 of her colleagues were accused of links to the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, or DHKP/C, a militant group designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. She was convicted in March 2019 and sentenced to 13 years and six months in prison. Her case was under review by an appeals court.

1st woman of colour as New Jersey judge

Trenton: The nomination of the first woman of colour to sit on New Jersey's Supreme Court was confirmed on Thursday by the state Senate. Fabiana Pierre-Louis, a 39-year-old attorney in private practice and a former federal prosecutor, was nominated by Democratic Governor Phil Murphy in June to succeed Justice Walter Timpone. He was nominated to the court by former Republican Governor Chris Christie in 2016 and will reach the mandatory retirement age of 70 later this year. "Ms Pierre-Louis is a New Jersey success story who will bring more diversity to the highest court of the most diverse state in the country," said Senate President Steve Sweeney, also a Democrat. She is Murphy's first pick for the high court.

US braces for mass anti-racism protest

Washington, Aug. 28: Anti-racism protesters were planning to flood the streets of the US capital on Friday, after a white officer's shooting of African American Jacob Blake rekindled outrage over police violence and sparked a boycott movement in the sports world. Tens of thousands of demonstrators are expected on the streets of Washington for a march to mark the date of civil rights leader Martin Luther King's historic "I have a dream" speech. The demonstration has been dubbed "Get Your Knee Off Our Necks," in reference to African American George Floyd, who suffocated beneath the knee of a white officer in Minneapolis, igniting the most widespread civil unrest in the country in decades.

ALLOWING SHARIF TO LEAVE PAK WAS A MISTAKE: IMRAN

Islamabad, Aug. 28: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that allowing his predecessor Nawaz Sharif to leave the country was a "mistake" and that his government "regretted" the decision. In a wide-ranging interview to ARY News on Thursday night, Khan hinted that he was pressurised into sending Sharif abroad, saying that the reports presented to his government suggested that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) supremo was severely ill, reports *Dawn* news. The federal cabinet, he said, had held a long debate over whether the government should let Sharif leave on humanitarian grounds. The Prime minister further said the court had declared that the government would be responsible, should anything happen to Sharif.

Leaders hail Abe's contribution to ties

Shinzo is expected to remain PM until new governing party leader is elected

Tokyo, Aug. 28: World leaders wished Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe a rapid recovery on Friday and praised his contributions during his years as Japan's longest-serving leader.

Abe announced on Friday that he is stepping down because of a health problem. He is expected to stay on until a new governing party leader is elected and formally approved by the parliament.

South Korea: South Korean President Moon Jae-in's office said Abe dedicated many years to the development of bilateral relations and achieved "various meaningful accomplishments" as Japan's longest-serving prime minister. It said Seoul will continue to work with Tokyo's next prime minister and Cabinet to promote "friendship and cooperation" between the countries. Relations between South Korea and Japan sank last year to their lowest point in decades as they feuded over trade issues, wartime history and military cooperation.

Germany: Longtime German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has worked with Abe during both of his spells in office, said she regrets his resignation. "Shinzo Abe has been the longest-serving prime minister of Japan, so he has helped shape Japan's history," Merkel told reporters in Berlin. "He was always someone who advocated multilateralism and made clear over

**Who could be next**

- Taro Aso, gaffe-prone finance minister
- Shigeru Ishiba, popular ex-defence minister
- Yoshihide Suga, power player and adviser
- Fumio Kishida, favoured successor
- Taro Kono, colourful Twitter user

the great distance between Germany and Japan our common basis of values." She added, "I wish him all the best from the bottom of my heart and thank him for working well together."

Taiwan: Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said Abe "has always been very friendly to Taiwan. He has always been very positive, no matter it be his policies or his feelings toward Taiwanese people. We cherish the friendship he has for Taiwan. We also wish him good health."

China: Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian declined to comment directly on

Abe's health, saying it was Japan's internal affair. However, he added that "China and Japan are close neighbours. We are willing to work with Japan to jointly press ahead with continuous improvement and development of China-Japan relations."

Britain: Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab paid tribute to "the great things" that Abe has achieved, and said he "leaves a strengthened UK-Japanese friendship, which we look forward to continuing in the years ahead. I wish him well for the future."

Philippines: Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr described Abe as Japan's "greatest postwar PM (prime minister)" in a tweet. He said Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and Abe had a frank relationship. "Watching President Duterte and PM Abe talking was like watching two old friends, no holds barred, talking frankly and freely of the true lay of the land and what can and cannot be done," Locsin said.

International Olympic committee: IOC President Thomas Bach credited Abe with the return of the Olympics to Japan after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics. "All the Japanese athletes and the athletes of the entire world are very grateful to him," Bach said. The Olympics were to be held in Tokyo this year but were postponed a year because of the Coronavirus. — AP

Hurricane effect

This aerial view shows damage to a neighborhood by Hurricane Laura outside of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Hurricane Laura slammed into the southern US state of Louisiana Thursday and the monster category 4 storm prompted warnings of "unsurvivable" ocean surges and evacuation orders for hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents. The storm left six people dead in Louisiana, including at least four from falling trees. — AFP

Biden, Harris criticise Don over social unrest, Covid response

Washington, Aug. 28: Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and running mate Kamala Harris launched a two-pronged attack on Thursday against Donald Trump, saying the president is fueling unrest over police brutality and racial injustice and has failed to protect Americans.

Trump "refuses to even acknowledge there is a racial justice problem in America," Biden said in a statement amid swelling social unrest after an African-American man, Jacob Blake, was shot in the back at close range multiple times by police in Wisconsin.

The shooting sparked nationwide rage and three nights of violence in the city of Kenosha. Tensions soared when two protesters were shot dead on Tuesday. A white 17-year-old was detained on murder charges connected to the protesters' slayings,

● **TRUMP "REFUSES to even acknowledge there is a racial justice problem in America," Biden said in a statement amid swelling social unrest after an African-American man, Jacob Blake, was shot in the back at close range multiple times by police in Wisconsin.**

and Trump announced he was sending federal forces to Kenosha to "restore law and order." On Wednesday Vice President Mike Pence warned people watching the Republican convention that they "won't be safe in Joe Biden's America." Biden shot back that the deadly violence did not occur on his watch, and won't during a future Biden presidency. "The violence we're witnessing is happening under Donald Trump. Not me," Biden said, adding

that Trump — who has yet to publicly address Blake's shooting — is turning a blind eye to the crisis.

"Instead of looking to calm the waters, he adds fuel to every fire. Violence isn't a problem in his eyes — it's a political strategy," Biden said. "And the more of it, the better for him." With Trump set to close out the Republican convention with a speech Thursday night, Harris sought to shine a light on racial injustice and police brutality.

"As vice president Biden put it, the shots fired at Mr Blake pierced the soul of our nation," she told reporters in an address in Washington. "It's sickening to watch. It's all too familiar. And it must end." Harris said she would "always defend" peaceful protesters but they should not be confused "with those looting and committing acts of violence." She also warned against citi-

zens taking the law into their own hands, a veiled reference to the arrested teen.

"Make no mistake, we will not let these vigilantes and extremists derail the path to justice," Harris said. Harris also went after Trump for his handling of the Coronavirus pandemic, saying the president showed "reckless disregard" by failing to take decisive action.

"President Trump got it wrong in the beginning. And then, he got it wrong again, and again. And the consequences have been catastrophic," she said. "Donald Trump has failed at the most basic and important job of a president of the United States. He failed to protect the American people," she said. Trump is expected to speak Thursday about his efforts to end the pandemic and revive the battered US economy. — AFP

China to unveil bronze statue of Indian doc Kotnis

Beijing, Aug. 28: A bronze statue of Indian doctor Dwarkanath Kotnis, who is revered in China for his contributions during the Chinese revolution headed by its founder Mao Zedong and the World War II, would be unveiled outside a medical school in North China next month, according to the official media here.

Kotnis, who hailed from Sholapur in Maharashtra came to China in 1938 as part of a five-member team of doctors sent by the Indian National Congress to help the Chinese during World War II. He joined the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1942 and died the same year at the age of 32.

The bronze statue of Kotnis, known in China as Ke Dihua, would be formally unveiled at the medical school at Shijiazhuang in September, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Thursday.

Kotnis' medical assistance during the difficult days of the Chinese revolution was praised by Chinese leader Mao Zedong. His status and memorials were also set in some of the Chinese cities in recognition of his services. He is married to Chinese national Guo Qinglan, who died in 2012.

Apart from the school named after him as the Shijiazhuang Ke Dihua

● **A WOMAN of Indian-origin dubbed "the spy princess" on Friday gets a new memorial in Britain honouring her espionage work and refusal to betray secrets in World War II.**

● **ENGLISH HERITAGE is putting up a Blue Plaque honouring Noor Inayat Khan outside 4 Taviton Street in the Bloomsbury area of central London where she lived from 1942-43.**

Medical Science Secondary Specialised School, there are memorials of Kotnis in both Shijiazhuang, the capital of Hebei province, and Tangxian county where he once worked. Late Chinese leader Mao Zedong was deeply affected by his death, the report said.

Mao wrote in his eulogy that "the army has lost a helping hand, the nation has lost a friend. Let us always bear in mind his internationalist spirit".

According to Liu Wenzhu, an official of the Shijiazhuang Ke Dihua Medical Science Secondary Specialised School, since the founding of the school in 1992 more than 45,000 medical professionals have graduated from it. — PTI



Angela Merkel

MERKEL WARNS OF PANDEMIC DIFFICULTIES

Berlin, Aug. 28: Coping with the Coronavirus will become more challenging in the coming autumn and winter months, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in her annual summer press conference on Friday.

"Some things are likely to be more difficult over the next few months than they are in the summer," Merkel said.

"We have all enjoyed the freedoms and relative protection from aerosols in the summer, which is possible through life outdoors," she said, referring to micro-particles that are thought to spread through the air, especially in enclosed spaces.

Merkel's comments came after she agreed a wave of new measures with the leaders of Germany's 16 federal states on Thursday designed to combat rising case numbers in Germany blamed mainly on summer travel and private parties. — AFP

US def chief says China destabilising Indo-Pacific

Koror, Palau, Aug. 28: US Defense Secretary Mark Esper accused China of "destabilising" the Pacific region on Friday on a whistle-stop trip to the tiny island nation of Palau.

The visit, which lasted barely three hours, comes as Washington attempts to counter Beijing's efforts to gain influence in the sparsely populated but strategically important Pacific island nations.

Esper said the United States and Palau shared values of freedom "where all countries respect the rules and norms for peace and prosperity of all nations".

"This is especially important today, as we continue work alongside our allies and partners to protect that international system that is under threat from China and its ongoing destabilising activities in the region," he said.

Beijing has enjoyed recent success in the Pacific, persuading the Solomon Islands and Kiribati last year to switch diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to China.

That left Palau as one of

U.S. WARSHIP SAILS NEAR DISPUTED PARACEL ISLANDS IN S. CHINA SEA

Beijing, Aug. 28: An American warship sailed near the disputed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, the U.S. Navy has said, challenging Beijing's claims on the resource-rich waterway and prompting a warning from the Chinese military.

The Thursday operation came a day after China fired ballistic missiles into the sea as part of ongoing live-fire exercises, inflaming already high tensions between Washington and Beijing.

The US regularly conduct "freedom of navigation operations" in the

area to challenge Chinese territorial claims.

The U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet said in a statement that the USS Mustin, a guided-missile destroyer, sailed on Thursday "in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands to ensure critical shipping lanes in the area remain free and open".

The Chinese military on Friday accused the US ship of entering "China's territorial waters" near the islands "without authorisation". Chinese forces tracked the warship and then warned it to leave, said military spokesman Li Huamin. — AFP

Taiwan's four remaining allies in the Pacific and only 15 worldwide.

The nation of 22,000, which lies about 1,500 kilometres (930 miles) east of the Philippines, has retained strong ties to Taiwan and the United States under Palau President Tommy Remengesau, despite pres-

sure from China to switch.

Remengesau said China had employed "aggressive moves" in the region but he understood why it had won over some island nations. "It's no secret that they are loaning money and putting money into the economies of many Pacific island nations," he said. — AFP

BACK TO | FUTURE

Machine can fly for 10 minutes; potential to be seen when it can stay in air for 30 minutes

Japan's 'flying car' has successful flight

Tokyo, Aug. 28: The decades-old dream of zipping around in the sky as simply as driving on highways may be becoming less illusory.

Japan's SkyDrive Inc., among the myriads of "flying car" projects around the world, has carried out a successful though modest test flight with one person aboard. In a video shown to reporters on Friday, a contraption that looked like a slick motorcycle with propellers lifted several feet (1-2

meters) off the ground, and hovered in a netted area for four minutes.

Tomohiro Fukuzawa, who heads the SkyDrive effort, said he hopes "the flying car" can be made into a real-life product by 2023, but he acknowledged that making it safe was critical. "Of the world's more than 100 flying car projects, only a handful has succeeded with a person on board," he said.

"I hope many people will want to ride it and feel safe." The machine so far

can fly for just five to 10 minutes but if that can become 30 minutes, it will have more potential, including exports to places like China, Fukuzawa said. Unlike airplanes and helicopters, eVTOL, or "electric vertical takeoff and landing," vehicles offer quick point-to-point personal travel, at least in principle.

They could do away with the hassle of airports and traffic jams and the cost of hiring pilots, they could fly automatically.

Battery sizes, air traffic control and other infrastructure issues are among the many potential challenges to commercializing them. "Many things have to happen," said Sanjiv Singh, professor at the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, who co-founded Near Earth Autonomy, near Pittsburgh, which is also working on an eVTOL aircraft.

"If they cost \$10 million, no one is going to buy them. If they fly for 5 minutes, no

one is going to buy them. If they fall out of the sky every so often, no one is going to buy them," Singh said in a telephone interview.

The SkyDrive project began humbly as a volunteer project called Carti-ator in 2012, with funding by top Japanese companies including automaker Toyota Motor Corp., electronics company Panasonic Corp. and videogame developer Bandai Namco. — AP



This picture shows a test flight of a manned 'flying car' at Toyota Test Field in Toyota, central Japan. — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,467.31	0.90
Nifty 50	11,647.60	0.76
S&P 500*	3,496.22	0.33
Dollar (₹)	73.39	0.58
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.38	0.16
Euro (₹)	87.38	0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,155*252	0.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.03	-0.06
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.097	-0.050
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.721	-0.025

Gold bond opens on Aug. 31; issue priced at ₹5,117

The issue price for the sixth tranche of the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme has been fixed at Rs 5,117 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India said. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2020-21 series VI will open for subscription on August 31 and close on September 4. The issue price for the bonds (series V), which were open for subscription from August 3 to August 7, was Rs 5,334 per gram of gold.

NZ probing cyber attacks on stock market



New Zealand's government and its foreign spy agency are getting involved after cyber attacks disrupted trading on the nation's stock market several times this week. The attacks have affected the private company NZX which hosts the market, halting trading for hours at a time. Finance minister Grant Robertson said ministers had asked the Government Communications Security Bureau intelligence agency to help.

Taxpayers under faceless scrutiny to get intimation

The Income Tax Department will soon start sending out intimation to assesses undergoing scrutiny that such cases would now be handled under faceless assessment. CBDT additional commissioner Jaishree Sharma said domestic transfer pricing cases too will be covered under the faceless assessment mechanism. Reassessment cases would also be part of the faceless scheme.

Kawasaki Vulcan S cruiser bike costs 5.79 lakh

Japanese automaker Kawasaki Motors introduced the new BS-6 compliant middleweight cruiser bike Vulcan S priced at Rs 5.79 lakh at pan-India showroom. With this, Kawasaki has updated its entire 650cc lineup to comply with BS6 regulations. The Vulcan S is powered by the 650cc, liquid-cooled, parallel-twin engine that offers 61PS of power and 63Nm of torque, and the bike is mated to a 6-speed gearbox

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Investors regain ₹45 L cr after March dip Market back at pre-Covid level

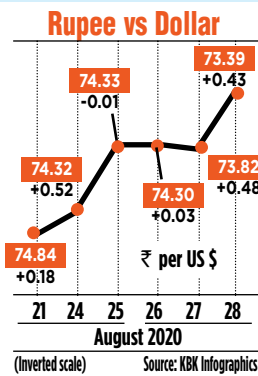
RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 28

It was a good week for the market, with banks and other financials helping market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50 to regain pre-Covid-19 levels. BSE's market capitalisation stood above Rs 1.58 lakh crore compared to the March 2020 low of over Rs 1.13 lakh crore, indicating investors regaining around Rs 45 lakh crore in the sharp recovery so far. During the week, the Nifty Bank index gained a hefty 9.97 per cent, of which 4.19 per cent gain came on Friday. On Friday, the Sensex closed at 39,467, up 353 points while the Nifty-50 gained 88 points at 11,647. The Nifty closed the week up 2.43 per cent. The key indices held up admirably above the mark buoyed by expectations from the twin verdicts next week which would have an impact on banking stocks, analysts said. The Supreme Court, during the week, heard a plea seeking interest waiver for six months during the loan moratorium period granted by the Reserve Bank. The apex court adjourned the hearing to September 1 while giving the government one week's time to clarify its position. The SC may also pronounce order in the matter of adjusted gross revenue dues of the telecom companies next week. Vikas Jain, senior

Rupee posts biggest weekly gain in 20 months at 73.38

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 28

Weak dollar, sustained foreign fund inflows and absence of currency intervention from the Reserve Bank helped the rupee rise to its highest level in six months and become the best performer in Asia on Friday. The rupee closed 42 paise up 73.38 against the dollar, up 0.6 per cent compared to its previous close of 73.81. During the session, the rupee rose to 73.28, its highest level since March 5. The rupee has risen nearly 2 per cent for the week, its biggest weekly gain since the week ended December 21, 2018 as the central bank halted dollar purchases, traders said. As a result, the rupee is finally taking cues from the Asian peers, especially the yuan, which is trading at



a seven-month high. The Dollar Index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, is at a two-year low at 92.50. So far this month foreign portfolio investors have invested Rs 50,000 crore in the domestic market. Analysts said the RBI has probably stepped aside from the dollar buying intervention.

research analyst, Reliance Securities said, "The positive news flow from the domestic and global markets set the ball rolling for banking stocks. The US Federal Reserve's new policy stance to let inflation run higher and unemployment run lower, meaning prolonged low interest

rate, is one of the reasons which created positive sentiments on banking stocks." The major gainers included Indusind Bank (32 per cent), Tata Motors (18 per cent), Axis Bank (16 per cent), SBI (13.6 per cent) and Shriram Transport (12.6 per cent).

Murugappa all set to bag CG Power

New Delhi, Aug 28: Exactly a year after founder Gautam Thapar was sacked as its chairman, CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd is set to get a new promoter in Murugappa Group after its offer to invest Rs 700 crore in the fraud-hit firm found no challenger. Chennai-based Murugappa Group firm Tube Investments of India Ltd (TIIIL) had earlier this month offered to invest Rs 700 crore in CG Power for a 56.6 per cent stake. Lenders to CG Power, which had defaulted on loan repayments since the fraud was detected in the firm last year, launched a so-called Swiss challenge to explore if any other eligible investor was willing to better the Murugappa's offer. No counteroffer was received at the close of the bidding on August 26, two sources with direct knowledge of the development said. Lenders are not evaluating the Murugappa offer and are likely to approve it later in the day, they said. While CG Power is an established player in industrial motors and power components, Tube Investments is the engineering arm of the Rs 36,900-crore Murugappa Group. A year back, the board of CG Power, erstwhile known as Crompton Greaves, had removed founder Gautam Thapar as the company chairman, citing fraud. —PTI

World Bank suspends ease of business report

Probing irregularities in data; India rankings may be revised

ARCHANA CHAUDHARY AUG. 28

The World Bank has suspended publication of its Doing Business report to probe alleged irregularities in the underlying data. "A number of irregularities have been reported regarding changes to the data in the Doing Business 2018 and Doing Business 2020 reports, published in October 2017 and 2019. The changes in the data were inconsistent with the Doing Business methodology," the World Bank said in a statement on Thursday. "We will act based on the findings and will retrospectively correct the data of countries that were most affected by the irregularities." Published since 2003, the report ranks 190 economies based on how easy it is to do business there, taking into account trading regulations, property rights, contract enforcement, investment laws, the availability of credit and a number of other factors. In recent years, there have been questions about the integrity of the rankings. Paul Romer quit in 2018 as the World Bank's chief economist after questioning changes to Chile's order in the Doing Business report. Changes to the World Bank's methodology penalised Chile under



INDIA 72ND ON WAGE LIST

New Delhi, Aug. 28: India has been ranked a lowly 72nd among 106 countries in terms of the average wage per month, while Switzerland topped the chart, according to a global ranking of average wages prepared by Picodi.com. With an average monthly wage of Rs 32,800 (\$437), India has been ranked 72nd among 106 countries surveyed by Picodi.com, an international e-commerce platform which provides discount coupons. Switzerland, where the average wage converted into rupees comes to Rs 4,49,000 (\$5,989), topped the ranking. —PTI

Socialist governments, even though the underlying indicators barely moved, Justin Sandefur, senior fellow at the Center

for Global Development, wrote in a blog in November. "Similarly in India, where Narendra Modi used India's surge in the Doing Business rankings as a political talking point, we showed that methodological changes, not reform, had pushed India up the rankings," he wrote. India rose to No. 63 in 2019 from 142 in 2014, when PM Narendra Modi first took office. "India will continue with our efforts to improve the ease of doing business, irrespective of the World Bank's actions regarding its rankings," Yogesh Baweja, spokesman for India's trade ministry, said by phone. "Our steps are part of our efforts to ensure ease of working and ease of living for people." The World Bank is auditing data collection processes and is reviewing changes that occurred after the institutional data review process for the last five Doing Business reports, the multilateral lender said. —Bloomberg

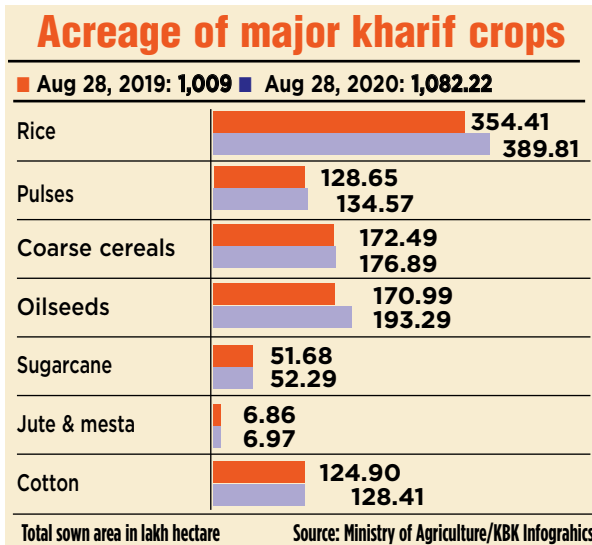
Cereal exports jump over 200%

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 28

Cereals, other than wheat and rice, have seen a jump in demand in the overseas market due to the pandemic with their exports growing over 200 per cent in July. In July, exports of cereals like bajra, oats, corn, ragi, quinoa, yellow maize, sorghum and their seeds collectively grew 226 per cent to Rs 330 crore against Rs 101 crore in the same month last year. Between April and July, exports grew 32 per cent to Rs 673 crore against Rs 509 crore in the year-ago period. Among the cereals, certain varieties of popcorn fetched export revenues of Rs 190 crore in July against nil exports in July 2019. Yellow maize and another variety of maize too saw an emerging demand in the overseas market this July. According to K. Unnikrishnan, deputy director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations, cereals have witnessed increased demand from African countries

and the Gulf region during the lockdown. "Many of the exporting nations had imposed restrictions on shipments to ensure food security during the lock-down. On the other hand, India had excess production and there were no restrictions on exports. This made countries in Africa and the Gulf region increasingly buy from India," he said.

Further, the Gulf region was seen stocking up commodities fearing scarcity. In the case of maize, Vietnam, one of the largest producers, had a lower output and countries turned to India. Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka have been buyers of cereal seeds from India. Apart from volumes, price rise in cereals also helped export earnings.



India may get vaccine by early 2021

New Delhi, Aug 28: As Covid-19 vaccine trials move ahead at a break-neck speed, an approved vaccine is likely to hit the Indian market by the first quarter of 2021, Bernstein said in a report. Globally, there are four candidates that are close to approval by the end of 2020 or early 2021. Through partnerships, India has access to two of those AZ/Oxford's viral vector vaccine and Novavax's protein subunit vaccine. "Phase I/II data looks promising for both in terms of safety and the vaccine's ability to elicit an immune response," it said. "We are optimistic that there will be an approved vaccine in the market by 1Q calendar year 2021 in India." While the vaccine could be available at \$3-6 (Rs 225-550) per dose, herd immunity might be two years away due to implementation challenges, it said, adding the experience in large scale adult vaccination programmes is thin. The polio eradication campaign in 2011 and the recent Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) are examples of large-scale campaigns but the scale there was 1/3rd of what the Covid-19 vaccine implementation programme demands. Cold chain storage and trained manpower will be the biggest hurdles, it said. "Even assuming 2x current throughput, implementation in the government programme can take 18-20

US-BASED BCM TIES UP WITH BE FOR VACCINE PRODUCTION

SEEMA HAKHU KACHRU HOUSTON, AUG. 28

In the race to find a cure for the coronavirus infection, Texas-based Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) has entered into a licensing agreement with Indian pharmaceutical company Biological E Limited (BE) for the development of a safe, effective and affordable vaccine. According to BCM, Hyderabad-headquartered BE has licenced the recombinant protein Covid-19 vaccine candidate developed at Baylor. The company engaged in

licence negotiations with the BCM Ventures team after initial discussions on Baylor's technology and how it could possibly work on a vaccine to address the current global pandemic. The company will leverage its past experience for the further development and commercialisation of the vaccine candidate, which is currently produced using a proven yeast-based expression technology, the Texas-based BCM said. At a webinar organised by the Consul General of India in Houston, Dr Peter Hotez, professor and dean

of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor, said he and his colleagues have already been making SARs and MERS vaccines. "Then, when we got word about Covid-19, we saw that the sequence for the new virus was similar to some of the viruses that we were already making vaccines for," said Hotez. Hotez and his team were able to quickly move on to creating a Covid-19 vaccine, which resulted in the collaboration with a large vaccine producer in India. —PTI

India must give up coal: UN chief

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH AUG. 28

India must stop building coal infrastructure and focus on renewable power generation to aid the global fight against climate change and lift its citizens out of poverty, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. The nation, the biggest coal consumer after China, must invest in a "clean, green transition" as it recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, Guterres said at an event organised by New Delhi-based Teri. It must also end fossil-fuel subsidies, which are about seven times as high as those for clean energy, he said. The Group of 20 nations including India must place a price on carbon pollution and commit to no new coal after 2020, Guterres said. He said he was concerned to learn that G-20 nations allocated more resources to fossil fuels than clean energy for an economic recovery and that some countries were "doubling



down on domestic coal and opening up coal auctions." India plans to auction 41 coal mines later this year. "Investing in fossil fuels means more deaths and illness and rising healthcare costs," Guterres said. "It is, simply put, a human disaster and bad economics." While India has seen coal as an affordable source of energy to fuel future growth it is also a major contributor to its chronic air pollution and the main driver of global climate change, of which the country has been a major victim. However, a shift is underway, and Guterres applauded the fact that renewable investments

outpaced those in coal for the first time last year. The government is making more pro-renewable policies that are already weighing on coal power plants. Average utilisation of these plants was 48 per cent in the first four months of the fiscal year, compared with 61.3 per cent a year earlier, according to the Central Electricity Authority. Half the country's coal power capacity will be uncompetitive in 2022, rising to 85 per cent in 2025, Guterres said. Renewable power, which can create three times more jobs than fossil fuel power plants, can address India's top priorities of alleviating poverty and giving energy access to nearly 64 million citizens, he said. "Like all countries, India is at a crossroad," he said. "Despite the significant challenges the country faces in bringing shared prosperity to its population, it has in many ways embraced clean technology and a sustainable energy future." —Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES



Khel Ratna Vinesh is Covid positive

New Delhi: India's top woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Friday said she has tested positive for Covid-19.

Selected for this year's Khel Ratna award, the Asian and Commonwealth Games gold-medallist, had been training at her village in Sonapat with coach Om Prakash. "Yes, I have tested positive for Covid-19 when my sample was taken in Sonapat before the dress rehearsal for the awards ceremony," Vinesh said. "I will recover soon, God willing. I am in isolation at home," she further added.

The 26-year-old will skip Saturday's virtual ceremony for the National Sports Awards distribution. She is one among five athletes chosen for the country's highest sporting honour this year. — PTI

Drogba's bid for prez post rejected

Abidjan: The electoral commission of the Ivory Coast Football Federation (FIF) rejected former Chelsea and international striker Didier Drogba's presidency bid on Thursday. FIF's election has turned into a soap opera marred by incessant infighting, attracting international attention with FIFA telling the body to cancel the vote.

"The electoral commission (...) rejects the candidacy of Mr Drogba, Tébily Didier Yves," an official document said. The text also claims Drogba is ineligible to run for the position held by Sidy Diallo with the elephants captain having only received the official support of two of a required four Ivorian clubs.

Drogba also has the backing of the association for the former and its current players equivalent and has five days to appeal the decision. He is standing against FIF's former third vice-president Idriss Diallo, as well as the current vice-president of the national body Sory Diabate. — AFP

Arsenal, Liverpool in clash for Shield

London: Jordan Henderson has urged Liverpool to show their hunger to retain the Premier League title when they face Arsenal in the Community Shield on Saturday.

Just five weeks after Liverpool captain Henderson lifted the Premier League trophy, Jurgen Klopp's side kick off the new season in the glamour friendly at Wembley.

While their Premier League title defence doesn't get underway until September 12, the Reds are keen to lay down an early marker to their title rivals. Henderson knows FA Cup winners Arsenal will pose a good test of Liverpool's desire for more silverware after beating the champions 2-1 at the Emirates Stadium late last season.

Liverpool have been getting back to business at a training camp in Austria and England midfielder Henderson is pleased with the attitude he has seen from his team-mates so far. — AFP

Live on TV

FORMULA ONE

Belgian Grand Prix Practice-3 from 3.25 pm; Qualifying from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

TOUR DE FRANCE

Cycling race from 5.30 pm on Eurosport, HD

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Barbados Tridents vs Trinbago Knight Riders from 7.30 pm; St Kitts & Nevis Patriots vs Jamaica Tallawahs from 11.45 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

FA COMMUNITY SHIELD

Arsenal vs Liverpool from 9 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

T20 CRICKET

England vs Pakistan from 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

UFC FIGHT NIGHT

Anthony Smith vs Aleksandar Rakić from 6.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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Left: Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma spends time with his family in their hotel room in Abu Dhabi. **Right:** Royal Challengers Bangalore's South African batsman AB de Villiers poses with his cricket kit and face shield in these photos posted by MI and RCB teams respectively.



Shaken sides train

IPL teams begin practice amid Covid scare

New Delhi, Aug. 28: With just 22 days left before the start of the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League, an India T20 specialist is among multiple members of the Chennai Super Kings contingent who have tested positive for Covid-19, forcing the IPL franchise to extend its quarantine period — upto September 1 — in Dubai and causing upheaval ahead of the event starting September 19.

The franchise is yet to issue a formal statement, as per reports, the number of positive cases could be between 10 and 12. Meanwhile, after completing a mandatory seven-day quarantine period in Abu Dhabi, Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Rajasthan Royals were the latest set of teams to come out of their isolation and shake the rust off in their first practice session at various ICC Academies on Thursday.

RCB and India captain Virat Kohli appeared cheerful as he kicked about a volleyball and shared some light moments with teammates.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Capitals have signed Australian all-rounder Daniel Sams to replace England's Jason Roy.

Run-blasting Roy was on Thursday ruled out of England's T20 series against Pakistan after sustaining a side strain. However the Delhi Capitals said he had opted out of the IPL "for personal reasons".

Billed as a rising star after his recent call-up to the national squad, Sams



RCB captain Virat Kohli shares a light moment during a training session.

will join fellow Australians Marcus Stoinis and Alex Carey at the Delhi Capitals, coached by compatriot Ricky Ponting.

"The IPL is a huge platform for any cricketer, and back home, we all follow the tournament extremely closely every year," said Sams, 27.

"I feel fortunate to be a part of it this year... I can't

wait to join the rest of the players in the UAE," he was quoted as saying in a statement by the franchise late Thursday.

South Africa-born opener Roy suffered the injury this week during England's preparations at Emirates Old Trafford where the Pakistan series starts later Friday.

Ahead of the tournament's start on September

19, all eight IPL teams have reached the UAE where they are required to undergo a period of quarantine in their hotels.

The IPL, originally scheduled to start in March, has been moved from India because of the rapid spread of the Coronavirus across the country.

— Agencies

KNIGHT RIDERS RECORD FIFTH STRAIGHT WIN

Port of Spain, Aug. 28: Trinbago Knight Riders maintained their clean slate with a fifth win in as many matches, while Mohammed Nabi produced a career-best five-wicket haul to guide St Lucia Zouks to a six-wicket triumph in the Caribbean Premier League here.

Sent into bat, the Warriors posted a lowly 112 for 7. The Knight Riders then overhauled the target, scoring 115 for 3 with 10 balls to spare.

Trinbago got an early break when Sikandar Raza clean bowled Brandon King (6) in the second over of the innings. Khary Pierre then struck twice in one over, dismissing Chandrapaul Hemraj (2) and Nicholas Pooran (1) to leave Amazon Warriors at 12 for 3.

Chasing the total, Imran Tahir broke through with two wickets in two balls in the sixth over, sending back Lendl Simmons (19) with a google and then a big leg-break ended Colin Munro's (0) stay. Darren Bravo (26) denied Tahir the hat-trick.

After 10 overs, the Knight Riders were 51 for two but soon Tion Webster was sent back by Chris Green. Yet they stayed on the course and needed 35 off the last 36 balls.

— PTI

Serena handed tough US draw

New York, Aug. 28: Serena Williams could see plenty of fellow Americans in her US Open quest for a 24th career Grand Slam title, including Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin in a semifinal match.

The women's draw unveiled Thursday ahead of Monday's start of the Flushing Meadows fortnight in a spectator-less Covid-19 quarantine bubble offers some challenges for the 38-year-old third seed.

Williams, one Slam singles crown shy of matching Margaret Court's all-time record, could meet 2017 US Open champion Sloane Stephens in the third round and 2017 US Open runner-up and seventh seed Madison Keys in a quarterfinal before a chance at Kenin in the semis and potentially Czech top seed Karolina Pliskova in the final.

And that's not even counting a possible fourth-round matchup against Greek 15th seed Maria Sakkari, who ousted Williams from this week's US Open tuneup event in New York.

Williams lost in the US Open and Wimbledon finals each of the past two years, and with the England grass event wiped off the schedule by the pandemic, the US Open marks a chance to break through and claim a seventh title on the same courts where she captured her first Slam crown in 1999.

— AFP

DJOKOVIC GETS A RELATIVELY EASY RIDE

New York, Aug. 28: World No.1 Novak Djokovic's path to a 2020 US Open title could include a semifinal against Stefanos Tsitsipas or Alexander Zverev under the tournament draw unveiled on Thursday.

The 33-year-old Serbian star, a 17-time Grand Slam winner who has captured five of the past seven men's singles Slam crowns, begins his quest for a fourth US Open title against Bosnia and Herzegovina's 107th-ranked Damir Dzumhur.

Austrian second seed Dominic Thiem, who pushed Djokovic to five sets before falling in this year's Australian Open final, was placed on the opposite end of the bracket, setting up the possibility of a rematch in the championship match on the Flushing Meadows hardcourts. With fellow "Big Three" players Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer absent, Djokovic has a prime chance to close the gap on his record rivals in a field of 128 that is missing several standouts.

Swiss legend Federer, who is injured, owns a record 20 men's Grand Slam titles with Spaniard Nadal, the 2019 US Open winner, next on 19.

— AFP

NAGAL UP AGAINST HOME PLAYER IN FIRST ROUND

New York, Aug. 28: India's number one singles player Sumit Nagal drew American Bradley Klahn in his US Open first round and a victory might put him against world number three Dominic Thiem in the next round.

It will be second straight US Open singles main draw for Nagal, who came through the qualifiers last year and played a memorable match against iconic Roger Federer.

Nagal is ranked six places higher than Klahn at 122 but the experienced American will compete in home conditions. Nagal is coming into the tournament after reaching quarterfinals at the Prague Open, a Challenger Tour event.

India's next best ranked Prajnesh Gunneswaran missed out on making the main draw as he was in the alternate list and needed more withdrawals to make it.

— PTI

Max revs it up in second practice

Stavelot (Belgium), Aug. 28: Red Bull driver Max Verstappen posted the fastest time in the second practice session for the Belgian Grand Prix on Friday.

Verstappen was .048 seconds ahead of Renault driver Daniel Ricciardo and .096 ahead of Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton. The Mercedes driver has won four of the first six races and leads the championship by 37 points from second-placed Verstappen.

With about 20 minutes left, Ricciardo parked his Renault on the side after an apparent engine failure.

The session was briefly held up shortly after when some debris fell onto the track at Turn 1, with race stewards rushing over to remove a couple of loose advertising hoardings.

Conditions were overcast all day, with light rain falling in the afternoon on the 7-kilometer (4.3-mile) track nestled in the Ardennes forest.

It was another miserable day for struggling Ferrari, with Charles Leclerc 15th and four-time F1 champion

Sebastian Vettel in 17th. In the first practice, Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas led by .069 seconds from Hamilton. Bottas had a late puncture to his front left tire in that session. But it was due to debris rather than the sort of tire degradation issues that caused him to puncture near to the end of the British GP on Aug. 2. Haas could not even get its drivers out for a lap in the morning because of engine problems.

HAMILTON WON'T BOYCOTT F1 RACE

Lewis Hamilton will not boycott this weekend's Belgian Grand Prix in sympathy with American sports protests following the shooting of Jacob Blake in the United States, but said he felt unified with their cause.

Hamilton told reporters via an official video news conference that he was impressed by the athletes taking action, which had led to the postponement of events.

"I stand unified with them and trying to do what I can over here," he explained.

— AP

TOUR DE FRANCE ROLLS OUT IN CYCLE OF GLOOM

Nice (France), Aug. 28: There are always sunshine and smiles on the French Riviera but the 2020 Tour de France will roll out of Nice on Saturday under a cloud of Covid-19 gloom, with doubts the 21-day jaunt across the peaks and plains will be end with its usual dash up the Champs Elysees in Paris.

Leaving the well heeled Riviera resort the 22 teams will race 3,484km through some of the prettiest vistas in France in a globally popular event broadcast in 190 countries. The organisers also hope to provide a new blueprint for sports in the time of Covid-19.

Defending champion Colombian Egan Bernal is again a good bet for the overall leader's fabled yellow jersey, along with Primoz Roglic and Thibaut Pinot chief among his rivals on a course that crosses all five of France's mountain ranges.

— AFP

NBA reloads post shooting protests

Los Angeles, Aug. 28: NBA playoff games were cancelled for a second straight day on Thursday, but players pledged to return to the court as they sought support from team owners in tackling racial injustice.

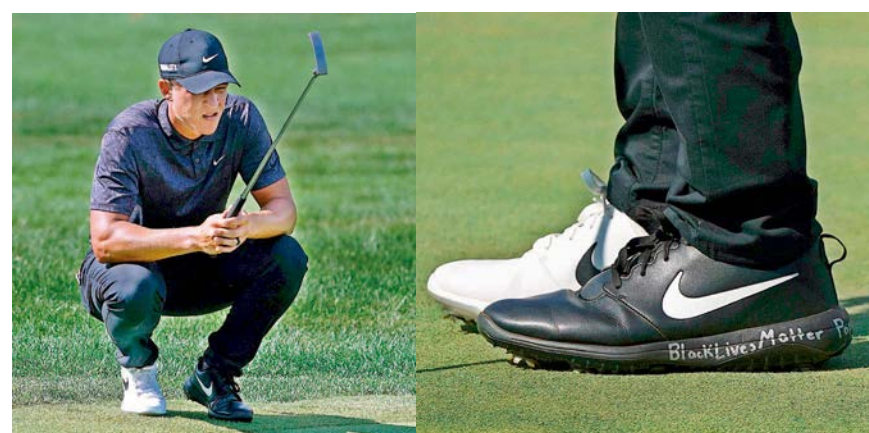
A Milwaukee Bucks boycott inside the NBA's Orlando "bubble" on Wednesday sparked a wave of protest that ultimately saw dozens of games called off across an array of sports — basketball, football, baseball, ice hockey and tennis.

Black players, their teammates and supporters demanded action in the face of yet another police shooting of an African American after Jacob Blake was shot several times in the back in the Midwestern city of Kenosha on Sunday.

The Bucks boycott, which was joined by their scheduled opponents the Orlando Magic, prompted the NBA to postpone all three playoff games scheduled for Wednesday and three more slated for Thursday as players from all teams debated whether to continue the season already disrupted by coronavirus.

Players agreed on Thursday to continue the playoffs, with LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers — who had been in favor Wednesday night of abandoning the season — reportedly "on board" with the decision.

— AFP



View of shoes worn by Cameron Champ that read "Black Lives Matter" as seen during the first round of the BMW Championship in Olympia Fields on Friday.

— AFP

Champ makes statement with shoes, Tiger joins in

Washington, Aug. 28: Cameron Champ considered not playing in Thursday's opening round of the USPGA's BMW Championship over the police shooting of Jacob Blake, but made his own statement with his shoes.

The 25-year-old biracial American, who has a Black father and a white mother, wore one white shoe and one black shoe with messages of support during his seven-over 77 at Olympia Fields, where Tiger Woods and Tony Finau also backed the growing sport boycott movement.

"I definitely thought about it for sure. But obviously I feel like I can do a lot more playing, and again, showing my support and expressing myself," Champ said of sitting out.

Champ had Blake's name and "Black Lives Matter" among the messages on his shoes, objecting to police brutality and racial injustice.

The PGA on Thursday backed the game boycotts and sport shutdowns by the NBA, NHL, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer and Women's NBA clubs over

shooting of Blake in Kenosha. "The PGA Tour supports them and any of our own members standing up for issues they believe in," the tour said in a statement.

Woods, a 15-time major winner and reigning Masters champion, said he did not consider sitting out the round, which would have ended his bid to qualify for next week's Tour Championship. "No, I talked to the commissioner and they were on board. He released his statement, and all the guys were on board," Woods said.

— AFP

BASEBALLERS PITCH IN WITH 7 GAMES OFF

New York, Aug. 28: The New York Mets and Miami Marlins made sure their point was clear on Thursday as seven Major League Baseball games were postponed in protest of racial injustice.

The Mets and Marlins didn't announce their plans prior to the game, taking the field in uniform and standing with caps off for 42 seconds.

It was a strong statement on the eve of MLB's Jackie Robinson Day — which commemorates the player who broke MLB's colour barrier and wore jersey No.42.

Dominic Smith led the Mets onto the field and led them off, after a shirt with the legend "Black Lives Matter" was placed on top of home plate.

Smith had been emotional after the Mets won on Wednesday night — when the team went ahead with games even as the issues of racial injustice and police brutality roiled the NBA and the rest of the sports world.

"I think the most difficult part is to see people still don't care. For this to just continually happen, it just shows just the hate in people's hearts," Smith said on Wednesday night.

— AFP