

SHORT TAKE

CONG LEADERS
TO INSPECT
DISTRICT HOSPSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

The Congress Legislature Party (CLP) has decided to visit government hospitals in districts from August 26 to 28 to bring pressure on the state government to take appropriate action to control the spread of Covid-19 and give moral support and confidence to the people during the pandemic.

CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said that for the past six months the Congress had been demanding that that government take appropriate preventive measures to contain Covid-19.

The government was not responding to the suggestions of the main Opposition party, Mallu Bhatti said.

MAN SEXUALLY
ASSAULTS NIECE,
GETS 5-YEAR RIJAYENDRA CHAITHANYA T. |
DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

A 35-year-old man who sexually abused his 10-year-old niece at her home was convicted by the Nampally court on Tuesday. The court sentenced the accused, Mohd Hameeduddin of Falaknuma, to undergo five years of rigorous imprisonment and pay ₹10,000 towards penalty. Of this, ₹9,000 would be paid to the victim as compensation to the victim.

The case against Hameeduddin was booked on June 7, following a complaint from his brother-in-law, that the former sexually abused the latter's daughter. Hameeduddin had touched the victim inappropriately and attempted to rape her, but her father returned to the house just then and prevented the assault. Hameeduddin was arrested by the Falaknuma police under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and POCSO Act. A charge-sheet was filed against him before the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge cum Special Judge for POCSO Act cases and a trial was conducted.

CASE LODGED
AGAINST ONE
FOR HATE POSTDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

The cybercrimes police of Hyderabad registered a case against a person who attempted to create trouble between two communities by uploading a video on social media. The accused, Ashish, had uploaded a video related to a small dispute between people of a community and posted it on his social media profile claiming that the issue took place between different communities.

A case has been registered against Ashish and the investigation is on to trace him, said the police.

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar warned people against sharing false videos to create disturbances.

“Warning. A small quarrel which took place within same community in Moghalpura was settled by police and community elders. Some mischief makers have uploaded a video and projected it as an inter-community issue. Such trouble makers are warned not to indulge in these mischiefs,” the commissioner posted on Twitter.

THOSE SELECTED
FOR CONSTABLES
CALL OFF STRIKE

Hyderabad, Aug. 25: A group of candidates chosen for the post of armed reserve and civilian constables called off their protest after being told by senior officials that their training would begin in October.

The candidates reached the office of Director-General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy here on Tuesday to protest against the delay in starting training for those selected after applying for recruitment notification released in 2018.

Despite responding to the notices given to them in connection with pending cases and medical tests, they said that they did not receive any calls.

Officials allowed them to enter the premises and told the candidates that training would start in October. Following this, the candidates called off the protest.

— INN

Rain plays spoilsport



Restoration work of the window of the historic Chowmahalla Palace has been stalled in view of the incessant rains during last week.

— P. SURENDRA

India records 25K more
Covid cases than Brazil

About 7 lakh infections added in 10 days since August 15

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

India is recording about 25,000 more Covid-19 cases than Brazil, and will have the second highest number of cases in the world if the daily growth rate of 1.85 per cent persists, experts said.

Brazil has a daily average growth rate of 1.03 per cent and the total caseload stood at 36,27,217 cases on Tuesday. In India, the total number of cases at 10.45 pm on Tuesday stood at 32,31,612. India has added about 7 lakh cases in the 10 days since August 15.

The high number of cases is also an indication that more tests being done and more people with symptoms are reporting to hospitals. While the rise is constant in new cases in India, Brazil is noting a bend of its curve as the number of new cases come down. For this reason, the gap in the caseload between India and Brazil is closing. Data analysis gives a 20-day time period after which India will have

RAPE COMPLAINT
FILED BY WOMAN
RE-REGISTEREDDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

The Central Crime Station (CCS) police of Hyderabad re-registered a case into the allegations of a 25-year-old woman who accused 143 persons of committing sexual assault, sources said.

The case was initially registered by the Punjagutta police on August 20, on the complaint of the victim that she was raped on multiple occasions by several persons who threatened her and captured her private videos.

Sources said that the case has been transferred to the Central Crime Station, where the officials re-registered the case and took up investigation into the matter.

CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS		
● For every symptomatic Covid-19 patient, there are 30 asymptomatic cases and 20 untested cases.	15%	● Covid cases reported have moderate to severe illness
● For one positive case there are 50 missed cases.	82%	● Of the total number of Covid infections are mild or asymptomatic
● Critical illness is 3%		
● Death rate due to Covid-19 is 2.3%		● The stigma of Covid-19 has caused more problems in India and that has led to people not coming forward for treatment and also not having Covid 19 as cause of death in the certificate.
● There has been a sharp increase with more than 60,000 cases being recorded every day in August indicating spread of the disease.		● The spread is also an indication of development of antibodies in the population.

43,11,646 cases and Brazil 42,96,232. Dr Kiran Madhala, senior government doctor, explained, “In metros, infection is found in 40 per cent of the population. Metros have shown a daily growth rate in terms of spread of one per cent. The spread is now in

semi-rural and rural areas where high numbers are being recorded. This shift shows that one section of the population has developed antibodies.”

The antibody test results in 2.7 lakh samples analysed by Thyrocare shows that 26 per cent peo-

ple have developed immunity to the virus. Dr A. Velumani, scientist and MD of Thyrocare Technologies Limited, said, “Our data shows that the antibodies in people in India is very high and this is not noted in European countries. Immunity levels are building up in people against the disease. People must not panic seeing the large number of new cases as there is an equal number of people recovering and developing resistance to the disease.”

Does this mean that maximum population will develop immunity? Dr Velumani says, “Unlocking will give a clear picture and it will give the right indication for which we have to wait. Till then it would be difficult.” The existence of virus around cannot be denied and use of masks, social distancing and hygiene etiquette will have to be followed. With a surveillance target of four years experts state that the prevention methods cannot be given up and it will have to continue.

Local communities can help
curb climate change: StudyHARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

A research paper done by an international group of experts based at the Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, the University of Manchester (UK), the University of Sheffield (UK), and the University of Michigan (US) has found that nearly 300 million people live in areas with high potential for forest restoration in the tropics.

The paper identified the importance of empowering local communities to manage forest restoration as a just and sustainable mechanism for climate change mitigation. The paper has been published in the journal Nature Ecology and Evolution.

The paper, was stated to be one of the first compre-

hensive studies to examine the extent to which opportunities for tropical forest restoration overlap with global populations and levels of economic development.

The research estimates that 294.5 million people live in areas with high potential for forest restoration in the tropics, and over one billion people live within 8 km from such high-potential sites. In low income countries, almost 12 per cent of the population lives in areas considered important for forest restoration.

The study highlighted the high value of partnering with indigenous people and local communities to ensure the success of investments in carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and local jobs and livelihoods.

Providing communities with the right to manage forests and implement forest restoration offers a just and sustainable way to address climate change, the paper said.

Talking specifically about India, Dr Ashwini Chhatre, co-author and professor of public policy at the ISB, said that India has a robust legal framework for empowering local communities living in or near forest areas.

Within the last two years, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha have prioritised expansion of community rights as a mechanism for empowerment and poverty alleviation. Dr Chhatre said that India could learn from its own positive experiences and set up an example for the global community.

2,000 medical personnel
infected by CoronavirusBALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

As many as 2,000 health-care personnel, including doctors and frontline health workers, have been infected by the Coronavirus in Telangana state so far. Of these, 16 persons have lost their lives with 14 of them succumbing to Covid-19 related issues, according to Director of Medical Education Dr K. Ramesh Reddy.

Addressing a press conference along with Director of Health Services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao here on Tuesday, Dr Ramesh Reddy said the welfare of doctors and other frontline staff was a priority for the government.

“If anyone is infected, we are providing the treatment needed. We are immediately responding and providing whatever is required. One officer has been given the task of processing the claims of the special insurance scheme for health workers that was announced by the Prime Minister,” Dr Reddy said.

In addition to Covid-19, the government is also seized of ensuring treatment for seasonal diseases such as dengue, swine flu, malaria and diarrhoea. Instructions have also been issued to all hospitals to attend to elective surgeries that have been put on hold as the health-care sector focused on controlling of Covid-19.

“So far there have been few cases of dengue and swine flu but we have to take care to prevent these diseases. If needed, government hospitals have been instructed to run evening clinics,” Dr Reddy said.

With respect to Covid-19 treatment, he said government hospitals, even in remote areas, have been provided with oxygen supplies along with the required medicines to

JAIN BODY TO
EXPAND COVID
CARE CENTRESDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

The Jain International Trade Organisation (JITO) has said that it was working on plans to open Covid care centres (CCC) in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns of Telangana state. JITO's city chapter said its first centre in the state in Hyderabad, which has 100 beds, will soon be expanded to 170 beds to cater to the increasing needs of patients. The centre was inaugurated by Finance minister T. Harish Rao on August 5.

According to Vinod Ranka, a JITO-CCC core committee member, two doctors were part of the team that takes care of persons identified as Covid-19 positive who are asymptomatic or show mild symptoms.

The facility, set up by JITO in association with Mahavir Hospital and Research Centre, charges ₹28,000 to ₹35,000 for a seven-day package inclusive of meals, medication, basic kit, treatment and stay, and functions as per ICMR guidelines. It is permitted by the Telangana state health department. More information on the facility is available on JITO's phone numbers 9121155500 and 91212 55500.

Record 2,579 new
cases erupt in TSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

New Covid-19 cases for the first time in the state breached the 2,500-mark with the government reporting that 2,579 persons had tested positive on Monday. The day also marked the first time that the state carried out more than 50,000 tests, with the tally reaching 52,933 between Sunday and Monday.

As per the Covid-19 bulletin issued by the health department on Tuesday, the total number of Covid-19 cases rose to 1,08,670 while the number of deaths increased by seven to 770. The state had 33,737 active cases of whom 17,226 were either in home or institutional isolation.

COVID-19 POSITIVE WOMAN DELIVERS
PRE-TERM BABY; MOTHER, CHILD SAFEDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

A pre-term baby was born to a Covid-19 patient who was in a serious condition in a city hospital and both mother and child are now safe. The birthing process had to be carried out in the seventh month as the mother developed Covid-19 and was on ventilator support.

As the woman had

As on Monday evening, 84,163 persons had recovered from Covid-19 in the state.

On a day that also saw Director of Health Services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao say that Covid-19 was now “under control” in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, the GHMC area, as per the bulletin, recorded 295 new cases, down from 373 on Sunday and 472 on Saturday.

Eight other districts also registered cases in three figures. While Ranga Reddy district had 186 cases, Khammam had 161, Warangal Urban 143, Nizamabad 142, Nalgonda 129, followed by Medchal-Malkajgiri with 106 cases and Mancherla with 104 cases.

stopped responding to treatment, doctors decided to save the child. After the delivery, it was found that the newborn too was ill and survival would be a challenge. Doctors put the child on medications and the infant responded.

The mother has also started showing signs of recovery. The 34-year-old woman had conceived the child after undergoing treatment for infertility.

treat cases of Coronavirus infection. A majority of the 319 doctors recruited recently have reported to work at remote health centres.

Dr Srinivasa Rao said the symptoms of many of the seasonal diseases, including typhoid, chikungunya, dengue, malaria

and viral fevers, were similar to those of Covid-19. “We appeal to the people not to take chances and go to the nearest health centre to get examined. If found to be Covid-19 positive or for other diseases, appropriate treatment will be started immediately,” he said.

Reported cases
not followed up

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Deccan Chronicle had reported two other cases of reinfection but they were not followed up at that time.

Since the viral fingerprinting of the Coronavirus samples from the two Covid-19 patients were treated for the disease for the second time in two different hospitals in the city, a final

conclusion on the matter cannot be reached, it is learnt. The results of tests on determining the viral RNA fingerprinting are expected to take time. Only when the results are available can any conclusion be drawn if the two individuals, both medical professionals, were infected by different strains of the Coronavirus as was the case in Hong Kong instance.

TELANGANA ADOPTED ‘STRATEGIC’
TESTING, SAYS HEALTH DIRECTOR

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“We could possibly go back to our normal lives as we lived them six months ago,” Dr Rao said.

He said Telangana state had adopted ‘strategic’ testing. “We ramped up our testing only when we needed it. We performed 52,933 tests yesterday (Monday) in the 1,100 testing centres across the state. For the past few days, we were averaging 40,000 tests a day,” Dr Rao said.

“The important aspect is that our aggressive testing and treatment over the past few months has resulted in a very low mortality rate, which is going down further,” he said.

As part of the Covid-19 control measures, con-

tainment zones were put in place in Hyderabad and other districts. House to house surveillance and testing of suspects were being done where positive cases are found and 20 mobile testing vehicles that perform RT-PCR tests were pressed into service, Dr Rao said.

While the government had 20,396 exclusive Covid-19 beds, an additional 18,000 beds were available in the state. A total of 15,000 beds now have been provided with oxygen connections, he said. Dr Rao also said that 50 per cent of all beds in private hospitals were occupied by Covid-19 patients from neighbouring states including Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.

Cops check Chinese firm links to gamers’ suicide

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

In the second week of July, T. Madhukar, 24, of Lakshettipet in Mancherial district died by suicide. He had lost ₹15 lakh to fraudsters on the online gaming site Dafabet. Madhukar had borrowed the money from his friends.

Like Madhukar, there were three more persons who ended their lives in separate incidents — one in Narsingi police limits,

the other in Sanjeeva Reddy Nagar while the third victim belonged to Chennai — all of whom lost several lakhs of rupees.

As the investigators are digging out the shady deals and transactions involving the Chinese firm Beijing T Power, whose head of operations for southeast Asia Yah Hao was arrested by the Hyderabad police recently, the sleuths have launched a parallel probe to ascertain whether the four vic-

tims of online gaming fraud were cheated by the Chinese company.

If the links are established between the victims and Yah Hao's companies, the Chinese national will be in for more trouble as the police have decided to charge him and other accused with abetment to suicide in each of the four cases. Interestingly, while the world was dealing with the deadly Covid-19, which originated from China, Chinese companies like Beijing T Power were

minting money during the lockdown as transactions of this company, reflected in the bank transactions, skyrocketed between March and July as people who remained indoors invested heavily, only to suffer losses. The total value of inward transaction traced is over ₹1,100 crore, a majority of which was during the lockdown due to the pandemic this year.

Sources told Deccan Chronicle that the mobile phones of the victims will

be examined to ascertain whether they placed bets in the companies linked to the Chinese firms, whose effort was to constantly establish new companies and move operations from one company to the other. To lure the gamers initially, the stakes would be in the ratio of 7:3, which means that the gamer would win seven out of 10 times. Subsequently, the company had programmed its systems in the reverse, that is 3:7 ratio, and this is when

many started losing large amounts of money.

Sources said that some evidence linking the victim with the accused company has emerged in the suicide in Chennai. The Hyderabad police are in touch with their counterparts in Chennai even as they are out on the trail of the transactions of the victims in Telangana state.

The website on which they placed the bets, the payment gateways, details of their bank accounts are among the aspects under

investigation. So far, suspicious death cases have been registered in connection with the suicides.

While online gaming was being organised by initiating prospective gamers through Telegram groups and the admins of these groups would usually indicate the websites on which the registered members can play games and place bets, these websites were being changed on a daily basis. Players would place bets on colours in a game called ‘colour prediction’.



SHORT TAKES

MAMATA WRITES TO MODI ON JEE/NEET EXAMS

Kolkata, Aug. 25: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the Centre should go in appeal against the Supreme Court order for holding the JEE and NEET examinations during the Covid-19 outbreak to ensure the aspirants are free from "mental agony".

She wrote to Modi after the state government received a letter from the National Testing Agency on Tuesday to conduct the JEE/NEET examinations starting from September 1, 2020.

"I am aware that the Supreme Court has given a verdict on holding JEE/NEET examinations and the central government has been issuing instructions to go ahead with it accordingly. However, I would like to request for your kind intervention and to consider the central government making an appeal to the apex court to review its decision in the interest of the student community, so that they are free from mental agony and mental disaster. Such intervention is very much essential in the larger interest of the students to facilitate creating a situation whereby the students will neither be subjected to grave health risk nor they will be facing a career risk," Banerjee wrote in the letter that was also released to media.

"We are really worried and concerned," she said.

FIRE AT PROTOCOL OFFICE OF KERALA SECRETARIAT

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 25

Dramatic scenes were witnessed in the state secretariat on Tuesday after some files and documents got destroyed in a fire that broke out in the protocol wing of the complex.

The fire incident took place in the protocol office housed in the North sandwich block of the secretariat.

While some files and documents were gutted, there was no report of injury to anyone. However, an official of the secretariat said that no important files were damaged in the fire. Fire and rescue service personnel rushed to the spot and put off the fire.

"Only some files relating to booking rooms in government guest houses were destroyed. The fire was caused by an electric short circuit," a senior official of the General Administration Department told media persons.

The destruction of files and documents in the fire triggered protests by Opposition - Congress and BJP. Leaders of the two parties rushed to the secretariat and alleged there was a conspiracy to destroy evidence linked with the gold smuggling case. The case is currently being investigated by the central agencies.

BJP MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IN MP RATTLES CONG

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, AUG. 25

The just concluded membership drive of the BJP in poll-bound Gwalior-Chambal region in Madhya Pradesh reportedly wooed 76,361 Congress workers, mostly loyalists of Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia, into its fold. The move has 'rattled' the grand old party in the state.

The Congress, however, asked the ruling party to make public the list of Congress workers in the region who joined the saffron outfit.

"The BJP has hyped its whole exercise of membership drive in Gwalior-Chambal region. The party showed its existing members as new members. I challenge BJP to come out with a list of Congress workers who joined BJP", senior Congress leader and former minister P.C. Sharma told reporters here on Tuesday. Sharma said Congress continued to enjoy a mass base in the region and it would be reflected in the upcoming Assembly by-elections in the area.

The BJP countered Sharma saying that the party was ready to provide addresses and names of the Congress workers in Gwalior-Chambal who joined BJP. "Congress is rattled by the mass exodus of party workers in Gwalior-Chambal to join BJP", BJP spokesman here Rajneesh Agrawal said.

Saw building pillars breaking before I ran out, says eyewitness

The building had issues related to substandard work and incidents of falling of plaster

Mumbai, Aug. 25: Mustafa Chaphekar and his family members, all residents of the ill-fated building that collapsed in Raigad, had a narrow escape as they rushed out just in time before the structure came crashing down.

They had barely reached the gate of the five-storey building when they saw some pillars of the ground floor breaking into pieces, Chaphekar said.

The building, which had around 40 flats, collapsed on Monday evening in Maharashtra's Raigad district.

According to police, a man, who was not a resident of the building, died of cardiac arrest on Monday night after he was hit by a stone from the falling building, and 19 persons were still missing.

Chaphekar said he was at home when he suddenly felt "tremors", following which he ran out into the balcony of his flat and asked others what was happening.

Some people asked him to come out as the building was on the verge of collapse, he said.

Chaphekar then quickly rushed out along with his family members. Before leaving, he knocked the door of his neighbour and alerted him, he said.

"As my family members and I left the building, I heard a loud sound. When I turned back, I saw two-three pillars of the ground floor breaking into pieces," he said.

Chaphekar said since he and his family came to live in the building in 2013-14, there were issues related to substandard work and incidents of falling of plaster.

The problems increased in the next two years, following which the residents had a meeting with the builder, but he was reluctant to carry out repair work, he said.

"The builder told us that he had constructed the building and given it to us, now it was up to us what to do with it," he added.

Riyaz Mulla, a relative of one of the missing families, said the incident shocked him.

His brothers wife and three children, aged



Relatives mourn the death of a victim near the site of the five-storey building collapse in Mahad on Tuesday.

— PTI

● **THE BUILDING**, which had around 40 flats, collapsed on Monday evening in Maharashtra's Raigad district.

between 1.5 and 5 years, were still missing, a teary-eyed Mulla said.

His brother worked in Dubai and left from there to reach home after getting to know about the incident, he added.

A day after the building collapsed, rescue personnel continued to sift through the rubble in search of survivors, while police said 19 persons are still missing.

An official at the Mantralaya State Control Room of the State Disaster Management Unit said the Tarek Garden building at Kajalpura in Mahad tehsil collapsed around 7 pm.

There were around 40 flats in the building, the official said, adding those rescued were shifted to a local hospital at Mahad, which is around 170 km from Mumbai. — PTI

Toll climbs to 12, 4-yr-old rescued

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 25

The toll in the Mahad building collapse incident rose to 12 on Tuesday.

Rescuers sifting through the rubble of a five-storeyed building in Raigad district found a four-year-old boy alive and his mother dead beneath the debris.

The dead include the boy's 30-year-old mother and two sisters, aged seven and two years. A man died of cardiac arrest on Monday night after he was hit by a stone from the falling building. The dead — five men and five women — include two teenagers.

A video shared by NDRF showed the rescuers taking out the boy from the

rubble on a stretcher amid claps by onlookers. NDRF Director General S.N. Pradhan termed the rescued boy as god's child. "Miracle child rescued alive — God's Child. @NDRFHQ teams find a 4-year-old boy. Ops will continue, canines used. Lets all pray for more miracles," Pradhan tweeted.

Police on Tuesday registered an offence against five persons, including the builder and architect of Tariq Garden in connection with collapse.

The offence was registered against builder Farooq Kazi, RCC consultant Bahubali Dhamne, and architect Gaurav Shah under sections 304, 304A and 338 of the Indian Penal Code.

64-yr-old searches for daughter, 3 grandkids

Mumbai, Aug. 25: Sixty four-year-old Muhammad Ali reached Mahad immediately after hearing news of a building there collapsing like a pack of cards. Ali, a resident of Mandangad in Raigad district, said he is clueless about the fate of his daughter, who lived in the ill-fated Tarek Garden building with her three children.

"My son, who lives in Mumbai, called me on Monday night and said the building had collapsed. I immediately set out from Mandangad," he said.

Ali reached Mahad, which is around 40 km from Mandangad, on Monday night and is camping near the collapse site, frantically trying to know the whereabouts of his kin.

"My daughter lives in

the building along with her two daughters aged five and two years and a son who is three years old. I don't know their fate. Officials are not allowing me to search for them in the debris," he said.

A day after the five-storeyed building collapsed, rescue personnel continued to sift through the rubble in search of survivors, while police said 19 persons are still missing.

An official at the Mantralaya State Control Room of the State Disaster Management Unit said the Tarek Garden building at Kajalpura in Mahad tehsil collapsed around 7 pm.

There were around 40 flats in the building, the official said. — PTI

Security in Eastern Ladakh beefed up

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Indian Armed forces have deployed troops equipped with shoulder-fired air defence missiles on the crucial heights in Eastern Ladakh to keep in check the activity of Chinese attack helicopters in the sector.

India had already deployed quick reaction air defence missiles including the Akash missile system in June in Ladakh which can take down fighter jets and armed drones in few seconds.

It was modified to make it suitable for deployment in the high mountainous terrain.

After this, now Indian troops armed with the Russian-origin Igla air defence system have been deployed on the crucial heights along the border to take care of any enemy aircraft trying to violate the Indian air space.

The Russian-origin air defence systems are used by both the Indian Army and the Air Force and they can bring down enemy fighter jets or copters which come close to Indian locations or deployments during hostilities.

The air defence systems of both Army and the Air Force have been deployed in Ladakh to take on any aerial threat.

Parliament monsoon session likely from Sept. 14; 18 sittings planned

New Delhi, Aug. 25: The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs has recommended that the Monsoon Session of Parliament be held from September 14 to October 1, sources said on Tuesday.

According to them, there will be in total 18 sittings and its dates will be notified later in the day.

Hectic preparations are underway for the Monsoon Session of Parliament with several first-time measures because of the Covid-19 pandemic such as staggered sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and use of both chambers and galleries to accommodate members while following

physical distancing norms, officials had said.

According to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, members of the Upper House will be seated in both chambers and galleries during the session.

This is the first time in the history of Indian Parliament since 1952 that such an arrangement will be in place, where 60 members will be seated in the chamber and 51 in the galleries of Rajya Sabha and the remaining 132 in the chamber of Lok Sabha.

Similar seating arrangements are being worked out by the Lok Sabha Secretariat as well.

For the first time, large display screens and con-

soles for participation from galleries, ultraviolet germicidal irradiation, special cables between the two Houses and polycarbonate separators will be in place.

Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at a meeting on July 17, after detailed examination of various options for holding the session, decided on using the chambers and galleries of both the Houses.

Naidu has directed officials to complete preparations for the session by the third week of August when testing, rehearsal and final inspection would be carried out. The Rajya

Sabha Secretariat has been working overtime to ensure full preparedness, officials said.

While both the Houses usually function simultaneously, this time due to extraordinary circumstances, one House will sit during morning hours and the other in the evening, sources say.

The last Budget Session of Parliament had to be curtailed because of the Covid-19 pandemic and both Houses were adjourned sine die on March 23.

As per precedent, Parliament has to be convened before the end of six months from the last session. — PTI

KARNATAKA CONG CHIEF TESTS POSITIVE

Bengaluru, Aug. 25: Karnataka Congress President D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday said he has tested positive for coronavirus and has been hospitalised.

Several leaders including Congress national president Sonia Gandhi, senior party leader Rahul Gandhi, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa have wished Shivakumar a speedy recovery.

"I had fever and tested positive for the coronavirus. I am doing well, but as a precaution have been hospitalised and I am under the good care of doctors. — PTI

COVID-19 | VACCINES

VINEETA PANDEY | DC with agency inputs NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Even though the trials for the Covid-19 vaccines are on track in India, the government is simultaneously engaging with Russia on the possible use of its Sputnik V vaccine.

"India and Russia are in communication on Sputnik V. Some initial information has been shared. Some detailed information is awaited," said union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Tuesday.

The government may not be in a real hurry to import the Russian vaccines given the fact that

three vaccine candidates are already in the advanced stages of clinical trials in India.

However, since the two countries are also strategic partners, the possibility of having Sputnik V vaccine to boost the vaccination drive for the huge Indian population cannot be ruled out.

"The Serum Institute of India (Oxford University trials) vaccine studies consisting of 1,700 persons are in phase 2 and 3, the one by Biotech has completed phase 1 with 375 persons while that of Zyventus Cadilla has entered Phase 2 with about 50 persons being tested. These are two dose vaccines and

antibody response is checked after two to four weeks," said Dr Balram Bhargava, chief of ICMR.

As per Union health ministry, the total number of cases of Coronavirus in India so far reached 31,67,323 till Tuesday morning with nearly 61,000 fresh cases being detected. The toll was 58,390 out of which 848 fatalities were recorded in the last 24 hours.

Bhushan said that for the first time, active cases have reduced in the last 24 hours. "Active cases are only 22 per cent of the total cases we have had so far. There is also a steady decline in positivity rate despite very high increase

in testing," Bhushan said. He added that in the first week of August, the positivity percentage on a seven day rolling average was 11% which came down to 8% on Tuesday.

The ICMR chief said the report of the second national level sero survey is expected soon that will give an idea about the prevalence of the virus in the population.

The health ministry is keenly following the reports of possibly world's first case of Covid-19 "re-infection" in Hong Kong though the ICMR chief said that the possibility of a virus infection recurring is very rare.

"We have read with inter-

est the reports of reinfection in Hong Kong. This may depend on the immune status of the person and whether the virus has mutated and become more virulent. But it is just one case and I do not want to be alarmed. Normally it does not happen in viral diseases. For example measles, in which immunity is developed for life," Dr Bhargava said.

Meanwhile, Puducherry health minister Malladi Krishna Rao on Tuesday indicated that the Union Territory may have 2-day lockdown every weekend, as part of the government's efforts to contain spread of Coronavirus. The Minister told a vir-

SUSHANT DEATH CASE: CBI MAY QUESTION MUMBAI POLICE

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 25

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) may record statement of some of the officials of Mumbai police team who were conducting enquiry into suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

The CBI on Tuesday grilled Rajput's flatmate Siddharth Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh and house help Deepesh Sawant whose versions of the sequence of incidents showed some differences. The officials also questioned the actor's former chartered account Rajat Mewati again.

The police officials would be asked about their line of investigation and the questioning of the movie industry bigwigs in connection with the probe. Those city policemen who are likely to be questioned would include the team members who were closely involved in the suicide enquiry.

The trio have been questioned on several occasions by the CBI citing the inconsistencies in their statement. The officials sought clarity on their statement at the DRDO guest house in Santacruz.

The trio's statement is of great importance in the probe as they were present in the Bandra apartment when the actor committed suicide.

"Rhea Chakraborty and family members may be summoned next for questioning in the suicide probe," said an officer privy to the investigation.

The CBI is also rummaging through the deceased actor's phone and other gadgets to ascertain his state of mind in the days prior to his suicide.

The details of the messages and other details exchanged by Rajput with whoever was in touch with him will be in prime focus of the investigation agency.

The CBI earlier questioned the staffers at the Waterstone Resort in Andheri about the actor's stay at the resort. The CBI asked the staff about who was accompanying him and if there were any visitors whom he met during his stay. They are also verifying if there is any relevant CCTV camera footage that could be useful to the probe.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on the other hand is probing the alleged money laundering that the actor's father has accused Chakraborty of. The family alleged that at least ₹15 crore was fraudulently transferred from his bank account.

The ED is investigating the companies that were floated with the actor, Chakraborty and her brother Showik of which they were directors.



IN BRIEF

Pakistan arrests two militants

Lahore: Pakistan's counter-terrorism officials have arrested two militants of the banned Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a splinter terrorist group of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, in the country's Punjab province, the police said on Tuesday. According to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab Police, an intelligence-based operation was conducted in Sahiwal city, some 175 kms from here, on Monday. The terrorists were carrying weapons and explosive material as they had planned to attack the personnel of the law enforcement agencies in the city. The CTD team raided and arrested them, the police said.

Philippines ultra leader 'killed'

Manila: Abu Sayyaf militants may have staged suicide bombings that killed 14 people to avenge the death of a Filipino leader of the Islamic State group in the southern Philippines following a clash with troops last month, the army chief said Tuesday. Army commanding general Cirilito Sobejana said Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan was wounded in a July 6 gunbattle in a jungle near Patikul town in Sulu province and most likely died a few days later. Troops have been searching for his buried remains, he said. Two Islamic militants blew themselves up in suicide attacks Monday that killed at least 14 people, including soldiers.

\$424 mn surplus in July: Pak

Islamabad: Cash-strapped Pakistan has shown a surplus of \$424 million in July after posting a deficit of \$100 million in June, the country's central bank has said. The State Bank of Pakistan said "this is the fourth monthly surplus since last October". The SBP said that the strong turnaround in the remittances and exports is achieved "with support from several policy and administrative initiatives taken by the bank and the federal government, the *Express Tribune* reported. The export of goods increased to \$1.89 billion in July compared to \$1.58 billion in June. It was, however, 14 per cent lower than \$2.22 billion export in July 2019.

FB blocks group on Thai monarchy

Bangkok: Facebook has blocked in Thailand a group with more than a million members that engages in open discussion about the Thai monarchy, an institution that is staunchly protected from criticism by strict laws. The Facebook group, "Royalist Marketplace", was blocked late Monday after the social media giant bowed to pressure from the Thai government. Facebook said that it is still available in other places, adding that the company plans to "legally challenge" the government's request. "After careful review, Facebook has determined that we are compelled to restrict access to content which the Thai government deemed to be illegal," the company said.

ACTOR SABA SAHER SHOT AT, CRITICAL

Kabul, Aug. 25: A roadside bombing killed a police officer while a policewoman and her driver were wounded when unknown attackers opened fire on them in Kabul, said Ferdaws Faramarz, spokesman for the Kabul police chief. The policewoman, Saba Saher, is also a well-known actress, and she was said to be stable.

A wave of attacks across Afghanistan on Tuesday left at least 17 people dead and scores more wounded, officials said, including a Taliban truck bombing that targeted a commando base for Afghan forces. The bomber struck in Balkh province, killing three people, including two Afghan commandos and a civilian. According to Hanif Rezaie, the spokesman for the Afghan army corps in the north, initial military report said at least six commandos and around 35 civilians were wounded in that explosion, which also destroyed or damaged dozens of nearby houses.

In a separate attack in Balkh, gunmen shot dead five people, including former warlord Abdul Raouf, two of his sons ages 10 and 11 and two other men. Also on Tuesday, an attack on a checkpoint of pro-government forces in western Ghor province killed eight troops and wounded five.

Haley: US not racist, reject Dem's 'fashion' statement

Will speak at GOP meet that will renominate Trump as poll candidate

Washington, Aug. 25: Describing herself as a proud daughter of Indian immigrants who wore a turban and a saree, top Republican politician Nikki Haley has narrated her story to the American voters, urging them to strongly reject the Democratic Party's "fashionable" statement that "America is racist". The 48-year-old former US Ambassador to the United Nations, Haley is the only Indian-American listed so far to be speaking at the Republican National Convention which on Thursday would formally re-nominate President Donald Trump as its candidate for the November 3 presidential election. President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence will be challenged by the Democratic Party's presidential nominee Joe Biden and his Indian-American running mate Senator Kamala Harris.

Twice elected as the Governor of South Carolina, Haley said, "In much of the Democratic Party, it's now fashionable to say that America is racist. That is a lie. America is not a racist country."

"This is personal for me. I am the proud daughter of Indian immigrants. They came to America and settled in a small southern town. My father wore a turban. My mother wore a sari. I was a brown girl in a black and white world," she said on Monday at the mostly-virtual four-day convention during which she fully backed President Trump and his policies.

Born as Nimrata Randhawa in South Carolina, she is the daughter of Ajit



Delegates cheer as US President Donald Trump (L) and Vice President Mike Pence stand on stage during the first day of the Republican National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina on Monday. — AFP

Singh Randhawa and Raj Kaur Randhawa, who emigrated from Amritsar in Punjab. Haley said her family faced discrimination and hardship but her parents never gave in to grievance and hate.

"My mom built a successful business. My dad taught 30 years at a historically Black college. And the people of South Carolina chose me as their first minority and first female governor," she said. "America is a story that's a work in progress. Now is the time to build on that progress, and make America even freer, fairer, and better for everyone," Haley said.

— PTI

Trump lauds India after American pastor released

Washington, Aug. 25: US President Donald Trump has appreciated India for listening to his request to release an American pastor who was arrested last October on charges of carrying \$40,000 of undeclared currency. Tennessee pastor Bryan Nerven, who was released by India after intervention from Trump this May, attended a round table with the President in the Oval Office of the

White House along with several other American citizens who were released from overseas abductions and detentions.

"India responded very well to my request. Appreciate that," Trump said as he appeared in a taped meeting with a group of US citizens who were abducted or detained overseas and the Trump Administration helped them to return home. The taped round-

table was broadcast during the first night of the four-day Republican National Convention on Monday. In his brief remarks, Nerven explained that he had been arrested by the Indian officials while travelling in the country.

Nerven from the International House of Prayer Ministries was arrested in Bagdogra, West Bengal last October.

— PTI

False plasma data: US health official sorry

Washington, Aug. 25: Dr Stephen Hahn, the commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration, apologised Monday after misrepresenting a key statistic on how effective blood plasma is for treating Covid-19 when announcing an emergency approval measure. The US on Sunday issued emergency approval for plasma taken from recovered Coronavirus patients, so that more people can get access to the exper-

imental treatment.

But Hahn and other senior health officials came under fire from experts after repeating a claim made by President Donald Trump that blood plasma from recovered Covid-19 patients reduced mortality rates by 35 percent.

"What that means is — and if the data continue to pan out — 100 people who are sick with Covid-19, 35 would have been saved because of the administra-

tion of plasma," Hahn said Sunday, after Trump had called it "a tremendous number". Health secretary Alex Azar added: "I just want to emphasise this point, because I don't want you to gloss over this number. We dream in drug development of something like a 35 percent mortality reduction. This is a major advance in the treatment of patients. This is a major advance." Such a reduction would indeed be a game

changer in the fight against the pandemic — but the statistic is false.

The officials said these results came from a study of 35,000 patients conducted by Mayo Clinic, but Dr Scott Wright, the study's leader, told *AFP* it did not come from his institution's research. He said he believed it might be an "integrated analysis" the FDA had arrived at by looking at both Mayo's work and other studies.

FDA spokeswoman Emily Miller later tweeted that 35 percent referred to the relative difference in mortality risk between those patients in Mayo's study who received a high level of antibodies against those who received a low level of antibodies.

"I have been criticized for remarks I made Sunday night about the benefits of convalescent plasma," said Hahn in a tweet thread on Monday. — *AFP*

Postpone NEET, JEE exams: Greta

London, Aug. 25: Swedish teen climate change campaigner Greta Thunberg on Tuesday threw her weight behind postponing the NEET and the JEE exams in India in view of the Coronavirus, saying it is "deeply unfair" that students are asked to appear in the tests during the pandemic.

Several students and political leaders across the country, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and DMK President M.K. Stalin, have urged the central government to postpone the examination until the spread of the Covid-19 was brought under control.

Voicing her support to the calls for the deferment of the key national examinations, Thunberg took to Twitter, saying it is deeply unfair for the students. "It's deeply unfair that students of India are asked to sit national exams during the Covid-19 pandemic and while millions have also been impacted by the extreme floods. I stand with their call to #PostponeJEE, -NEETinCOVID," she said in a tweet.

Thunberg, 17, has become a leading voice for action on climate change, inspiring millions of students to join protests around the world. She was named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year for 2019. Two years ago, she started missing lessons most Fridays to protest outside the Swedish Parliament building, in what turned out to be the beginning of a huge environmental movement.

● THE JEE (Main) is scheduled to be held between September 1 and 6, while the JEE (Advanced) on September 27. The NEET will be held on September 13.

The chorus for postponing the various examinations, including NEET and JEE, grew louder on Sunday with over 4,000 students observing a day-long hunger strike to press for the demand in view of the rising Covid-19 cases. The protest came on a day Gandhi said the government must listen to the 'mann ki baat' of students and arrive at "an acceptable solution" and his party demanded that the NEET and the JEE be deferred. According to the leftist All India Students Association (AISA), over 4,200 students observed the day-long hunger strike at their respective home demanding that CBSE compartment exams of Classes 10 and 12 be cancelled and entrance exams such as the UGC-NET, CLAT, NEET and JEE be postponed. Aspirants appear in the JEE for admission into the premier engineering colleges and the NEET for undergraduate medical courses.

The JEE (Main) is scheduled to be held between September 1 and 6, while the JEE (Advanced) on September 27. The NEET will be held on September 13. With 60,975 people testing positive for the Coronavirus infection in a day, India's Covid-19 tally on Tuesday rose to 31,67,323. — *PTI*

Kenosha protesters, cops clash again after man shot

Kenosha, Aug. 25: Anger over the shooting of a PoC by police spilled into the streets of Kenosha for a second night Monday, with police again firing tear gas at hundreds of protesters who defied a curfew, threw bottles and shot fireworks at law enforcement guarding the courthouse. The southeastern Wisconsin city became the nation's latest flashpoint in a summer of racial unrest after cellphone footage of police shooting Jacob Blake — apparently in the back, as he leaned into his SUV while his three children sat in the vehicle — circulated widely on social media Sunday.

The 29-year-old was hospitalised in serious condition. The shooting drew

condemnation from Democratic Gov Tony Evers, who also called out 125 members of the National Guard on Monday after protesters set cars on fire, smashed windows and clashed with officers in riot gear the previous night.

Police first fired tear gas Monday about 30 minutes after the 8 p.m. curfew took effect to disperse protesters who chanted, "No justice, no peace" as they confronted a line of officers who wore protective gear and stood shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the courthouse entrance.

But hundreds of people stuck around, screaming at police and lighting fires, including to a garbage truck near the courthouse. Tensions had flared anew earlier Monday after

a news conference with Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian, originally to be held in a park, was moved inside the city's public safety building.

Hundreds of protesters rushed to the building and a door was snapped off its hinges before police in riot gear pepper-sprayed the crowd, which included a photographer from *The Associated Press*. Police in the former auto manufacturing centre of 100,000 people midway between Milwaukee and Chicago said they were responding to a call about a domestic dispute when they encountered Blake on Sunday. They did not say whether Blake was armed or why police opened fire, they released no details on the dispute. — *AP*

NZ survivor to mosque gunman: 'You are the loser'

Christchurch, Aug 25: A man who was shot and wounded in the New Zealand mosque attacks had a simple message for the mass-murderer responsible: "You are the loser, and we are the winners." Mirwais Waziri was among the survivors and family members who spoke on the second day of a four-day sentencing hearing for white supremacist Brenton Harrison Tarrant, who killed 51 worshippers at two mosques during the March 2019 attacks. Waziri said Tarrant had not shown any remorse during the hearing and so instead of giving a victim's impact statement he wanted to deliver the gunman a message.

Coming from Afghanistan, Waziri said, he was sometimes associated with terrorism but now he'd been freed. "You took that name from me," Waziri said.

"Today, you are the terrorist." His comments elicited spontaneous applause from other victims in the courtroom. Others told Tarrant during their statements that he was a coward, a monster, a rat. Tarrant broke his impassive facade a

couple of times to smirk at survivors when they made fun of him — one told him he should read the Quran during his plentiful free time, another said he was still alive because Tarrant didn't know how to shoot, except from point-blank range. The 29-year-old Australian gunman in March pleaded guilty to murder, attempted murder, and terrorism, reversing an earlier not guilty plea. He could become the first person in New Zealand to be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, the toughest sentence available. Tarrant is noticeably thinner than when he was first arrested.

At the current hearing, he hasn't shown the brazenness he did at his first court appearance the day after the attacks, when he made a hand gesture sometimes adopted by white supremacists. During Tuesday's hearing, relatives and survivors described how more than a year after the attacks, they were still having trouble sleeping, enjoying life and providing for their families.

— *AP*

Navalny poisoning blame just 'empty noise', says Kremlin

Moscow, Aug. 25: The Kremlin on Tuesday rejected accusations of involvement in an alleged attack on Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny who is in a coma in a German hospital, a day after doctors said tests indicated that he was poisoned. The politician's allies say the Kremlin is behind the illness of its most prominent critic, with some demanding an investigation into whether Russian President Vladimir Putin was involved.

"These accusations absolutely cannot be true and are rather an empty noise," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday. "We do not intend to take it seriously."

Peskov saw no grounds for launching a criminal investigation into Navalny's condition, saying that it could have been triggered by a variety of causes, and determining one should come first. "If a substance (that caused

the condition) is found, and if it is determined that it is poisoning, then there will be a reason for an investigation," Peskov said. Navalny, a politician and corruption investigator who is one of Putin's fiercest critics, fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Thursday and was taken to a hospital in the city of Omsk after the plane made an emergency landing.

Over the weekend he was transferred to the Charité hospital in Berlin, where doctors on Monday said they have found indications of "cholinesterase inhibitors" in his system. Cholinesterase inhibitors act by blocking the breakdown of a key chemical in the body, acetylcholine, that transmits signals between nerve cells.

Navalny is being treated with the antidote atropine. Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, has been visiting her husband daily and made no comment. — *AP*

Imran wants Nawaz back immediately

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 25

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday while directing to review the legal aspects said that former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) supreme Nawaz Sharif should be brought back to Pakistan immediately.

The meeting of the federal cabinet was held in Islamabad with Prime Minister Imran Khan in chair. During the meeting, matters pertaining to the country's current political situation came

under discussion. Sources said that the meeting discussed bringing back PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan and the recent political activities of party vice president Maryam Nawaz.

Federal Minister for Water Resources Faisal Wadwa while expressing concern for failing to arrest Maryam Nawaz, said that she should have been arrested for what she did outside the National Accountability Bureau office, adding that no matter what happens, Maryam Nawaz will not be allowed to leave the country.

UNDERWATER

Officials yet to reveal why vessel came so close to the island

Ship behind Mauritius oil spill sunk

Port Louis, Aug. 25: The broken stem of a Japanese-owned ship which ran aground causing a devastating oil spill in pristine waters off Mauritius, has been successfully sunk in the open ocean.

Nagashiki Shipping, which owns the MV Wakashio, said on Tuesday (Aug 25) it had completed scuttling of the front part of the vessel at sea on Monday as instructed by local authorities.

The bulk carrier ran aground on a coral reef off the Indian Ocean island on Jul 25 and began leaking

oil two weeks later, prompting a race against the clock to pump all the fuel off the bulk carrier before it broke in two.

The operation was successful and two tugboats last week began towing the larger, forward section of the vessel some 15km out into the open ocean, where it has been sunk to a depth of 3,180m.

The smaller section remains wedged on the reef where the shipwreck occurred.

"The planned sinking of the stem (forward) section of the casualty has been

completed and at around 3.30pm was no longer visible on the sea surface," read a statement on Monday from the Mauritius crisis committee.

Greenpeace opposed the plan, warning last week that sinking the vessel would "risk biodiversity and contaminate the ocean with large quantities of heavy metal toxins".

More than 1,000 tonnes of oil spilled into the pristine waters that have long been a major draw for honey-mooners, and contain precious mangroves and coral reefs. Last week a team of

British scientists arrived to co-ordinate an impact assessment on what damage has been done to the island and how to help the eco-system recover.

International experts from Japan and France are also on the ground assisting the archipelago nation in the wake of the spill.

Senior British marine monitoring scientist Dr Sue Ware told *AFP* the team would help "determine the footprint of the oil both on the shoreline and ... whether it has managed to reach any areas of

the seabed" and how it has impacted mangroves, coral reefs and different marine species.

She said efforts by Mauritius to place booms in the water appeared to have been successful in preventing oil from reaching the protected Blue Bay wetlands area.

The captain of the ship and his second-in-command were arrested last Tuesday. Officials have yet to reveal why the ship, which was making its way from Singapore to Brazil, came so close to the island. — *Agencies*

DECCAN Chronicle

26 AUGUST 2020

Restore democracy to reinvent Congress

The meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) held on Monday evoked only the usual interest among the people, party workers and in political circles. The CWC, once one of the most powerful and representative bodies in the pre- and post-Independent India, has ceased to make news when it meets. There are two important reasons for it. One, the body filled with nominated people reflected the loss of democratic moorings in the party and symbolised the sycophancy that runs in the organisation from top to bottom; the last proper election to the CWC was conducted in 1991. Second, the committee with its elected president used to control the affairs of the nation as the ruling or a major Opposition party at the Centre and in most of the states; it no more holds such power strings now. It has been reduced to such a position that its leader in the Lok Sabha cannot legitimately lay claim to the post of the leader of the Opposition for he lacks the support of one tenth of the members of the House. The party has only four Chief Ministers now.

An elected leadership is a pre-condition if the party were to regain its legitimacy and popularity and the Congress president must set in motion the process aimed at that

The sudden interest in the CWC meeting has its origin in the letter 23 senior leaders wrote to the party leadership seeking a change at the helm. The letter created heartburn in the circles close to the party high command but the party will do well to seize the opportunity the letter-writers have offered. It is highly unlikely that they will launch an open revolt against Sonia Gandhi who has been retained as president until a new incumbent arrives or former president Rahul Gandhi, though they have succeeded in stopping Mr Gandhi from returning as party chief for now. Ms Gandhi who has said she has no plans to initiate disciplinary action against them must do more and accommodate them in the new committee which will be formed to help her run the party. Ms Gandhi must resist the temptation of the coterie around her which would want every crisis to end with a declaration that the “hands of the leadership must be strengthened”. Such self-serving exercises are unlikely to help the party.

An elected leadership is a pre-condition if the party were to regain its legitimacy and popularity and the Congress president must set in motion the process aimed at that; the easy way out of foisting string-pullers under the garb of “consensus” must be jettisoned. The AICC has been talking of making itself an elected body for decades, and this crisis gives it a golden opportunity, what with Ms Gandhi, who commands respect among all sections of the party, at the helm. It is important that the grand old party of Indian politics reinvents and renovates itself and makes itself a worthy Opposition party this nation deserves. Shortcuts and courtroom dramas are not the way to achieve it; returning to basic democratic practices is.

No state for journalists

What was the egregious misdeed of 42-year-old television reporter Ratan Singh for which he was beaten up by villagers at the home of the panchayat head in Ballia, eastern UP, before being shot dead? Why was there no deterrence of note in the face of this flagrant crime? Instead, the police, who should be in the dock for birthing this culture of impunity by repeatedly failing to do their job, are now busy playing down the murder as one that occurred as a result of a property dispute, a conjecture denied by none other than the family of the victim.

Sadly, this is the second murder of a journalist in about a month's time in the state of Uttar Pradesh. In July, Vikram Joshi was shot in Ghaziabad for reporting the harassment of his niece to police who waited and then effectively watched the crime take place. And in June, Shubham Mani Tripathi, a newspaper reporter from Kanpur, was shot in Unnao at the behest of a local real estate and sand lord after his reports led to the demolition of an illegal structure and he shared it on Facebook.

Tripathi's killing coincided with the Varanasi police's hounding of Scroll's executive editor for reporting that people in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency had gone hungry during the Covid-19 lockdown. This time, the police acted with alacrity. Indeed, 60 journalists from all over India, including some prominent names, have been arrested in this period, or booked or been confronted with other tactics of intimidation for simply doing something the police aren't — which is their own job of reporting on the pandemic and how the people have suffered through it.

As the lockdown and recession affect millions of jobs nationwide, journalists, too, have come under financial stress and distress. But some of them have continued to face down both the virus and crime, as also an uncooperative and very often vindictive government, in order to report, investigate and be the first to get the news. The government, in its turn, has changed kitchen utensils in their honour, and then promptly turned a blind eye even as police blithely brushed crimes under the carpet.

The headline, therefore, is an ironic one. As for the police-mafia-state crackdown on news and commentary, it is not completely successful.

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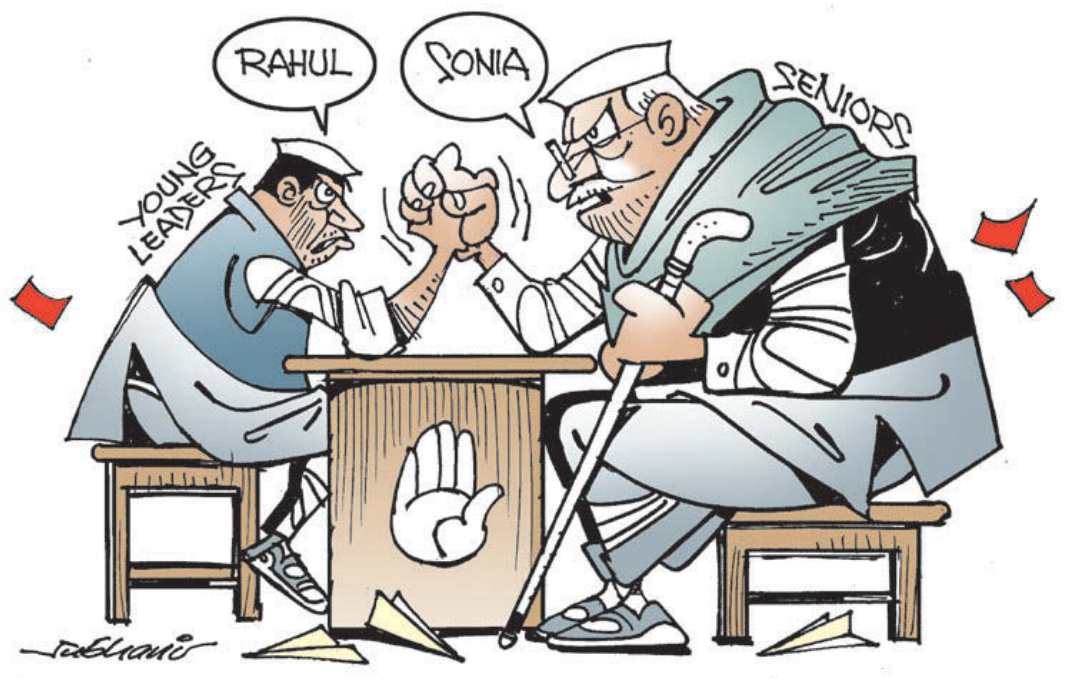
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Subhani



Dawood, D-Company & Pakistan's terror links



Syed Ata Hasnain

In the early 1970s the name Haji Mastan used to trigger much fear in India. He was among the early smuggler kings who lived by crime and exploited criminal networks — gold, some drugs, electronics and liquor, which mainly formed contraband those days. There were vast smuggling networks to evade the authorities, but their main effect was a marginal negative impact on the economy and a few inter-gang shootouts. These were people who did what they did for self-enrichment, and the power that went with it.

Smuggler kings usually invested in the urban property market. As India progressed, these holdings began to emerge as virtual gold. The Bollywood film *Deewar* captured this very well in 1974. It was n't until 1993 that crime syndicates involved in running contraband across borders went beyond the ordinary. They got involved with terrorism, as Mumbai saw in the 1993 bombings, when a series of 12 bomb explosions on March 12, 1993 resulted in 257 fatalities and 1,400 injuries. The bombings were ascribed to Dawood Ibrahim, leader of a Mumbai-based international crime syndicate called “D-Company”. Dawood was assisted by subordinates Tiger Memon and Yakub Memon. D-Company became a well-known name across India as it deeply involved itself with Pakistan-sponsored transnational proxy terrorism in India. Dawood Ibrahim, who had lived in the UAE since 1986, found a safe haven in Karachi too. Since then, he has been behind several high-profile terror acts in different parts of India outside Kashmir. He is listed as an “international terrorist” by the UN and the United States and carries a bounty of \$25 million on his head.

The recent Financial Action Task Force (FATF) pressure on Pakistan has led to the partially admitted presence of Dawood in Karachi. However, his networks continue to flourish in India despite the marked success of India's intelligence agencies.

What is the linkage between crime syndicates and transnational terrorists? To comprehend this, take the example of Pakistan. In 1989 it chose to target India through what is called asymmetric or sub-conventional war. Terrorism forms the core of this, with many other domains forming part of the low-intensity conflict spectrum. Pakistan chose to launch its strategy in Kashmir and over a period of time established an efficient network of local overground workers from different segments of society. The network covered civil society members, lawyers, businessmen, politicians, media persons, members of the clergy, faculty and students of universities, and much more. Due to the prevailing sub-nationalist trends in J&K it was not difficult doing this. However, Pakistan's strategy desired extension of the hand of proxy conflict to hinterland areas and important cities of India to give substance to its chosen strategy of “war by a thousand sands”. It was not easy doing this. Finding reliable proxies, creating networks, embedding sleeper agents, transporting warlike material, having access to large-scale finances and creating empathy in some elements of society is never a simple set of tasks. It takes years to build these through networks. In search for the means to take the proxy war into the rest of India, Pakistan got a shot in the arm with the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 and the communal riots that fol-

lowed; both acting as facilitators for the extension of its strategy. Its target was not difficult to choose, as Mumbai offered itself due to its strategic significance as India's financial capital. Mayhem by violence would disrupt investments, lead to serious suspicions of the minority community, create cleavages in society and cultivate a resultant trust deficit that would assist Pakistan to exploit at will. However, the other major consideration for the selection of Mumbai as the target was the pre-existence of criminal networks, with the D-Company leading them. A foreign hand could ride on these networks for a cost. With networks on its side, Pakistan thus had available human resources, weapons, finances, communications and local knowledge. With explosives supplanted, it was a ticking bomb. Criminal networks got their first major experience of terror that did not differentiate between targets; every incidental target is justified in the rationale of terrorists, especially those with ideological orientation. People of all faiths died or were maimed in the acts on March 12, 1993 and thereafter.

Dawood Ibrahim, who evaded the hand of Indian law, managed to create a reported network of 5,000 criminal elements with an annual turnover of \$2 billion. The D-Company is suspected of having provided the logistics for the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba's terror attack on Mumbai on November 26, 2008, besides a host of other attacks in 2002, 2006 and 2011. A total of 600 people died in these various attacks in Mumbai. With each event, Dawood

With international success against the ISIS and Al Qaeda, a renewed and energetic Indian campaign to nail Dawood Ibrahim is the call of the hour so that the FATF can effectively take note and place Pakistan on notice

Ibrahim's criminal-cum-terrorist profile enhanced a couple of notches and he has been known to keep the company of international terrorist outfits like Al Qaeda and the Taliban. In 2006, India submitted a list of 38 most wanted terrorists, including Dawood Ibrahim, to Pakistan, but the latter continued to play a hedging game knowing that the D-Company and its head was an invaluable asset for it.

With the FATF investigation against Pakistan, India in recent months has mounted pressure at the UN. On August 6, 2020, India highlighted the nexus between international terrorism and organised crime, quoting the case of UN-designated terrorist Dawood Ibrahim, who has been living in Pakistan ever since his involvement in the 1993 Mumbai blasts. India went on to state: “If the international community can successfully defeat the Islamic State, a similar focus on addressing threats posed by proscribed individuals and entities such as Dawood Ibrahim and his D-Company, the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad will serve humankind well.” The continuous Indian diplomatic campaign to highlight Pakistan-sponsored criminal and terrorist links which have acted as its proxies in India is apparently bearing fruit, with Pakistan reportedly admitting the existence of Dawood Ibrahim in Karachi. However, Pakistan is a past master at subterfuge and evasion of responsibility. Its admission on one day and denial the next is part of an old strategy which it continues to play with the FATF. With international success against the ISIS and Al Qaeda, a renewed and energetic Indian campaign to nail Dawood Ibrahim is the call of the hour so that the FATF can effectively take note and place Pakistan on notice to deliver or perish on the blacklist. But only time can tell if it will happen this time.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

LETTERS

CONG TROUBLES

Your editorial 'Letter a wake up call to Congress on its future' (DC, Aug. 25) hits the nail on the head. Why the Congress is not able to demonstrate to the people that it can be a credible alternative to the BJP is amply evident from the way Monday's CWC meeting was conducted. Instead of discussing the contents of the letter which implores the leadership to take steps to revitalise the party, what they thought was important was to deliberate for close to eight hours on its timing!

L. Prabhakar
Secunderabad

ONLINE SCHOOLS

I am 84, a retired teacher. I request the government to providing one hour daily internet class followed by short homework on the school's website. Sundays may be used for conducting online weekly exams as a revision recall. The poor may be given free internet and cellphones or tablet computers.

P.V. Padmavathi
Secunderabad

SUBHANI'S CARTOONS

Every day, we look forward to the cartoons by Subhani.. He says it all in a few words and sometimes even without any words. Hats off to such talent. Monday's cartoon on the Edit Page was yet another good piece of work. The Counterpoint cartoons are no less. Thanks for making us laugh and think.

Pooja Dinakar
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

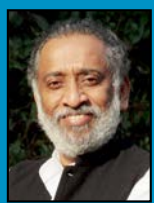
CM leaving for Japan on Aug. 31

HYDERABAD, August 25. Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi, Chief Minister, will leave by plane for Japan from Calcutta on August 31 on a 15-day visit at the invitation of the Japanese Government.

Mr. Brahmananda Reddy will be accompanied by Mrs. Raghavamma Brahmananda Reddi his Security Officer, Mr. S. Seethapathi Naidu, Mr. Sushil Kumar, managing director of the State Industrial Development Corporation and Mr. Maddi Sudarshanam, a well known industrialist of the State.

The Chief Minister and party will visit the Expo-70 and will also visit Hong Kong, Osaka, Tokyo, Bangkok and Singapore. The party will return to Hyderabad on September 16.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Audit service is unhappy over Murmu as CAG

The appointment of former lieutenant governor of Jammu & Kashmir G.C. Murmu as India's Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has not been welcomed by the Indian Audit & Accounts Service (IA&AS) officers. It is being seen as yet another instance of the dominance of the IAS cadre over other all-India services. Not that it's been known to make any difference to this Sarkar, once it's made up its mind!

Sources say that in becoming CAG, Mr Murmu who is from the 1985-batch Gujarat cadre of the IAS, has superseded at least six IA&AS officers. But he is not the first IAS officer to become the nation's top auditor. Mr Murmu's immediate predecessor, Rajiv Mehroshi, was from the 1978 IAS cadre, and he too had followed Shashikant Sharma, who belonged to the 1976 batch. Many would also remember CAG

Vinod Rai, a 1972-batch IAS officer. Apparently, the last IA&AS officer to become CAG was A. Bakshi whose tenure ended back in 1978.

Since then, CAGs have been from the tribe of the “heaven-born”, but clearly the IA&AS officers who have lost the race to become CAG are unwilling to accept the IAS “outsiders”. Will the current resentment subside “naturally” or will Mr Murmu face rough weather? We'll have to wait and see.

ASTHANA IS NEW BSF CHIEF

Two years after his highly publicized ouster from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), its former special director Rakesh Asthana has been named director general of the Border Security Force (BSF).

Interestingly, he continues to hold additional charge of director general, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). Checking narcotics smug-

gling remains a big concern and in the BSF, which patrols the borders, Mr Asthana as DG is back in a position where he can play a more active role.

Mr Asthana has served both in the state government and at the Centre, where he served twice in the CBI. The 1984-batch IPS officer from the Gujarat cadre also did a low-profile stint at the Bureau of Civil Aviation and Security.

At the CBI, he was involved in investigating many high-profile cases. During his first stint in the agency, he investigated the fodder scam, which resulted in the conviction of former Bihar chief minister Lalu Yadav. He also achieved signal success in building a water-tight case for the extradition of escaped liquor baron Vijay Malhiya from the UK. He led CBI's case in the UK courts. In Gujarat, he served in crucial posts such as Vadodara's police commissioner

under then chief minister Narendra Modi.

TELL-ALL TALES

The arrival of “tell-all” books by Viral Acharya and Urjit Patel has whetted the curiosity of many who are looking to find some skeletons tumble out.

Both economists did stints at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and left in more or less similar circumstances — before the end of their terms. While Mr Patel was RBI Governor, Mr Acharya is a former deputy governor of RBI, who quit six months before his tenure ended in 2019.

According to Mr Acharya, Mr Patel quit because of several attempts to undermine the autonomy of the bank by the government. It was something that was widely discussed in the media at the time. However, Mr Patel had claimed that he had resigned for “personal rea-

sons”, although it was widely speculated that one reason he disagreed with the government was on the issue of parting with the central bank's reserves. However, he seems to have mended fences now as he has been appointed as Chairman of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy.

Mr Acharya, too, quit after a series of spats with government officials. His book was published close on the heels of Mr Patel's own book which provides a glance into how India's bankruptcy code was weakened by several stakeholders within the broader banking system. Mr Acharya has argued that numerous policies “regressed” the economic climate in the country while he was deputy governor between early January 2017 and mid-July 2019.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,843.88	0.12
Nifty 50	11472.30	0.05
S&P 500*	3,428.93	-0.07
Dollar (₹)	74.33	-0.01
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.27	-0.02
Euro (₹)	87.83	-0.02
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,081*188	0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.92	0.79
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.157	-0.065
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.700	0.054

* As of 9:30 PM IST

LIC Housing rises eight per cent after Q1 results

Shares of LIC Housing Finance Ltd (LICHFL) on Tuesday closed with 8 per cent gains after the company reported a 34 per cent jump in its net profit for the quarter ending June. The stock rose by 8.06 per cent to close at ₹299 on the BSE. On the NSE, it jumped 8 per cent to close at ₹298.95. In volume terms, 21.07 lakh shares were traded on the BSE and over 4 crore shares on the NSE during the day.

Flipkart to shift to 100% Electric Vehicles by 2030



Walmart-owned Flipkart on Tuesday said it will transition completely to the usage of electric vehicles (EVs) by 2030 as part of its sustainability efforts, and has joined the Climate Group's global electric mobility initiative, EV100. EV100 brings together companies committed to accelerating the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) and making electric transport the new normal by 2030.

Satyam investor relations head fined by Sebi

Sebi on Tuesday levied a fine of ₹10 lakh on Satyam Computer Services Ltd's head of investor relations for indulging in insider trading in the firm's scrip. The head of investor relations of Satyam Computer Services Ltd, T.A.N. Murti, violated Prohibition of Insider Trading norms, Sebi order said adding that he had dealt in shares of SCSL while in possession of unpublished price sensitive information.

ICICI Bank uses satellite data to assess agri loans

For the first time in domestic banking, ICICI Bank is deploying satellite data to power farm credit assessment, which it claims will reduce cost for both farmers as well as the lender. The second-largest private sector lender on Tuesday said it has been piloting the project in a few select villages for the past two years and is extending the same to 500 villages in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat now.



RBI stops printing ₹2,000 notes

■ No ₹2,000 note printed in 2019-20; ₹2,000 notes in circulation are on decline

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 25

Without announcing a formal demonetisation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) appears to be phasing out ₹2,000 currency notes from circulation if one goes by data published in the RBI Annual Report 2019-20, which was released by the central bank on Tuesday. In its report, the RBI said the ₹2,000 denominated currency note, which was launched after the demonetisation in November 2016, has not been printed in financial

year 2019-2020. The number of ₹2,000 currency notes in circulation is also gradually coming down since 2018. At the end of March 2018, there were 33,632 lakh pieces of ₹2,000 currency notes in circulation. This number came to 32,910 lakh pieces at end-March 2019 and further down to 27,398 lakh pieces at end-March 2020. The ₹2,000 denominated notes constituted 2.4 per cent of the total volume of notes at the end of March 2020, down from three per cent at the end of March 2019 and 3.3 per cent at the

VERY CLEARLY without demonetisation, the RBI maybe phasing out ₹2,000 currency notes. We are not getting any new supply of ₹2,000 notes.

SENIOR BANKER

end of March 2018. In value terms also, the share has come down to 22.6 per cent at the end of March 2020, from 31.2 per cent at the end of March 2019 and 37.3 per cent at the end of March 2018. The share of ₹2,000 notes was

50 per cent in 2017, as the major focus was on remonetising the economy. On the other hand, the circulation of currency notes of denomination of ₹500 and ₹200 has gone up substantially, both in terms of volume and value over the three years beginning 2018. Bankers believe that the RBI is gradually withdrawing ₹2,000 notes from the circulation by not printing notes afresh. Unlike demonetisation, the method would gradually withdraw the notes while allowing them to remain a lender tender.

A senior banker told *Deccan Chronicle*, "Very clearly without demonetisation, the RBI maybe phasing out ₹2000 currency notes. We are not getting any new supply of ₹2,000 notes." A former banker said, "There may be some people who are hoarding ₹2,000 currency notes but the number may not be large. Banks are not reissuing ₹2,000 notes; maybe banks have been told by the RBI not to reissue ₹2,000 notes. It is also easy to calibrate the ATMs with lower currency notes such as ₹500."

Jack Ma's Ant offers world's biggest IPO

Hong Kong, Aug. 25: Billionaire Jack Ma's Ant Group filed for an initial public offering (IPO) in Hong Kong and Shanghai to bankroll its expansion in financial services and bolster its lead as China's largest online payments platform.



The Hangzhou-based company will issue no less than 10 per cent in new shares of its total capital, according to its filing with the Shanghai exchange. Ant generated 72.5 billion yuan (\$10.5 billion) in revenue in the first half, after full-year sales of 120.6 billion yuan in 2019, it said. The firm posted a profit of 21.2 billion yuan in the first half.

WITH DATA from a billion users of its Alipay app at its back, Ant is pushing broadly into financial services, delivering technology such as artificial intelligence, robo investing and lending platforms.

The crown jewel of the sprawling Alibaba empire, Ant has been accelerating its evolution into an online mall for everything from loans and travel services to food delivery, in a bid to win back shoppers lost to Tencent Holdings Ltd. With data from a billion users of its Alipay app at its back, Ant is pushing broadly into financial services, delivering technology such as artificial intelligence, robo investing and lending platforms.

ties, according to the filing, which didn't provide a share price range or the amount it intends to raise in the IPO. Unlike Chinese tech giants such as Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., Ant decided against listing in the US at a time of increased scrutiny by the Trump administration of Chinese companies and warnings to US endowment funds to offload their stakes in US-listed Chinese businesses.

The simultaneous listing could mark one of the biggest debuts in the market, and even top Saudi Aramco's record \$29 billion IPO, a person familiar has said. The firm is targeting a valuation of about \$225 billion, based on an IPO of about \$30 billion if markets are favourable, people familiar with the matter have said. The company will use the proceeds to expand cross-border payments and enhance its research and development capabilities.

Ant's Shanghai listing marks a victory for the city's exchange, and is part of an effort by China to establish its own capital markets as tensions with the United States escalate. Alibaba is Ant's largest shareholder, with a 33 per cent stake. Hangzhou Junao, an entity that is owned by key Ant and Alibaba executives, owns 20.66 per cent, while Hangzhou Junhan, which holds shares on behalf of Ant employees, owns a 29.86 per cent stake. — Bloomberg

SHAKY GROUNDS

THE RBI'S ANNUAL REPORT SHOWS THAT THE INDIAN ECONOMY WAS ON A SHAKY GROUND EVEN BEFORE THE CORONAVIRUS DEALT A SEVERE BLOW.

- The general government fiscal deficit of 25 states and the central government has increased from 5.4 per cent of GDP in 2018-19 to 6.5 per cent in 2019-20. The revised figure is expected to deteriorate further to about 7.5 per cent in 2019-20.
- Outstanding liabilities rose to 70.4 per cent of GDP in 2019-20 (revised estimate) from 67.5 per cent in 2018-19.
- On a year-on-year basis, direct tax collection has declined by 7.7 per cent in 2019-20 as against a 13.4 per cent increase in 2018-19.
- Indirect tax growth has slowed to 1.7 per cent from 2.9 per cent a year ago.
- Estimates for gross tax revenue in 2019-20 were brought down by ₹ 4.51 lakh crore vis-a-vis budget estimates.

RBI foresees higher food prices despite surplus crop

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

The country's headline inflation is expected to firm up further in the coming months largely due to disruptions in food and manufactured items' supply chains, the RBI said in its annual report for 2019-20. In the same report, the central bank also claims that surplus foodgrain management has become a major challenge for the country. One hand, the RBI said headline inflation picked up strongly during the closing months of 2019-20 and the short-term outlook for food inflation has turned uncertain. On the other hand, the RBI claims that the total production of foodgrains has

ONE HAND, the RBI said the short-term outlook for food inflation has turned uncertain. On the other hand, the RBI claims that the total production of foodgrains has reached a record 296.65 million tonnes in 2019-20.

chains of food and manufactured items could amplify sectoral price pressures, thus posing an upside risk to headline inflation. The RBI also stressed on agricultural exports that expose the Indian farmer to international terms of trade and technology; and public and private capital formation in the farm sector. Experience shows that in periods when the terms of trade remained favourable to agriculture, annual average growth in agricultural GVA exceeded 3 per cent. Otherwise, the main instrument of incentive has been minimum support prices, but the experience has been that price incentives have been costly, inefficient and even distortive, the RBI report added.

Bank frauds double to ₹1.85 lakh cr in 1 year

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 25

Bank frauds of ₹1 lakh and above have more than doubled in the previous year to ₹1.85 lakh crore from ₹71,543 crore in 2018-19 period, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its Annual Report 2019-20 released on Tuesday. The number of such cases increased by 28 per cent to 8,707 in 2019-20 from 6,799 in 2018-19 said the RBI report. "Frauds have been predominantly occurring in the loan portfolio (advances category), both

in terms of number and value. There was a concentration of large value frauds, with the top 50 credit-related frauds constituting 76 per cent of the total amount reported as frauds during 2019-20. Incidents relating to other areas of banking, like off-balance sheet and forex transactions, fell in 2019-20," said the RBI said in its report. However, the date of occurrence of these frauds are spread over several previous years and are accounted for in the financial year when they are reported. — PTI

NIPPON INDIA RAISES ₹720CR FROM FIRST NFO

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 25

Nippon India Mutual Fund has collected ₹720 crore through its first new fund offer (NFO) after the rebranding of its fund house. The NFO which was conducted digitally and saw a large participation with over 80,000 applications. Nippon India Multi Asset Fund is a unique fund which allows investors to take exposure to four distinct asset classes — domestic equity, foreign equity, commodities and fixed income. The NFO closed on August 21, 2020 and would reopen for subscription from September 2, 2020. "This was the first open ended actively-managed NFO after the brand change, launched under Nippon India Mutual Fund. The overwhelming response strongly reflects our strong distribution capabilities, sound digital infrastructure and trust in newly established brands," said Saugata Chatterjee, co-chief business officer, Nippon India Mutual Fund. "Over 80,000 investors spread across 370 locations invested in the NFO through both digital & offline mode. The fund also received 25,000 SIP applications," it said.

TERI for ₹40L cr green stimulus

New Delhi, Aug. 25: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) has proposed to revive the Indian economy by exploiting potential of around ₹40 lakh crore in clean energy projects over the next 10 year through government policy interventions but with minimum public spending. TERI has released a discussion paper on 'A Fiscally Responsible Green Stimulus' to revive the Indian economy by creating demand and jobs with policy and regulatory interventions using minimal government spending.

ing, a TERI statement said. The Green Stimulus proposed by the TERI is about ₹40 lakh crore (or \$540 billion), spread over this decade by 2030. TERI suggested to incentivise cleaner transport, which has the investment potential of ₹1.6 lakh crore per annum. It suggested to subsidise fleet modernisation of existing vehicles to BS-VI, use of electric vehicles and provision of buses for public transport. The Institute has also pitched for producing renewable energy from agricultural residues which

have an investment potential of ₹22,470 crore per annum. TERI suggested that the government should announce a commercially viable procurement price for the next five years for briquettes made from crop waste. It has also asked for creating renewable energy from animal husbandry waste, which has investment potential of ₹88,000 crore per annum. The study suggested to introduce a commercially viable feed-in tariff for purchase of electricity generated from animal

husbandry waste (excreta from cattle, poultry, pigs, etc.) by power distribution companies. The institute also says that promoting solar generation in rural India has an investment potential of ₹27 lakh crore. It made a case for a commercially viable feed-in tariff for purchase of electricity generated from rural areas in the kilowatt range by power distribution companies. Supporting MSMEs to become more green and competitive has savings potential of ₹15,000 crore every year. — PTI

Apple to open online store in India in Sept

Bengaluru, Aug. 25: Apple Inc is set to open an online store in India next month, *Bloomberg News* reported on Tuesday, citing a person familiar with the matter.

ately respond a *Reuters* request for comment. Apple chief executive officer Tim Cook had said here earlier this year that Apple would open its first Indian retail store in 2021. With more than 1 billion wireless subscribers, of which about a third rely on basic handsets, India provides huge growth prospects for smartphone makers, as well as cheap labor to manufacture the devices. Apple also assembles some smartphones, including the iPhone 11, at Foxconn and Wistron's plants in two southern Indian states. — Reuters

The iPhone maker currently sells its products in the country through third-party vendors and e-commerce firms such as Amazon.com Inc and Walmart Inc-owned Flipkart. The company's online store will be ready for operation in time for the festive season that culminates in Diwali, the biggest spending season in the country, *Bloomberg* said. Apple did not immediately respond to a *Reuters* request for comment.

POST | LOCKDOWN

Lower demand for API and normalisation of operational expenses expected

Pharma sector's profitability likely to decline

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 25

Pharma, which has been one of the very few sectors that have performed well in the past quarter, may not be able to sustain the performance in the coming quarters. While domestic sales will improve with lifting of the lockdown, moderation in API demand and normalisation of operational expenses will affect profitability. The quality performance of Q1 FY21 is attributed to the strong revenue

growth in the API business and lower operating expenses. The API business revenue grew 31 per cent year-on-year basis and 18 per cent q-o-q in Q1FY21 as demand from global and Indian formulation players remained robust, aided by higher pricing opportunities, according to India Ratings and Research. Indian API players benefited due to the thrust on supply chain continuity from customers and better inventory management in view of supply disruptions

tions from China and the run up in the prices of API. Increased stocking by different channels also supported growth. However, the growth in the API business will taper off in the near term as companies normalise their buying patterns. India also expects a price correction as the sudden demand normalises. Further, operating expenses, primarily led by the 19 per cent q-o-q decline in the selling expenses, too would normalise. The restricted movement

of medical representatives and other cost savings like lower promotional expenses due to the lockdown led to the operating expenses declining 8 per cent y-o-y and 19 per cent q-o-q in Q1FY21 and had aided profitability. According to Fitch Ratings, focusing on optimising direct costs and reducing fixed costs, including those related to travel and sales and marketing, helped many companies report resilient margins in Q1FY21. Post-lockdown, as com-

petitive pressures rise, companies will eventually revert to in-person engagement with prescribers. Though the companies had cut some expenses with manpower rationalisation and expense curtailment, the overall sustainable cost reduction is unlikely to exceed 10-20 per cent finds Ind-Ra. However, Fitch Ratings believes that sales will rise after a gradual easing of the lockdown measures that caused disruptions across most markets in

April-June. The gradual easing has led to a rise in doctor visits and elective procedures since May in key markets. This will benefit sales, particularly in acute therapy areas. Nevertheless, sustained price erosion in the US generic pharmaceutical market continues to weigh on profitability. "Focus on conserving cash by limiting capex and R&D spending in the near term will support their financial flexibility in the current environment," finds Fitch.

SHORT TAKES

Man U captain to be tried for crime

Thessaloniki, Greece: The trial of Manchester United captain Harry Maguire on charges of “assault”, “bodily harm”, “verbal abuse” and “attempted bribery” opened on Tuesday in the criminal court on the Greek island of Syros, according to a judicial source.

According to some British and Greek media on the spot, Maguire’s lawyers raised procedural issues which could lead to the trial being postponed.

The international defender was not present, but was simultaneously named in Gareth Southgate’s England squad for matches against Iceland and Denmark next month. Maguire’s lawyers told local media that he had left the Cyclades last week.

He could face a maximum prison sentence of seven years, Greek radio station *Skai* said.

The 80 million (88 million euros) defender was arrested late on Thursday after a fight with another group at a nightclub in Mykonos.

Greek media reported that the fight started when someone in the other group hurt Maguire’s sister. — *AFP*

Ronaldinho out after five months

Asuncion, Paraguay: Retired Brazilian football star Ronaldinho was released from house arrest after spending five months detained in Paraguay for entering the country with a false passport.

Paraguayan judge Gustavo Amarilla handed down a suspended sentence of two years in prison for Ronaldinho and his brother Roberto de Assis Moreira, and granted their release. The brothers will also have to pay a fine of \$200,000 between the two of them.

Both were arrested last March for possession and use of false Paraguayan passports with which they entered the country to conduct business activities.

The retired soccer star was earlier released from a high-security jail in Paraguay but ordered to serve house arrest at a luxury hotel while he was investigated.

Ronaldinho will be able to return to Brazil immediately. Defense attorneys Tarek Tuma and Alcides Ceres said their clients will establish residence in Rio de Janeiro. — *AP*

Afghans fail to arrest sex abuser

Kabul: Supporters of the former head of Afghanistan’s football federation, who is accused of sexually assaulting and harassing several players on the women’s national team, prevented Afghan special forces from arresting him, officials said.

FIFA imposed a life ban and a fine of 1 million Swiss francs (\$1.06 million) on Keramuddin Karim last year, and Afghan authorities issued an arrest warrant, but he remains at large.

The inability to arrest him reflects the lingering power of local warlords and authorities’ failure to uphold women’s rights nearly two decades after the U.S.-led invasion that toppled the Taliban.

Amin Sediqqi, the deputy governor of the northern Panjshir province, said the arresting forces were met with a reaction by armed men. He said provincial authorities were not aware of the operation and are now working through local elders to calm the situation. — *AP*

JUDOKA GIVEN 22-MONTH BAN FOR DOPING

New Delhi: Indian judoka Deepanshu Balayan has been handed a 22-month suspension by NADA’s Anti Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) for consumption of prohibited substance Furosemide, which is a diuretic medicine.

Balayan had tested positive for the banned substance after his sample was collected during trials held in Bhopal in June last year. Since NADA failed to establish that Balayan’s dope offence was intentional, the panel shot down agency’s recommendation of a harsher punishment of four years. — *PTI*

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ASH STOKES FIRE

Seals details of ‘Mankad’ talk with Ponting

Dubai, Aug. 25: Ravichandran Ashwin says he has spoken to his IPL coach Ricky Ponting on the contentious issue of running out batsmen who back up too far at the non-striker’s end but will reveal the contents of the telephonic conversation only next week.

The issue became a talking point when Ponting, head coach of Ashwin’s team Delhi Capitals, said he would have a discussion with Ashwin on the controversial manner of getting a batsman out ahead of the IPL starting September 19 in the UAE.

Ashwin ran out England batsman Jos Buttler at the non-striker’s end last season when he backed up too far, drawing criticism for his act as many called it against the ‘spirit of the game.’ While Ashwin has reached Dubai, Ponting is set to arrive next week and the two will talk in person before the Indian reveals what transpired between them.

“Ricky Ponting hasn’t yet reached (Dubai). After he comes, we will sit for a chat with him. He said he wants to have a conversation. We have already talked over the phone. It was a very interesting chat,” Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

Ashwin said it’s better to have a face-to-face conversation since the message of the heavily-accented Australians can get lost in translation. “What happens sometimes is Australians’ messages in English get lost in translation and reach us with a different meaning. Even some of their jokes become news. That’s what it is and next week I will reveal a bit more about my conversation with Ricky.”

Ashwin on Monday suggested the introduction of a “free ball” for bowlers if non-strikers back up too far, saying there was nothing wrong with running such batsmen out. “Make it a free ball for the bowler. If the batsmen gets out of that ball, the batting team will be docked five runs. Free hit adds to the drama for a batter, let’s give a chance to bowlers too,” Ashwin had tweeted. — *PTI*

Jimmy first pacer to 600 Test wkts

Southampton, Aug. 25: England paceman James Anderson cemented his place in cricket history by taking his 600th Test wicket when he dismissed Pakistan captain Azhar Ali (caught by England captain Joe Root) in the rain-marred third and final Test at Southampton on Tuesday.

The 38-year-old struck with his 14th ball of the day. And there was enough time left in the day for England, 1-0 up in the three-match contest and on the brink of a first series win over Pakistan in a decade, to press for victory.

Anderson is only the



Ravichandran Ashwin of Delhi Capitals in this file photo.

Rahul banks on coach Kumble

Dubai, Aug. 25: K. L. Rahul expects head coach Anil Kumble to do bulk of the planning, which he feels will help him immensely in his debut as captain of Kings XI Punjab in the IPL, beginning in UAE on September 19.

Like the other seven teams, KXIP players are undergoing a six-day mandatory quarantine in the UAE.

The squad is heavy on players from Karnataka including the captain himself, Mayank Agarwal and Karun Nair. The head coach too is from Karnataka.

“To have someone like Anil *bhai* around helps

To have someone like Anil *bhai* around helps me immensely this season. I think he (Kumble) will make my life as captain very easy. I know that he would be doing most of the planning and I just have to go out there and carry out the plans.

— **K. L. RAHUL**
Kings XI Punjab captain

me immensely this season. I share a very good relationship with him off the field, coming from the same state,” Rahul told the IPL website.

“I think he (Kumble) will make my life as captain very easy. I know that he would be doing most of the planning and I just have to go out there and carry out the plans,” said the 28-year-old.

Rahul was in red hot form in the past two seasons while batting alongside Chris Gayle, scoring 659 and 593 and in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

“Maxi has been with Kings XI before and has had a successful run with the team. He was one player we were very clear we needed going into the auctions.

“On a given day, he will

9-MAN TEAM WILL CONDUCT DOPE TESTS

New Delhi, Aug. 25: Three high-ranking National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) officials, along with six empanelled Dope Control Officers (DCOs), will be travelling to the UAE for sample collection during this year’s Indian Premier League, which starts on September 19.

According to sources in the NADA, the agency is targeting collection of at least 50 samples during In-Competition (IC) and Out-of-Competition (OOC) testing during the 60-match event which will run till November 10.

“NADA will have nine people in UAE and they will also take help of the UAE’s National Anti Doping Organisation if they require further manpower in this case chapter-ones who help in sample collection,” a senior BCCI official confirmed.

The National doping agency will have three teams with one official and two DCOs at each of the three venues along with local NADO staff in each of the units. — *PTI*

take down any bowling attack and we’ve felt that the last couple of seasons we have missed that impact player in the middle order,” said Rahul.

In Rahul and Gayle, KXIP make one of the most destructive opening pairings in IPL. The captain expects the West Indian to keep winning games for the team.

“I have played for several years with him and share a great friendship with him. He’s a great guy to have in our team. He will be part of our core group and with the kind of experience he has, he will definitely be somebody that wins a lot of games for us,” he added. — *PTI*

Bolt tests Covid+ after B’d day party

Kingston (Jamaica), Aug. 25: Jamaica’s Minister of Health says legendary sprinter Usain Bolt has tested positive for the novel Coronavirus.

Minister Christopher Tufton said Bolt was aware of the results and his recent contacts were being traced.

“It is now public knowledge that Mr Bolt has tested positive. He has been formally notified, I’m told by the authorities,” Tufton told reporters.

“It triggers an approach to questioning, interrogation if you will, which we follow through with contact tracing,” he added.

According to reports, a surprise birthday party was thrown for Bolt by his family and friends when he turned 34 on August 21, with Manchester City star Raheem Sterling and Bayer Leverkusen winger Leon Bailey in attendance. Cricketer Chris Gayle is also said to be present at the event, which was described as a “big, mask-free” gathering that failed to observe health safety measures.

In some videos that surfaced, Bolt was seen dancing with his visitors as they seemed to disregard proper social distancing.

Jamaica’s Prime Minister Andrew Holness also said police are investigating the circumstances surrounding Bolt’s birthday party. “There are reports of an activity related to Usain Bolt. These matters are all being thoroughly investigated and the police will give a report on these matters in near future,” Holness told a virtual news conference.

Bolt said on social media on Monday that he was awaiting the result of a Coronavirus test and was quarantining himself as a precaution.

The 34-year-old retired sprinter who won gold in the 100 and 200 metres at the last three Olympics posted a video on social media to explain the situation. “Good morning everybody. Just waking up. Like everybody, checked social media and saw that social media says I’m confirmed of Covid-19. I did a test Saturday, because I



Usain Bolt

● **According to reports, a surprise birthday party was thrown for Bolt by his family and friends when he turned 34 on August 21, with Manchester City star Raheem Sterling and Bayer Leverkusen winger Leon Bailey in attendance. Cricketer Chris Gayle is also said to be present at the event, which was described as a big, maskless gathering that failed to observe health safety measures.**

work. I’m trying to be responsible, so I’m going to stay in and stay here for my friends,” he said.

Bolt, who appeared to be lying in bed in the video, said he has no symptoms. “Just to be safe, I’ll quarantine myself and just take it easy,” he said.

Jamaica has had fewer than 1,700 cases, a relatively low number in a country of nearly 3 million.

On the track, Bolt was known for his poses — his “Lighting Bolt” became iconic — and of course his post-race celebrations. His speed and charisma made his sport can’t-miss viewing whenever he lined up in the blocks.

Bolt set the world records in the 100 and 200 metres at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin. He last competed internationally at the 2017 World Championships in London.

Bolt and partner Kasi Bennet welcomed the birth of a daughter, Olympia, in May. — *Agencies*

FORMULA ONE ADDS FOUR RACES TO 2020 CALENDAR

Paris, Aug. 25: Four Grand Prix races, in Turkey, Bahrain (two) and Abu Dhabi, have been added to the 2020 Formula One calendar, but the postponed Chinese GP has been cancelled, F1 organisers said.

The addition of the four races and the elimination of the Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai bring the race total to 17 for the Coronavirus-affected season.

Formula One returns to Turkey for the first time since 2011, with the Turkish Grand Prix to be run at Istanbul Park on November 15. That is followed by a back-to-back double header in Bahrain, with the Bahrain Grand Prix on November 26 and the Sakhir Grand Prix on December 6. The season-concluding Abu Dhabi Grand Prix will take place at the Yas Marina Circuit on December 13. — *AFP*

Ostapenko pulls out of US Open

New York, Aug. 25: Jelena Ostapenko, the 2017 French Open champion, pulled out of the U.S. Open, citing a change of schedule.

She is the latest woman with a Grand Slam title or high ranking to withdraw from the tournament that begins next week amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Six of the top eight women in the WTA rankings already were out, including No.1 Ash Barty, the reigning champion at Roland Garros, and No.6 Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 winner at Flushing Meadows.

DJOKOVIC BATTLES NECK PAIN FOR A WIN

World number one Novak Djokovic battled through neck pain on the way to a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 victory over Ricardas Berankis at the Western & Southern Open, where second seed Dominic Thiem crashed out. Djokovic made it through to the Round of 16 despite the sore neck, for which he received treatment on court.

Djokovic twice went down a break in the second set, but broke back both times. He let out a roar

when he broke for a 5-4 lead then calmly served it out. He next faces American Tennys Sandgren, a 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) winner over 15th-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The upset of the day was at the opposite end of the men’s draw, as 32nd-ranked Filip Krajinovic of Serbia toppled Austria’s Thiem 6-2, 6-1.

Krajinovic lined up a meeting with Hungarian Marton Fucsovics, who ousted 14th-seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 4-6, 6-2.

Meanwhile, Andy Murray also notched an upset, surprising world number seven Alexander Zverev 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 for his first win over a top-10 player in more than three years.

— *Agencies*

Kashyap questions training selection

New Delhi, Aug. 25: Former Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap on Tuesday questioned his omission from the ongoing national badminton camp in Hyderabad, saying that restricting it to just eight Olympic hopefuls is “illogical”.

The 33-year-old, a former World No.6, insisted that he too has an outside chance of qualifying for the Tokyo Games but he has no way to pursue it as he can’t train at the camp. “I have a couple of questions regarding the camp. I find it illogical to allow only eight people to train. Also, how are these eight, Olympic hopefuls because I think only three have almost confirmed their slot and rest have an outside chance including Srikanth and the women’s doubles pair,” Kashyap

said. “I am ranked 23rd in the world ranking after Sai (B. Sai Praneeth) and (Kidambi) Srikanth, then why haven’t I been considered,” he asked.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) had allowed resumption of training at the SAI-Pullela Gopichand Academy from August 7 following the Telangana government’s approval on August 1.

Kashyap, who along with wife and fellow shuttler Saina Nehwal, has been training at a separate facility near the academy, said he shared his thoughts with SAI but didn’t get a satisfactory response.

“Gopi *bhaiya* (Pullela Gopichand) advised me to speak to SAI as they made the list. So I spoke to SAI DG and asked him what is the logic behind it? Why

I find it illogical to allow only eight people to train. Also, how are these eight Olympic hopefuls, because I think only three have almost confirmed their slots and rest have an outside chance including Srikanth and the women’s doubles pair.

— **PARUPALLI KASHYAP**
World No.24 badminton player

am I not in the camp? Who decided that we don’t have a chance to qualify when seven-eight tournaments are still left,” he said.

“A day later, a SAI assistant director called me and said this is a directive which has come from higher officials and they have spoken to BAI and SAI, who believe only

these people have a chance to qualify which I found to be strange,” he added.

“I was told that only eight people will train till the Tokyo Games to keep the Olympic hopefuls safe. Now no one is staying at the centre, all are using gyms at different centres, they are meeting people outside, so I don’t understand their explanation of keeping them safe.”

Kashyap reiterated that the SAI Pullela Gopichand academy is equipped with enough courts to accommodate more players.

“The national centre has nine courts and currently only four people are training. There are nine coaches and two physios for four players who are training for a maximum of two and a half hours.

“So rest of the time the court is empty. Why can’t



Khaleel Ahmed (below) and Siddharth Kaul of the Sunrisers Hyderabad pose for a photograph outside their rooms at a Resort in Dubai on Tuesday.