

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | MONDAY | 10 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

Max: 29.8°C
Min: 23.3°C
RH: 88%
Rainfall: 3 mm

Forecast: Cloudy sky, light to moderate rains likely. Max/Min temp. 31/23 °C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+61,572)	(+1,011)
22,12,484	44,457

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,982)	(+12)
TS: 79,495	627
(+10,820)	(+97)
AP: 2,27,860	2,036

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

1,99,20,351

DEATHS

7,31,729

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

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IAF officer completes space mission training



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Violence, chaos must not prevail in Lebanon

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IPL sponsor pullout no big deal: Ganguly



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Cong: Sonia will stay interim prez

New Delhi, Aug. 9: The Congress on Sunday said Sonia Gandhi will continue as interim president till such time a “proper procedure” is implemented in the “not too distant future” to elect a party chief.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi, during an online media briefing, said it was true that Sonia Gandhi’s tenure as interim chief comes to an end on August 10, one year after she assumed the post, but it did not mean that the seat automatically falls vacant that day.

“Sonia Gandhi is the president, she will continue till such time as a proper procedure is implemented and it will be implemented in the not too distant future,” he told reporters.

“Yes, her tenure comes to an end on August 10. But be rest assured that there is a process which goes through the CWC (Congress Working Committee). This will be followed in the near future and a result will

● **PARTY SPOKESMAN** Abhishek Singhvi said it is true that Sonia Gandhi’s term as interim president comes to an end today, but the seat won’t automatically fall vacant

emerge,” he said.

The procedure is written in the Congress’ constitution and the party is committed to follow it, Mr Singhvi said, adding that it was being done and information will be shared on it soon.

Asked about the confusion over whether Mrs Gandhi’s term ends tomorrow or there is no deadline for when the term of an interim president ends, he said it is very clear that neither nature nor politics, nor political parties, permit or tolerate a vacuum.

“Just like nature abhors a vacuum, political parties cannot function in a vacuum. It is true that the tenure is expiring tomorrow. There is a laid down procedure for elections,” Singhvi said. — *PTI*

Plane crash black box probe begins

New Delhi, Aug. 9: Investigators on Sunday began examining the black box of a Boeing-737 that overshot a runway on its second attempt, killing 18 people in the worst aviation accident in a decade.

In an interview on Sunday, Arun Kumar, head of DGCA, said India would open the recovered transcripts to international investigators, as well as manufacturer Boeing.

“Only after conducting a thorough and unbiased probe, can we tell what happened,” Kumar said.

Late on Saturday, Kumar said in another

interview that the pilot made an aborted landing attempt into a headwind and then made a second approach with a tail wind, landing 1,000 metres down the runway.

An air traffic control official familiar with the crash confirmed this version of events, adding it is unusual to attempt a landing with a tailwind, typically used for takeoffs.

“The length of the runway is around 2,700 metres and the plane touched the ground after crossing 1,000 metres, leaving less room for a halt,” the official said. — *Reuters*

Active Covid cases rising fast

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 9

There appears to be a slow but steady rise in the ratio of Covid-19 victims being added to the ‘active patients’ category in Telangana state, compared to the average number of fresh cases every day.

Active patients are those who are under some form of observation or treatment; whether in home or in institutional quarantine, or in hospitals receiving more attentive treatment.

The situation is expected to continue for a few more weeks until the state

NOTHING POSITIVE ABOUT IT		
	July 24-July 31	Aug. 1- Aug. 8
Fresh cases	13,960	12,818
Daily average	1,745	1,602
Active cases added	6,077	4,322
Average active cases	759	540

begins witnessing a significant drop in Covid-19 cases being discovered each day.

While the higher rate of new case additions is clearly the primary factor for the increase in the number of active patients, another could be that a sig-

nificant portion of them could be taking slightly longer to recover before officially being let go from the records as a patient.

While the ratio of growth in active cases, compared to the overall growth in cases, was 2.29 between July 24 and July 31, this

rose to 2.9 for the period between August 1 and August 8.

The state had 11,677 active cases and 50,826 cases on July 24, these numbers were at 17,754 and 64,786 on July 31. Similarly, the state had 18,547 active cases on August 1 with 66,677 total cases, these figures rose to 22,869 and 79,495 on August 8.

The daily average rise in active cases for July 24 to July 31 was 759 while the new cases rose at an average of 1,745. These figures for the August 1-August 8 period stood at 540 and 1,602 respectively.

license fees while setting up commercial establishments. They were not even meeting minimum standards pertaining fire safety and other parameters. Sources said that at times officials were forced to refrain from taking action against violators, particularly because of interference of local political leaders and lawmakers. Despite several reminders, officials said that the commercial establishment owners did not come forward to apply for trade licence and fire safety certificate while giving Covid-19 lockdown as an excuse.

However, corporation officials now claim that they will start a special drive and ensure trade

4G in J&K to get delayed further

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Restoration of 4G Internet services in Jammu and Kashmir could get delayed further with appointment of new Lt Governor Manoj Sinha.

Sources claim he is expected to review the entire issue in detail again. High speed internet services in Valley were suspended for over a year now after Article 370 was abrogated.

Suspension of high speed 4G internet services

in the Valley has remained a highly contentious issue as there were increasing demands from various quarters that these services be restored.

However, the move was strongly opposed by multiple security and intelligence agencies on the grounds that this will trigger a fresh round of terror and false propaganda. The matter has also been pending in the Supreme Court in view of some petitions being filed for restoring the services.



DEF MIN PLACES IMPORT BAR ON 101 PLATFORMS

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday anno-unced a “negative list” of 101 defence platforms and weapons whose import will be banned progressively, starting December 2020, to boost the indigenisation of defence production under the “Atma Nirbhar Bharat” initiative. The negative list includes artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircraft, light combat helicopters (LCHs) and radars.

By December 2025, the import of all defence items on the list will be totally barred, while 69 will not be imported from December 2020 itself.

The defence ministry claimed with this embargo, contracts worth ₹4 lakh crore will be placed with domestic industry in the next five to seven years. Of these, equipment and weapons of ₹1,30,000 crore each are likely for the Army and Air Force, while almost ₹1,40,000 crore worth of items are anticipated by the Navy.

10 Covid patients housed in Vijayawada hotel die in fire

Short circuit in reception spread to first, second floors at 5 am

MD. ILYAS | 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



The Swarna Palace hotel in Vijayawada which was gutted resulting in the death of at least 10 Covid-19 patients on Sunday due to a short-circuit in the hotel’s reception area.

● **THERE WAS** no way the fire department and NDRF could 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.

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.

OTHER STORIES

COVID-19 +VE CASES TOUCH 80K-MARK IN TS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 9

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.

Of the fresh cases, 463 were in the GHMC limits while 1,519 were from the rest of the state. Medchal-Malkajgiri and Ranga Reddy districts continued to registered new cases in triple figures with 141 and 139 respectively.

The department said as on August 8, the number of active cases in the state was at 22,869 of whom 16,112 were in either home or institutional isolation. As many as 1,669 persons comprised the number of recoveries.

While a total of 22,925 tests were conducted in the 24-hour period ending 8 pm on August 8, results of another 1,509 tests were pending, according to the daily Covid-19 bulletin issued by the department.

It also said that of the 8,436 beds available in 56 Covid-19 designated government hospitals, only 2,512 were occupied. Of the 6,846 Covid-19 beds available in 91 private hospitals, 4,245 were occupied.

■ **THE DEPARTMENT** said as on August 8, the number of active cases in the state was at 22,869 of whom 16,112 were in either home or institutional isolation.

HISTORY SHEETER STABBED TO DEATH IN HYD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 9

A 26-year-old history-sheeter was stabbed to death by a group of people at Chaderghat on Saturday night.

The police has taken five suspects into custody for questioning for the murder of Sajid alias Chaha, 26, who was involved in property offences. A suspect sheet was opened against him at the Chaderghat police station.

On Saturday night, Sajid and a group of people headed by Abdul Khader had a fight at Malkapet railway tracks. Sometime later, Sajid was stabbed by the accused in the abdomen at Azampura Chaman. He was taken to Osmania General Hospital, where the doctors declared him brought dead.

"It is found that Sajid and another group led by Kahder had some petty disputes, over which they are suspected to have attacked him. Five suspects are being questioned," said Chaderghat inspector P. Sateesh.

■ **ON SATURDAY** night, Sajid and a group of people headed by Abdul Khader had a fight at Malkapet railway tracks. Sometime later, Sajid was stabbed by the accused in the abdomen at Azampura Chaman.

Schools chalk out plans for online classes

However, more than 50 per cent students will be unable to access education: Student federation

PULI SHARAT
KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 9

Schools in erstwhile Karimnagar district are making preparations to reopen after remaining shut for the past five months following the outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic.

There are 4,42,226 students studying in 3,573 schools in the erstwhile Karimnagar district. Of them, 1,37,955 students are enrolled in 1,150 schools of present Jagtial district, 1,43,275 students in around 1,000 schools in Karimnagar district, 89,226 students in 773 schools in Peddapalli district, and 71,781 students in about 650 schools of Rajanna Sircilla district.

When the education departments in these four districts conducted surveys about the possibility of conducting online classes, they realised that more than half of the government school students do not have internet facility, 40 percent of them do not have a television at their homes and 10 percent do not even have power supply at their houses. Further, only 60 percent of all the schools have cable network, while only 22 percent have DTH (Direct To Home) systems.

State general secretary of Telugu Nadu Student Federation P. Ravinder said under the circumstances, it will be very difficult to provide online education to almost 50 percent of the students. Moreover, running of online classes will affect students psychologically as also their vision.

On the pretext of conducting online classes, many private educational institutions are collecting

■ **RUNNING OF** online classes will affect students psychologically and their vision also.

■ **ON THE** pretext of conducting online classes, many private educational institutions are collecting high fee

high fee, Ravinder alleged.

He pointed out that many parents had lost jobs due to Coronavirus and are facing severe hardships. They are in no position to pay fee for their children to study online.

State president of Telangana Recognised Schools Management Association Yadagiri Shekar Rao, however, said they are organising online classes following pressure from parents, who have realised that given the circumstances, this is the only way their children could be provided education.

Moreover, students are also slowly getting habituated to this kind of education environment and are able to focus on their studies, he said.

Some of the private educational institutions are also gearing up to start virtual classes using tools like Zoom, Google hang-out and Microsoft team. Some of them are also trying out Seesaw, Google suite and Youtube videos to record classes and teach their students.

Chairman of Alphonse Educational Institutions, Dr. V. Narendar Reddy said it is the responsibility of every educational institution to ensure that each student benefits, whether by way of virtual or real means of education.



WHEN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS IN THESE FOUR DISTRICTS CONDUCTED SURVEYS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CONDUCTING ONLINE CLASSES, THEY REALISED THAT MORE THAN HALF OF THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE INTERNET FACILITY.

40% students do not have a television at their homes.

10% do not even have power supply at their houses.

60% of all the schools have cable network.

22% of all the schools have Direct To Home (DTH).



SCHOOLING THEM

District	Schools	Students
Jagtial	1,150	1,37,955
Karimnagar	1,000	1,43,275
Peddapalli	773	89,226
Rajanna Sircilla	650	71,781
Nizamabad	2,137	2,40,000
Khammam	1,619	1,98,994
Bhadradi-Kothagudem	1,650	1,51,542
Old Adilabad	4,230	2,50,000

Clarity sought on reopening of schools

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, AUG. 9

Managements of educational institutions as well as parent groups want clarity from the central and state governments on reopening of educational institutes across the country, with Covid-19 not showing any signs of waning anytime in near future. There is speculation that schools and colleges may start classes from September 1. But the mode of education is not yet known.

Private educational institutions are already holding online classes. But their attendance is not more than 50 percent. The reason being students not being serious about online education and many of them have no laptops or smartphones.

Khammam Study Circle correspondent G. V. Narasimha Rao says, "Students will focus on online classes only after the government makes them mandatory. Authorities will have to explain that there is no other alternative except online classes. Only then will they sit for the class."

There are also proposals that students from 10th to 12th should attend classes on the school premises. But private institutions are wary of this idea, as Coronavirus is now spreading even in rural areas. K. Krishna, who runs a private school says, "We can ensure distancing between students in classes. But they may catch the virus on the way to school. If



A mandal parishad primary school at T.L. Pet in Enkoor mandal in Khammam district

How can one expect a tribal family residing around a forest to purchase a smartphone for their kid? Even if they do, will the internet reach remote areas? Thirty percent of students in Khammam and Bhadradi-Kothagudem districts come from such areas. These students have no other choice but classroom study. The government should evolve a rational policy for conducting classes during the crisis

— N. KONDAL RAO, ACTIVIST FROM PALONCHA

any kid tests positive for the virus, government officials as well as parents will find fault only with the management. We are not ready to face such blame."

Parents, who are a major stakeholder, too are worried about their children commuting to schools, giving the rising trend of Covid-19. The official figure of Coronavirus is expected to touch one crore by

September. As of now, parents have no interest in sending their kids to schools.

There are two major issues before parents; one is school fee and the other purchase of smart phone or laptop for their children, so that they can attend online classes. G. Madhavi, mother of a 10th class student, says, "It is better to conduct online

classes till the spread of Coronavirus is checked." But for parents staying in rural areas, this is a costly choice.

N. Kondal Rao, a social activist of Paloncha, says, "How can one expect a tribal family residing around a forest to purchase a smartphone for their kid? Even if they do, will the internet reach remote areas? Thirty per-

cent of students in Khammam and Bhadradi-Kothagudem districts come from such areas. These students have no other choice but classroom study. The government should evolve a rational policy for conducting classes during the crisis"

THERE ARE TWO MAJOR ISSUES BEFORE PARENTS; ONE IS SCHOOL FEE AND THE OTHER PURCHASE OF SMART PHONE OR LAPTOP FOR THEIR CHILDREN, SO THAT THEY CAN ATTEND ONLINE CLASSES.

The state government wants to save the academic year at any cost. At the same time, students, parents and teachers need to be safe. K. Sravani, a lecturer in an engineering college says, "School managements, students, parents, teachers and government should come to an understanding to get over the crisis. Students should be prepared to study more within their houses. Parents, teachers and the government should work in this direction."

Meanwhile, schools are not willing to cut down on their fee, saying they have to pay teachers and bear the running costs.

Contract medical staff strike, govt ignores

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 9

Contractual medical employees went on a day's strike at government hospitals all over the state on Sunday. The protest was against the non-fulfilment of the promises made to them by the government. There were no signs of response from the government during the strike.

Contract workers at government hospitals and primary health centres sought to bring to the notice of the government the promises which they were made, which had led them to withdraw the agitation in July. Those promises have not been implemented so far. The employees warned the government that if the promises are not implemented, they would go on an indefinite strike, said Telangana State Medical Contract Employees and Workers Union president M. Narisimha.

All the employees under contract in 24 government hospitals and primary health centres

took part in the protest, said Hasina Begum, who works in patient care at Niloufer Hospital, and is the union general secretary. She added that keeping in the view that patients should not suffer because of the strike, the employees had chosen a Sunday because of the less flow of patients.

The promises which the government failed to deliver on include the Chief Minister's promise of an incentive of 10 per cent to medical staff and 15-day quarantine for staff working in Covid-19 hospitals. The health minister had promised a risk allowance of ₹500 for paramedical and ₹300 for sanitation, patient care and security personnel per day for those working in the Covid-19 hospitals.

None of these have been delivered showing utter disregard for frontline workers in the pandemic who are already treated poorly as contractual labour. The indifference of the government is shocking to say the least.

TECH | BARRIER

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, AUG. 9

Many parents and children are not fully prepared for online classes to be launched by the state government soon. However, the state government yet to officially announce the reopening of schools and colleges and conducting of online classes.

Many private schools have started online classes on their own to see that student strength is intact and create a feeling among parents that their kids are learning something even as schools are closed.

But many private schools have stopped online classes following complaints that the private school managements forced the parents to pay the pending school fees or fresh school fees for the new academic year and purchase the books in the schools.

■ **THE STATE** government has to create awareness among parents and children about online classes before introducing them in the schools.

The state government has to create awareness among parents and children about online classes before introducing them in the schools.

There are language and technology barriers among the parents and children and many parents are not familiar with the operation of online classes on smart mobiles, tablets and computers.

However, private schools' managements are preparing to start online classes and are collecting details about electronic gadgets available with the students.

It is said that the state

government is planning to start schools and colleges from next month and efforts are being made to start classes for college students first and gradually for school students.

According to sources, even the state government has conducted a survey to know how many students have electronic gadgets to start online classes.

The state government is of the opinion that it is high time to start schools and run classes online to save the academic year.

However, it seems that parents do not support online classes and it was difficult for many parents since they do not have smartphones and laptops and cannot afford them, are often technologically and generally illiterate and unable to monitor these classes.

Rakesh of Adilabad said "Many parents are not fully prepared for online classes for their children.



Tribal students outside a school in old Adilabad district. (file photo)

The state government should create awareness about online classes and operations on smartphones."

He said it would be good if the state government prepare parents and children for online classes

before introducing them in the schools officially as part of the re-opening of schools.

IN BRIEF VARIOUS PUJAS IN BHADRACHALAM DURING SRAVANA

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHADRACHALAM, AUG. 9

The priests of Bhadrachalam temple are organising various puja programmes during the last 10 days of the 'Savana Masam'.

Dasavidha Pushpanjali 'Seva' will be performed on August 14 on *Savana Sukravaram* in the Laxmi Thayar Goddess temple in Bhadrachalam.

Abhishekam with *pancham-rithalu* will be performed to the Goddess amidst the chanting of the Laxmi *stotram*.

It is decided to hold *Smartha Krishnastami* on August 11 and *Gokulastami* on August 12. *Suapana Thirumanajanam* will be held in Beda Mandapam to celebrate idols on *Punarvasu Nakshatram* on August 17.

2-KG OF BLACK TURMERIC ROOTS SEIZED, 8 HELD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, AUG. 9

Eight persons were taken into custody for possessing the roots of the endangered black turmeric in Khammam on Sunday. The taskforce recovered ₹2.16 lakh cash, seven cellphones and two kilograms of black turmeric roots from them.

The accused include Durgam Suresh, G. Jagadeesh, T. Venkatesh, K. Prathap, G.V. Ramana, S. Mahesh, B. Guruvaya and Keerthi Mahesh. ACP Venkatrao said that the eight accused had met at a hotel in Khammam to finalise on a sale deal. Police were tipped off about it and raided the hotel wherein they were arrested.

Black turmeric is a rare herb. In 2016 the Indian agriculture department listed it as an endangered plant species. Black turmeric is sometimes grown as an ornamental plant, but its roots have been used for medicinal and religious purposes for centuries. It is said that black turmeric offers benefits similar to the orange variety and contains higher concentrations of curcumin than any other Curcuma species. In Hindi, the herb is called Kali Haldi.

Black turmeric is native to northeastern and central India and is used by many tribal communities in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The herb is sold in its fresh or dried form in markets across India and southeast Asia.

Efforts are on to protect and conserve black turmeric in Odisha.

DON'T DESTROY WAQF BOARD LANDS: AIMIM

DC CORRESPONDENT,
JAGTIAL, AUG. 9

The town president of the 'All India Majlis-e-Ithadul-Muslimeen' (AIMIM) Nadeem Younus alleged that the ruling party leaders along with the officials are trying to destroy the 70-year-old burial grounds belonging to the Waqf board present in the Yellampalli village of Pegadapalli mandal in Jagtial district.

Speaking to the media, Mr Nadeem alleged that the Yellapur village sarpanch along with her husband and other ruling party leaders destroyed the Waqf board lands in Yellapur village. When the elders of the Muslim community tried to stop them, they threatened to kill them if they interfered in the matter.

People should respect the integrity and unity of Hindu-Muslim who were living in peace and harmony.

With the negligent behaviour of the state the waqf board and chairman Saleem such incidents are taking place across the state and in the district. He should step down from his post voluntarily when he cannot protect the waqf board land, he said.

Mr Nadeem said that the issue was brought to the notice of the AIMIM party president, Asaduddin Owaisi who warned them of severe consequences if they do not stop their illegal acts.

A complaint was also given to the district collector G.Ravi and police commissioner V.B. Kamalasan Reddy requesting them to take immediate action against the Yellapur village sarpanch and her husband, he informed.

Mr Nadeem warned of taking up a massive programme in the name of Chalo Yellapur village, if they do not stop the destruction of the 70-year-old burial ground.

+ve cases on the rise in Mancherial

Many working in the Singareni Collieries infected

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
MANCHERIAL, AUG. 9

Coronavirus is spreading rapidly in Mancherial district with as many as 1,067 positive cases and 17 deaths till August 8, making it one of the worst Covid-affected districts in North Telangana. The disease is also rapidly spreading in rural areas of the district.

A considerable number of patients are those working with Singareni Collieries at its underground and opencast mines. Nearly 150 Singareni personnel have tested positive. Majority of them are undergoing treatment at private hospitals in Karimnagar, Warangal and Hyderabad.

■ **NEARLY 150** Singareni personnel have tested positive. Majority of them are undergoing treatment at private hospitals in Karimnagar, Warangal and Hyderabad.

Many patients are also in home quarantine but are not revealing their health status owing to social stigma and repercussions from the locality residents.

The surge in Covid-19 cases started in Mancherial district with lifting of the lockdown. Many of the district's citizens started returning to their villages, particularly from Mumbai and Hyderabad, after lifting of the lock-

down. Till then Coronavirus was under control within the district.

There are fears that many more cases would come up once the number of tests being conducted are increased.

There are also suspicions that the administrative authorities are under-reporting the number of cases in Mancherial district.

Many of the workers of Singareni Collieries are not showing any interest in attending to their duties for fear of catching Covid-19 in the mines from fellow workers.

People are also afraid of falling ill, as private hospitals are exploiting patients by collecting huge amounts for treatment.

RLS GETS NOD TO MANUFACTURE FAVIRAVIR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, AUG. 9

Raghava Life Sciences Limited (RLS) received Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) approval to manufacture Covid-19 anti-viral drug Favipiravir.

RLS managing director P. Lohit Reddy, a native of Khammam, said that pharma companies like Lupin, Hetero, Cipla and Sun Pharma have recently launched oral pills of Covid-19 drug under their own brand names at competitive prices.

"Favipiravir is widely being considered successful in treating patients. At present, the medicine is currently being prescribed to Covid-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms. Glenmark's data from clinical trials involving 150 subjects showed that about 70 per cent of the patients being treated with the drug achieved clinical cure by the fourth day of the study, compared to about 45 per cent in the standard care group."

RLS got approval for its drug under New Drugs and Clinical Trials, 2019.

RLS, which also specialises in Contract Research Organisation projects, received approval to supply the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) to formulation companies. "We have focused on developing API with raw materials sourced within India to reduce dependency on procurement from China," Lohit said.

■ **At present, the medicine is currently being prescribed to Covid-19 patients.**



Adivasis play the drums as they walk through their village on International Adivasi Day in old Adilabad district on Sunday.

Adivasi Day celebrated

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHADRACHALAM, AUG. 9

The national Adivasi Sanghala Ikya Vedika adopted 10 resolutions in the spirit of Komaram Bheem on the occasion of Adivasi Day on Sunday.

Ikya Vedika convenor, Chanda Lingaiah, said that 13 organisations from various states including the Adivasi Samkshema Parishad, the Gondvana Samkshema Parishad, the Akhila Bharata Vikas Parishad and the AP Girijana Abhyudaya Sangham attended the programme.

"Adivasis of all states are not happy with the implementation of acts aimed at tribal development. Revisiting of the acts and their implementation should be done at this juncture. The acts like 1959 and one of 1970 regulation were among them," Lingaiah said.

Representatives of the organisations met in Bhadrachalam and discussed their problems.

The 10 resolutions include reviving GO no. 3 that stipulates allocation of all jobs to the tribals in agency areas, the central government filing a review petition in the apex court on the ROFR act, implementing decisions taken under PESA (Panchayat Extension in Scheduled Areas) on par with the acts passed by parliament and implementing the acts of 1950 and 1970.

Ikya Vedika demanded that the evacuees of the Polavaram project should be given compensation, said Lingaiah. A solution is required on the conflicts between the tribal sects and the government should solve it.

Tribal cultures and traditions should be protected and Koya, Gond, Santhali and other tribal languages should be included in the list of regional languages.

Many villages with large Adivasi populations should be brought under the Scheduled Areas and the recommendation of the Sri Krishna Committee that the demand of the Adivasis fighting for a separate state should be addressed by the central government.



Asifabad MLA Atram Sakku perform special puja and pay tributes to Kumaram Bheem on International Adivasi Day in the Kumarambheem Asifabad district on Sunday.

Amidst Covid, Adivasi villages come alive to drum beats

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, AUG. 9

Adivasis observed International Adivasi Day on Sunday and paid rich tributes to Kumaram Bheem and other tribal legends who fought for their rights in the erstwhile Adilabad district.

Traditional drum beats reverberated in the villages and many children dressed like Kumaram Bheem carried wooden guns during the celebrations.

Adilabad collector Sikta Patnaik, ITDA project officer Bhavesh Mishra attended the event and promised to resolve the problems faced by the Adivasis.

Asifabad MLA Atram Sakku and ZP chairperson Kova Laxmi also participated in the celebrations.

■ **TRADITIONAL DRUM** beats reverberated in the villages and many children dressed like Kumaram Bheem carried wooden guns during the celebrations.

Meanwhile, Thudum Debba (Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samiti) leaders stressed the need for unity among the Adivasi groups to protect their constitutional rights.

Leaders of Thudum Debba, Adivasi Mahila Sangham and Adivasi Sankshema Parishad participated in the event.

Thudum Debba Adilabad district president Godam Ganesh demanded restoration of

GO No 3, which provides for 100 per cent reservation for tribals in teachers jobs in agency areas, and removal of Lambadas from the ST list.

He also demanded patta to podu land cultivators and inclusion of non-agency Adivasi villages in the ambit of agency areas for the effective implementation of 1/70. Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna paid rich tributes to Kumarambheem in Adilabad town.

BJP Adilabad district president Payal Shankar, Congress leaders Sajid Khan and Madavi Raju also paid rich tributes to Kumarambheem on the occasion. International Adivasi Day was also observed in Nirmal and Mancherial districts.

■ **THE 10 RESOLUTIONS** include reviving GO no. 3 that stipulates allocation of all jobs to the tribals in agency areas, the central government filing a review petition in the apex court on the ROFR act, implementing decisions taken under PESA (Panchayat Extension in Scheduled Areas) on par with the acts passed by parliament and implementing the acts of 1950 and 1970.

Bizman held for fake land papers

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA
T. | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 9

A city-based businessman who complained against revenue officials for demanding a bribe was arrested by the Hyderabad Central Crime Station police on Sunday for allegedly creating fake documents of land and trying to claim its ownership.

In June, Syed Abdul Khaled of Mir Alam Mandi had complained to the Anti-Corruption Bureau that Shaikpet revenue inspector K. Nagarjuna Reddy was demanding a ₹30-lakh bribe to settle the ownership of a parcel of land of 4.865 sq yards located at Road No. 14 of Banjara Hills.

Following the arrest of Nagarjuna Reddy while taking ₹15 lakh, as part of the bribe, the ACB officials also arrested sub-inspector Ravinder who was working at Banjara Hills police station for demanding a ₹3 lakh bribe. Subsequently, raids

were conducted at the house of tahsildar Ch Sujatha and she was arrested on June 8.

About 10 days after Sujatha's arrest, her husband Vijay Kumar committed suicide by jumping from a building at Gandhinagar.

The CCS police said that the ACB officials had lodged a complaint against Syed Abdul Khaled and his legal adviser A. Ashok Reddy, stating that Khaled involved in forging the documents and attempted to grab government land.

The accused had claimed that his father purchased the land in 1969, and fabricated the documents.

The revenue department officials had filed complaints against the accused duo at Golconda and Banjara Hills police station for similar offences.

On Sunday, Khaled and Ashok were arrested and further investigation is underway by the while collar offences wing of the CCS, said the officials.

WILL FIGHT FOR SHARE OF KRISHNA WATERS, SAYS KTR

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 9

TRS working president and industries minister K.T. Rama Rao has warned private hospitals against forcing Covid-19 patients to pay hefty bills.

Responding to questions from Twitterati on the Covid-19 pandemic and other issues during an interactive session, #AskKTR, on Sunday, Rama Rao said the state government had already taken action against erring hospitals and will not hesitate to move against more of them.

Replying to a question about the stand of the state government on the Pothireddypadu issue, with regard to the Andhra Pradesh project, the minister said "we will fight for our rightful share of the Krishna waters. Already an SLP has been filed in the Supreme Court by the state government."

■ **GOVERNMENT HAS** taken action against erring hospitals.

QUIT INDIA | DAY Special shawl, gold coin given to Anumala Narsaiah

90-year-old freedom fighter felicitated

DC CORRESPONDENT,
SIRCILLA, AUG. 9

Zilla parishad chairperson Nyalakonda Aruna and additional collector R. Anjaiah felicitated 90-year-old freedom fighter Anumala Narasaiah with a special shawl and a gold coin on the occasion of Quit India Day at his residence in Nimmapally village of Konaraopet mandal in Rajanna Sircilla district on Sunday.

Ms Aruna said that she felt happy to felicitate the freedom fighter on the orders from Rashtrapathi Bhavan.

Felicitations of such freedom fighters would help remind the present generation of the sacrifices made by them to free the country from foreign rule, she said.

Mr Anjaiah said that every year freedom fighters were felicitated by the President of India in the Rashtrapathi Bhavan on Quit India Day. This year, the district collector proposed the name of Anumala Narsaiah for the honour.

Keeping in view the pre-



ZP chairperson N. Aruna and additional collector R. Anjaiah felicitate freedom fighter A. Narasaiah on the occasion of Quit India Day at Nimmapally village of Konaraopet mandal in Rajanna Sircilla district on Sunday.

vailling Covid-19 pandemic, the Centre decided to felicitate freedom fighters at their respective houses on behalf of the President and issued orders to the district collectors con-

cerned. A. Gatla Chandraiah, SES director Tirupati and tahsildar Narendar were among those who were present on the occasion.



The gold coin given as a token of appreciation.

SHORT TAKES

MAN KILLED IN
TIGER ATTACK IN
CHANDRAPUR

Chandrapur, Aug. 9: A shepherd has been killed by a tiger in the Bramhapuri forest range in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra, an official said on Sunday.

The incident occurred on Saturday evening when the victim, Annaji Kuthe, was grazing cattle, he said, adding that the body was spotted by villagers in night. A total of 18 people have been killed in Chandrapur district so far this year by tigers, the official said. In 2019, 23 people had fallen prey to big cats.

BJP RIDDEN WITH
FACTIONALISM,
SAYS GEHLOT

Jaipur, Aug. 9: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday questioned the shifting of BJP MLAs to Gujarat, saying the opposition party was ridden with factionalism.

His comments came in the wake of the BJP herding its 18 MLAs in the past two days to party-ruled Gujarat ahead of the Rajasthan assembly session beginning August 14. The BJP had claimed that their MLAs were being harassed by police and the administration at the behest of the Congress government in the state.

Gehlot, on the other hand, defended the stay of Congress legislators at a Jaisalmer hotel, saying the party required to keep them together to thwart horse-trading. "But, what is worrying the BJP? They are herding their legislators to three-four places. I see a big split in them," Gehlot told reporters in Jaisalmer.

Lashing out at the opposition party, Gehlot said the "tradition they are setting up is dangerous to democracy." He said while BJP is trying to topple his government, the government is making efforts to save lives amid the Coronavirus crisis. Unfortunately, such people sitting in power are weakening democracy, which we saved for the past 70 years, Gehlot said.

11 PAK MIGRANTS
FOUND DEAD IN
RAJASTHAN

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. A member of the family, however, 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 happened in the night," said Superintendent of Police (Rural) Rahul Barhat. "We are yet to ascertain the cause and means of death. They appeared to have committed suicide by consuming some chemical in the night," Barhat said.

He said there was a smell of some chemical in the hut, suggesting they consumed something. The family belonging to the Bhil community had come to India from Pakistan's Sindh province 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.

ED GRILLS RHEA'S
BROTHER FOR
18 HOURS

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 9

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) questioned Showik Chakraborty, brother of actor Rhea Chakraborty, for about 18 hours and has summoned the actress again for questioning on Monday in connection with the money laundering case linked to the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Following questioning of Rhea on Friday, the agency is probing the trail of ₹2.5 crore worth fixed deposit of the late actor, to ascertain if it was diverted to Chakraborty. The interrogation has hinted towards the possibility of the money having been allegedly siphoned off with the help of her chartered accountant (CA).

The ED officials said the responses given by the brother sister duo was largely incomplete that gave rise to many questions. The team questioning them has hence sought for another round of questioning and Chakraborty has again been summoned on Monday.

PMO sets deadline for Naga talks

Sources stated that an accord will be signed in September after surrendering weapons

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

● **THE SECURITY** sources said the interlocutor and NSCN (I-M) negotiators may have more than one or two rounds of meetings before finalisation of the modalities of the Naga pact for which the NSCN (I-M), the working committee of Naga National Political Groups and other stakeholders will be the signatories.

● **SAYING THAT** the Prime Minister's Office had set a September deadline for the final settlement of all Naga political issues

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.

Clarifying that the Covid-19 situation had delayed the peace process, the sources said the government had already rejected the demand for a separate flag and constitution for Nagaland, but the NSCN (I-M) was still insisting on discussing these issues. Saying these two contentious issues may be left for negotiations between the state and Central governments after the signing of the accord, the sources said a vested interest group was working overtime to derail the peace process. "As Naga peace talks started in 1997, a vested interest group is already developed and active. They know they can't derail the peace process so they have been working hard to ensure that the status quo is maintained," the sources said, while rejecting media reports making claims such as a change of interlocutor to the NSCN (I-M) refusing to join the talks, etc.

About the talks being held in New Delhi instead of Kohima, the sources said the decision to hold the talks in New Delhi was taken by Mr Ravi given the health issues of 86-year-old NSCN (I-M) general secretary Th Muivah, who is now under treatment in New Delhi.

The security sources said the interlocutor and NSCN (I-M) negotiators may have more than one or two rounds of meetings before finalisation of the modalities of the Naga pact for which the NSCN (I-M), the working committee of Naga National Political Groups and other stakeholders will be the signatories.

It is significant that the Naga insurgency has been one of India's oldest conflicts. Right from Independence, the Naga groups have asserted their distinct identity and sought to break away from the Indian Union. Led by Angami Zipo

Phizo, the movement for secession took a violent turn in the 1950s. When some elements signed a peace accord with the government, a more radical outfit — the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) — was set up under the leadership of T. Muivah, Isak Swu and S.S. Khaplang. The group later split.

In 1997, New Delhi began engaging closely with the NSCN, led by Isak and Muivah (I-M). A ceasefire was declared. Multiple rounds of talks were held. Violence dipped — even though the insurgents maintained a parallel government in the state. And in August 2015, a framework agreement was signed that has not only managed to neutralise the Naga extremists but also shattered the backbone of the insurgency across the entire Northeast. A distinct evolution in the Naga position is visible, the security sources added.

CONG LEADER
BOOKED FOR
TAMPERING
PM'S PICTURE

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOVAL, AUG. 9

Police in Indore on Sunday lodged an FIR against former minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress unit working president, Jitu Patwari, for portraying Prime Minister Narendra Modi in poor light by posting a morphed photograph of him in social media and making 'objectionable' remarks against him.

Police booked the Congress leader, said to be close to ex-AICC president, Rahul Gandhi, under sections 188 (Disobedience to official order) and 464 (making a false document) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) following a complaint lodged by Indore Lok Sabha member, Shankar Lalwani, and several other BJP leaders.

Token of appreciation



Internationally acclaimed sand artist Narayan Sahu pays tribute to Doctors, nurses and police for their dedicated and valuable service round the clock during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic through his sand artwork at phoenix mills palladam lower parel in Mumbai on Sunday.

— RAJESH JADHAV

Virus cases in India
cross 22-lakh mark

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

India crossed the 22 lakh cases mark on Sunday. On Saturday, India had recorded 65,788 cases, the highest so far on a given day.

The biggest contributors to the spike were Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh both of which reported over 10,000 cases in a single day while numbers are rising in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar and West Bengal. Delhi, where the number of cases has fallen impressively, is again reporting a high number of cases. However, Delhi health minister said the rise in Delhi numbers is due to persons from outside the city coming to the capital for testing and treatment which is leading to the increase in numbers.

Union health ministry officials said such high numbers of positive cases are due to higher testing. In a new high, India has scaled the peak of testing more than 7 lakh people in a single day as 7,19,364 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours. India

has so far conducted 2, 41, 06, 535 tests.

"Such high levels of testing will also lead to a high number of daily positive cases. However, states have been advised to firmly focus on comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation and effective treatment. Several meetings in the past week have engaged with states showing higher fatality rates," said union health ministry officials.

They added that such an approach of high testing has started showing results and recoveries are also increasing exponentially. India recorded the highest number of recoveries in a single day with 53,879 patients recovered and discharged on Saturday. With this, the total number of recovered cases has touched another high of 14,80,884 on Sunday.

"This is more than twice the number of active cases (6,28,747). The number of recovered cases is 2.36 times the active cases, which are all under medical attention either in home isolation or in hospitals," officials said.

Cong targets PM, launches
employment programme

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 9

Targeting Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the Congress on Sunday launched a Rozgar Do (provide employment) programme.

Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi, accused the Modi government of failing to meet its promise of jobs for two crore people every year and then enacting policies that 'destroyed India's economic structure' and left crores without jobs.

In a 90-second video posted on his Twitter account, Gandhi launched the Rozgar Do campaign and urged young people without jobs, as well as others, to raise their voices, speak out and 'awaken the gov-

ernment from its slumber.'

"When Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, he promised the youth of this country that he would give employment to two crore people every year. He sold them a very big dream. The truth is 14 crore people have been made jobless by Narendra Modi's policies," said Gandhi.

He further added, "Why did this happen? Because of wrong policies - demonetisation, GST and then the lockdown. Because of these three, the government has destroyed India's economic structure. The truth now is India cannot give its youth jobs."

Several leaders of the Congress also shared videos on social media

demanding that Modi should give employment to the youth. In the last couple of weeks, the Congress claimed that around 12 crore people lost jobs in April alone, a month into the first lockdown, according to estimates by the private think tank, the centre for monitoring Indian economy (CMIE).

Unemployment in India stood at 11 per cent in June down from 23.5 per cent the previous month - according to data released by CMIE that said over 46 crore people were looking for jobs that month.

The CMIE also said that unemployment levels 'pre-lockdown' were 8.5 per cent. The Congress has added unemployment as one of the major failures of the Modi government.

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

● **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.

deal with his produce in his field, he can. Or he can directly connect with the warehouse or whoever pays the higher price," Modi said, saying the agriculture sector will benefit a great deal.

A loan amount of ₹1 lakh crore will be made available to farmers over a period of four years.

While ₹10,000 crores will be made available between 2020 and 2021, ₹30,000 crore 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

₹1 lakh-cr PM fund for agri-infra

ISRO'S | GOAL

Four astronauts will go into space for seven-day mission
Cosmonauts finish phase-1 Gaganyaan training

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR AUG. 9

Odisha-born Indian Air Force (IAF) wing commander, Nikhil Rath, along with his other co-pilots has completed the first phase of training for the country's first manned mission to space called Gaganyaan.

Rath, who hails from Bolangir, is among the four selected pilots for the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Gaganyaan, billed for 2022. He has completed

his training at Gagarin cosmonaut training centre in Russia on crew actions in the event of an abnormal descent module landing.

According to a statement by the Russian space corporation, Roscosmos, Rath, along with his co-pilots, have completed training on crew actions in all-weather and all terrain modules. "They were trained on landing on wooded and marshy areas in winter (February), on the water surfaces (June) and in the steppe in summer (July)



Nikhil Rath

in complete adherence of Covid-19 safety protocols," Roscosmos said.

"The programme for Indian cosmonauts also

● **THE PROGRAMME** for Indian cosmonauts also includes training in a centrifuge and in a hyperbaric chamber to prepare their organisms for sustainingspaceflight factors, such as G-force, hypoxia and pressure drops.

includes training in a centrifuge and in a hyperbaric chamber to prepare their organisms for sustainingspaceflight fac-

tors, such as G-force, hypoxia and pressure drops. These training sessions are to be held in the near future. All of the Indian cosmonauts are in good health and are determined to continue their training," the statement added.

If everything follows schedule, the astronauts will go to space for a seven-day mission.

If the space project succeeds India will be the fourth nation to send astronauts to space after the United States, Russia and China.

Rape accused
held after 34 yrs

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOVAL, AUG. 9

Police in Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday arrested a rape accused who had absconded after committing the crime 34 years ago.

The accused, Suresh Pathak (62), was arrested in Gwalior bus stand early on Sunday morning following a tip off by a local police informer, police said.

According to the police, the accused, a resident of Dehri under Barason

police station in Bhind district, had been living in Mathura, Vrindavan and Hardwar in guise of a 'sadhu' for the last 33 years after fleeing Madhya Pradesh soon after he committed the crime in 1986.

He returned to Gwalior in 2019 thinking that his case may have been buried in police files and forgotten.

Police has circulated his photographs in all police stations in the state recently as a part of drive to solve old cases.

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. Regional firefighter chief Vladimir Vleck said it was unusual how quickly the fire spread through the apartment.

30 perish in S. Korea floods

Seoul: Landslides and flooding triggered by days of heavy rain in South Korea have left at least 30 people dead and 12 missing, officials said Sunday, warning of more downpours. Torrential rain has wreaked havoc across the country since the beginning of the month, but nearly half of the deaths occurred in the past three days, according to the Ministry of the Interior and Safety. Since Friday more than 3,700 people have been displaced from their homes after flooding in the country's hardest-hit southern region. In all, nearly 6,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across the country this month, with about 4,600 of them staying at temporary shelters. Among the victims was a man in his 80s who was found dead after he was buried in a landslide with his tractor. A 61-year-old man and a 59-year-old woman were killed after their home was swallowed by a landslide. Authorities have issued landslide warnings for 24 regions.

3 DAYS OF RAIN KILLS 50 IN PAKISTAN

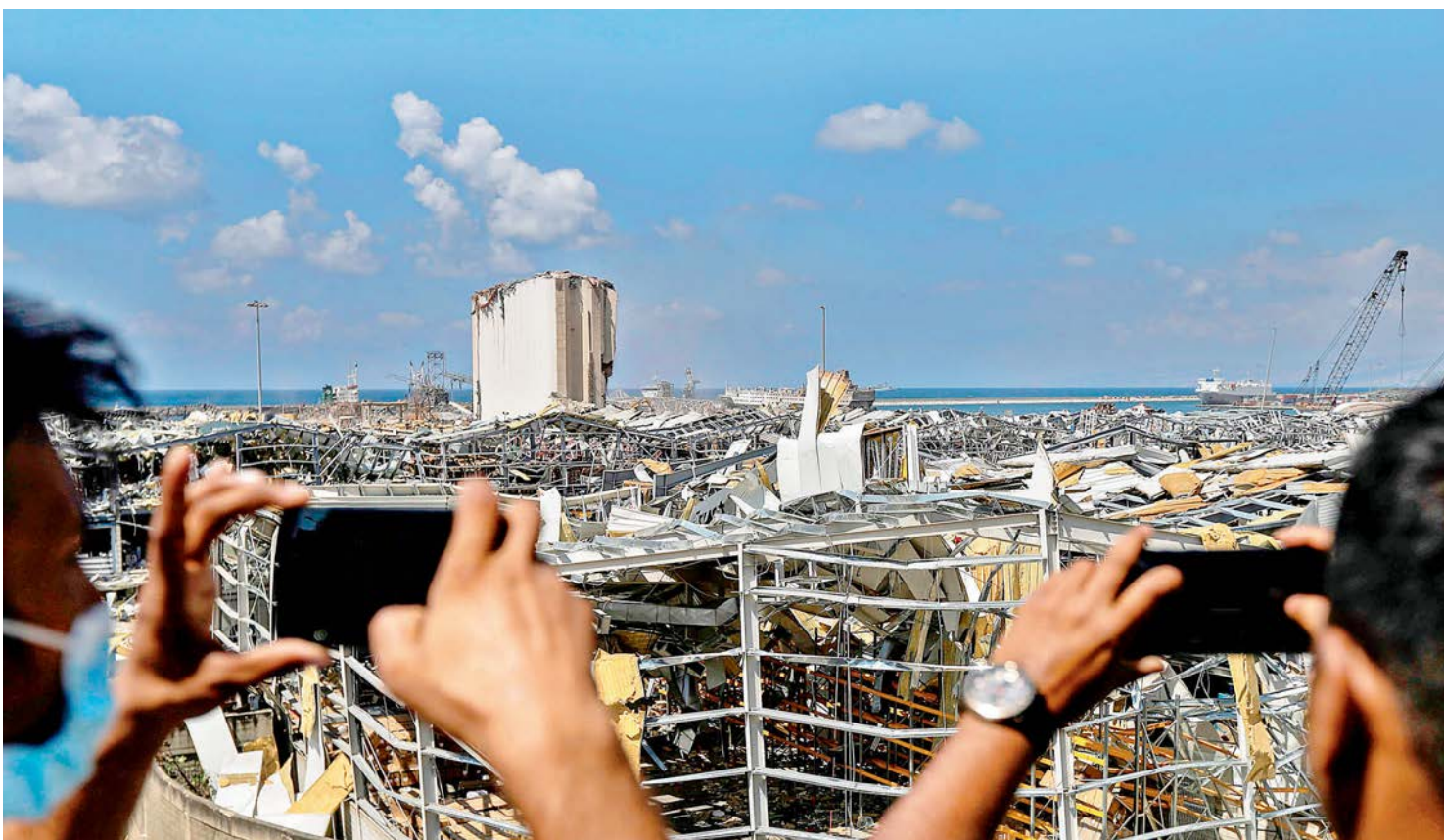
Karachi, Aug. 9: Three days of heavy monsoon rains triggering flash floods killed at least 50 people in various parts of Pakistan, as troops with boats rushed to a flood-affected district in the country's southern Sindh province Sunday to evacuate people to safer places.

Every year, many cities in Pakistan struggle to cope with the annual monsoon deluge, drawing criticism about poor planning. The monsoon season runs from July through September, during which swelling rivers cause damage to crops and infrastructure.

According to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority, 19 people were killed in rain-related incidents in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 12 in southern Sindh province, 8 in Punjab province and 10 in the country's scenic northern Gilgit Baltistan region in the past three days.

Rains also partially damaged about 100 homes and caused a breach in a main flooded canal, inundating villages in Sindh province. Troops used boats to rescue stranded people and move them to safer places.

It said a medical camp was also established and food was being provided to the rescued people. Heavy rains also lashed many districts in Baluchistan province, damaging homes. According to local media reports, at least eight people were killed in Baluchistan because of rains and flash flooding.



People take photos from atop a bridge overlooking the damaged port of Lebanon's capital Beirut and its grain silos on Sunday, in the aftermath of a colossal explosion that occurred Tuesday due to a huge pile of ammonium nitrate that had languished for years at a port warehouse. — AFP

Violence, chaos must not prevail in Lebanon: Macron

French Prez urges speedy global response after deadly Beirut port blast

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

Lebanon information minister quits in first govt resignation

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.

Maronite 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

BLAST CRATER 43 METRES DEEP, SAYS OFFICIAL

Beirut, Aug. 9: The huge chemical explosion that hit Beirut's port, devastating large parts of the Lebanese capital and claiming over 150 lives, left a 43-metre (141 foot) deep crater, a security official said Sunday.

The blast Tuesday, which was felt across the country and as far as the island of Cyprus, was recorded by the sensors of the American Institute of Geophysics (USGS) as having the power of a magnitude 3.3 earthquake.

It was triggered by a fire in a port warehouse, where a huge shipment of hazardous ammonium nitrate, a chemical that can be used as a fertiliser or as an explosive, had languished for years, according to authorities.

The huge blast also wounded at least 6,000 people and displaced more than 300,000 from their destroyed or damaged homes.

The revelation that the chemicals had languished for years like a ticking time-bomb in the heart of the capital has served as shocking proof to many Lebanese of the rot at the core of the state apparatus. — AFP

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 international 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.

"People have realised that they need to take things into their hands. We are here to protect our fauna and flora," said Ashok Subron, an environmental activist at Mahebourg, one of the worst-hit areas. Police said Sunday they would execute a search warrant granted by

a Mauritius court to board the Wakashio and seize items of interest, including the ship's log book and communication exchanges, as part of its investigation into the accident.

The ship's captain, a 58-year-old Indian national, will accompany officers on the search, police officials said.

Twenty crew members evacuated safely from the Japanese-owned but Panamanian-flagged ship when it ran aground are under surveillance. — AFP

HONOURING | DEAD

City mayor raises concern that nuclear countries had retreated from disarmament efforts

Nagasaki urges nuke ban on 75th anniv of A-bombing

Nagasaki, Aug. 9: The Japanese city of Nagasaki on Sunday marked its 75th anniversary of the US atomic bombing, with the mayor and dwindling survivors urging world leaders including their own to do more for a nuclear weapons ban.

At 11:02 a.m., the moment the B-29 bomber Bockscar dropped a 4.5-ton (10,000-pound) plutonium bomb dubbed "Fat Man", Nagasaki survivors and other participants stood in a minute of silence to honour more than 70,000 dead.

The Aug. 9, 1945, bombing came three days after

the United States dropped its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the world's first ever nuclear attack that killed 140,000. On Aug. 15, Japan surrendered, ending World War II.

At the event at Nagasaki Peace Park, scaled down because of the Coronavirus pandemic, Mayor Tomihisa Taue read a peace declaration in which he raised concern that nuclear states had in recent years retreated from disarmament efforts.

Instead, they are upgrading and miniaturising nuclear weapons for easier use, he said. Taue singled

out the US and Russia for increasing risks by scrapping the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

"As a result, the threat of nuclear weapons being used is increasingly becoming real," Taue said. Noting that the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty entered into force 50 years ago, Taue urged the US and Russia to show a (asterisk)workable way (asterisk) towards their nuclear disarmament at the NPT review process next year.

He said that "the true horror of nuclear weapons has not yet been adequately conveyed to the world at

large" despite struggle and efforts by hibakusha, or atomic bombing survivors, to make Nagasaki the last place of the tragedy.

He also urged Japan's government and lawmakers to quickly sign the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

After taking part in the ceremony, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe criticised the treaty for not being realistic. None of the nuclear states has joined, and it is not widely supported even by non-nuclear states, he said. "The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted

without taking into consideration the reality of the harsh national security environment," Abe said at a news conference.

"I must say the treaty is different from Japan's position and approach" even though they share the same goal of abolishing nuclear weapons, he said.

Abe has repeatedly refused to sign the treaty. He reiterated that Japan's approach is not to take sides but to serve as a bridge between nuclear and non-nuclear states to encourage dialogue to achieve a total nuclear ban. — AP

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

Mahinda Rajapaksa sworn in Lanka PM

Colombo, Aug. 9: Sri Lanka's former President Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in as the prime minister for the fourth time Sunday after his party secured a landslide victory in parliamentary elections that cemented his family's hold on power. Rajapaksa took oath before his younger brother, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, at a prominent Buddhist temple on the outskirts of the capital Colombo. Mahinda Rajapaksa served as the island nation's president from 2005 to 2015 and is highly popular among the ethnic majority Sinhalese for ending the country's 25-year civil war against Tamil rebels in 2009.

He was first elected prime minister in 2004 and again appointed for brief periods in 2018 and 2019. Sri Lanka People's Front — the party led by the Rajapaksa brothers — won 145 seats in the 225-member Parliament in the election last Wednesday. Its main opponent obtained only 54 seats.

A party representing ethnic minority Tamils won 10 seats, and 16 others were split among 12 small parties. The victory gave the Rajapaksa brothers nearly the two-third majority of seats requir-



Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (R) swears in elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa (L) as Sri Lanka's new Prime Minister in Colombo on Sunday. — AFP

ed to make constitutional changes that could strengthen dynastic rule in the country. This time, five members of the Rajapaksa family have been elected as lawmakers — Rajapaksa, his son Namal, the eldest brother Chamal and his son Sashindra, and a nephew, Nipuna Ranawaka. The brothers need 150 seats to be able to change the constitution.

At least four small parties collaborate with the Rajapaksas' party, so they appear to have mustered that support. However, analysts say any attempt by Gotabaya Rajapaksa to push for changes that will strengthen presidential powers at the expense of the prime minister may trigger sibling rivalry. — AP



Japanese PM Shinzo Abe lays a wreath to mark the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, at the Nagasaki Peace Park on Sunday. — AFP

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 tabletop 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 unredeemed 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

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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 hiith 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

PLANE CRASH

It is unfortunate that 18 people were killed in the Air India Express plane crash. The Air Traffic Controller should have refused permission to land and directed the flight to Cochin or Chennai. This could have saved people. Once the Black Box is opened, it will reveal the facts. The pilot might have said he is confident of landing but given the weather, the ground staff had the authority to refuse his request.

J. Bhaskar Rao
Hyderabad

MINISTER AND CURE

Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has nothing to worry though he is diagnosed with Covid-19 (*Union minister who endorsed 'Bhabhi ji papad' positive, DC, Aug. 9*) as he already knows the cure.

Z.A.Khan
Hyderabad

SRI LANKA POLL

Sri Lanka has given a thumping majority to Sri Lanka People's Front — the party led by the Rajapaksa brothers which won 145 seats in the 225-member Parliament (*Rajapaksa to take oath as PM, DC, Aug 9*). This has further cemented Rajapaksa family's rule. This should not be seen as a shift towards majoritarianism as in democracy, people reward those whom they confide in.

Jitesh Mathur
Hyderabad

PM's unity call to youth

NEW DELHI, August 9 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today asked youth to take a pledge to work for strengthening national unity to enable the country to face all possible internal and external dangers.

The Prime Minister was addressing a function organised by the Delhi Pradesh Youth Congress to celebrate the "youth day".

Vigyan Bhavan Hall was packed to capacity. Tourism and Civil aviation Minister Dr. Karan Singh was in the chair.

Mrs. Gandhi said the younger generation had to charter its own course. It should not expect others for leadership. They should ensure that the country progressed on socialist and democratic lines.

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 Murli 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 parti-

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 Corona virus. 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 Gupteshwar 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, BEML, 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, FIC 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

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, Florida: 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 on the day the reigning MVP was named a finalist for the award. Meanwhile, Jamal Murray scored 23 points as Denver Nuggets beat beat Utah Jazz 134-132. — AP

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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

PIRLO NAMED MANAGER OF JUVENTUS

Milan, Aug. 9: Former Italy and Juventus star Andrea Pirlo was appointed the Italian champions' new coach, just hours after Maurizio Sarri's sacking with the club promising a "new chapter in world football".

Sarri, 61, leaves Juventus after just one season, a day after the Italian giants crashed out of the Champions League in the last 16 to French club Lyon.

The 41-year-old Pirlo, with no previous top-level coaching experience, recently took over the Juventus U23 side and arrives on a two-year contract.

"The choice is based on the belief that Pirlo has what it takes to lead from his debut on the bench, an expert and talented squad to pursue new successes," Juventus said.

"Today, begins a new chapter of his career in the world of football: from Maestro to Mister," the club added. — AFP

SILVERSTONE | GRAND PRIX

Verstappen steals victory in Brit F1

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 & 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 insisting 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 glib 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.