

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 10 | AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER



Max: 29°C  
Min: 23°C  
Rainfall: 2.3 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Aadi 26  
**Tithi:** Saphthami  
**Star:** Ashwini  
**Rahukalam:**  
7.30 am to 9 am  
**Yamagandam:**  
10.30 am to 12 noon

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.41am  
**Zohar:** 12.20 pm  
**Asar:** 3.28 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.34 pm  
**Isha:** 7.49 pm

**SUNSET TODAY** 6.32 PM

**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.56 AM

**MOONRISE TODAY** 11.09 PM

**MOONSET TOMORROW** 11.52 AM

## CORONA COUNT

### CASES

(+62,117)  
22,14,137

### DEATHS

(+1,013)  
44,466

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,994)

TN: 2,96,901 4,927

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,99,26,475

### DEATHS

7,31,821

COUNTRIES,  
AREAS WITH  
CASES

213

worldometers.info

## ED grills Rhea's brother overnight in money laundering case

**Mumbai:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) questioned Showik Chakraborty, brother of actor Rhea Chakraborty, for about 18 hours in connection with a money laundering case linked to the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, officials said on Sunday. Showik left the central investigative agency's office here in the Ballard Estate area around 6:30 AM after an overnight questioning session that began around noon on Saturday.

## Gold has room to go beyond \$2,800

**Chennai:** At \$2,070 an ounce, gold touched a new high last week and has moved up more than 30 per cent since the break of Covid-19 pandemic. However, when adjusted to inflation, the record price is lower than 1980 January as well as September 2011 record-high levels. This provides room for gold to move beyond \$2,800 per ounce.

## COUNTER POINT



# PM Mahinda cements Rajapaksa family grip on power in Sri Lanka

**Colombo, Aug. 9:** Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in on Sunday as Sri Lanka's new prime minister at a centuries-old Buddhist temple after his party won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections that allowed the influential family to consolidate power for the next five years.

The 74-year-old former president and Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) leader was administered the oath of



Mahinda Rajapaksa (left) receives appointment documents his younger brother, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, after being sworn in as the PM in Colombo on Sunday. — PTI

office by his younger brother and President Gotabaya

## STATE | 3 Edappadi assures all support to Kerala



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



Firemen carrying the dead body from the gutted Swarna Palace hotel in Vijayawada where a fire killed at least Ten COVID-19 patients on Sunday, Hotel was being used as a makeshift Covid-19 facility. — DC

# 10 patients killed in fire at Covid care facility in AP

**MD. ILLYAS | DC**  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 9

Ten persons undergoing treatment for Coronavirus at a hotel-turned-hospital in Vijayawada were killed in a fire mishap early on Sunday.

The fire broke out at 5 am at the reception in the centrally located Swarna Palace Hotel due to a short circuit. The flames spread rapidly to first and second floors, where the patients were housed. Ramesh Hospitals, a well-known

institution, had taken the hotel on lease for treating Covid-19 patients and 30 patients were undergoing treatment at the time of the mishap. The thick smoke that filled the hotel following the fire is said to have asphyxiated 10 of them.

Besides, 10 hospital staff were also present to take care of the patients. Short circuit in an air conditioner near the reception on the ground floor caused the fire around 4.30 am. The fire started spreading to first and second floors, where the

patients were undergoing treatment. The fire was noticed about half an hour later.

Many patients rushed out of their rooms and tried to climb down the stairs. They were unable to see anything due to thick smoke. Patients and hospital staff then rushed to windows and started screaming for help.

The fire department, NDRF and police personnel reached the spot around 5.15 am. There was no way they could enter the hotel using

the stairs. They used the fire brigade ladders and climbed to the first and second floors, broke the window panes of the rooms and evacuated the patients.

District fire officer M. Srinivas Reddy said that the fire station was located within a kilometre from the hotel and they could respond within 10 minutes.

"There was no way to enter the hotel to rescue the people who were screaming from the windows, due to the flames and smoke," he said.

# PM launches ₹1 lakh cr financing facility under Agri-Infra Fund

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

The Centre on Sunday announced a financing facility of ₹1 lakh crore under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund for agri-entrepreneurs, startups, agri-tech players and farmer groups for nurturing farm assets and post-harvest management.

The fund, which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is part of the government's "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" initiative to make farmers self-reliant.

These assets will enable farmers to get greater value for their produce, as they will be able to store and sell at higher prices, reduce wastage,



and increase processing and value addition, the government said.

"Today, our farmers have a choice. If he wants to deal with his produce in his field, he can. Or he can directly connect with the warehouse or whoever pays the higher price," Mr Modi said, saying the agriculture sector will benefit a great deal.

# CISF official asked me if I was an Indian: Kanimozhi

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

DMK Lok Shaba MP M. Kanimozhi on Sunday recounted an unpleasant experience at an airport where she was asked by a Central Industrial Security Force officer if she was an Indian because she did not speak Hindi. The incident is reported to have taken place when Kanimozhi was to take a flight to Delhi on Sunday.

Narrating the incident on



Twitter, the Lok Sabha MP from Thoothukudi constituency wrote, "Today at the airport a CISF officer asked me if 'I am an Indian' when I asked her to speak to me in Tamil or English as I did not know

Hindi. The DMK leader said that she would like to know from when being Indian is equal to knowing Hindi.

Her tweet found support from several people condemning the alleged Hindi Imposition, including Virudhunagar Congress MPs Manickam Tagore, who called it condemnable and Sivaganga MP Karti Chidambaram who called it Outright ridiculous and Highly condemnable and sought CISF headquarters' intervention.

## WORLD | 5 Violence, chaos must not prevail in Lebanon: Macron



## SPORT | 8 Vivo pullout no big deal: Dada



# Embargo on import of 101 defence items

**PAWAN BALI | DC**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday announced a negative list of 101 defence platforms and weapons whose import will be progressively banned starting December 2020 to boost indigenisation of defence production under Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

The negative list includes artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircrafts, light combat helicopters (LCHs), and radars among other weapons and platforms. By December 2025, the import of all defence items on the negative list will be completely barred. Of these 101 items, 69 will not be imported from December 2020 itself.

Defence ministry claimed that with this embargo, contracts worth Rs 4 lakh crore will be placed with the domestic industry within the next five to seven years. Of these, equipment and weapons of ₹1,30,000 crore each are anticipated for the army and the air force while items worth almost ₹1,40,000 crore are anticipated by the navy over this period.

"This decision will offer a great opportunity to the Indian defence industry to manufacture the items in the negative list by using their own design and development capabilities or adopting the technologies designed and developed by DRDO to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces," said defence minister. He said that the ministry's aim is to apprise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the armed forces so that they are better prepared to realise the

A loan amount of Rs 1 lakh crore will be made available to farmers over a period of four years. While Rs 10,000 crores will be made available between 2020 and 2021, ₹30,000 crores will be provided in each of the remaining three years. Farmers will also get a subsidy of three per cent on interest.

The PM also released the sixth instalment of ₹17,100 crores to the bank accounts of over 8.55 crore farmer beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme. Under the scheme, launched in 2018 and funded by the Centre, each farmer gets direct support of up to ₹6,000 a year as minimum income support.

# 119 fatalities sign of pandemic severity

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

Fatalities due to Covid-19 went up in the districts, taking the total to 119 with Chennai reporting just 12 deaths, on Sunday when the number of new infections hovered close to the 6,000 mark - at 5,994.

New cases were more in the three districts adjoining Chennai than in the city, where it was 989. Chengalpattu 397, Kanchipuram 393 and Thiruvallur 396 added to more than Chennai's tally. Other districts that had high numbers were Coimbatore 217, Ranipet 219, Theni 360, Tiruvannamalai 222 and Thoothukudi 251.

The Covid-19 test positivity rate in Chennai may drop to about six per cent by the end of this month and concerted efforts were on to accomplish it, Greater Chennai Corporation Com-

## ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT



**The Ministry of Defence is now ready for a big push**

**to #AtmanirbharBharat initiative,"** Rajnath Singh said on Twitter while making the announcement.

He said the ministry has prepared a list of 101 items for which the embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 and 2024.

What the defence minister said in his "historic Sunday announce-

ment" deserved only an office order from the minister to his secretaries, P. Chidambaram said.

**"Import embargo is high sounding jargon. What it means is we will try to make the same equipment (that we import today) in 2 to 4 years and stop imports thereafter!"** he said.



goal of indigenisation.

The Department of Military Affairs (DMA) headed by CDS Gen Bipin Rawat will identify more equipment to be added to the negative list for import embargo in coming days. The negative list also includes, wheeled Armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which the army is expected to contract almost 200 at a cost of over ₹5,000 crore. Similarly, the Navy is likely to place demands for submarines with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which it expects to contract about six at a cost of almost ₹42,000 crore.

Defence ministry said that the negative list was prepared after several rounds of consultations with all stakeholders, including army, air force, navy, DRDO, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and private industry to assess current and future capa-

bilities of the Indian industry for manufacturing various ammunition, weapons and platforms within India.

It said that almost 260 schemes of such items were contracted by the tri-services at an approximate cost of ₹3.5 lakh crore between April 2015 and August 2020. India is world's second largest arms importer. To give a push to Make-in-India in the defence sector, Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in May this year had announced hiking FDI in defence manufacturing to 74 per cent from 49 per cent under automatic route to encourage major foreign defence companies to set up factories in the country.

The defence ministry has also bifurcated the capital procurement budget for 2020-21 between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes. A separate budget head has been created with an outlay of nearly ₹52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement in the current financial year.

## Maha, AP push India tally to 65K cases a day

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Close to 65,000 coronavirus cases were detected in the past 24 hours, taking India's overall cases past 21.5 lakhs till Sunday morning, as per the health ministry's data.

The biggest contributors to this single-day spike are Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, which have reported over 10,000 cases in a day, while Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar and West Bengal too have started detecting a high number of cases. Delhi, where the numbers had fallen impressively, is again reporting a high number of cases. Delhi's health minister, however, said the rise in Delhi's numbers was due to people from outside coming for testing and treatment, which was adding to its tally.

**Total fresh cases on Sunday**  
**5,994**

**Chennai 989**

**Number of active cases**  
**53,336**

missioner G Prakash said. The positivity rate, has gradually dipped to about 8.50 percent to 9.50 per cent now from 14-15 per cent last month, he said.

Another good outcome to several efforts was that the doubling time has improved to 72.2 days in Chennai from 65 days a week ago and in divisions under north Chennai, it was a welcome 140-150 days.

Efforts were on to replicate the improvement seen in the north of the city in other areas with relatively higher cases, he said.

# 11 of Pak Hindu migrant family dead in Raj

**Jodhpur, Aug. 9:** Eleven members of a family of Pakistan Hindu migrants were found dead at a farm in Rajasthan's Jodhpur district on Sunday morning, police said. The dead included five children and four women. A member of the family was found alive outside the hut they lived at Lodta village of the Dechu area, over 100 km away from Jodhpur city, an officer said.

"But he claimed to have no idea about the incident, which believed to have hap-

pened in the night," said Superintendent of Police (Rural) Rahul Barhat.

He said they are examining whether it is a suicide or something else. "We are yet not in a position to tell whether it was a suicide, an accidental casualty or something else. We have sent the bodies for autopsy by a medical board and will wait for its report," said the SP.

He said a half-consumed canister of a pesticide and some vials were recovered from their hut. Police also found a note from the spot

## ● The family belonging to the Bhil community had come to India from Sanghar district of Pakistan's Sindh in 2015 on a long-term visa

and verifying its writing. The family belonging to the Bhil community had come to India from Sanghar district of Pakistan's Sindh in 2015 on a long-term visa.

They had been living at the Lodta village farm, which they had hired for farming,

for the past six months.

"There was neither any injury mark on any of the bodies nor any evidences of any foul play," the SP said. "But we have roped in a forensic team and a dog squad before arriving at any conclusion," he said. Preliminary investigation indicated that there was a dispute in the family over some issue. "Once we interrogate the survivor, we would be in a position to find out what had led to this incident," the SP said.

Meanwhile, Kewal Ram

(35), the surviving member of the family, lodged a complaint against his wife's family, alleging that "it was not a suicide but murder".

Confirming it, the SP said his wife has not been living with him for the past some time due to some dispute. She has been allegedly pressuring them for the custody of her children, the SP said. The officer, however, said Kewal Ram is also a suspect in the case, considering his "escape from the incident and changing statements". — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## IDP's virtual edu fair from today

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

To address the challenges faced by the students and their families in the time of Covid-19, IDP Education will be hosting the biggest virtual education fair. Spread over eight weeks, this education fair will run from August 10 to October 10 with over 150 leading institutions from Australia, UK, U.S. Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland participating in the Virtual Education Fair to interact with Indian students and help them with their overseas education plan. The first-of-its-kind virtual education fair is an initiative by IDP Education to help students connect with their preferred institutions over a 1-on-1 video call from the comfort of their homes. Students can apply directly to institutions of their choice and get detailed information on scholarships, ranking, visas, etc. by IDP's certified education experts over a 1-on-1 video call feature. This allows them to interact face-to-face with institution representatives.

## New CMD at NMDC

**Chennai:** Sumit Deb has assumed charge as Chairman-cum-Managing Director at the navratna NMDC Limited. He was Director (Personnel) and he succeeds N. Baljendra Kumar, IAS, who has retired. "NMDC has established itself as a clear industry leader with strategic diversification and continued profitable growth. We are at the cusp of an incredible opportunity and focused on driving growth and value creation."

## 'Chennai's virus test positivity rate may fall to 6%'

**Chennai, Aug. 9:** Soon, Chennai would complete eight lakh RT-PCR Covid tests and tests per day had again touched 14,000 on Friday from about 12,000 on an average, Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash said. "Experts feel that bringing the positivity rate to five per cent could be a milestone. But it cannot happen suddenly and we could only hope for a gradual reduction. Based on our field work and according to the views of doctors, the positivity rate in Chennai could go further down between six per cent to 6.5 per cent by the end of this month," he told reporters.

Concerted efforts were on to achieve better outcomes be it positivity or mortality rate, he said. Illustrating his point, he said specific interventions like admitting people with breathlessness and those with Severe Acute Respiratory Illnesses to hospitals directly instead of waiting for tests to be completed has proved to be a "turning point."

So far, since July 25, about 675 such people have been admitted to hospitals and on an average, everyday about 20 people were being sent to healthcare facilities, he said. While the mortality rate in Chennai was presently 2.12 per cent, a priority was to bring it down to 1.5 per cent. — PTI

## Cops with a difference



As Chennai is in total lockdown, a team of policemen distributes food packages to the homeless in the city on Sunday. — DC

## EIA-2020 a double whammy on environment, says NGO

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

A Chennai based NGO has launched a tweet campaign against draft EIA-2020 while demanding that the Central Government scrap the draft immediately. In the campaign, 'Poovulagin Nanbargal', the NGO on Sunday stated that the proposed draft EIA-2020 encourages further pollution with diluted regulations over industrial development.

Battling for a stronger environmental and social regulation through a stronger EIA2020, the NGO stated that Delhi has the worst air pollution of any capital. The draft exempts 25 'red' and 'orange' toxic industries from public consultation and expert appraisal approval. Reduction in eco-sensitive zones through dilution of EIA will have a double-whammy effect on human beings, animals and ecosystems.

It allows 70 meter wide highways up to 100 km without public consultation, which may lead to the killing of more elephants and legitimize what is illegal today. The draft accords permission for more polluting industries, thus pushing

**The heavy polluting industries like coal, chemicals and acid manufacturing are being allowed to operate in forests, river banks and close to human settlements**

ing our children to live their lives inside a toxic soup. The power of public consulting in both public and private projects is either being removed or diluted to a large extent.

The heavy polluting industries like coal, chemicals and acid manufacturing are being allowed to operate in forests, river banks and close to human settlements. Large, medium and small industries alike are allowed to operate, expand and modernise upto 50 years without necessary environmental clearance.

The forest land diversions would trigger more zoonotic diseases like Covid-19. The Environment Protection Law was proposed in 1984 following the deadly Bhopal gas tragedy, whose culprits are still not punished while the victims are suffering for generations.

The NGO called upon the youth and future generations to come and protest against environmental crimes and fight for climate justice. It will pose an adverse impact to the health and livelihood of millions of people, especially the marginalised as this would promote habitat losses and climate change with global pandemics.

The NGO alleges that the Central government legalises the environmental crimes and climate injustice by amending the existing laws. The EIA draft failed to understand the adverse effects of activities like extensive mining that will impact tribal people and indigenous communities.

The draft has been designed to open the door to corporates without any concern for the environment and expel millions of tribes, who are torchbearers of our tradition and culture.

Contrary to the Central government's poser that the draft will reinforce transparency, it reduces the space available for public participation, thereby abandoning public trust and there is no scope for any complaint about infringements.

## Unions slam IT industry for sacking employees during virus pandemic

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

Slamming the IT and ITes industry for sacking their employees during the pandemic, the IT and Information Technology Enabled Services unions demanded that the Central and State governments intercede in the matter and take efforts to reinstate them immediately.

In a joint statement, Alagunambi Welkin, General Secretary, Union of IT & ITES Employees, Parimala, President, Forum of IT Employees, Tamil Nadu, Rajadurai, Organiser, New Democratic Labour Front IT Employees Wing and Vinod A.J, General Secretary of All India Forum for IT Employees, stated that during the Covid-19 pandemic

■ "The quarterly reports of these companies show more than 25,000 IT & ITes Employees lost their employment during this period and that IT & ITes employees unions across the country are working to bring justice to the employees affected due to the illegal practices of these MNCs"

■ The Ministry of Labour and Employment remained a mute spectator to this retrenchment and the associations are demanding that the Ministry of Labour and Employment and Labour Welfare Department stop such illegal retrenchments immediately and protect the jobs of employees and reinstate them.

period the IT giants Cognizant, Wipro, Hexaware, Capgemini, Accenture and others illegally retrenched thousands of employees across the country.

They said the quarterly reports of these companies show more than 25,000 IT & ITes Employees lost their employment during this period and that IT & ITes em-

ployees unions across the country are working to bring justice to the employees affected due to the illegal practices of these MNCs.

For example, Shyam Sundar, and Vinod A.J, employed with Wipro and Cognizant respectively, were illegally terminated for voicing protests in favour of the affected employees. They said the IT

## NEP violates Constitution, says education expert

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

Vehemently opposing the New Education Policy 2020 an expert on education has stated it violates various provisions of the Constitution including federal structure. The State Platform for Common School System -Tamil Nadu (SPCSS-TN), General Secretary, P.B. Prince Gajendra Babu said the NEP 2020 is a direct assault on the Constitution, its uniqueness in ensuring 'Unity in Diversity', and its vision of establishing an egalitarian society with equality in opportunity and equal social status for all.

For example, the Constitution places the subject of University in the exclusive domain of the State Legislature. In total disregard to the Constitution, NEP 2020 is usurping the powers of the State Government to regulate the universities established and administered by a State Government of a State in India. The power and authority to formulate policy and regulate all Universities is now sought to be with the Union Government and the responsibility to deliver the same as dictated by the Union will be with the State. The establishment of a single Central Regulatory Authority by the Union Government to regulate the Higher Education Institutes including all State Universities is in violation of Article 246, he pointed out.

For the overall development of the country, the Centre has to learn from the States and States to learn from the Centre.



Prince Gajendra Babu

## Dravidar Kazhagam flays New Education Policy

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

'Special concession and special status for Sanskrit. Demotion for Tamil.' This sums up the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, said Dravidar Kazhagam president K Veeramani.

In a statement on Sunday, he said the Prime Minister's address on NEP was a word play that did not answer any of the questions or clarify the doubts raised by educationalists. The address did not dispel the fears of the educationalists and social activists over the NEP, Veeramani said.

The worrying aspect in the policy was that it did not acknowledge that India was a nation of many languages, cultures, civilisations and traditions and it used a single yardstick to measure the education, language and culture in the country, he added.

Instead, the NEP 2020 pushes education from Concurrent List to Union List by replacing the federal spirit with an authoritarian Centre dictating policy to the States, without recognising the knowledge and progress gained by the States through the sustained struggles for universalisation of education from Pre Primary to Post Doctoral, he said.

The policy violates Article 13 as it is inconsistent with the Articles 14, 15, 16 and 30 and deliberately ignored the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes and the Minorities' administered institutions. Its implementation requires amendments to the Constitution and several fresh Parliamentary Legislatures to repeal several State Legislations. The policy which has larger implications was not placed in Parliament for discussion. It was announced



■ The policy violates Article 13 as it is inconsistent with the Articles 14, 15, 16 and 30 and deliberately ignored the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes and the Minorities' administered institutions. Its implementation requires amendments to the Constitution and several fresh Parliamentary Legislatures to repeal several State Legislations. The policy which has larger implications was not placed in Parliament for discussion.

total disregard to Parliamentary Democracy and implementing NEP 2020 is well demonstrated by the first step of implementing a change in the name of the Ministry of HRD as Ministry of Education as announced in its official website, he added.

The implementation of NEP 2020 will make many laws enacted by the Tamil Nadu State Legislature infructuous and in future the State Legislature will be deprived of its power to enact laws concerning higher education according to the needs of the people. It was not discussed in the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly, neither at the draft stage nor after the Union Cabinet's approval. The financial liability is also more on the State. It will demolish the

strongly built Public Higher Education Institutes established and administered by the Tamil Nadu to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the People of Tamil Nadu based on the needs and principles of social justice. There is an imminent threat to institutions like International Institute of Tamil Studies, Central Institute of Classical Tamil and other such institutes established for specific purposes, he explained.

The policy draft has not disclosed details regarding the reservation or scholarship based on the social and educational backwardness. NEP 2020 does not take into consideration the level of difficulty faced by the socially oppressed during admission, grant of scholarship or appointment of teachers, he concluded.

## Government prerogative to shift official, HC rules

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

It is the prerogative of the government to shift an official for achieving the large purpose of good governance when ubiquitous corruption is eating into vitals of the public administration, the Madras high court said when upholding an order of the state government transferring a woman officer from the post of Assistant Commissioner of Labour (Enforcement), Thiruvallur to the post of Assistant Commissioner of Labour (Social Security Scheme), Thiruvannamalai, for allegedly indulging in corrupt practices. Justice VParthiban dismissed the petition filed by A.Valarmathi challenging her transfer order dated June 8, 2020.

The court said it had perused the files and also the enquiry report dated June 2, 2020. It noted that there were several allegations of corrupt practices attributed against the petitioner and after enquiry a finding was given by the enquiry officer that there was a prima facie evidence as regards involvement of the petitioner in receiving bribes and other corrupt practices and opined that a vigilance enquiry against the officer was necessary.

The additional chief secretary who had forwarded the complaint to DVAC felt it was appropriate to transfer the petitioner to a non-sensitive post, the judge added. Several transactions were mentioned in the report which did not speak well of the officer concerned. According to the

enquiry officer, there were incriminating materials available in regard to the allegations made against the petitioner. The judge said, on reading of the cumulative circumstances of the case, shifting of the officer to a non-sensitive post, cannot be assailed as a punitive transfer for more than one reason.

The court did not see any adverse consequence befalling the petitioner as she has been transferred only to a neighbouring district with the same emoluments and status. And when there were allegations of corrupt practices against the official of the government, individual right of the petitioner for enforcement of normal procedure for transfer was to be subordinated to the larger public interest, the judge ruled.



Transgenders perform 'Go Corona Go' number in the city on Sunday.

## An initiative of team of transgenders affected and cured of Covid-19 Songs, folk dances take corona message to public

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

For the last couple of months, transgender volunteers recruited by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) under its 'Community Intervention Programme', to make people aware of social distancing norms in tandem with officials in the city, are winning minds and hearts of Chennaites through their story-telling numbers.

A few transgenders were Corona infected and later cured, are now using their story-telling talents to draw the attention of hundreds of people in the streets and

footpaths, to spread the message of prevention of the disease, by adhering to the government and health department's instructions.

They perform various art forms including folk songs and folk dances like Kolattom.

But their latest 'Go Corona Go' item (a mock rhyme that went viral online earlier in March, during the lockdown period) composed to the tune of Villupaattu (bow song), has been a hit among people in the city.

The team of transgenders covers street after street in the city, along with traditional musical instruments and stage at

least a half-an-hour awareness programme like bhajans in front of the temple.

People seem to be so attracted, and are attentive as they croon the words 'Go Corona Go', in a high pitch. The audience, including children and women, gather and listen to the jovial performance, maintaining safe distances.

The main intention of their efforts, is to raise awareness on the precautionary measures to contain the virus spread.

It was in June that the GCC came up with this idea in association with NGOs such as 'Thozhi' and 'Sahodaran' for awareness

creation. "We have been a part of the awareness campaign for the last two months. Our 'Go Corona Go' number, has been a hit among the people these days, because it was already a laughing stock on social media."

So, we thought of doing the number in more places in the city. Apart from Villupaattu, our team of over 15 members, continue to visit door-to-door to raise awareness about Covid-19, in various parts of the city. We also collect details about symptoms and coordinate with corporation officials for testing," says a transwoman.

Earlier in June, we had introduced a story telling technique by shouting loudly about our experience with the pandemic, in front of the public. We had also staged street plays acting various characters to disseminate information on how the pandemic took its toll on daily life.

General manager, Sahodaran, A Jaya, said that such an initiative helped them not only to create awareness on Covid-19, but also doing some visible work in society to get rid of the social stigma towards the transgender community. People are so cooperative to our initiative."



## SHORT TAKES

## MS Swaminathan award presented

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

The Dr M S Swaminathan Award for Environment Protection was presented to RS Paroda, the Founder Chairman of the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), New Delhi, with the Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan as the chief guest. The award is presented to an individual, company or NGO that has contributed to heightening environmental protection and awareness and has been instituted by the Rotary Club of Madras East.

## Firm gifts energy juice to cops

**Chennai:** Tablets (India) Foundation distributed 50,000 packets of Recharge (an energy juice) for the use of police personnel in Chennai. The consignment of energy juice was handed over to Mr M.K. Aggarwal, Commissioner of Police, Greater Chennai by Director (Corporate Support) Mr.Dhruv Narayan. The trust also runs two annadhanam centres in Tondiarpet and MKB Nagar providing free lunch to the public on a daily basis to around 500 people.

## CISF orders enquiry after Kani's tweet

From P1

Soon after the tweet from her, The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) sought details from her: The CISF tweeted, Warm greetings from @CISFHQrs. We sincerely acknowledge your unpleasant experience. Kindly DM journey details; the name of airport, location, date, and time of the incident for appropriate action in the matter. The CISF also ordered an enquiry into the matter and said that it is not the policy of CISF to insist upon any particular language.

## NEP stir: Preventive arrests made

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, AUG 9

Police here has arrested the district secretary, Students Federation of India (SFI), G Aravindasamy, from the party office, ahead of an agitation announced by SFI to protest against the New Education Policy (NEP), here on Sunday.

However, SFI members led by Balaguru, district president, staged a demonstration before the railway station here, protesting against the NEP. The police arrested them also.

Meanwhile, CPM district secretary, G Neelamegam, condemned the arrests and demanded the release of the arrested SFI office-bearers.

He condemned the police for taking Aravindasamy under preventive custody, thus preventing him from taking part in a democratic agitation.

## TN CM assures all support to Kerala

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami spoke to his Kerala counterpart Pinayari Vijayan on Sunday and enquired about the rescue and relief operations at Munnar, where 28 persons from Tamil Nadu have been killed in a landslide.

Palaniswami discussed with Vijayan about the work that had been carried out to provide relief to the affected people and assured of any help that the Kerala government might require from Tamil Nadu.

About 80 persons were buried when a landslide, caused by the rains in Kerala, swept the colony in which families of the plantation workers were housed at Rajamalai in Munnar.

The toll in the landslide that leveled a row of 20 houses of tea estate workers in Idukki district, rose



National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel conduct rescue operations after a major landslide swept down a portion of the Pettimudi hills in Munnar.

to 40 on Sunday with the retrieval of 16 more bodies

from the rubble. The workers, mostly Tamils, have

been working in the estates for several decades.

## Help relatives of disaster victims with e-pass:

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

DMK President MK Stalin urged the Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami to help the relatives of the victims of the landslide in Munnar get e-passes to enable them travel to Kerala and

also announce relief for the families of the affected.

More than 80 persons belonging to Tamil families from the Kayathar-Kovilpatti region were buried in the landslide caused by rains on the night of Thursday-Friday and 29 of them have per-

ished. Their relatives in Tamil Nadu were unable to reach Munnar due to the restrictions on travel.

Stalin requested the Chief Minister to speak to the district collector and coordinate with their Kerala counterparts to facilitate the travel of the

relatives. The victims were working in tea plantations in Rajamalai in Munnar.

Stalin also urged the Kerala Chief Minister Pinayari Vijayan to increase the solatium announced by him to the families of the deceased to Rs 25 lakh per head.

## 7 more succumb to COVID-19 in Puducherry

Puducherry, Aug 9 (PTI)

Seven more people including four women succumbed to coronavirus in Puducherry taking the toll to 87 while 264 fresh cases were detected, a top Health department official said on Sunday. Most of the patients died of severe Covid pneumonia, Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said, adding the deceased were in the range between 38 and 80 years. The seven deaths in the last 24 hours ending 10 am Sunday took the number of fatalities to 87, he said. While three male patients died in hospitals in Puducherry and Yanam region (JIPMER, Indira Gandhi Government Medical College (IGGMC) hospital in Puducherry and the Government GH in Yanam), two female patients died at IGGMC and two others at the Government Hospital in Karaikal. The overall tally of COVID-19 infections reported so far in Puducherry was 5,382 of which 2,094 (including 712 home quarantined patients) were active cases. The total number of patients treated and discharged so far was 3,201. Mohan Kumar said as many as 131 patients were discharged from hospitals during the last 24 hours. The 264 new cases were identified after examination of 958 samples projecting positivity rate at 27.5 per cent while fatality rate was 1.6 per cent. The Department of Health has so far tested 46,878 samples of which 40,575 tested negative and results of the examination of remaining specimens were awaited. — PTI



## Stray wild gaur herd invades Kotagiri town

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, AUG 9

The straying of dangerous wild gaurs, popularly known as Indian bison, into the arterial parts of Kotagiri town near here, has become a cause of concern to resident in this thickly populated town in Kotagiri hills.

Though straying of gaurs into villages around the forest fringes here in Kotagiri has been reported quite often in the past, now the movement of guar herd into the arterial part of the town limits in recent times, has triggered panic in residents and commuters here in the town limits.

Recalling a few incidents related to man-gaur conflict in rural Kotagiri in the recent past, residents here wanted an area specific approach and strategies to be developed by the foresters to permanently check such herds from

Residents in Kotagiri town feel that the gaur herd that move out from Longwood Shola forests on the outskirts of Kotagiri, had become a menace in recent times in the fringe villages there, and some of these animals could have made it a habit to walk into the deeper part of the town. Hence, a forest team should be formed to monitor the movement of stray gaurs and alert and help people avoid any conflict with the gaur, as the animal is generally known to be a very dangerous beast.

straying into the town limits, where there is always good public movement.

Residents in Kotagiri town feel that the gaur herd that move out from Longwood Shola forests on the outskirts of Kotagiri, had become a menace in recent times in the fringe villages there, and some of these animals could have made it a habit to walk into the deeper part of the town. Hence, a forest team should be formed to monitor the movement of stray gaurs and alert and help people avoid any conflict with the gaur, as the animal is generally known to be a very dangerous beast.

## Ramadoss wants India to protect Lankan Tamils

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 9

PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss urged the Indian government to intervene and protect the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and also ensure that their rights were upheld in the aftermath of the Rajapaksa brothers emerging powerful after the Parliamentary elections held on August 5.

In a statement on Sunday, Ramadoss said that since the Sri Lanka Podujana Perumuna, the party floated by the Rajapaksa brothers, had won the elections with a two thirds majority, there is every likelihood of

Constitutional changes being brought in.

One of the changes would be the revocation of the 13th amendment that gave some rights to the Tamil people living in the northern and eastern provinces. Also revoking the amendment would tantamount to insulting India since the amendment was brought in following the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987, he said.

With Gotabaya Rajapaksa as President and Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister, there had been fears that restrictive measures would be unleashed on the Tamil people since the Sri Lanka Podujana

Perumana had won the elections by invoking Sinhala chauvinism, Ramadoss said.

Besides sweeping the Sinhala territories, they had also populated Tamil dominated areas with Sinhala people, thus winning the seats in those regions, and garnering 150 of the 225 seats in the Parliament, he said.

It was feared that the Rajapaksa brothers would take hostile steps against the Tamil people to keep the Sinhala support intact and also as a way of thanking the Sinhalese for the mandate, Ramadoss alleged.

## Ammonium nitrate shifted from City after e-auction

**Chennai, Aug. 9:** Safety concerns over storage of ammonium nitrate arising in the backdrop of the explosion of the chemical in Beirut were addressed as the substance has been e-auctioned and is being shipped to Hyderabad, sources said on Sunday.

The 697 tonnes of the chemical have been lying in the container freight station near here and the e-auction is over. The disposal of the cargo is being done, adhering to safety norms, sources said. Seven tonnes of the chemical got

The disposal of the cargo is being done, adhering to safety norms, sources said. Seven tonnes of the chemical got spoilt during the deluge in December 2015

spoilt during the deluge in December 2015.

Some containers with the chemical have already left for Hyderabad, according to police sources. The substance was seized in 2015 and the cargo was then kept at the freight station located about 20 km from the city. — PTI



The heavy water inflow has seen water levels rise in the Mettur Dam

## Inflow of 90K cusecs pushes Mettur Dam level to 76 feet

Coimbatore, Aug 9 (PTI) Due to the heavy inflow, the water-level in the Mettur Dam in Salem district on Sunday stood at 75.83 feet against the capacity of 120 feet.

The inflow, which was

55,000 cusecs on Saturday, increased to 90,000 cusecs Sunday morning, raising the water level by five feet following the release of surplus water from Cauvery River in Karnataka, official sources said.

While the outflow from the dam, the Stanley Reservoir, the lifeline of farmers in the delta region, was 1,000 cusecs, the available water in the reservoir was 36.72 tmc against 93.47 tmc, they said. — PTI

## Salem boy dies in Russia

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SALEM, AUG 9

The parents of a student from Salem who died in floods in Russia, have pleaded with Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, to bring their son's body back to Tamil Nadu.

Sources said, the victim's father, Anandan, hails from Arakalur area in the district.

His eldest son, Manoj Anan, is studying final year medicine at Valka Grade University, Russia.

On Saturday, Manoj Anan along with some college friends went to the Valka river which is close to the area. There, they were unfortunately swept away by flash floods.

Four persons including Manoj Anan, died while some were res-

cued.

All the four are from Tamil Nadu.

Manoj Anan's family cried when they heard the news of the son's death.

Following this, the family also met Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami in person at the camp office in Highway City here, and appealed to him to bring Manoj Anan's body back.

## Traditional games



Kids play traditional games during the lockdown in Chennai.

## 1 more jumbo sick, another takes mild hit by train

ANANTH MATHIVANAN |  
DC  
COIMBATORE, AUG. 9

Yet another female wild elephant was found sick in the Coimbatore forest division in Boluvampatti range, even as the department had recorded 15 deaths in the last 90 days, forcing the forest department to form a panel of experts and biologists, to conduct a study in connection with the series of elephant deaths.

DFO Venkatesh told DC, "Except a few, most of the wild elephant deaths recorded in the last three months were due to weakness and sickness of the animals. We tried to treat them, but couldn't save them."

A few experts claimed that when there occurs a short-fall of forage for elephants, they could have consumed the weed 'Prosopis Juliflora' causing prolonged illness and damage to internal organs. An expert committee had carried out the studies, and samples have been sent to labs, added the DFO.

Meanwhile on Saturday noon, another female elephant was found lying sick on the ground, four-km away from the Reserve Forest boundary, and it was unable to stand on its feet.

A team of forest officials, during their regular perambulation at Boluvampatti Block II Reserve Forest in Mulankaadu beat, had noticed the elephant which

they estimated could be around 10 to 12 years old.

Immediately, a forest veterinary officer was informed. Acting on the information, he rushed to the spot along with veterinarian Dr Prabhu, veterinary dispensary at Vadavalli, animal husbandry department.

The DFO and ACF also rushed to the spot. The jumbo was found extremely weak, debilitated and dehydrated. Doctors had given 21 bottles of intravenous fluids, antibiotics, vitamins and minerals to the animal. Yet, the jumbo remained sick without showing signs any improvement.

The Boluvampatti forest area is also witnessing continuous showers making

the situation worse, added a forest source.

In another incident, a young male elephant with a single tusk, took a mild hit by a slow moving goods train heading towards Palakkad from Podanur in Coimbatore, in the early hours of Sunday.

According to the DFO, based on information got over phone from a loco pilot of a goods train, the driver claimed that the train had mildly hit the elephant on its side, as it tried to scamper away from the railway track in Madhukkarai forest area, around 5:45 am.

Acting on the complaint, a team led by the DFO, rushed to the spot, but were unable to find the elephant except its footprints near

the track on the wet mud. After a couple of hours of search in Madhukkarai forest range, they found a herd of three comprising a male, female and a juvenile which were found healthy, showing no signs of injury. A few minutes later, officials found another young lone male with a single tusk, standing in a place for a long time. But, they were unable to find external injuries on its body.

Forest officials suspect the particular elephant to be the one which met with the incident. DFO had deployed a team of AP watchers to follow the elephant and study its movement for a few days to ensure whether it picks up any health complications.



## SHORT TAKES

TN ASSURES  
RESCUE SUPPORT  
TO KERALA

**Chennai, Aug. 9:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister N. K. Palaniswami on Sunday assured support to his Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan on rescue efforts following a massive landslide that killed at least 28 people in the neighbouring state.

“I spoke to Hon @CMOKerala today morning about the tragic loss of lives and damages caused due to heavy rain and landslides at Munnar. I promised to provide necessary support in rescue and relief operations,” Palaniswami said on his twitter handle.

The landslide occurred on Friday morning and levelled a row of 20 houses of tea estate workers in Idukki district of Kerala.

The workers, mostly Tamils, have been working in the estates for several decades.

CO-PILOT AKHILESH  
CREMATED IN  
MATHURA

**Mathura, Aug. 9:** Mortal remains of Akhilesh Kumar Sharma, the co-pilot of the Air India Express plane that crashed in Kozhikode two days ago, were consigned to flames here on Sunday.

The last rites were performed at the Moksha Dham cremation centre and the pyre was lit by the pilot's younger brother Rahul as his family was inconsolable.

The father of the deceased pilot, Tulsiram Sharma, sought a government job for Akhilesh's wife Megha, who is expecting a child shortly. Akhilesh deserves the status of a “shaheed” as he sacrificed his life to save people on the plane, he said.

CAPT. SATHE WAS  
KEEN ON SPORTS,  
SAY CLASSMATES

**Pune, Aug. 9:** Captain Deepak Sathe, who was the pilot of the ill-fated Air India Express plane that crashed in Kerala, was academically bright and also took keen interest in sports, remembered his classmates here.

He was focussed on his career and determined to join the prestigious National Defence Academy (NDA), located at Khadakwasla near Pune in Maharashtra, some of his classmates from the Class 11 batch of St Vincent School here said.

He had joined St Vincent School in Class 11 in 1977, said Brigadier Kevin Mendonca (ret'd), who was Sathe's classmate.

“Since his father was in the armed forces, he had already made up his mind to join the NDA. Those days, the qualification for joining the National Defence Academy was Class 11, and he appeared for the exam and cleared it,” he said.

“Sathe was enthusiastic, jovial, focused and determined. In NDA also, he was very good at academics and sports. The NDA's journal had mentioned him as the captain of golf and squash team,” he added.

MORTAL REMAINS  
OF 16 HANDED  
OVER TO FAMILIES

**New Delhi, Aug. 9:** Air India Express said on Sunday that the mortal remains of the 16 passengers who lost their lives in the Kozhikode plane crash had been handed over to their families.

The flight from Dubai with 190 people on board, including a six-member crew, overshot the tabletop runway on Friday night while landing at the Kozhikode airport in heavy rain, fell into a valley 35 feet below and broke into two, killing 18 people, including both pilots.

“AAIB (Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau) has initiated the investigation into the accident with the support of Flight Safety Officials,” the airline said.

“As regards the deceased passengers, the mortal remains have been handed over to the families with their consent,” it said.

A total of 149 people have been admitted to various hospitals. 23 have been discharged, while three are critically injured, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said on Saturday after his visit to the Kozhikode Medical College, where many of the affected passengers have been admitted.



Wife Sushma Sathe and younger son Dhananjay Sathe during the funeral ceremony of Captain Deepak Sathe in Mumbai on Sunday.

— PTI

‘Plane landed, sped, overshot  
runway, crashed, in 15 secs’

Survivor Muhammed Junaid recounts surviving India's worst crash in 10 yrs

**New Delhi/Kochi, Aug. 9:** Seated on the last row of the plane, Muhammed Junaid sensed something was amiss when Air India Express flight IX 1344 from Dubai was jerked around by strong winds as it approached the southern Indian city of Kozhikode late on Friday.

After an aborted attempt, the aircraft swung around and touched down on the runway, said Junaid, who like many others onboard worked in the Middle East but was forced to return home when his salary halved because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Instead of slowing down, Junaid said, the Boeing-737 appeared to pick up speed, overshooting the runway slickened by heavy rains, hurtling down a sharp slope and breaking in two.

“All these things happened in 15 seconds,” he told Reuters by phone on Saturday.

Eighteen of the 190 passengers and crew, including both pilots, died, officials said on Saturday, in India's worst passenger aircraft accident since 2010. Sixteen people were severely injured.

But Junaid and several other passengers, seated at the back of the aircraft, walked away from the wreckage at Calicut International Airport near Kozhikode almost unscathed.

By midnight, Junaid said, he had driven him-

self home to Elathur, an hour from the airport.

Only his head was sore from bumping into the ceiling and his lips bled a little after he bit into them. “Nothing happened to me, thank God,” he said.

## Escaping a pandemic

Junaid, 25, moved to Dubai three years ago to work as an accountant at a trading firm.

The only breadwinner in his four-member family, he would send home around half the 4,000 dirhams (\$1,000) he made a month, he said.

But after the pandemic took hold this year, his firm's business dried up and he was only paid half his salary from May.

“My boss told me to take two or three months' leave and come back when everything is ok,” he said.

Finding a way home was not easy because India had closed its international borders in March. Junaid said he registered for the Indian government's repatriation flight programme in May but did not hear back for two months.

On August 1, he was told flights would be available between Dubai and Kerala state, where Kozhikode is located, during a two-week period.

He paid 880 dirhams for Friday's flight.

“I was coming back to India after almost two years, so I was very excited to meet my family and

everyone,” he said.

## Cabin crew

A few seats ahead of Junaid, 28-year-old Muhammad Shafaf was also returning home from Dubai after spending seven months there unsuccessfully looking for a job.

When the aircraft careened off the runway and plunged off a hill, Shafaf said he thought it was the end, fearing a fire would break out and engulf him.

“A cabin crew from the back assured us that there was no need to worry about a fire. She said that the engine was off,” said Shafaf, who suffered only bruises on his nose and feet.

As he sat dazed near the tail of the wrecked aircraft, Junaid, too, said he remembered cabin crew calming down passengers and helping those scrunched between mangled seats.

After a 45-minute wait, during which emergency workers helped passengers out of the wrecked front of the plane, Junaid and the rest at the back were helped down.

Now resting at home and awaiting a Coronavirus test, Junaid said he wants to stay away from aircraft.

“I am really afraid,” he said. “I don't want to fly again,” he added.

— Reuters

Responsibility must  
be fixed, says Adhir

**Kolkata, Aug. 9:** Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Sunday demanded that Union civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri explain to the country the reasons for the Dubai-Kozhikode plane crash, and said anyone found responsible for the accident should be punished.

Choudhury, in a video message from New Delhi, said the department should form a high-powered committee to probe the plane crash, which claimed at least 18 lives.

“The committee must find out what led to the tragedy and punishment should be meted out to anyone found responsible... The minister should explain to the people of India what caused the accident and responsibility should be fixed,” Choudhury said.

Asserting that the two pilots “did their best to save precious lives,” the senior Congress leader said, “I wonder what maintenance engineers and inspectors were up to... “The pilot (Deepak V Sathe) was such a highly qualified personnel having decades of experience but he couldn't save him-

● **THE COMMITTEE must find out what led to the tragedy and punishment should be meted out to anyone found responsible. The minister should explain to the people of India what caused the accident, Choudhury said.**

self. His co-pilot (Akhilesh Kumar) also died in the accident. They had to crash land the plane, and pay with their lives to save many others.”

Puri said on Saturday that an inquiry has been ordered under the Aircraft Act in the Kozhikode accident and findings of the investigation will be made public.

He also visited the site of the accident to take stock of the relief measures. Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India since March 23 amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Special repatriation flights, however, were being operated by Air India and Air India Express under the Vande Bharat Mission to help stranded people reach their destinations.

Private carriers have also flown under this mission.

— PTI

AP Covid death  
toll crosses 2K  
as 97 more die

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 9

Andhra Pradesh has registered 10,820 new Covid-19 cases, raising the overall tally to 2,27,860 in the last 24 hours, apart from 97 deaths during this period, taking the death toll so far to 2,036.

The state health authorities have released their Coronavirus bulletin here on Sunday stating that out of 62,912 samples tested, 10,820 individuals have tested Covid-19 positive. Out of the total 24,87,305 samples tested so far in the state, 1,38,712 infected patients have been discharged from various hospitals after recovery, while 87,112 patients are undergoing treatment.

TS Covid cases inch closer to 80,000

**Hyderabad:** Covid-19 cases inched towards the 80,000 mark in Telangana state with the total number of people infected by the Coronavirus touching 79,495 on Saturday. While 1,982 new cases were

reported by the health department, it also said that 12 more people had died from the disease, taking to 627 the Covid-19 fatalities in the state.

107 people die in  
Karnataka

**Bengaluru:** With 5,985 new Covid-19 cases and 107 casualties, the number of those infected by the deadly virus in Karnataka reached 1.78 lakh on Sunday, the health department said.

Bengaluru alone recorded 1,948 fresh cases and 22 deaths due to the pathogen.

1,211 new cases, 2  
deaths in Kerala

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala on Sunday recorded 1,211 fresh Covid-19 cases and two more fatalities, taking the total infection count in the state to 34,331. Health minister K K Shailaja said at least 1,026 cases are of local transmission and the contact source of 103 is not traceable while 76 cases are returnees.

Patient's timely act  
saves many lives

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 9

The presence of mind of a Covid-19 patient undergoing treatment in the private Covid centre at Swarna Palace Hotel at Vijayawada helped the fire department, National Disaster Response Force and other officials to swiftly plunge into action and rescue patients.

The patient, Chowdavarapu Pawan Sai Kishan, on observing the flames tried to escape from the room. Seeing fire, heat and smoke, he returned to his room and broke open glass window pane. He then called the fire department and police from his mobile phone.

The fire department rushed fire tenders to the hotel and rescued Pawan Sai by bringing him down on a ladder. They also rescued 18 patients who were also trapped and shifted them to hospitals.

Kishan narrated his horrifying saga through a selfie video and said this was almost a second life for him. He said he was staying in Room 307. In the wee hours, he saw thick smoke coming inside the hotel.

He said “I started feeling breathless. The thick smoke made it impossible for me to use the stairs.”

“As I was facing a problem, I used my mobile. Fortunately the fire

VIJAYAWADA  
FIRE VICTIMS

**Vijayawada:** The deceased in the Vijayawada fire have been identified as Kosaraju Suvarnalatha (42) of Nidubrolu in Guntur district, Dokka Siva Brahmaiah (59) of Machilipatnam, Potluri Purnachandra Rao (80) of Kodali village, Gantasala mandal in Krishna district; Sunkara Babu Rao (80), retired sub-inspector of Indiranagar; Ajit Singh Nagar of Vijayawada, Majji Gopi (54) of Machilipatnam, G. Venkata Jayalakshmi (52) of Kandakuru in Prakasam district, Venkata Narsimha Pavan Kumar, also of Kandakuru in Prakasam district, S. Ratna Abraham (48) of Jaggaiahpet and his wife S. Rajakumari, and Maddali Raghu of Moghalrajapuram in Vijayawada. (Bureau)

department, police and other officials responded swiftly. They immediately fixed a tall ladder which helped me to get down. I was shifted to another hospital. I salute them for saving my life and that of other patients,” he said.

Kishan said Ramesh Hospital took no precautions while putting him up at Swarna Palace Hotel.

Talks with Nagas to  
conclude in Sept

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 9

The Centre has decided to conclude the decades-old peace talks with the NSCN (I-M) and NNPGs (Naga National Political Groups) in Nagaland by September this year, for which a process of thrashing out differences over some of the minor rhetorical issues will start next week in meetings in New Delhi between the collective leadership of the NSCN (I-M) and the Prime Minister's special envoy for Naga talks R.N. Ravi, who is also the governor of Nagaland.

Saying that the Prime Minister's Office had set a September deadline for the final settlement of all Naga political issues, authoritative security sources told this newspaper that the date and place of signing of the historic peace accord, bringing an end to one of India's oldest armed insurgencies, is yet to be decided.

Saying that Mr Ravi was leaving for New Delhi from Kohima on Tuesday,

the sources said the NSCN (I-M) delegation has already reached New Delhi for the talks. Saying that a consensus had already been created on a majority of the issues, apart from the demand of for a separate flag and constitution, the sources said the NSCN (I-M) was also insisting on some changes in the “language” of the final draft agreement that will be come up for discussion at the meeting.

Indicating that the focus of the talks in New Delhi would also be to work out the date and place for signing of the peace accord, the sources said the interlocutor would also be asking the Naga rebel groups to submit the list of cadres and inventory of arms and ammunition.

Stating that an accord will be signed after the surrender of the inventory of weapons by the cadres, the sources said the Union home ministry, in consultation with the interlocutor, was also preparing a rehabilitation package for the Naga rebels.

## Idukki landslide death toll rises to 28

● **INCESSANT RAINS, landslides and opening of shutters of dams across rivers have caused rise in water level in rivers and streams in central Kerala. Normal life of people living in low lying areas of Kottayam and Alappuzha has been affected with flood waters entering their homes.**

from neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

NDRF chief in charge of south Indian state, Rekha Nambiar is leading the 55-member team which is entrusted with the search and rescue mission.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for Idukki, Malappuram and Wayanad districts on Sunday.

Incessant rains, landslides and opening of shutters of dams across rivers have caused rise in water level in rivers and streams in central Kerala. Normal life of people living in low lying areas of Kottayam and Alappuzha has been affected with flood waters entering their homes. Low-lying areas in Kottayam and Alappuzha

districts are heavily impacted due to flooding. Hundreds of families have been shifted to relief camps from low lying areas including Kumarakom and Kuttanad regions of Kottayam and Alappuzha districts, they said.

Meanwhile, a car with a man was washed away in flood waters at Manarcad area in Kottayam district in the wee hours of Sunday.

The NDRF team has launched a rescue operation for the missing person identified as Justin, a native of Angamaly.

He is an airport taxi driver. Considering the spread of novel Coronavirus, the authorities have opened separate camps for different categories of the flood affected people.

In Ernakulam district, 1,203 flood affected people have been shifted to relief camps.

While 1,118 persons have been lodged in general relief camps, 67 senior citizens are staying in camps for persons above 60 years of age. 18 persons are staying in the camps set for quarantined people, district administration officials said.

— PTI

Families wait for  
remains of kin

**Idukki, Aug. 9:** “My people are buried under the soil. Can you give them back Sir?” asked a wailing 70-year-old woman to the rescue workers, hoping to get some information about members of her family, who went missing after Friday's devastating landslide in this high range district.

With each passing day, Karupayi's hope of seeing her dear ones has given way to despair.

As rescue officials pull out bodies, she rushes to see if it is that of her near and dear ones.

Ten members of her family were buried under the massive mound of earth and slush that flattened a row of 20 one room row houses made of tin and asbestos sheets, housing at least 82 workers and their families, at Pettimudi in Rajamala.

Karupayi's husband Shanmugham, three daughters, their husbands and three grandchildren are all buried under the

soil. As rescue workers of NDRF, police and fire force personnel dug out bodies, Karupayi rushesto them asking “Have you got them?”

Shanmugham, their daughters and sons in law were all workers at the tea plantation and living in the quarters along with children.

On the fateful night, Karupayi was woken up by a huge sound and she came out of the house to see the horrifying sight of the landslide and immediately tried to alert her dear ones.

However, everything was over in a flash and there was nothing remaining except massive boulders strewn around, she said.

Ramar, another elderly person, is inconsolable as he had lost his son, daughter and 13 family members.

“They have all gone. I will not go back without seeing them,” he said.

— PTI



## IN BRIEF

## Hungary bus crash: 1 dead

**Budapest:** One man died and three people, including a young child, were seriously injured when a tourist bus crashed into a ditch on the side of a highway in Hungary, police and rescue officials said Sunday. The incident happened on the M5 highway in the city of Kiskunfelegyhaza, about 115 kilometres (71 miles) east of Budapest, the capital. Police said the vehicle was a Polish tourist bus. A spokesman for the National Rescue Service said a 35-year-old man died at the scene and 34 people were injured. Three people who suffered serious injuries, including a child about five years old. Two helicopters and 14 ambulances were taking the injured to hospitals. The bus was travelling toward Budapest and the crash happened around 6:30 a.m.

## Czech apartment blaze kills 11

**Prague:** At least 11 people have been killed and 10 others injured in an apartment building fire in the northeastern Czech Republic, officials said Saturday, with some suggesting that the fire could be arson. Police said the fire hit the 11th floor of the 13-story building in the afternoon in the town of Bohumin. Firefighters spokesman Lukas Popp told local media that six people, three adults and three children, were killed in an 11th-floor apartment. The other five died after trying to escape from the building "in a panic" by jumping from the windows on the 12th floor, Interior Minister Jan Hamacek told Czech public radio. Hamacek and the head of the regional government, Ivo Vondrak, suggested the fire was likely intentionally set.

## Mauritius containing oil spill in sea

**Port Louis, Aug. 9:** Police in Mauritius on Sunday prepared to board a grounded ship leaking tonnes of oil into its crystal-clear waters, as clean-up crews confronted a growing ecological disaster on the archipelago's pristine shores. The bulk carrier MV

Wakashio has been seeping fuel into a protected marine park boasting unspoiled coral reefs, mangrove forests and endangered species, prompting Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth to declare an environmental emergency and appeal for interna-

tional help. Attempts to stabilise the stricken vessel, which ran aground on July 25 but only started leaking oil this week, and pump 4,000 tonnes of fuel from its hold have failed, and local authorities fear rough seas could further rupture

the tanker. Hundreds of volunteers, many smeared head-to-toe in black sludge, are marshalling along the coastline, stringing together miles of makeshift cordons in a desperate attempt to hold back the oily tide. But already, thick muck has

inundated the island nation's unspoiled lagoons, marine habitats and white-sand beaches, causing unprecedented damage to the fragile coastal ecosystem upon which Mauritius and its economy relies.

— AFP

## Violence, chaos must not prevail in Lebanon: Macron

French Prez urges speedy global response after deadly Beirut port blast

## Lebanon information minister quits in first govt resignation

**Paris, Aug. 9:** French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday said violence and chaos must not prevail in Lebanon as he opened a UN-backed aid conference for the country rocked by angry protests over negligence blamed for the deadly Beirut port blast.

"It is up to the authorities of the country to act so that the country does not sink, and to respond to the aspirations that the Lebanese people are expressing right now, legitimately, in the streets of Beirut," Macron said.

"We must all work together to ensure that neither violence nor chaos prevails," he added. "It is the future of Lebanon that is at stake." Macron on Sunday called for speedy international backing for disaster-struck Lebanon and urged its leaders to prevent "chaos" as he opened an emergency aid conference following Beirut's deadly port blast.

Macron hosted US President Donald Trump and other world leaders for the virtual conference to drum up aid for Lebanon, as the UN said some \$117 million will be needed over the next three months for the emergency response. "The objective today is to act quickly and effectively to coordinate our aid on the ground so that it goes as efficiently as possible to the Lebanese people," Macron told the conference also attended by

**Beirut, Aug. 9:** Lebanon's information minister Manal Abdel Samad on Sunday quit in the first government resignation since a deadly port blast killed more than 150 people and destroyed swathes of the capital. "After the enormous Beirut catastrophe, I announce my resignation from government," she said in a statement carried by local media, apologising to the Lebanese public for failing them.

The head of Lebanon's Maronite church meanwhile called on the entire government to step down over the August 4 explosion, a blast widely seen as shocking proof of the rot at the core of the state apparatus. Lebanese protest-

ers enraged by the blast vowed to rally again after a night of street clashes in which they stormed several ministries.

Macronite patriarch Beshara Rai joined the chorus of people pressing Prime

Minister Hassan Diab's cabinet to step down over a blast he said could be "described as a crime against humanity". "It is not enough for a lawmaker to resign here or a minister to resign there," Rai said in a Sunday sermon.

"It is necessary, out of sensitivity to the feelings of the Lebanese and the immense responsibility required, for the entire government to resign, because it is incapable of moving the country forward."

Rai echoed calls by Diab for early parliamentary polls — a long-standing demand of a protest movement that began in October, demanding the removal of a political class deemed inept and corrupt. — AFP

streets of Beirut.

"We must all work together to ensure that neither violence nor chaos prevails," he added. "It is the future of Lebanon that is at stake." Macron also warned that "those who have an interest in this division and chaos, it is the powers that would somehow want to put the Lebanese people at risk". He did not name names.

— AFP

## Germany troop pullout: Pompeo eyes east Europe

**Washington, Aug. 9:** As President Donald Trump orders US troops out of Germany and faces a tough re-election battle, his top diplomat, Mike Pompeo, is heading to friendly climes in Central and Eastern Europe.

Pompeo on Tuesday opens a five-day trip that will terminate in close ally Poland, which is eager to welcome some of the US troops leaving Germany to guard against historic adversary Russia. He will also travel to the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Austria where he is expected to press his campaign for nations to shun Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant considered a threat by Washington as it takes a lead in fifth-generation internet.

In Slovenia, where he will be the first US secretary of state to visit since 2001, Pompeo will on Thursday sign an agreement on 5G, officials said without previewing details. Pompeo's trip comes weeks after the Pentagon said the United States would bring home some 6,400 military personnel from Germany and shift nearly 5,600 more to other NATO allies, including Italy and Belgium. Trump has a tense relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who declined his invitation for a Group of Seven summit in Washington in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, and accuses Europe's largest economy of unfair trading practices.

"What is most significant about this trip is the places the secretary is not going to," said Ian Lesser, the Brussels-based vice president of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. "If the secretary was going to address the core issues in transatlantic rela-

## HIGHEST LEVEL U.S. VISIT TO TAIWAN BEGINS

**Taipei, Aug. 9:** A senior member of US President Donald Trump's administration landed in Taiwan Sunday for Washington's highest level visit since switching diplomatic recognition to China in 1979, a trip Beijing has condemned. During the three-day visit Health Secretary Alex Azar will meet President Tsai Ing-wen, who advocates Taiwan being recognised as a sovereign nation and is loathed by China's leaders.

Tsai's office said the meeting would take place Monday morning. Azar is the most senior US cabinet member to visit Taiwan in decades and his visit comes as relations between the world's two biggest economic powers plunge to historic lows.

In recent days, Trump has ordered sweeping restrictions on popular Chinese apps TikTok and WeChat and the US Treasury Department slapped sanctions on Hong Kong's leader over a tough law that curbs dissent.

Washington has billed the Taiwan trip as an opportunity to learn from the island's fight against the coronavirus. — AFP

tions at the moment, he would be making stops in Brussels, Paris and Berlin." Lesser said that the troop repositioning out of Germany was unlikely to be a major issue for US voters. "What does have some political resonance is how a senior American official is received when he or she goes to Europe," he said. — AFP

## COFFEE-BREAK

## Your day today

By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** Financial conditions from a setback could cause apprehensions. A creative mind and an adventurous attitude create work wonders.



**Taurus:** You may get back to fitness routines and diet programmes. You'll earn in your craft and promote your business. You'll easily be around loved ones.



**Gemini:** No one can separate your love. Invest in real-estate business. Fear of loss could cause loss of professional opportunities.



**Cancer:** Expect chest pain. Those longing to buy a farmhouse should. Avoid criticising others, it'll disappoint your family. Expect problems related to your kids.



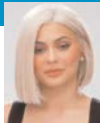
**Leo:** Let friends offer financial help. Avoid losing temper unnecessarily; it'll upset your family members. You may suffer love pangs.



**Virgo:** Reckless behaviour harms family members' interests. Expect some stagnation at work. Your loved ones are responsive to your first move. You'll bridge gaps, begin a new business and earn well.

## You share your b'day with

Kylie Jenner, an American media personality, socialite and entrepreneur. She has starred in the television series Keeping Up with the Kardashians since 2007 and is the founder and owner of cosmetic company Kylie Cosmetics.



**Libra:** A new work associate who's delaying decisions becomes dependable. You'll earn money and promote your business. Enjoy work and pleasure. Expect in-depth communication with loved ones.



**Scorpio:** Don't expect help from friends/colleagues now. Some of you may suffer digestive disorders. Today, you may be on top of things at work.



**Sagittarius:** Some may plan a long journey with family, but bad news pertaining to children may dampen the day. Be careful, you could injure yourself today.



**Capricorn:** You feel content today. You may also meet some important people. Your confidence soars, but focus at work dwindles. Avoid spending lavishly.

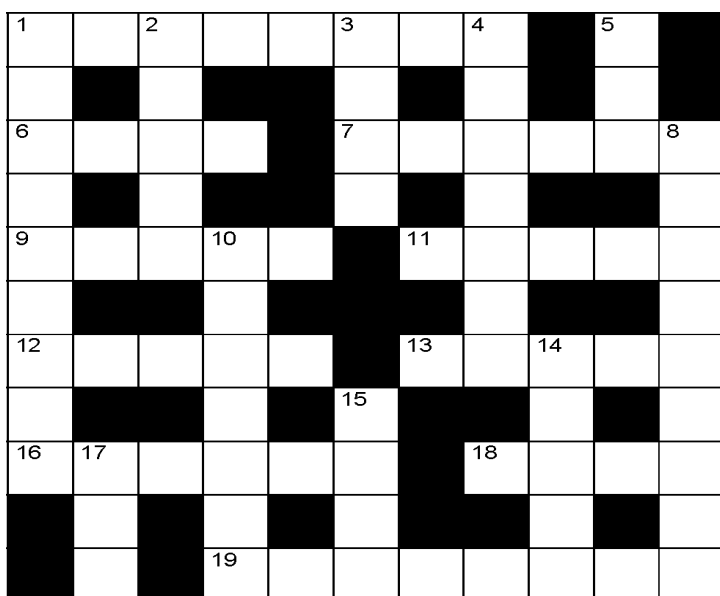


**Aquarius:** Your siblings bring you comfort and support. However, hectic activities leave some of you feeling mostly exhausted and restless today. Make your health a priority.



**Pisces:** You'd be cheerful as communication from a distant land would be lucrative. There's a strong possibility of losses in the stock market; invest prudently. You may not see eye-to-eye with the person in authority. Harsh words would ruin a friendship.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



**Across**  
1. Intense unfounded suspicion (8)  
6. Probability (4)  
7. French brandy (6)  
9. Build (5)  
11. As above (5)  
12. Game fish (5)  
13. Rough dwelling (5)  
16. Baby's toy (6)  
18. Grain store (4)  
19. Almanac (8)

**Down**  
1. Film machine (9)  
2. Long narrow hilltop (5)  
3. Long ago (4)  
4. Torment (7)  
5. Large water body (3)  
8. Wind-up mechanism (9)  
10. Nation (7)  
14. Spanish friend (5)  
15. White cheese (4)  
17. Piercing tool (3)

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**  
**Across:** 6. Methodist, 8. Hopes, 10. Minim, 13. Illuminated, 14. Tamed, 17. Below, 19. Accelerate.  
**Down:** 1. Weep, 2. Ohms, 3. Edam, 4. Icon, 5. Clamdown, 7. Christmas, 9. Exude, 11. Inane, 12. Dip, 15. Muck, 16. Dull, 17. Burn, 18. Late.

## Word Mine

PEADRODES

TODAY'S RATINGS: 35 AVERAGE: 40 GOOD: 45 OUTSTANDING

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

Dealer: South Vulnerable: Both  
South West North East  
10NT Pass Pass Pass Pass  
Opening lead: ♠ J

## jumble

FONET  
RNIDG  
SCOREC  
NTYMIU

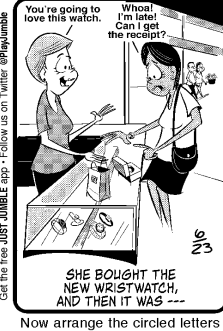
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Print your answer here:

Yesterday's

Jumbles: QUEEN SASSY MUMBLE REVOLT  
Answer: To show his grandson where he bowled a perfect 300 game, they went to — MEMORY LANE

dummy's last diamond. Then ruff the diamond jack on the board. Finally, South mustn't get greedy; He should run the spade nine. Now the contract is safe. But if he puts the spade queen on dummy's nine, he should fail. West can win with the ace and switch to the club queen. If declarer wins with dummy's ace and runs the spade eight to West's jack, that defender continues with the club jack. East overtakes with the king and plays

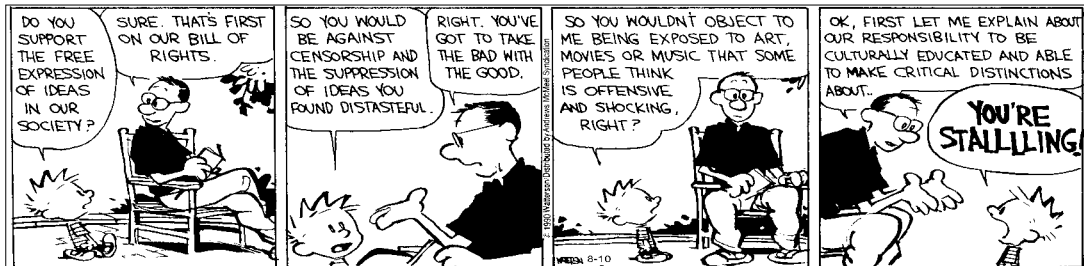


Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

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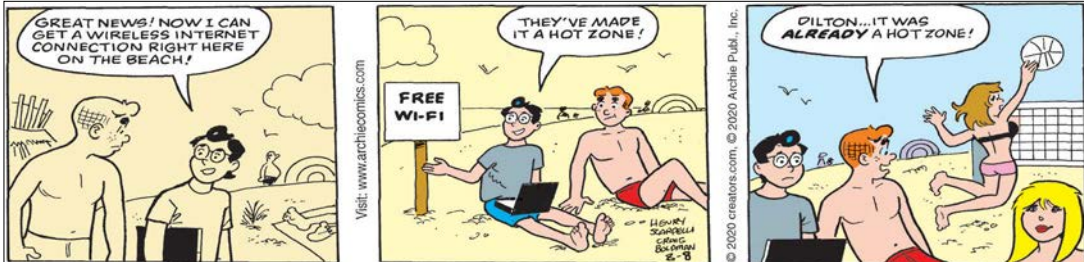
## CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



## THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



## ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



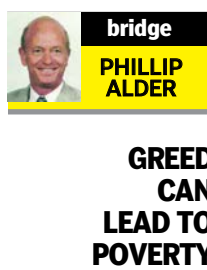
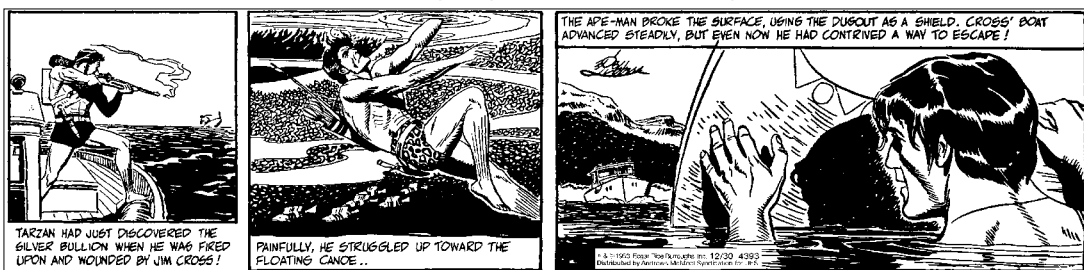
## BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



## ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



## TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



**bridge**  
**PHILLIP ALDER**  
**GREED CAN LEAD TO POVERTY**

Mohandas K. Gandhi said, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed." That applies to this deal. If declarer tries for an overtrick, he should go down. How should South play in four spades after West leads the heart jack?

Playing Standard American, not two-over-one, if North had rebid three spades, not four, would it have been forcing? I think it should be. If you

agree, then responder with 10-12 support points and only three spades should make an immediate limit raise. Discuss it with your partner. If declarer has two trump losers, he has only nine winners: three spades, three hearts, two diamonds and one club. The simplest line is to ruff a diamond in the dummy for the 10th trick. After winning trick one with dummy's heart king, cash the diamond ace-king and play off the heart ace-queen, discarding



## DECCAN Chronicle

10 AUGUST 2020

### Kozhikode highlights air safety imperative

It would be some time before we get to know what led to crashlanding of the Air India Express flight at Kozhikode airport on Friday, which claimed the life of 18 passengers including the pilot and the co-pilot. The Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has already initiated an investigation into the accident in which the aircraft, part of the Vande Bharat Mission, carrying 191 passengers including the crew skidded off the runway and ran into a ditch. Inclement weather and poor visibility coupled with human error have been cited as early reasons but the whole truth will come out only when the investigation is completed. It should also reveal if the systems were made to make amends for the errors that caused a similar accident in Mangaluru airport 10 years ago.

An aircraft is a magnificent engineering product which has evolved over a century and air travel is the safest mode of transport if we consider the number of people using it. This is basically because it is system-dependent, and recalibrates itself if something goes wrong anywhere in the system. It is imperative on the part of the regulators and the authorities to pick lessons from the Kozhikode incident and improve it further.

While awaiting the investigation report, we must comment on the grace, presence of mind, valour and selflessness, which were on display at Kozhikode immediately after the mishap. The local residents of the nearby Kondotty town in Malappuram district rushed to the accident site, launched the rescue operations in no time and, with the help of the rescue team from the airport, completed the job in about less than two hours. They evacuated all the passengers and rushed them to the nearby hospitals despite knowing the fact that they are operating in a Covid containment zone and that many of the passengers could have been infected with the coronavirus. The timely intervention has considerably reduced the casualty, according to doctors. The social media was awash with photographs of youngsters rushing to hospitals and queuing up to donate blood for people of whom they have not heard before.

That, however, should bring certain other disturbing facts to the attention of the government. The DGCA had banned the operation of wide-bodied aircraft under Code E from May 2015 after an inspection by the regulator flagged safety concerns and later in 2018 allowed the same. The aircraft that met with the accident does not belong to that class but experts have already called for a reassessment of the safety standards. The table-top airport, which is traditionally considered accident prone, needs expansion of its runway and the proposal to acquire about 100 acres for the project has been hanging fire for long. The Airports Authority of India, which runs the airport, and the government of Kerala must act in tandem, discuss it with the people and their representatives and complete the project after meeting their demands at the earliest so that all types of aircraft can have safe landing there.

### Setback for Tamils, Muslims

The overwhelming victory of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) in the August 5 elections to the island nation's Parliament is a triumph of Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism and a consolidation of power by the Rajapaksa family. It just follows a popular political trend across the globe, wherein people with power and privilege hunger for more power and more privilege and hand over governments on a platter to politicians whom they believe would do that for them.

In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese perhaps chose the Rajapaksa family because they were enamored by the way prominent brothers, Mahinda and Gotabaya, ruthlessly quelled the LTTE in 2009. Or do the people believe that as a large family of rulers —another brother Basil and Nirmal, son of Mahinda, included — the Rajapaksas would do a better job in showing minorities their place?

Whatever it is, political trends that lead to the concentration of power in the hands of a family yanks democracy off the feet of nations. With such a brute majority in Parliament, the brothers are only likely to make sweeping constitutional changes to enhance the authority of the President and to continue ruling the country for a longer time. There are also indications that they would fashion the government on the lines of a military regime. Already Gotabaya, who came in as President in November, has appointed many serving and former military officers to key bureaucratic posts.

Since Gotabaya stormed into government by stoking ethnic Sinhala nationalism and SLPP has now romped home exemplifying such a majoritarian agenda, the ruling family would have no qualms about subjugating the minorities, Muslims and Tamils in particular. And when the minorities look up to the government for an assurance to realise their legitimate aspirations, the pardoning of military officers charged with war crimes during the end of the civil war in 2009 by the Rajapaksas can be least assuring.

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Subhani

## Will 'Ram Rajya' lead to a more tolerant India?



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Religious disputes, involving historical memory, and deeply divisive recent communal clashes, are not easy to resolve. But the manner in which India got over the Ram Mandir versus the Babri Masjid dispute must be a unique template for the rest of the world. When the talks failed, the matter was left to the Supreme Court. The judgment, which finally came in November 2019, was a remarkable compromise. It condemned the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 and asked for all those responsible for this act to be prosecuted. The Ram Mandir Trust was awarded the disputed land for the building of the new temple. Simultaneously, the country's highest court also ordered that five acres of land should be allocated elsewhere for the construction of a mosque. In a country where some 80 per cent of the population is Hindu, Shri Ram will finally get a temple in his name in his hometown and at his birthplace after a struggle for over a century through a hard fought legal title suit!

There were some commentators in the media who proclaimed that August 5, 2020, the date of the *shilanyas* of the temple, marked the death of secularism in India. Frankly, I consider all such remarks ludicrous. Does secularism banish religious faith and worship in India? On the contrary, the Constitution guarantees both as part of our fundamental rights. If so, why should the building of a temple, pursuant to the decision of the highest court of the land, be the

harbinger of such unneeded doom? The Muslim litigants, who were party to the judicial dispute, may not have been entirely happy about the final verdict, but they accepted it. The same "secular" commentariat has no objection if a mosque or a church is built. In the past, they had always maintained that a solution to the prolonged dispute should be found either through mutual accommodation or through a judicial verdict. Why then this pained hand wringing? In fact, it is my firm conviction that it is precisely this kind of reflex reaction that does the greatest disservice to the cause of secularism in this country.

Perhaps the problem with the critics is the pageantry that marked the ceremony. But this was hardly a chance that the BJP-RSS was going to miss. A temple was becoming a reality after 136 years of struggle. Its consecration had to be done in accordance with Hindu rituals, and the entire ceremony was bound to be telecast live. There was criticism too about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in the function. But the precedent of our first President, Rajendra Prasad, inaugurating the

**There were some commentators in the media who proclaimed that August 5, 2020, the date of the shilanyas of the temple, marked the death of secularism in India. Frankly, I consider all such remarks ludicrous.**

**Perhaps the problem with the critics is the pageantry that marked the ceremony. But this was hardly a chance that the BJP-RSS was going to miss. A temple was becoming a reality after 136 years of struggle.**

restored Somnath temple in Gujarat, in spite of the advice of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru against it, is telling. Secularism in our country is not about the absolute separation of the State and faith. It is about the fundamental freedom of following one's faith, while respecting all other faiths. Babu Rajendra Prasad was one of the most prominent followers of Mahatma Gandhi. He was uncompromisingly secular. But his evocative defence of his decision was simply this: "I believe in my religion and cannot cut myself away from it." In other words, just like Gandhiji, he did not see a contradiction between being a practising Hindu and the imperative to respect all religions. Indeed, if one reads the debates of the Constituent Assembly on the question of secularism, this — and not the European construct of a complete separation between the State and religion — was the interpretation accepted by the vast majority of its members.

This being said, what is important for the future is a closure to the kind of communal politics that we have recently seen. Devotees of Shri Ram would do well to remember that he was "*maryada purushottam*", the very epitome of right conduct, the role model of correct behaviour. Shri Ram would never sanction irrational anger, unwarranted violence, or unnecessary vengeance, particularly

against the weak or the innocent. In fact, in Tulsidas's *Ramcharit-manas*, there is a very significant line in the description of Ram Rajya: "*sab nar karahin paraspar priti*" (all human beings would harbour mutual affection for each other). It is Shri Ram again who — in Tulsidas' words — tells Bharat: "*Par hi th saras dharam nahin bhai, par peeda sam nahin athamai* (there is no greater virtue than the welfare of others, and no greater sin than injury to others)." This did not make him a passive god. He fought hard against injustice and defeated Ravan. But even in this form, he harboured no personal enmity, and remained the embodiment of the *saumya rasa*, eternally in equipoise and equilibrium, rational and restrained, and certainly not the kind of person who would approve taking the law into one's own hands.

Thus, when Prime Minister Modi in his speech at the ceremony said that Ram stands for the unity of India, it must be assumed that what he meant was that Ram, as the embodiment of mercy, compassion, justice and right conduct, must guide our actions in the future. BJP ideologue Ram Madhav quotes Swami Chinmayananda to say that Ayodhya itself stands for "*ayuddha*" (non-war or peace), which should augur peace forever among all communities. If the otherwise noble greeting of Jai Shri Ram has been weaponised by illiterate bigots, Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on Jai Siya Ram in Ayodhya on August 5 is a good sign. We must remain vigilant to ensure that such sentiments are, indeed, implemented in the future. Hinduism, and its intrinsic tolerance for all faiths, would want that to happen.

*The writer, an author, is a former diplomat and in politics*

#### LETTERS

### BLOODTHIRSTY WOLVES

"Power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely", said John Acton. Government officials are making a fast buck by getting their palms greased to issue e-pass, especially during lockdowns. It is not only shameful but also disreputable to the government machinery resulting in timely judicial comments of Madras HC branding such corrupt officials "bloodthirsty wolves" (HC shocked over getting e-passes thru brokers, Aug.9). It has also pulled the departments concerned as to how the adolescent children were transported to work in companies, that too when issuing e-passes has a cumbersome process. It is time the government introduced transparent procedures to issue e-pass which would stop officials and touts taking undue advantage of the crisis.

**E.S. Chandrasekaran**  
Chennai

### DUSTY SAFETY MANUALS

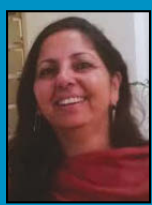
**THE DEADLY EXPLOSION** in a port warehouse in Beirut is another instance of conscience keepers of safety abdicating their remit. The presence of 740 tonnes of ammonium nitrate at Chennai port is now suddenly remembered but likely its administrative gearing will be slow-footed for remedy. The problem arises when overconfidence or oversight or both makes for omitting stage checks detailed in meticulous Standard Operating Practices. Watch dogs are meant to bark and when they don't, it invites trouble. In the Kozhikode airport tragedy, despite a top notch pilot the control room apparently failed to flag conditions. The landing ought to have been aborted by ATC. In every sphere we seem to be short of inspired administrators with grip on their jobs. Such drift keeps perpetuating mishaps.

**Syed Abdul Monim**  
Navi Mumbai

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup

### Singhal nephew at puja venue; Covid reprieve for Gehlot govt?



While most invitees seated in close proximity to Prime Minister Narendra Modi around the havan kund at the ground breaking ceremony for the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya last week could be recognised, people were left guessing the identity of a couple who participated in the religious ceremony. It turned out the "unknown person" was Salil Singhal, a Udiapur-based businessman and the nephew of late Ashok Singhal, who was the international working president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for nearly two decades and a leading figure in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Salil Singhal's presence, along with his wife Madhu, led many to ask about denying the same courtesy to children of senior Bharatiya Janata Party leaders L.K. Advani and Murl Manohar Joshi who were also the architects of the movement which catapulted the saffron party to power. Party insiders pointed out it should be remembered that Ashok Singhal was the first leader from the Sangh to declare his support for Mr Modi's candidature as the BJP's prime

ministerial face. Speaking to the press at the 2013 Mahakumbh congregation in Allahabad, Mr Singhal had said that Mr Modi enjoyed the same popularity as Jawaharlal Nehru. In contrast to Mr Singhal, Mr Advani had resisted Mr Modi's move to the national political stage while Mr Joshi was also not known to be favourably disposed towards Mr Modi.

After Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra came out in support of the construction of a Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, party leaders went overboard in endorsing her stand. While most leaders put out similar tweets and statements, many party offices in the states and districts organised special prayer meetings while others even burst crackers to mark the occasion. However, this open display of religiosity at the party offices has not gone down well with a section of the Congress cadre. Questions are being raised in private conversations about organising pujas at party offices and whether similar celebrations will be held in the future to mark the festivals of other faiths. Most perti-

nently, it is being asked if any programme will be held when the construction of the mosque begins on the plot, which has been allotted to the Muslim community to compensate for giving up their claim on the disputed site of the Babri Masjid.

First home minister Amit Shah tested positive for coronavirus. Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan was next. Both are undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Gurugram. With the two leaders in quarantine, BJP insiders are wondering how their incarceration will affect the party's plans to topple the Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan. It is an acknowledged fact that it is Mr Shah who is planning and supervising the operation in the desert state while Mr Pradhan, who has now emerged as his chief lieutenant, executes the former party president's orders. So does this mean a reprieve for the Gehlot government? The more optimistic in the BJP express full faith in Mr Shah's capabilities while underlining that it is perhaps no coincidence that the two chief players are in a hospital which is in close proximity to

the resort where rebel Rajasthan Congress leaders are lodged.

Bihar's director general of police Guptaeshwar Pandey, who has been extremely vocal about the ongoing investigation into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, sounds more like a politician than a high-ranking police officer. Like a politician he has been making all kinds of charges in public, acting as judge, jury and executioner. It must be recalled here that Mr Pandey nurses political ambitions and had even sought a ticket from the Bharatiya Janata Party but it never materialised. As inspector general of police, Muzaffarpur, Mr Pandey courted controversy when he was investigating an abduction case and was even examined by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with it. Mr Pandey took voluntary retirement from the service a few years ago but was subsequently reinstated by Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, a decision which raised a lot of eyebrows. This bit of background is important to understand why Mr Pandey is over-eager to please his

political bosses.

The recent decision of the textile ministry, headed by Smriti Irani, to disband the 70-year-old All-India Handloom Board, set up by Pupul Jayakar, and the All-India Handicrafts Board, has virtually gone unnoticed. The two panels, comprising craftspeople and other experts, served as a valuable forum for the government to get inputs from people working in the field. The official explanation for scrapping these boards is that it is prompted by the government's vision of "minimum government, maximum governance". However, representatives of the sector and craftspeople, are convinced the decision flows from a belief that Irani's ministry does not need to listen to voices from the ground. They feel it is a deliberate attempt to deny an opportunity to those outside the system to interact with the government. Ms Irani is particularly prickly about working with anyone who has been even remotely associated with the Congress regime.

*Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist*



quick BITES

| INDICATORS             |           | %        |
|------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Sensex                 | 38,040.57 | 0.04     |
| Nifty 50               | 1,1214    | 0.12     |
| S&P 500*               | 3,351.28  | 0.09     |
| Dollar (₹)             | 74.93     | 0.00     |
| Pound Sterling (₹)     | 98.12     | 0.53     |
| Euro (₹)               | 88.64     | 0.20     |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹)       | 55,120    | 725 1.30 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)*  | 44.40     | 0.00     |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield    | 5.886     | 0.025    |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.566     | 0.00     |

\* As of Friday/Saturday

FPIs invest over ₹7,800 crore in equities in Aug.

Overseas investors remained net buyers in Indian markets by investing a net Rs 8,327 crore in the first week of August. Foreign portfolio investors invested a net Rs 7,842 crore in equities and Rs 485 crore in the debt segment during Aug. 3-6, according to depositories data. FPIs have been net buyers in the past two months. They invested Rs 3,301 crore in July and Rs 24,053 crore in June on net basis.

Emission rules for construction, agri machinery likely



The Centre said it has issued draft notification for separate emission norms for agriculture machinery and construction equipment vehicles. MoRTH has invited suggestions on a draft notification seeking to amend Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 to separate the emission norms for agricultural machinery (agricultural tractors, power tillers and combined harvesters) and construction equipment vehicles, a release said.

Amazon Easy stores get an upgrade

Online retailer Amazon launched an upgraded 'Amazon Easy' store format that integrates its multiple services through a single touchpoint. The format would offer a touch-and-feel product experience through a physical product display, the firm said. Customers can also place an order on Amazon.in with assistance from the store staff and either pick up the order from the store or get it delivered at the doorstep.

₹68,000 cr loans released under discoms' package

As much as Rs 68,000 crore worth of loans under the Rs 90,000-crore liquidity package announced for the stressed power distribution utilities have been sanctioned so far. "State-run non-banking finance firms REC and Power Finance Corporation have sanctioned loans worth about Rs 68,000 crore so far under the Rs 90,000 crore liquidity infusion package for discoms announced in May," a source said.



■ Current price is lower than 1980 high Gold has room to go beyond \$2,800

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 9

At \$2,070 an ounce, gold touched a new high last week and has moved up more than 30 per cent since the break of Covid-19 pandemic. However, when adjusted to inflation, the record price is lower than 1980 January as well as September 2011 record-high levels. This provides room for gold to move beyond \$2,800 per ounce.

"Adjusted for inflation, the gold price today is \$200 shy of the 2011 level and well below its January, 21, 1980 record high equivalent to approximately \$2,800 per ounce in today's money," says a World Gold Council report. Gold had hit a record high of \$850 an ounce in January 1980 as investors piled up bullion to beat high inflation due to strong oil prices, the Soviet Union intervention in Afghanistan and the impact of the Iranian revolution. If adjusted to inflation, this would have translated to \$2,800 per ounce in today's scenario. Similarly, in September 2011, gold had made a high of \$1,920 per ounce and if adjusted to inflation, it would have been close to \$2,200 per ounce.

Further, the report finds that the gold price had more than doubled from about \$900 per ounce in early 2008 to its high more than three years later in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. In con-



trast, it has increased by 30-34 per cent since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The current price movement of gold has been driven by high levels of global uncertainty and very low interest rates. The Covid-19 pandemic is far from over and more importantly, its impact on the global economy is yet to be determined.

Central banks have aggressively cut interest rates, often in combination with quantitative easing and other non-traditional policy measures. Governments have also approved massive rescue packages to support their local economies. These initiatives have increased concerns that easy money, rather than fundamentals, is fuelling the stock market rally and all the extra money being pumped into the system may result in very high inflation or at the very least, currency debasements.

"The re-emergence of infections seen in Japan, Australia, South Korea and Vietnam and upturn

in infections seen in the US, Russia and India could trigger the reimplementa-tion of lockdowns and containment measures. The more delayed the complete reversal of the great lockdown, the slower the economic recovery. With this back-ground, it is hard to imagine a scenario where central banks around the world will change their accommodative stance any time soon," said Chirag Mehta, senior fund manager-alternative investments, Quantum Mutual Fund.

Further, despite record inflows into gold ETFs in 2020, gold remains an under-owned asset. The market share of Gold ETFs, compared to all ETF assets, jumped from 3 per cent to 8 per cent in the aftermath of the global financial crisis before dwindling to one per cent levels in the following years. The current figure stands at 3 per cent, indicating significant potential for Gold ETF asset expansion going forward, says Mehta.

TikTok plans to sue Trump administration

BELINDA CAO & YUEQI YANG AUG. 9

TikTok plans to file a federal lawsuit as soon as Tuesday to challenge President Donald Trump's executive order banning the video-sharing service from the US as unconstitutional, National Public Radio reported.

The lawsuit will be filed in the US District Court for the Southern District of California, where TikTok's American operations are based, NPR said, citing a person familiar with the matter whom it didn't identify. It will argue that the president's action is unconstitutional because it failed to give the company a chance to respond and that the US government's national-security justification for the order is baseless, according to the report.

Chinese-owned TikTok responded in a blog post on Friday it is "shocked" and will pursue all remedies available, including in US courts. A company spokesman reached by phone on Saturday declined to comment on the NPR report and referred to the earlier blog post.

Trump signed executive orders on Thursday prohibiting US residents and companies from doing business with TikTok and Tencent Holdings' WeChat apps, effective in 45 days, citing the national-security risk of leaving Americans' personal data exposed. A 1977 law lets the US president declare a national emergency in response to an "unusual and extraordinary threat."

— Bloomberg

Defence stocks may gain from latest import ban

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 9

Defence production related stocks like Larsen & Toubro, Bharat Forge and defence PSUs such as Bharat Electronics and HAL would be in focus on Monday as the government has fast-tracked indigenous production of many items and plans to phase out high levels of import dependence over a period of time.

The Department of Military Affairs (DMA), Ministry of Defence (MoD) has prepared a list of 101 items for which there would be an embargo on the import beyond the timeline indicated against them, said a release on Sunday.

"It is estimated that contracts worth almost Rs 4 lakh crore will be placed upon the domestic industry within the next five to seven years. Of these, items worth almost Rs 1,30,000 crore each are anticipated for the Army and the Air Force while items worth almost Rs 1,40,000 crore are anticipated by the Navy over the same period," the defence ministry said.

Bharat Forge, Bharat Electronics, Larsen & Toubro, HAL, Cochin Shipyard, Garden Reach, BHEL, Bharat Dynamics, Mishra Dhatu Nigam and BHEL may bag large contracts with their past records in defence-related production, brokers said.

Defence production related stocks have rallied post-Galwan Valley clash on June 15.

The list of 101 embargoed items comprises not

| On the rise   |                     |   |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Defence production related stocks have rallied post-Galwan Valley clash |                     |   |
| Company   | Current stock price | Stock price on June 15- Galwan Valley clash |
| HAL   | 947.90              | 657.5                                       |
| Bharat Electronics  | 99.20               | 70.9  |
| BHEL  | 35.25               | 29.1  |
| BEML  | 656.35              | 595.7                                       |
| Mishra Dhatu Nigam  | 204.70              | 195   |
| Bharat Dynamics   | 419.05              | 235.55                                      |
| Cochin Shipyard   | 331.65              | 264   |
| Garden Reach Ship-builders & Engineers                                  | 202.40              | 188.55                                      |
| Larsen & Toubro   | 915.70              | 899.65                                      |
| Bharat Forge  | 408.00              | 340.45                                      |

Figures in ₹

Source: BSE, FC Research

just simple parts but also some high technology weapon systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircraft, light combat helicopters (LCHs), radars and many other items.

The list also includes, wheeled armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which the Army is expected to contract almost 200 at an approximate cost of Rs 5,000 crore.

Similarly, the Navy is likely to place demands for submarines with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which it expects to contract about six at an approximate cost of Rs 42,000 crore. For the Air Force, it has been decided to enlist the light combat aircraft with an indicative embargo date of December 2020. Of these, 123 are anticipated at an approximate cost of over Rs 85,000

crore, the release said.

The embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 and 2024. The aim behind promulgation of the list is to apprise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the Armed Forces. More such equipment for import embargo would be identified in consultation with all stakeholders, the defence ministry said.

The recently published draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy, 2020 suggests a more bottom-up framework to empower system integrators to achieve greater scale by expanding the role of the private sector, especially MSMEs. Key objectives include achieving Rs 1.75 lakh crore turnover, including Rs 35,000-crore exports; cutting defence imports; entry in the global defence exports value chain, among others.

Oil giants cut value of assets by \$50 bn

DAVID GAFFEN AUG. 9

The world's five largest oil companies collectively cut the value of their assets by nearly \$50 billion in the second quarter, and slashed production rates as the coronavirus pandemic caused a drastic fall in fuel prices and demand.

The dramatic reductions in asset valuations and decline in output show the depth of the pain in the second quarter. Fuel demand at one point was down by more than 30 per cent worldwide, and still remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Several executives said they took massive write-downs because they expect demand to remain impaired for several more quarters as people travel less and use less fuel due to the ongoing global pandemic that has killed more than 700,000 people.

Of those five companies, only Exxon Mobil did not book sizeable impairments. But an ongoing re-evaluation of its plans could lead to a "significant portion" of its assets being impaired, it reported, and signal the elimination of 20 per cent or 4.4 billion barrels of its oil and gas reserves.

By contrast, BP took a \$17 billion hit. It said it plans to re-centre its spending in coming years around renewables and less on oil and natural gas.

Weak demand means oil producers must revisit business plans, said Lee Maginniss, managing director at consultants Alarez & Marsal. He said the goal should be to pump only what generates cash in excess of overhead costs. "It's low-cost production mode through the end of 2021 for sure, and to 2022 to the extent there are new development plans being contemplated," Maginniss said.

London-based BP has previously said it plans to cut its overall output by roughly 1 million barrels of oil equivalent (boepd) by the end of 2030 from its current 3.6 million boepd. Of the five, Exxon is the largest producer, with daily output of 3.64 million boepd, but its production dropped 408,000 boepd between the first and second quarters. The five majors, which include Chevron Corp, Royal Dutch Shell and Total SA, also cut capital expenditures by a combined \$25 billion between the quarters.

— Reuters

ONGC pares debt by 35%, but low oil & gas prices a concern

New Delhi, Aug 9: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has cut its debt by more than one-third but faces an uphill challenge to meeting planned expenditure during the current fiscal due to oil and gas prices falling below sub-optimal levels, according to company officials and regulatory filings.

ONGC's outstanding debt of Rs 21,593 crore as on March 31, 2019 has come down to Rs 13,949 crore as on March 31, 2020, as it used revenue from better operations to retire some of the borrowings, according to the company's regulatory filings.

Out of this debt, long-term borrowings account for Rs 2,245 crore which are due for maturity in December 2029.

The company had cash and cash equivalent (including other bank balances) of Rs 968 crore as on March 31, 2020, up from a record low of Rs 504 crore a year back.

Standalone debt-equity ratio at the end of March 31, 2020 is only 0.07, which is considered comfortable. Company officials explained that ONGC has been working on bringing



operational efficiencies and financial discipline and used surplus revenues to repay debt.

"While we ended the 2019-20 fiscal year with a comfortable financial position, we face an uphill challenge during the current 2020-21 financial year. The pandemic has played havoc on oil prices and government mandated gas price is way below cost of production," a senior official said.

ONGC has planned a capital expenditure of over Rs 26,000 crore and meeting that target with the current oil and gas prices will be a challenge, he said.

Another official said the company had taken an impairment loss of Rs 4,899 crore in Q4 FY'20 to

factor in estimated future crude oil and natural gas prices. However, the company believes that oil and gas prices will recover in future and then this impairment loss shall be reversed as and when prices rise, he said.

ONGC once was India's most profitable company with a cash balance of over Rs 10,000 crore. But the fortunes reversed after the company bought the government's 51.11 per cent stake in oil marketing company Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and the Gujarat government's GSPC in a KG-basin gas block.

It funded the Rs 36,915 crore acquisition of 51.11 per cent equity shares in HPCL through internal

funds of Rs 12,034 crore and balance Rs 24,881 crore from borrowed money from commercial banks.

The funding requirement of Rs 7,560 crore for Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation's KG block acquisition was met by borrowing against term deposits.

Its cash and balances dipped to touch a record low of Rs 504 crore in March 2019, down from Rs 1,013 crore in March 2018 and Rs 9,511 crore in March 2017 and Rs 9,957 in March 2016.

"We live in an era of sub-optimal oil prices and government mandated natural gas prices that are way below the cost. The answer to such a scenario is to optimise cost and bring in operational efficiencies," an official said.

He said the company has sufficient lines of credit/ short term fund facilities with banks amounting to Rs 7,800 crore for meeting the working capital or deficit requirements. Further, the company has an overall limit of Rs 10,000 crore for raising funds through commercial paper.

— PTI

Shelf-life of skills now only 2-3 years, says Nasscom chief



U. B. Pravin Rao

Bengaluru, Aug. 9: Nasscom chairman U. B. Pravin Rao on Sunday said the shelf-life of skills is now only two to three years, as he called for continuous, lifelong learning.

As corporates are reinventing themselves, individuals also need to reinvent themselves to stay relevant, said the COO of Infosys.

"Shelf-life of skills is becoming short, two-three years," said Rao, who was addressing the online graduation ceremony hosted by upGrad and IIT-B.

"People need to unlearn, learn new stuff and therefore commit to lifelong learning. This is critical to stay relevant and employable", Rao said. — PTI

BARCLAYS PROBED BY WATCHDOG FOR MONITORING STAFF

EDUARD GISMATULLIN AUG. 9

Barclays Plc is being investigated by the Information Commissioner's Office, a privacy watchdog, on allegations it spied on its workers through a computer monitoring software, the Telegraph reported. It said Barclays faces a maximum fine of 865 million pounds (\$1.1 billion) if it's found to have broken data privacy laws.

The software allowed managers to measure the length of time employees were away from their desks or how long they took to finish tasks, the paper said. — Bloomberg



Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, said in an interview. Private medical practitioners with licences will gain the right to "grow, produce and export marijuana," he said, adding that Thai farmers will gain "more options for income."

Priority will be given to Thai investors, Marut said. "We want to use Thai money for now, especially

collaboration between the government and communities to enhance knowledge, research and production," Marut said. "We don't want foreigners to come in and invest, then reap all the benefits."

The agriculture and tourism sectors are crucial to the local economy. About a third of Thais make their living from rice alone, according to the Thai Rice

Exporters Association. Meanwhile, the wellness tourism sector generated domestic expenditures of \$12 billion in 2017, more than the combined amounts in Indonesia and Malaysia, according to a report by the Global Wellness Institute.

Thailand's economy is likely to contract 8.5 per cent in 2020 amid the global coronavirus pandemic, the biggest decline projected in Asia.

"This will allow more patients to have access to medical marijuana for their ailments and to increase awareness of medical marijuana in Thailand," Traisuree Taisaranakul, a government spokeswoman, said in a statement.

Marijuana cultivation

— Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Domestic cricket likely from Nov.

**New Delhi:** The BCCI is mulling November 19 as tentative date for start of domestic season with Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament but Indian players in various IPL teams won't be able to play first few rounds due to quarantine protocols in place.

The delay in the beginning of the domestic season due to Covid-19 pandemic means that only Mushtaq Ali trophy and Ranji Trophy (December 13-March 10) comprising of 245 games (across the formats with 38 teams) will be played.

There will be no Vijay Hazare Trophy, Duleep Trophy or Challenger Series this year and as of now there is no provision for Irani Cup also.

"This is a tentative list that has been prepared and it has gone for approval of president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah," a BCCI official said.

While this is a draft schedule, it is being asked how the Indian players, who will return from IPL, will play since they will have to be in a 14-day quarantine as per government rules.

— PTI

## Ex-Bagan captain Manitombi dead

**Kolkata:** Former India defender and Mohun Bagan captain Manitombi Singh died at the age of 39 at his native village near Imphal in Manipur on Sunday, club sources said.

Manitombi was suffering from prolonged illness and breathed his last in the early hours of Sunday.

He is survived by his wife and an eight-year-old son.

"Mohun Bagan family is deeply saddened by the untimely demise of former club captain Manitombi Singh. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time. Rest in peace, Manitombi Singh," the club posted on its Twitter handle.

Manitombi was a key member of the Stephen Constantine-coached India Under-23 side that lifted the LG Cup in 2003 by defeating Vietnam 3-2 in Ho Chi Minh City.

It was India's first international triumph since their victory at an eight-nation tournament in Singapore in 1971.

Manitombi also represented India in the 2002 Busan Asian Games. — PTI

## Johnson leads at PGA tourney

**San Francisco:** Dustin Johnson supplied the birdies, eight of them at the PGA Championship, the most he has ever made in his 157 rounds of major championship golf for a 5-under 65 and a one-shot lead.

Brooks Koepka supplied the needle on Saturday.

Koepka recovered from three straight bogeys to salvage a 69 and stay within two shots of a leaderboard more crowded than any of San Francisco's congested highways.

At stake is a chance to become only the seventh player to win the same major three straight times. He surveyed the cast of contenders, and focused on the guy at the top.

The final round at Harding Park figures to be wide open, just like it was on a Saturday so wild that eight players had at least a share of the lead during the third round.

Johnson lost his yardage book and still found his way through an enormous crowd of contenders.

— AFP

## DONCIC HELPS MAVERICKS BEAT BUCKS

**Lake Buena Vista, USA:** Luka Doncic scored 36 points in his NBA-leading 17th triple-double and the Dallas Mavericks scored the last seven points of regulation to force overtime, going on to a 136-132 win over the Milwaukee Bucks on Saturday.

Milwaukee star Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points, 13 rebounds and five blocks before fouling out in the final seconds.

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## EYES ON ICC CHAIR

## Nomination process for top post on agenda

**Dubai, Aug. 9:** Finalising the nomination process to elect Shashank Manohar's successor as the next independent chairman of the world cricket body is the sole agenda for the ICC Board, which will meet virtually on Monday.

It is expected that the entire process irrespective of whether it's an election or unanimous selection will be over by four weeks.

"The meeting on Monday only has nomination process in the agenda. Normally, it is a two week window that is provided for filing nominations," a senior board member said on the condition of anonymity.

Usually in ICC, a two-third majority is required but there could be a few board members who would want it to be a case of simple majority among 17 members.

The 17 board members of ICC comprise of 12 Test playing nations, three associate nations (Malaysia, Scotland, Singapore), chairman (in this case interim) and independent director (Indra Nooyi of Pepsico).

ICC CEO Manu Sawhney is also a part of ICC Board but without voting right.

A candidate can be nominated by a past or present director of ICC but it has to be seconded mandatorily by two current directors. Only then one can enter the election fray.

There have been discussions on whether the a former director nominating an incumbent should remain valid or not.

As far as the candidates are concerned, there are few names, including that of current interim chairman from Singapore Imran Khawaja, are doing rounds.

— PTI



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (left) with a Vivo representative in this file photo.

## Vivo pullout no big deal: Dada

**Delhi, Aug. 9:** India's cricket chief Sourav Ganguly says the Indian Premier League's decision to suspend a lucrative contract with its main sponsor, the Chinese phone maker Vivo, following a deadly border clash between the two nations is "just a blip".

The IPL last week suspended the agreement with Vivo, which signed a five-year contract in 2017 worth more than \$330 million to sponsor the world's richest cricket tourney.

"I wouldn't call it a financial crisis. It is just a little bit of a blip," said Ganguly, the head of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

"BCCI, it's a very strong foundation — the game, the players, the administrators in the past have made this game so strong that BCCI is able to handle all these blips," he said at an online conference on Saturday.

"You keep your other options open. It is like Plan A and Plan B," the

BCCI president added.

The 2020 IPL tournament is due to start in the United Arab Emirates next month.

Vivo said the decision was mutually agreed.

The IPL and BCCI have tie-ups with companies including Paytm, Swiggy, Dream11 and Byju, which all have Chinese investment.

According to reports, the BCCI was in talks with Indian companies over sponsorship deals but was expected to make less

than the \$60 million it would have received from Vivo.

Each of the eight IPL teams stands to lose nearly \$4 million from the lost sponsorship, a team said.

The star-studded IPL Twenty20 league is a huge revenue earner for BCCI and is estimated to generate more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy.

The tournament normally starts in March, but was repeatedly postponed this year because of the pandemic. — AFP

## UNITED, INTER BRACE FOR EUROPA TIES

**Paris, Aug. 9:** Manchester United, Inter Milan and Sevilla headline a quintet of former champions travelling to Germany for a remodelled eight-team straight knockout tournament that will crown the winner of a Europa League campaign heavily disrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic.

All games from the quarterfinals onwards in this season's competition will be played behind closed doors as one-off ties across four venues.

"There are rules and regulations on the bubble that's going to travel. We've got to stick together, stay together in and around the hotel and the training ground," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said. — AFP

**LIVE ON TV**  
**Europa League quarterfinals: Manchester United vs Copenhagen on Sony Ten 2; Inter Milan vs Leverkusen on Sony Ten 1. Both matches from 12.30 am (Tuesday)**



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (centre) vies for the ball with Napoli's Mario Rui (second from left) during their UEFA Champions League Round of 16 second leg match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. Barcelona won 3-0. — AFP

## Messi rises and shines

**Barcelona, Aug. 9:** Just when it looked like Lionel Messi had nowhere to go, the Argentine great bamboozled half of Napoli's team before scoring from an exquisite solo effort that helped Barcelona reach the Champions League quarterfinals in Portugal.

Messi netted Barcelona's second goal in the 3-1 victory that sent the Spanish side past

Napoli on a 4-2 aggregate score on Saturday.

Messi's goal in the 23rd minute was arguably the pick of the 31 he has scored this season in all competitions.

Napoli appeared to have him in check when Messi received the ball all alone outside the right corner of the area. Messi, however, dipped his head and took on the well-placed defense. He kept control of the ball despite being

knocked over while going past three Napoli players.

Meanwhile, Robert Lewandowski scored twice and set up two more goals as Bayern beat Chelsea 4-1 on Saturday for a 7-1 win on aggregate in Munich to book a ticket to Lisbon.

Bayern has won 18 straight competitive games going back to February and hasn't lost since December.

— Agencies

## BRITISH | GRAND PRIX

## Verstappen steals win at Silverstone

**Silverstone, Aug. 9:** Max Verstappen delivered Red Bull's first victory at Silverstone since 2012 on Sunday when he made the most of a superior strategy in sizzling conditions to beat both Mercedes and claim victory in the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix.

It was the Dutchman's first victory of the season and the ninth of his career and the first time a race had been won by a driver who did not start on pole position in seven races since last year's Mexican Grand Prix.

Verstappen owed his victory to a team decision to start the race on hard compound tyres while his main rivals all launched from the grid on mediums, the two Mercedes men struggling to manage tyre-wear throughout the race.

During the race, Red Bull asked him to ease off, but he replied saying "I don't want to drive like a grandma" before the team relented.

Verstappen won by 11.326 seconds ahead of championship leader and six-time champion Lewis Hamilton

● **Max Verstappen went past the Mercedes duo of Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas to win the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone race track on Sunday.**

who passed Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas in the closing stages. The Finn finished third.

"I didn't see that coming, but after the first stint it seemed we were really good on tyres. I didn't have any tyre issues at all — a great day for us," said Verstappen.

Hamilton said: "That was a massive challenge, but congratulations to Red Bull. It was definitely unexpected to have the blistering (on tyres) as hard core as that."

Bottas, who started from pole, said: "Very frustrating for me, to start from pole and finish third. It's not ideal and I think that as a team we were sleeping."

— AFP

## BUTTLER &amp; WOAKES SEE ENGLAND HOME IN TEST

**Manchester, Aug. 9:** Jos Buttler and Chris Woakes led a remarkable comeback for England in a three-wicket victory over Pakistan in the first test on Saturday.

The pair went on the counter-attack at the fall of the fifth wicket in England's second innings and shared a sixth-wicket stand of 139 on day 4 at Old Trafford. No fans were present for the exciting finale due to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

Buttler was out for 75 while Woakes hit the winning runs and was undefeated on 84 as England finished on 277-7 for its 10th highest successful test run chase.

Leg-spinner Yasir Shah (4-99) had put Pakistan in pole position with two wickets as the hosts got off to a shaky start in their second innings. — AFP

**Brief scores:** Pakistan 326 & 169 (Y. Shah 33, A. Shafiq 29, S. Broad 3/37, lost to England 219 & 277/7 in 82.1 ov (J. Buttler 75, C. Woakes 84\*, J. Root 42, Y. Shah 2/74).

## Root praises Jos, Chris for show

**Manchester, Aug. 9:** England captain Joe Root doffed his hat to Jos Buttler after his beleaguered teammate battled concerns over his father's health and fear of losing his place in the side to engineer a dramatic triumph in the first Test against Pakistan here.

After his vital 75-run knock in a partnership of 139 with Chris Woakes that rescued England from 117 for five to register a three-wicket victory, Buttler avoided any discussion on his father Johnny, who had spent the previous evening in hospital.

"It says a huge amount about him as a person to carry that and be able to either use it, or park it only he will know which way he did that and to play in that manner was exceptional. To have that external pressure as well, I'm chuffed to bits with him," Root said.

It was a welcome knock for Buttler who had been struggling with the bat.

Root was also full of praise for Woakes.

"You watch him play and know he's more than capable of three or four more Test hundreds. His game is there. He's got all the attributes, he was clear how he wanted to play Yasir Shah and managed the seamers.

**STOKES SET TO MISS REST OF THE SERIES**

England star Ben Stokes will miss the concluding two Tests against Pakistan for family reasons, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced Sunday.

Stokes's father Ged was admitted to hospital in Johannesburg two days before Christmas last year with a serious illness while following his son's progress with the England cricket team during their tour of South Africa.

Ged, a former Kiwi rugby league international, underwent three operations and spent 37 days in hospital. — Agencies

## Dire need to keep age fraud under check

Hemant Kenkre  
Silly Point

The lovely game of cricket has had its issues over a period of time. Fudging age, particularly in the Asian sub-continent, has been a primary one which has not got the necessary treatment it deserves from Boards that govern the game in countries therein.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced an amnesty scheme for young cricketers to own up any 'fudging' they may have committed if they want to play age-group cricket at a higher level.

The malaise of tamper-

ing with age has been going on for years in India and many 'illegals' have gone scot free, playing with cricketers much younger to them.

They have taken advantage of having strength over talent to bulldoze their way in school and age-group games creating a playing field that was completely lop sided, favouring teams that fielded older boys.

BCCI's edict of offering amnesty is welcome in the sense it will now ensure parity in age-group tournaments where offenders who continue to play ille-

gally will face a two-year ban. The ban will ensure that they will not be allowed to play in any age-group tournaments, local and national, effectively taking away the best of the formative years of their careers.

Being ineligible to play for two seasons is a harsh punishment for youngsters and the BCCI has (over the past few years) been docking the guilty for meddling with age. Last year saw them, and domestic associations, punish more than 200 cricketers including one who had represented India Under-19 in the victorious 2018 World Cup.

Tinkering with age is an old issue that has plagued Indian cricket over the years. As a 16-year old boy, playing the Cooch Behar Trophy, which was an inter-state schools tourna-

ment in those days, I was shocked to see sweets being distributed by the captain of another state school team to celebrate the birth of his son. The incident that happened 47 years ago still rankles in my mind.

Most school cricketers in Mumbai (then Bombay) were aware that they had to compete with 'almost adults' who were masquerading as kids.

While cases, in those days, happened they were not as rampant as what we have been seeing recently. Elder, ineligible, players get more opportunities to represent state age-group teams irrespective of real skills, leaving genuine cricketers in the lurch. Not being in the state squads eventually forces talented youngsters give up the game with parents insist-

ing on spending time on

the children education.

The biggest problem faced by genuine coaches is to persuade parents to let their talented children continue to play the game. Reputed coach, Dinesh Lad, who nurtured young talent like Rohit Sharma, Shardul Thakur and his son Siddesh said that the biggest challenge in his 25-years of coaching at the school level comes from convincing parents.

"I always tell parents that talented youngsters should continue to play at the Under-14 and Under-16 levels to develop their skills for the future and not worry about state team selections. Real talent like Sachin Tendulkar and Rohit Sharma will always find their way irrespective of the inequality," he confided.

Why then has this malaise been allow to take

rampant proportions over the years? The answer lies in career prospects that cricket offers. Earlier it was jobs that talented cricketers got which ensured stability, now parents look at the prospect of a much bigger and better opportunity of their wards likely to be picked for the Indian Premier League (IPL) and get them set for life. Today, playing in the IPL is a more immediate goal set for youngsters than playing for the state or the country, unlike in the past.

BCCI's amnesty scheme is a fabulous move, one that will give errant youngsters an opportunity to get back into the scheme of things and not put obstacles for their immediate future. If one takes a holistic view of the age tampering issue the primary blame lies with

indecorous coaches who get the youngsters (and their gullible parents) to agree to fake certificates that fuddle the age of the cricketer.

The unequal contests eventually lead to ruin with this form of short-term cheating tearing into the fabric of the game. Along with the Board of Control for Cricket in India, many state associations have started to focus on this corruption which is as bad, if not worse, than match fixing and throwing the game.

Hopefully, the amnesty scheme will deter youngsters from taking such illegal shortcuts. To ensure a level playing field, the state associations must also censure errant coaches (the main culprits) with life time bans if any of their wards are found guilty in the future.