



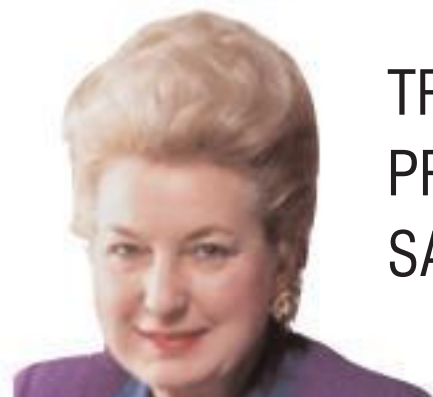
NAIDU CALLS FOR
CONSENSUS ON
QUOTA FOR WOMEN

P5



UK APPROACHED
FOR EXTRADITION
OF NAWAZ SHARIF

P9



TRUMP HAS NO
PRINCIPLES, SISTER
SAYS IN RECORDING

P10



MURRAY BACK
WITH A WIN

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with light rain/thunder-showers. Strong surface winds during the day. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 34 and 26 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: 002. mm

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 86% Min: 66%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 34.2°C (+1) Min: 26.4°C (0)

SUN RISES 05:56 hrs SUN SETS 18:51 hrs

MOON RISES 12:23 hrs MOON SETS 22:42 hrs

THUMBNAILS



During a Covid-19 antibody test drive at Beliaghata in Kolkata on Sunday.

SNS

ISIS operative: The Delhi Police has so far recovered around 30 kilograms of explosives from the alleged ISIS operative arrested in the national capital, officials said on Sunday. About half of this quantity was found at Mohammad Mustakim Khan's home in Uttar Pradesh's Balrampur during a search, an official said. An ISIS flag was also recovered there. Khan, armed with two pressure cooker IEDs, was arrested in central Delhi's Ridge Road area on Friday night following a brief exchange of fire.

P4

SOP for resuming shooting of films: The Centre on Sunday announced standard operating procedures (SOPs) for resuming shooting of films and TV programmes, and these include measures such as social distancing and mandatory use of face cover or masks for cast and crew, except for actors in front of camera. Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, announcing the SOPs and guiding principles, said barring those who are in front of cameras all others will have to wear masks, while physical distancing of at least six feet would have to be followed as far as feasible at all locations at all times.

Congress a divided house ahead of CWC meeting

Sonia Gandhi could offer to quit as Congress chief in wake of letter calling for party reform

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Ahead of the crucial Congress Working Committee meeting on Monday, the party was deeply divided on the leadership issue with a section demanding a "full-time" chief and another pitching for retaining the Gandhis at the helm, amidst indications that interim president Sonia Gandhi might offer to quit.

After around 20 leaders wrote to the party chief seeking collective leadership and a revamp of major bodies, sources close to Sonia Gandhi said she might offer to step down in the CWC and ask the party to look for a full-time president. AICC media chief Randeep Surjewala, however, denied it.

As the debate over the issue of leadership raged, another group of leaders put their weight behind the Gandhi family calling for Sonia Gandhi to stay or Rahul Gandhi to take charge again. While Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot, Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and former ministers Ashwani Kumar, Salman Khurshid and K K Tewary backed the Gandhis, the dissenting group included former ministers Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Kapil Sibal, Mukul Wastnik, Manish Tewari, Shashi Tharoor and former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Opposing the bid to challenge the Gandhi family leadership, Amarinder Singh said this was not the



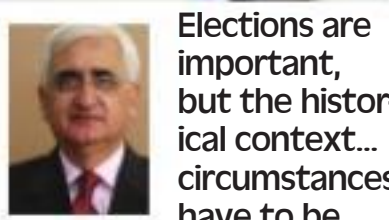
The move by these Congress leaders to demand a rehaul of the party at this critical juncture would be detrimental to its interests, and the interests of the nation

AMARINDER SINGH
Punjab chief minister

time to raise such an issue.

"The move by these Congress leaders to demand a rehaul of the party at this critical juncture would be detrimental to its interests, and the interests of the nation. What the Congress needs is a leadership that is acceptable not just to a few but to the entire party, through its rank and file, and the nation at large," he said, adding that the Gandhis were the right fit for this role. "Sonia Gandhi should continue to helm the Congress as long as she wants," he said, adding that Rahul Gandhi should thereafter take over as he is fully competent to lead the party.

Former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah tweeted, "It is unfortunate that the leadership of Gand-



Elections are important, but the historical context... circumstances have to be taken into account. Consensus has been an important part of the political process in the Congress

SALMAN KHURSHID
Congress leader

hi family is being questioned by a few. In these difficult times of undeclared emergency and attack on democracy by BJP, we should collectively strive to strengthen Congress and not weaken it."

Ashwani Kumar, Salman Khurshid and K K Tewary spoke against elections to the post of party president and favoured consensus. Kumar and Khurshid both argued that elections would be divisive and consensus should be given a chance.

In response to the letter by Azad and others, sources said, Sonia Gandhi might offer to quit as party's interim chief and ask the leadership to scout for a full-time president.

She took over as interim chief on August 10 last

Need full-time leadership, stop micro-management, revamp key bodies: Letter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Having a "full time" leadership that is active in the field and "visible" in party offices, devolution of powers to state units and revamping the CWC in line with the party constitution are some of the far-reaching suggestions made by 23 senior Congress leaders in a letter to party chief Sonia Gandhi to revive the organisation, sources said on Sunday.

The leaders said that over-centralisation of the organisation and micro-management has always proven to be counter-productive, and that uncertainty over the leadership has "demoralised the Congress workers and further weakened the party".

They were also critical of the way the Congress Working Committee, the party's top decision-making body, was being constituted and was functioning. Highlighting the gravity of the challenges facing the party, they said that it was "imperative" to urgently establish an insti-

tutional leadership mechanism to collectively guide the party's revival.

The letter talked about forming the CWC in accordance with the Congress' constitution as well as reconstitution of the central parliamentary board and the central election committee. The details of the letter written around early August by the leaders, who include former Union ministers, ex-chief ministers, former and current parliamentarians and senior functionaries, emerged just ahead of the CWC meeting scheduled for Monday.

The leaders said that the party has witnessed a steady decline reflected in successive electoral verdicts in 2014 and 2019, and noted that even after 14 months of the 2019 verdict, the Congress party has not undertaken "honest introspection" to analyse the reasons for its continued decline. It also said that in recent years the institutional process of "merit-based and consensus-backed selection has been disrupted".

year following a request from the CWC after Rahul Gandhi declined the committee's unanimous appeal to stay as chief post the 2019 Lok Sabha poll debacle.

Surjewala, meanwhile, said, "I have not seen any

purported letter and hence cannot comment upon it". On the issue of Sonia Gandhi's possible resignation, he said, "Sonia Gandhi has not made any comment or has given any interview and media reports in this regard are false".

Covid-19 caseload in India breaches 30-lakh mark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

India's Covid-19 tally sprinted past the 30-lakh mark, just 16 days after it crossed 20 lakh, while 22,80,566 people have recuperated in the country so far pushing the recovery rate to 74.90 per cent, according to Union Health Ministry data.

Covid-19 cases in the country jumped from 10 lakh to 20 lakh in 21 days, while it had taken 59 days for the cases to cross the 10 lakh mark.

It took 110 days for Covid-19 cases in the country to reach one lakh, while just 59 days more to go past the 10-lakh post.

With a single-day spike of 69,239 infections, India's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 30,44,940, while the death toll climbed to 56,706 with 912 fatalities being reported in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 a.m. showed. The Covid-19 case fatality rate has declined to 1.86 per cent.

There are 7,07,668 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country which comprises 23.24 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 3,52,92,220 samples have been tested up to August 22, with 8,01,147 samples being tested on Saturday.

Of the 912 fresh deaths, 297 are from Maharashtra, 97 from Andhra Pradesh, 93 from Karnataka, 80 from Tamil Nadu, 70 from Uttar Pradesh, 48 from West Bengal, 45 from Punjab, 21



from Madhya Pradesh, 15 each from Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala, 14 from Gujarat, 12 from Haryana, 11 each from Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Telangana.

Nine fatalities each have been reported from Chhattisgarh and Odisha, eight from Puducherry, seven from Assam, five each from Bihar and Goa, four from Himachal Pradesh, three from Uttarakhand, two each from Ladakh, Manipur and Tripura while Meghalaya, Nagaland have registered one fatality each.

Of the total 56,706 deaths, Maharashtra has reported the maximum at 21,995 followed by 6,420 in Tamil Nadu, 4,614 in Karnataka, 3,189 in Andhra Pradesh, 2,881 in Gujarat, 2,867 in Uttar Pradesh, 2,737 in West Bengal and 1,206 in Madhya Pradesh.

Chorus grows for putting off entrance exams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

The chorus for postponing various examinations, including NEET and JEE, grew louder on Sunday with over 4,000 students observing a day-long hunger strike to press for the demand in view of rising Covid-19 cases.

The protest came on a day Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the government must listen to the 'mann ki baat' of students and arrive at "an acceptable solution" and his party demanded that the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) be deferred.

According to the leftist All India Students Association (AISA), over 4,200 students observed the day-long hunger strike at their respective home demanding that CBSE com-

partment exams of Classes 10 and 12 be cancelled and entrance exams such as the UGC-NET, CLAT, NEET and JEE be postponed.

Using the hashtag, SATYAGRAH against Exam in Covid, many students also took to Twitter to appeal to the government to heed to their demands.

Manoj S, a JEE aspirant from Karnataka, said, "We have to report to the JEE exam centre at 7 am. My centre is almost 150 kilometres away and there are no train or bus services available currently. "Many of my friends have said that their centres are 200 to 250 kilometres away. How are we supposed to travel? How will we write exams wearing masks for seven to eight hours?"

He urged the government to postpone the exams till normalcy is restored.

Sanctions don't mean admitting Dawood presence: Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, 23 AUGUST

Days after including India's most wanted terrorist Dawood Ibrahim on its new sanctions list, Pakistan on Sunday tried to sidestep its admission of his presence in the country, claiming that its notifications about the 88 banned terror groups and their leaders were based on the details provided by the UN.

Seeking to escape from getting blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog, Pakistan on Friday imposed tough financial sanctions on 88 banned terror groups and their leaders, including Ibrahim, 26/11 Mumbai attack mastermind and Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed and Jaish-



e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar. The Pakistan government ordered the seizure of all movable and immovable properties of these outfits and individuals, and freezing of their bank accounts.

Underworld don Ibrahim

had emerged as India's most wanted terrorist after the 1993 Mumbai bombings. Pakistan's Foreign Office issued a midnight statement in response to media reports that Islamabad had admitted in the two new notifications issued on August 18 that Ibrahim was residing in the

country. It said that the SROs (Statutory Regulatory Orders) issued reflect the information contained in the list entry of UN designated individuals/entities.

It said the assertions in some sections of the media, as to Pakistan admitting to the "presence of certain listed individuals on its territory, based on the information contained in the SRO, are baseless and misleading".

"It is once again reiterated that the information contained in the SRO is reproduced as per the details in the list entry of the individuals/entities designated under the two sanctions regime, which is publicly available, and contains names of individuals who despite their confirmed deceased status still continue to be on the sanctions list," it said.

Delhi reports 1,450 new Corona cases, highest rise in August

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Delhi reported 1,450 new coronavirus infection (Covid-19) cases today — the city's highest single-day Covid figure this month — which pushed its caseload to over 1.61 lakh while the death toll due to this disease climbed to 4,300, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The national capital had recorded 1,412 fresh Covid cases yesterday, which was the previous highest single-day spike of August.

A total of 18,731 tests — 6,261 RT-PCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests and 12,470 rapid antigen tests — have been conducted for detecting coronavirus infections in the last 24 hours, the health bulletin reportedly said.

The positivity rate was

stood at 90.04 per cent.

The national capital has seen a fluctuation in the number of coronavirus cases since 1 August. With the 1,450 fresh cases today, Delhi's tally has now mounted to 1,61,466, the health bulletin stated. The active Covid case count increased to 11,778, up from yesterday's 11,594, while a total of 1,45,388 such patients were said to have recovered in the city so far. The recovered Covid patients discharged by different hospitals over the last 24 hours numbered 1,250, according to the health bulletin.

Sixteen fresh deaths due to Covid-19 in the national capital were taken into account today. The number of such deaths recorded yesterday was 14.

SEE PAGE 2

India could have Covid-19 vaccine by year-end: Harsh Vardhan



NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has said that if everything goes well, India would get a vaccine against the novel coronavirus by the end of this year. Three Covid-19 vaccine candidates, including two indigenous ones, are in different phases of development in India.

The phase-one human clinical trials of the two indigenous Covid-19 vaccine candidates, one developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR and the other by Zydus Cadila Ltd, have been completed and the trials have moved to phase-two, ICMR Director General Dr Balram Bhargava had said recently.

The Serum Institute of India, which has partnered with AstraZeneca for manufacturing the COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed by the University of Oxford has been permitted for conducting its phase two and three human clinical trials in India. It is likely to start the trials next week. In a tweet in Hindi, Vardhan said on Saturday, "I hope that if everything goes well, India will get a coronavirus vaccine by the end of this year."

Meanwhile, the apex health research body, ICMR, is in the process of developing an online vaccine portal which will provide information related to Covid-19 vaccine development in India and abroad, with the majority of the updates in several regional languages in addition to English.

PTI

‘Howdy’ Modi features in Trump campaign’s commercial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 23 AUGUST

Aiming to woo the influential Indian-American voters numbering over 2 million, the Trump campaign has released its first video commercial that has short clips from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches and US President Donald Trump's historic address in Ahmedabad.

Modi and Trump addressed a huge crowd in Ahmedabad during the US president's visit to India in February this year. Trump was also accompanied by his wife Melania, daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and top brass of his administration on his

trip to India. "America enjoys a great relationship with India and our campaign enjoys great support from Indian-Americans," Kimberly Guilfoyle, national chair of Trump Victory Finance Committee said in a tweet releasing the video commercial.

The president's son Donald Trump Jr, who is leading the campaign, also retweeted it as the commercial soon became viral on social media with over 66,000 views on Twitter in the first few hours.

Titled "Four More Years" the 107-second video starts with the footage of Modi and Trump walking hand in hand at the NRG Stadium in Houston during the prime minister's

visit to the US last year where in the leaders of the world's two largest democracies made a joint address before a strong crowd of Indian-Americans numbering more than 50,000.

Amidst cheering, Modi is seen as saying that Trump "needs no introduction" and that "his name comes up in almost every conversation."

He is the president of the United States of America "Mr Donald Trump", Modi says at the start of the video, that has been conceptualised by Al Mason, co-chair of the Trump Victory Indian American Finance Committee. After Modi introduces Trump to "my family", the second part of the commercial has clips

from Trump's address in Ahmedabad this February.

"America loves India. America respects India. And America will always be a faithful and loyal friend to the Indian people," Trump says in the commercial in which he praises the contribution of four million Indian-Americans.

"They are truly spectacular people," the president said.

The commercial comes following research by Mason in battleground states according to which Indian-Americans, who traditionally vote for the Democrats, are switching over to the Republican party in significant numbers because the friendship that Trump

has with Modi and the latter's popularity among a large section of the community, of which 2.5 million are eligible to vote.

Mason's survey was conducted before former vice president Joe Biden, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, selected Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate, a move the Democratic Party leader believes would stem the flow of Indian-Americans towards the Republicans.

However, both President Trump and his campaign, in recent remarks, have asserted that more Indian-Americans support them than the Democrats.





Whenever BJP, JD-U and LJP have come together, the NDA has won in Bihar. This time too, BJP, JD-U and LJP will jointly contest elections and emerge victorious

J P NADDA
BJP PRESIDENT

Delhi records 1,450 new Covid cases, highest spike in August

The city's Corona caseload mounts to 1,61,466, while with 16 fresh deaths its toll rises to 4,300

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Delhi reported 1,450 new coronavirus infection (Covid-19) cases today — the city's highest single-day Covid figure this month — which pushed its caseload to over 1.61 lakh while the death toll due to this disease climbed to 4,300, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The national capital had recorded 1,412 fresh Covid cases yesterday, which was the previous highest single-day spike of August.

A total of 18,731 tests — 6,261 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests and 12,470 rapid antigen tests — have been conducted for detecting coronavirus infections in the last 24 hours,

the health bulletin reportedly said. So far, 14,31,094 Covid-19 tests have been conducted in Delhi, while the number of such tests per million population stood at 75,320 in the city now.

The positivity rate was stated to be 7.74 per cent, while the Covid recovery rate stood at 90.04 per cent.

The national capital has seen a fluctuation in the number of coronavirus cases since 1 August. On 1 August, Delhi had reportedly recorded 1,118 fresh Covid cases while for the next three days, the number of infections reported in a single-day stayed below the 1,000-mark.

From 5 August to 9 August, the number of fresh coronavirus cases again stayed above the 1,000-mark only to come down to 707 on 10 August.

Three days between 11 August and 22 August witnessed less than 1,000 fresh coronavirus cases being reported — 13 August (956),



People wearing face masks amid the coronavirus pandemic, in the Capital on Sunday

DEEPAK

16 August (652), and 17 August (787) — in the city.

With the 1,450 fresh cases today, Delhi's tally has now mounted to 1,61,466, the health bulletin stated.

The active Covid case count increased to 11,778, up from yesterday's 11,594, while a total of 1,45,388 such patients were said to have recovered in the

city so far.

The recovered Covid patients discharged by different hospitals over the last 24 hours numbered 1250, according to the health bulletin.

Sixteen fresh deaths due to Covid-19 in the national capital were taken into account today. The number of such

deaths recorded yesterday was 14.

The number of coronavirus patients under home isolation in Delhi was reported to be 5,896.

Out of 14,126 total beds for Covid patients in hospitals in the city, 3,617 were currently said to be occupied. As many as 3,589 beds of Covid

care centres were occupied by people under quarantine, including travellers who came by Vande Bharat flights and "bubble" flights.

The number of containment zones or coronavirus hotspots in Delhi rose to 627 today, up from 591 the previous day, the health bulletin added.

Businessman's suicide linked to loan defaults

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

The death of a businessman in Kirti Nagar, West Delhi, on 8 August is now being investigated by police for abetment of suicide, following the discovery of a letter written by him in which he has accused several city businessmen of having driven him to the extreme step after they refused to repay loans totalling over a crore of rupees that they had taken from him.

The Kirti Nagar police station registered a case under section 306 of the Indian Penal Code (abetment to suicide) after the businessman's widow discovered a letter written by him on 14 August in the pocket of a shirt in his cupboard.

The businessman, Gaurav Khurana, said to be in his 40s, ran a catering and finance business and claimed in his

letter that he was owed several lakh rupees each by several businessmen, among whom one is the owner of a well-known hotel cum wedding venue on NH 24 and the other runs a chain of beauty salons in south Delhi.

In his letter, Khurana claimed he had made repeated efforts to get the money owed to him but was rebuffed, in one case, by the threats issued by a local politician of Punjabi Bagh and in another by one of his debtors waving a pistol at him.

Saying that he was extremely disturbed by the non-payment of the sums and had thus decided to end his life, Khurana blamed the defaulting businessmen for his death.

He asked that the money owed to him be recovered and handed over to his family.

The Kirti Nagar police are investigating.

Drone found near house of Israeli Embassy official

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

The Delhi Police has recovered a drone from near the residence of an official of the Israeli embassy in southwest Delhi's Vasant Vihar area, officials said on Sunday.

The police, however, do not suspect any foul play in this matter and said the drone was being operated by a child.

It went out of range and landed near the residence of the official, they said.

A staff of the residence of the official made a PCR call on Saturday following which a police team visited the spot and recovered a drone.

"After verification, we found that the drone was operated by a child and it went out of range," a senior police officer said.

AZURE CANOPY



White clouds float across a blue sky over the Capital on Sunday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

Classified

EDUCATIONAL

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Delhi govt launches campaign for registration of construction workers from today

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

The Delhi government will launch a 15-day-long campaign starting Monday in the city's all 70 assembly constituencies to help construction workers get registered for a welfare fund.

Around 70,000 construction workers have applied online for registration since the COVID-19 pandemic in March and the verification process is on, Delhi's Labour and Employment Minister Gopal Rai said.

The construction workers may visit the help camps from August 24 to September 11 to get them registered with the Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, he said.

He said the Board had provided Rs 5,000 to each of 40,000 registered construction workers for two months during the lockdown period.

It also undertakes various welfare measures like providing financial assistance for education and



Delhi minister Gopal Rai during a press conference in the Capital on Sunday.

SNS

marriage of children, old age pension and accidental insurance to the registered construction workers, Rai added.

If proper documents are furnished, the process of registration and verification will be completed on the spot, he said.

"In each of the 70 Assembly segments, a camp will be set up in a local school for registration of construction workers.

The local MLAs, trade unions, engineers of agencies like PWD, MCD, Flood and Irrigation department have been asked to get the

workers registered at these camps," Rai said in a press conference.

The online registration process will continue and the construction workers can go to the camps for verification after applying online, he said.

The workers must be in the age group of 18-60 years. Other eligibility criteria are a90-day work certificate and the AADHAAR card. The eligible worker can get registered by furnishing a photograph and bank account number.

"There are some doubts regarding who all can register themselves as construction workers. According to laws, carpenters, worker grinders, construction site guards, the people who work in concrete mixers, crane operator, electrician, comp operator, mason (Raj Mistry), tiles stone fitters, welders, coolies and others can apply," the minister said.

The construction work which was halted due to the pandemic has resumed and there is a demand of workers at construction sites, Rai said.

Jeweller held for staging fake robbery to get loan waiver

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

A 40-year-old jeweller and his two associates staged a fake robbery of 2.6 kg gold at his office in central Delhi in order to get bank loans worth Rs 61 lakh waived off, police said on Sunday.

Abhijeet Samanta, who has been in the jewellery business for the past four years, was not making much profit and it was further hit due to the coronavirus lockdown. Samanta and his associates -- Farhan (38), a property dealer, and Munna (28), who works at a garage -- staged a fake robbery, officials said.

Munna executed the robbery by venturing into the office at Chandni Mahal wearing a burka and a toy gun, police said.

Tablighi Jamaat: HC transfers cases from different trial courts to Saket district court

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

The Delhi High Court has ordered the transfer of a batch of cases pending against 27 foreign nationals, who attended a Tablighi Jamaat event here, to the Saket district court so that they are swiftly decided.

The foreigners had allegedly indulged in missionary activities in violation of visa norms and flouted COVID-19 guidelines.

The court was hearing petitions filed by the foreigners who submitted that they have been released after paying fines in a case but are unable to leave the country due to similar pending FIRs.

Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani directed that the

charge sheets arising out of different FIRs mentioned in four petitions be transferred from different trial courts in Delhi to the court of chief metropolitan magistrate, South-East Delhi, Saket district court here.

The high court, which was hearing the matters through video conferencing, passed the order after the counsel for the foreigners urged it to issue directions similar to the one by the Supreme Court on August 6 on the transfer of cases, and the Centre and the Delhi government said they had no objection to it.

Accordingly, the present petitions are dismissed as withdrawn with a direction that all charge sheets in all FIRs from which the present cases arise be trans-



ferred to the court of the learned CMM, South East, Saket Court Complex, New Delhi, to be decided expeditiously, in accordance with law, the judge said.

The court directed that the records of all these matters be transferred from respective jurisdictional magistrates to the court of chief metropolitan magistrate, Saket court.

Advocate Ashima Mandla, representing the foreign nationals, said in each of these cases, the offences alleged in the FIRs are either the same as those alleged in the earlier FIR, in which they have pleaded guilty or no offence whatsoever was made out.

The counsel said the proceedings in the earlier FIR were closed after they

entered into plea bargaining.

Delhi government standing counsel (Criminal) Rahul Mehra said the state has no objection to this direction being made in all these cases.

Meanwhile, central government standing counsel Ajay Digpal submitted that look out circulars (LoCs) against these foreign nationals were issued by the Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Home Affairs at the request and instance of the investigating agency.

Once criminal cases are closed in accordance with law and a request for closing the LoCs is received, the Union of India will have no objection to closing all LoCs and permitting the petitioners to exit the country,

he said.

According to the separate petitions, the foreigners said they have already admitted their guilt in the FIR lodged by the Crime Branch of Delhi Police in the matter and pleaded for lenient punishment under the provisions of plea bargaining.

They were allowed to walk free on payment of varying fines and pleading guilty for minor offences related to the COVID-19 lockdown violations, the counsel for the foreigners said, adding that their deportation orders were also issued.

However, they are not able to fly back to their countries due to the pending FIRs lodged at various police stations here, the counsel said.

TURNING TIDES



When declared in March to check the spread of coronavirus, the lockdown turned everything upside down across the country. Millions of desperate workers travelled to their native villages from cities and towns, where they were employed. The horrific scenes of countless migrant workers walking back to their distant villages with their toddlers and little belongings were witnessed. The situation was so bad that both the central and state governments came under sharp criticism from various quarters. Subsequently, the authorities had to start 'Shramik Express' (special trains) to ferry the migrants to their home districts. Now after five months, things have started changing. The migrant workers

are suddenly finding themselves to be much sought after people now that the steps are being taken on a war-footing to revive the devastated economy. Industrial units are busy wooing their trusted migrant workers to return and resume work. As trains are not fully operational and inter-state buses are also not running, many industrial houses are sending cars and buses to bring the migrant workers back to work. Many of them are even sending them air tickets. A friend, who was travelling from Patna to Delhi, was surprised to see many labourers boarding flights. When he spoke to one of them, he revealed that he was going back to Delhi and all the expenses were being borne by his 'thekedar' (contractor).

Rashtrapati Bhavan had a subdued 'At Home' on 15 August, as it too fell under Corona's shadow. The annual Independence Day party did have some colour as President Ram Nath Kovind invited select "Corona Warriors" and lavished generous praise on their work. Though the event had its traditional grand style, the drastic cut in the guests list made all the difference. Old-timers recall the long queues the distinguished guests made for the small circular stairs to reach the Rashtrapati Bhavan lawns. Well-guarded Kota stone pathways between flower beds led the guests to the main square. While the armed forces' bands played on one end, the President, accompanied by the PM and other dignitaries, sat under an elegant temporary shade. The ceremony started with the National Anthem. The guests, most of whom were regular invitees, made it a point to reach the lawns before the bands played the anthem. After that, it was searching for and mingling with the high

Muted celebrations



and mighty, whom one knew or wanted to know. This was not possible this year because of the social distancing norms. In the past, nearly all senior-most serving and

retired bureaucrats, top officers from the armed forces, ministers, MPs, diplomats, freedom fighters and TV and print journalists attended the event. Many took their spouses forward

to the VIP tent for a closer look at the First Couple. Elsewhere, guests exchanged greetings with each other, in what could be called the capital's most dignified exchange of

pleasantries. Like President Kovind, there were Presidents in the past too, especially Pranab Mukherjee, who came out of their exclusive enclosures to greet the guests.

While the guests had their brief chats, there were food tables at the end of water channels, calling everyone to hurry up. The tables had snacks representing the culinary traditions of different regions. It was not an easy exercise to find a good place in a queue to collect plates, and one often wondered whether to go east or the west, or just stand in the middle, and wait for the way to clear. There was no dearth of food, however. Tea and coffee, too, were in plenty. One could have as many items, as a plate would allow, though this often meant that the juicy "gulab jamuns" or "jalebis" could make the spicy "samosas" and "vadas" a bit sugary. The arrangements in the laying out of the snacks seemed to improve each year, and sometimes, appeared to be more lavish than the previous year. One was always careful if it was not time for the second playing of the National Anthem. This meant the official party was over. Those who started late did certainly go on for some more time. But the grandeur of the occasion demanded everybody to leave slowly.

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

In these days of economic downturn, almost all sectors are laying off their employees. But, the medical and paramedical segment is one of the few areas where there is a dearth of staff. With the number of Covid-19 cases on the rise, several hospitals and medical centres, especially private ones, are luring doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff with high salaries. A nurse, who happened to have quit her hospital job due to some family emergency just before the pandemic set in, narrated how she had a harrowing time looking for another job. But now, she was sur-

prised at the number of offers coming her way, all with amazingly good pay. In fact, she said, one private hospital offered triple the pay normally given to a nurse with her qualifications. But did she take the high-paying job? No, she replied. While she was tempted to take it up, it was a Covid-duty job and looking at her toddler and the risks involved, she decided to join another place for a much lesser amount. So, there are several lessons to be learnt from this story. First, it's simple economics that with high demand and low supply, prices will go up. However, the concerns over risks to life and limbs would often prevail over such bids to lure workers with bonanza offers.

REST IN PEACE, DR GHOSH!

One would remember visits in the 1980s to nearby temples where homeopathic doctors distributed medicines free of cost. And these were quality medicines which worked. Probably those were the times, homeopathy had not picked up much in the race of curative medicines, or doctors were simply less money-minded and more welfare-oriented. One can still visit many of these temples in search of genuine homeopathic consultations, but the doctors now charge heavily, probably because a part of the money goes to the temples which let them practise there. Notably, most homeopathic doctors dispense medicines but not prescriptions. It is

against this backdrop that a little-known Dr Debu Ghosh, a qualified surgeon who took to homeopathy realising the side effects associated with allopathy, stood tall, practising from his unassuming middle-class residence in Kolkata. Charging merely Rs 100 for consultation and even less from the poor, this rare breed of a doctor would refuse to charge more even when his patients in full gratitude suggested him to do so, saying "this is enough to fulfil my needs". And he would also prescribe medicines so that one could purchase these from anywhere without visiting him again. Such was his dedication to his patients and trade that he would be available on phone even late in the night. Call him at 10pm, he would be still busy with his patients

but will not disappoint you, asking you to call him in half-an-hour or one hour. He would wait for your call, and if you did not call him, he would call back. His skills were as high as his compassion and generosity. He would diagnose considering modern reports and clinical examination of patients. Many times, his diagnosis would reveal what others sitting in posh hospitals in Delhi would miss. He would often say "my job is to provide treatment" regarding patients who could not be treated through conventional allopathic approach. The lives he impacted are numerous. Therefore, when he departed from this world recently, eyes welled up and many felt helpless. Memory of his words "don't worry I am here for you" now

make many of his patients "feel orphaned". One can only hope there are more like Dr Ghosh who was unique and unparalleled. **TAILPIECE** If 6 feet distance is maintained while buying alcohol, the last person in line may be standing in the liquor factory itself," remarked a frustrated friend who stood in the queue for hours at a wine shop while following the social distancing norms. *Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Rakesh Kumar, Asha Ramachandran, Savita Verma and Ashok Tuteja*

India

Capt takes on Cong dissenters, bats for Gandhis' leadership

Playing some Cong leaders' bid to demand an overhaul of the party leadership, Punjab CM says this is not the time to raise such issues when the Constitution & democracy are under threat under the Modi govt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 23 AUGUST

With a slew of senior Congress leaders, in their joint letter to party president Sonia Gandhi, calling for a comprehensive overhaul of leadership in the party at every level and for sweeping reforms, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday opposed "the bid by some Congress leaders to challenge the Gandhi family leadership of the party". Rising to the defence of the Nehru-Gandhi family, dubbed as the "Congress party's first family", Capt Amarinder said this was not the time to raise such an issue, "given the need for a strong opposition against the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) that was out to destroy the country's Constitutional ethos and democratic principles".



The veteran Congress leader said the NDA's success was attributable to the absence of a strong and united Opposition and that the move by these Congress "dissenters" to demand an overhaul of the party leadership at this critical juncture would be detrimental to the party's interests and the interests of the nation. Terming the demand for

leadership change as "untenable", the Punjab CM noted the immense contribution of the Nehru-Gandhi family to the country's progress since it achieved freedom from the British rule. What Congress needs is a leadership that is acceptable not just to a few but to the entire party, through its rank and file, and the nation at large,

Capt Amarinder said, adding that the Gandhis were the "right fit" for this role. Sonia Gandhi should continue to helm the Congress as long as she wanted, he asserted, adding that Rahul should thereafter take over as he was fully competent to lead the party. At a time when the very bedrock of India's Constitutional strength was under threat, it was important for every Congress man and woman to stand firmly and unitedly behind the Gandhis, who had held the party together all these decades and could continue to do so, said Capt Amarinder. There was currently no leader in the Congress who could give the party that kind of strong leadership, he said, urging one and all to put the interests of the party and the nation above their own. The Gandhis were the

"only universally recognisable face of the Congress, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari", the CM stressed. Electoral defeats could not be the yardstick for leadership change, he said, adding that just because the Congress was down at the moment did not mean the Gandhis' contribution to its growth could or should be undermined. The BJP rose from two parliamentary seats to lead the country, he pointed out, adding that the Congress will rise again, and that too under the leadership of a Gandhi. In a recent letter to Sonia Gandhi, more than 20 senior party leaders have sought discussion over the leadership issue, referring to the internal crisis in the party. The letter calls for an honest introspection, collective leadership and stresses that the "youth are losing confidence" in the party.

HP govt committed to redress public grievances: Jai Ram

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 23 AUGUST

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday said the state government was committed to resolve the common people's grievances and that he knew the difficulty which people face in getting various issues resolved as he is himself from the rural area. In a virtual interaction with beneficiaries of government schemes in Kangra parliament constituency, he said for this, the state government launched Jan Manch program and till date, over 91 percent grievances have been redressed. Besides, 'Mukhyamantri Sewa Sankalp Helpline 1100' has further helped in redressal of public grievances through this service. "The state government is ensuring that policies, programmes and welfare schemes initiated reach the target group so as to ensure socio-economic upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden in the state," he added. The Chief Minister said that organising such virtual



rallies help the state government to directly interact with the beneficiaries and also get feedback from them regarding the government's policies and programmes for their welfare. During these interactions, the Government gets good suggestions to make the programme more result oriented and effective, he said. Thakur said at times, it has been felt that people could not derive benefit of welfare schemes due to lack of information regarding various schemes and such interaction also goes a long way in sensitising the people about these schemes. Chief Minister said that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Ujjawala Yojna for providing free gas connection to the poor women, but

still lakhs of women of the state were not covered under this scheme. For them, the state government thus launched Gharini Suvidha Yojna and provided free gas connections to about 2.76 lakh households. With this, the state has become the first state of the country with gas connection in every household, he added. He further stated the state government for the first time had set a target to provide 10,000 houses to the poor homeless under various housing schemes in the state. Under Mukhyamantri Swavalamban Yojna, loans worth Rs 13 crore were provided to the youth to start their own self employment ventures, he said, adding while urging the youth to avail the scheme and become job providers instead of job seekers. "COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected every section of the society. An amount of about Rs 180 crore was transferred into the accounts of over 8.75 lakh farmers under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojna.

Endangered Chamurthi horses thrive in tribal Lahaul Spiti

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 23 AUGUST

Once considered to be on the verge of extinction, the endangered Chamurthi horses' population is on the rise in the cold desert of Lahaul Spiti in Himachal Pradesh in the wake of the state Animal Husbandry Department's efforts to save them. The Chamurthi breed, known for better ability and endurance skills, is found in the upper mountainous areas of Himachal mainly in the snow-bound Spiti valley and their existence was recorded as early as the Indus Valley (Harappan) civil-

ization. This breed is one of the six recognized breeds of Indian horses which is known for its stamina and surefootedness during high-altitude journeys, which remains covered with snow in most part of the year. It has been used by the Tibetans, Ladhakhis and Spitians forward and to carry their goods and is widely used for various domestic and commercial use in Kullu, Lahaul and Spiti and Kinnaur area of the Himachal and adjoining states. State Animal Husbandry Minister Virender Kanwar said with constant efforts and bat-

tle against all odds, the government had been successful in conserving and rebounding Chamurthi horse breed which were in danger of becoming extinct a few years back. "The Animal Husbandry Department set up a horse breeding farm in the year 2002, in Lari (Spiti), to save and conserve snow horses and bring them to the fore. This farm is one kilometre away from Spiti River and is being used for propagation of this versatile breed of horses popular with royalty and farmers alike. Presently, this breeding farm has been divided into three



Endangered Chamurthi horse

separate units having capacity of 20 horses in each unit and

one stallion shed having capacity of four horses. It is being run

Once considered to be on the verge of extinction, the population of these horses reached up to 4,000

on 82 bighas and 12 Biswa land. The department is also utilizing local surrounding village land for pasturing objectives of saving this endangered species," he added. Kanwar said with the establishment of this breeding farm and after years of breeding programmes, the population of this fiery wild heritage breed has witnessed steady

increase. "Their population has now touched a high figure of around four thousand in Himachal Pradesh at present," he said. He said around 25 veterinarians and supportive staff of the Animal Husbandry department equipped with necessary medicines, machines and other infrastructural facilities are contributing towards the conservation efforts of this species in Lari farm. Around 67 horses both young and adult are being reared in this breeding farm out of which 23 stallions and 44 broodmares both young and adults are being reared in the farm. The majority of the year-

lings produced each year are sold to the locals and individual buyers through auction by the Animal Husbandry department. The Average market value of one full grown horse of 4-5 years of age is currently 30-40 thousand rupees. The highest cost of these horses three years back was recorded at Rs 75 thousand, he said. "On an average, maximum 15 mares conceive in a year depending on the population and climate and pasture, a foal is born 11-12 months after conception while weaning is done once it completes its one year of age.





Functionaries and workers should always be faithful to only the party and at no point of time had I persuaded loyalty to me

AIADMK TOP LEADER AND DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER O PANNEERSELVAM
DURING AN INTERACTION WITH AIADMK PARTY FUNCTIONARIES

THUMBNAILS



Labourers travel on tractor after lockdown norms for weekends and public holidays were imposed as a preventive measure against Covid-19, in Amritsar on Sunday.

AFP

Naidu slams YSR over 3 capital issue: TDP leader N Chandrababu Naidu slammed YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government for remaining unmoved even as the agitation by Amara-vati farmers against the three capital plan completed 250 days. Naidu said 85 labourers, farmers and women have been martyred in the movement. YSRCP government's failure to accept his challenge and seek a fresh mandate on the plan illustrates mood of the people who do not support it.

SNS

Small businesses struggle to survive in deserted IT hub

Economically hit areas are Madhapur, Kondapur, places adjoining Cyber tower

ANINDITA CHOWDHURY
HYDERABAD, 23 AUGUST

With majority of the IT companies choosing to let their employees continue work-from-home till next year due to the pandemic, the city neighbourhoods which had once catered to them are now wearing a deserted look with many rented apartments currently sitting vacant and small businesses which had mushroomed with the IT boom struggling to stay afloat.

Particularly hard hit are areas like Madhapur and Kondapur, adjoining the IT Hub around Cyber Towers area and Gachibowli which all had prospered thanks to the IT crowd.

Once bustling neighbourhoods with hostels for working men and women, apartments rented out to software employees and shops which had sprung up overnight to meet their demands, these localities have clearly lost their buzz.

Earlier on Sunday mornings, small eateries serving breakfasts and other meals to the software professional staying at hostels and rented apartments were usually thronged by crowds. But not anymore. Their brisk businesses were hard hit during the lockdown but even after regulations were relaxed, their customers have not returned. Although the lockdown ended, the IT companies have allowed their employees to work from home. Hence, during the 'unlock' period the employees came back to Hyderabad for a day or two, packed away their belongings and returned to their home towns.

The private hostels dotting the heart of Madhapur area are all vacant. So are the apartments which were rented by IT employees. A number of apartments, are displaying "to let" notices, as well as the commercial spaces because small businesses are unable to stay afloat without the IT crowd.

As S Ravikanti pointed out: "My friend owns 12 single

BHK flats in Kondapur. The last tenant is leaving this month. Now all are sitting empty as everyone have gone back to their hometowns." Many of those working in the city's IT sector hail from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Initially after the lockdown was announced the software employees kept paying rents because they thought they would have come back and join their workplace. But with many of the IT giants announcing work-from-home policy till next August, they chose to let go of their rented apartments.

Sabrunissa, a women employee who hails from Andhra Pradesh's Guntur came to Hyderabad in the last week of July to vacate the apartment.

"I can stay with my parents and continue working from home. My senior at work told me the company is not going to revoke its work-from-home policy anytime soon. So there is no point in paying rent or for other utilities like wifi, electricity and water" she said.

But it is not only the landlords or hostel owners who have been hit hard by the work from home policy. There were a large number of smaller firms, renting plug and play office spaces in Madhapur area which lies adjacent to the IT Park, Raheja Mind-space. They too are closed with the employees working from home.

Akram who used to supply packaged drinking water bottles to homes and offices in Madhapur has been hit hard by the loss of business.

"I used to supply water to offices in this area apart from residents and hostels. With employees going home, I hardly have any customers left."

These neighbourhoods once were the hunting grounds of the nobility in Nizam area with a rocky terrain and jungles which were cleared out to make way for the IT hub during the tenure of Chandrababu Naidu as CM in early 2000. The area witnessed unplanned growth and a real estate boom with apartments, and hostels mushrooming overnight.

'Ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi may be BJP's CM candidate in Assam'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI, 23 AUGUST

Former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi, who headed benches that pronounced several key judgments including in the Ayodhya land dispute case, might be the BJP's chief ministerial candidate in Assam in the Assembly election next year, veteran Congress leader Tarun Gogoi has claimed.

The BJP, however, denied the former three-time state chief minister's assertion on Ranjan Gogoi who was nominated as a Rajya Sabha member by the government in March. If the former CJI could go to the Rajya Sabha, he might also agree to be the next chief ministerial candidate of the BJP in Assam, said Tarun Gogoi.

"I have heard from several sources that Ranjan Gogoi's name is there in the list of BJP candidates for the chief minister's post. I suspect that he might be projected as the next possible chief ministerial candidate," he said.

"The BJP was happy with



Ranjan Gogoi for the Ayodhya land dispute case judgment. It won't be surprising if he agrees to be the next CM candidate for the BJP, Tarun Gogoi said on Saturday.

The BJP, however, said that what the 85-year-old Congress leader said is not true. "People say many meaningless things when they become very old. There is no truth in what Tarun Gogoi said about the former CJI becoming the BJP's chief ministerial candidate," the saffron party's state unit president Ranjeet Kumar Dass said.

"I will contest the elections but I will not be the CM candidate. There are several qualified candidates in the party for that. I can only be a guiding force or act as an advisor," he said.

Explosives, ISIS flag recovered from arrested operative Khan

PTI
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW, 23 AUGUST

The Delhi Police has recovered a large quantity of explosives and an ISIS flag from the house of Mohammad Mustakim Khan in Uttar Pradesh's Balrampur two days after he was arrested in the national capital. An alleged ISIS operative, Khan, armed with two pressure cooker IEDs, was arrested in central Delhi's Ridge Road area on Friday night following a brief exchange of fire.

A Delhi Police Special Cell team took him to his Badhiyaa Bhausaahi village in Balrampur district. A brown jacket containing three explosive packets and a blue-check jacket containing four explosive packets were recovered from his house, a senior Delhi Police officer said.

"Each explosive packet, removed from the jackets, was wrapped with transparent tape which contained explosives and cardboard sheet pasted with ball bearings, and electric wires were coming out from it," DCP (Special Cell) P S Kushwah said.

Phone-tapping: MP says BJP can obstruct individual freedom

BENGALURU, 23 AUGUST

Expressing apprehensions that his brother and Karnataka Congress president D K Shivakumar's phones were being tapped, Bengaluru Rural MP D K Suresh on Sunday demanded a proper investigation and alleged that BJP can obstruct individual freedom.

"It is not a mere allegation, the true fact has been brought to the notice of the concerned, the police department. We have doubts about phone tapping, because for the last ten to fifteen days there were a lot of disturbances during phone calls," Suresh said. He said when inquired with some people, they suspected phone tapping, and advised us to give a complaint, so we have filed a complaint.

"Everyone should know what all is happening. BJP people are experts in it," Suresh added.

PTI

Covid-19: Maha's case count grows by 10,441; death toll by 258

PTI
MUMBAI, 23 AUGUST

Maharashtra on Sunday reported 10,441 new coronavirus positive cases, which pushed the cumulative count in the state to 6,82,383, a state health official said.

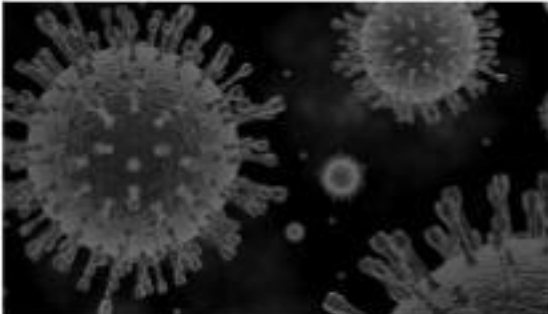
With the death of 258 patients during the day, the toll reached 22,253, he said. As many as 8,157 patients were discharged after recovery on Sunday, which took the number of recovered persons to 4,88,271 so far.

According to the official, there are 1,71,542 active COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra at present.

In Mumbai, 991 new cases and 34 deaths were reported. The total number of cases in the city thus rose to 1,36,353 and death toll to 7,422. The number of active cases in Mumbai is 18,567, the official said.

Thane circle, which comprises Mumbai city, on Sunday reported 2,670 COVID-19 cases, which took the regions' overall count to 3,09,008, where 12,219 people have died so far.

The case count in Pune division has reached 1,76,595, while the death toll has gone up to 4,714. Pune city reported 1,288 cases and 40 deaths on Sunday. The city's infection tally is now 89,150 and death toll 2,329.



Nashik division's cumulative tally is 78,464 and fatality count 1,968.

Kolhapur division has so far reported 30,692 cases and 912 deaths, Aurangabad division 27,861 cases and 811 deaths, Latur division 20,762 cases and 600 deaths, Akola division 14,413 cases and 413 deaths and Nagpur division 23,959 cases and 552 deaths.

Of the 258 deaths reported in Maharashtra on Sunday, 213 were from the last 48 hours, while 23 others from the last one week. The remaining 22 deaths had occurred before the last week, but were added in the list on Sunday, the official said. So far 36,16,704 tests have been carried out in the state.

There are 12,30,982 people under home quarantine and 34,820 in institutional quarantine.

Maharashtra's COVID-19 figures are as follows: Positive cases 6,82,383, deaths 22,253, recoveries 4,88,271, active cases 1,71,542 and people tested so far 36,16,704.

LDF govt secretly helped Adani Group: Chennithala

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 23 AUGUST

Senior Congress and Opposition leader in the Kerala Assembly Ramesh Chennithala on Sunday came out against the state LDF government for hiring a law firm close to the Adani Group as legal consultants in the bidding process for the Thiruvananthapuram International airport.

Blaming the LDF government for losing out to Adani Group in the bid to lease the Thiruvananthapuram international airport, Chennithala asked on whose advice did the government has chosen Gautam Adani's daughter-in-law's firm as legal consultant on the bidding process of the airport.

He said the government publicly opposed Adani Group, but secretly

helped it. "Now it is clear that the state government which publicly opposed the Adani Group secretly helped it," Chennithala claimed.

"Why didn't the government appoint the Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) as its consultant," Chennithala asked. "Not considering CIAL, which has the experience of successfully operating an airport, is a serious matter," he stated. It seems the government was unable to maintain secrecy of bid documents, as it engaged a firm close to Adani in the bidding process.

The Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) - which participated in the bidding on behalf of the state government - lost out to the Adani Group which quoted a rate of Rs 168 per domestic passenger, while the state quoted Rs 135 per

passenger.

A committee headed by former chief secretary Tom Jose coordinated the bidding process.

The LDF government in the state courted controversy after the revelation that it had appointed law firm Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas as legal consultants to participate in the bid for the Thiruvananthapuram airport. Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas is a Mumbai-based law firm owned by Cyril Shroff, father-in-law of Gautam Adani's son Karan.

Meanwhile, state Industries minister EP Jayarajan has on Sunday said that the government was not aware of the relationship of the firm Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas has with Gautam Adani. He said that the firm didn't reveal their relationship with Adani.

Incessant rains in Gujarat hit normal life; flood situation in Bihar remains grim

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Rains pounded several areas of Gujarat on Sunday leading to swelling of rivers and over 100 dams being put on a high alert, while the flood situation in Bihar remained grim even though no new areas were affected by the deluge since Saturday.

The national capital experienced a cool and cloudy Sunday with the city recording traces of rainfall in a few areas and the maximum temperature settling at 34.2 degrees Celsius, the Met department said.

In Haryana and Punjab too, maximum temperatures hovered close to normal limits, while light to moderate rains occurred in many parts of Uttar Pradesh. The meteorological department has forecast rain and thunder-showers in all the three states over the next two days.

Three rivers are already flowing above the danger mark in Uttar Pradesh where over 1,000 villages in 16 districts have been hit by floods. An official, however, said all river embankments in the state are safe and there is no need to be worried.

Torrential rains pounded several areas in Gujarat on Sunday, causing waterlogging and disruption to normal life. As rivers swelled and many lakes overflowed, a high alert was sounded for 108 dams.

An alert has been issued for 14 dams while a warning has been sounded for 17 dams after they received heavy inflow of water due to rains, officials said.

Parts of Mehsana, Patan, Surat, Gir Somnath, Sabarkantha, Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Aravalli and Surendranagar districts have been witnessing very heavy rainfall since Sunday morning.

Low-lying areas in many districts were flooded after several dams and lakes started overflowing, officials



said, adding that gates of many dams were opened.

Waterlogging caused by intense rains disrupted normal life in Mehsana, Patan, Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Kadi in Mehsana received 289 mm rainfall between 6 am and 4 pm on Sunday while Becharji, in the same district, received 224 mm of rains, according to the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC).

The meteorological department has predicted heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in many districts of north, south and east-central Gujarat and Saurashtra-Kutch region till Tuesday morning.

"As many as 44 rivers and 41 lakes in the state were overflowing due to heavy rains. The Sardar Sarovar Dam is 60.83 per cent full, while 68 dams are full to the brim," Relief Commissioner Harshad Patel said.

According to the government, out of 205 dams, a high alert has been sounded for 108, while 14 have been put on alert. A warning has been issued for 17 dams.

The state has so far received 94.57 per cent of the average annual rainfall. Kutch received the highest 162 per cent rainfall in the state, Patel said.

Life Mission project row: Report says Red Crescent, Kerala govt nowhere in picture

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 23 AUGUST

The controversy over the Life Mission project in Kerala got a new twist on Sunday with the latest reports relating to the project stated that the UAE Consul General awarded a contract directly to a contractor in the country.

The final agreement for the LIFE (Livelihood, Inclusion and Financial Empowerment) Mission project to construct a housing scheme, with a hospital at Wadakkanchery in Thrissur, was signed between UAE Consul General of the state and UNITAC Builders directly.

The MoU was signed between the state government and Red Crescent.



However, when the main agreement came, it changed into an agreement between the UNITAC and the UAE Consul General. The state government and Red Crescent were nowhere in the picture. The first party to the agreement is UAE Consul General and second party is UNITAC Builders. It was only mentioned that the project would be funded by Red

Crescent.

As per MoU norms, the agreement should be signed between Red Crescent authority based in UAE and UNITAC Builders and Developers.

The controversial agreement was signed on 31 July 2019 between UAE Consul General and UNITAC managing partner Santosh Eapen. The agreement was to construct a housing complex and

hospital on the government land. Red Crescent Dubai had allotted Rs 20 crore for the project

LIFE Mission Chief Executive Officer, UV Jose under state government signed the MoU with Red Crescent authority which is selected as the consultancy for the implementation of the project, on 11 July 2019.

The Enforcement Directorate, probing the alleged kickbacks in connection with the project, has asked Kerala chief secretary to furnish documents. In a notice to the chief secretary, ED sought clarification as to whether permission from Union government was obtained before entering into an agreement with a foreign institution.

India set to record bumper harvest as timely monsoon boosts agriculture

VIJAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Covid-19 might have hit all the economic sectors badly, but luck is favouring Indian agriculture sector this year as there has been 95 per cent equal distribution of rainfall all over the country. Along with historic sowing, and timely rains agricultural experts are predicting bumper crop this year.

"I, in my lifetime, have never seen so many fac-

toring favouring agriculture," said former director general of Indian Council for Agriculture Mangla Rai. "I do not remember ever before monsoon was so proportionately distributed and timely. Rains poured when it needed the most except some areas of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir region. But these areas are negligible. Lastly, this year sowing areas broke all records - 1,062.93 lakh

hectares," former DGICAR said.

"There is no doubt we are getting wonderful reports of sowing from all parts of the country and if all goes well, this year will have bumper crops," said Shiraj Hussain, former Union agriculture secretary.

"Farmers got a good price for almost all crops except gram and cotton," Hussain added.

"India is blessed this year. We are expecting

very good price of crops in the international market, he added.

According to Agriculture Ministry, the total Kharif crops have been sown on 1,062.93 lakh hectare area against 979.15 lakh hectare during the corresponding period last year, thus increase in area coverage by 8.56 per cent.

According to Hussain, rice sowing increased by 11.71 per cent. Similarly, sowing of pulses increased by 6.77 per cent.

Serological survey for Covid launched in Assam

PTI
GUWAHATI, 23 AUGUST

The first serological survey in Assam was launched here by the Minister of state for Health and Family Welfare Pijush Hazarika on Sunday to assess whether people surveyed have developed immunity to novel coronavirus.

A serological survey involves testing of the blood serum of individuals to check for the prevalence of antibodies against an infection.

The survey titled 'A.A.S.H.A Assessment of Anti-SARSCoV2 Seroprevalence in Habitants of Assam: a population based cross sectional study' is an initiative of an NGO in partnership with diagnostics solutions provider.

"The need of the hour today is a seroprevalence study that would identify the proportion of people carrying antibodies against this virus," the minister said.

Hazarika also lauded the effort of Padmanabi Bora, an IRS (Indian Revenue Service) officer from the state, who has been instrumental in initiating the survey.

Despite the infrastructural bottleneck and floods in

the state, Assam has been doing exceptionally well in containing the infection, he added.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has advised states to conduct sero-survey to measure coronavirus exposure among people using IgG Elisa Test (antibody test).

It can reveal insights into the immunity against the coronavirus by detecting presence of specific antibodies against COVID-19.

The IRS officer said that the study will help in estimating the immunity level developed by population groups in the state against coronavirus for taking further containment measures.

The study will help in knowing the distribution of coronavirus infection, which might have been missed by the currently applied testing strategy and method, the extent of immunity among the people of Assam to this infection, managing trustee of 'Srijanasom', the NGO, Mridusmita Dass said.

The survey will also give an opportunity for raising awareness, among those who have recovered, about the necessity of plasma donation, she said.





The situation in J&K is disappointing and hopelessness has engulfed the whole region because of BJP government's wrong decisions and policies

CPM(M) LEADER MOHAMMAD YOUSUF TARIGAMI
URGING POLITICAL PARTIES TO GET THE PEOPLE OUT OF THE HOPELESS SITUATION

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 24 AUGUST 2020

THUMBNAILS



People abide by the pandemic guidelines in the Capital on Sunday. DEEPAK

Pranab still on ventilator support: There is no improvement in former President Pranab Mukherjee's health. He continues to remain in coma and on ventilator support, informed Army's Research and Referral hospital on Sunday. Doctors say his vital parameters are stable. On 10 August, he tested positive for Covid-19. SNS

MP highway projects: Union minister for road and transport Nitin Gadkari will lay the foundation of and inaugurate 35 highway projects in Madhya Pradesh on 25 August, the government informed on Sunday. The project entails 1,139-km of highways, worth Rs 9,400 crore. SNS

5 of family found hanging: A retired government employee, his wife and three other family members, including a four-year-old child, were found hanging at their home in Madhya Pradesh's Tikamgarh district on Sunday, police said. Initial investigation suggested the family members committed suicide, but no note was recovered from the spot. PTI

4 more COVID-19 deaths in Ladakh: Four more persons died of coronavirus in Ladakh, taking the death toll in the union territory to 23, officials said on Sunday. All the four deaths were reported from Kargil district during the past 48 hours, they said. The total number of COVID-19 fatalities in Ladakh – 16 in Kargil and seven in Leh district – now stands at 23, the officials said. PTI

J&K cops under DGP turn plasma donors for +ve civilians

JAMMU, 23 AUGUST

The J&K Police personnel besides fighting terrorism in the Union Territory have also turned plasma donors for civilians battling in hospitals with coronavirus. Several such patients have recovered due to the plasma donation of the men in *khakhi*. The Covid-19 scenario in J&K has turned alarming with the number of deaths crossing the figure of 612 and more than 32,000 persons testing positive.

The J&K DGP Dilbag Singh has himself taken the initiative of motivating policemen who have recovered from the virus to voluntarily donate plasma.

As a collective fight against Covid-19, Jammu and Kashmir Police in collaboration with the department of health and medical education recently organised a plasma screening camp in Srinagar. Top brass of the police and doctors attended the camp.

The DGP assured that J&K Police is always available to provide help in the fight against Covid-19. SNS

'Delhi Metro services should be resumed on trial basis'

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said that Metro train services in Delhi should be resumed in a phased manner as the COVID-19 situation was improving in the city and hoped the Centre would soon take a decision on it.

Interacting with traders, entrepreneurs and businessmen in the city in a 'Digital Samvad', the chief minister also said his government was considering launching a website for goods that are manufactured and traded in Delhi to attract buyers from across the globe.

He said markets and roads in the national capital would be beautified on the lines of the Chandni Chowk redevelopment project, which is expected to be completed by November-December.

"Have requested the Centre that Delhi should be treated differently. Corona situation is improving in Delhi. If they do not want to run Metro trains in other cities, let it be so. But, in Delhi Metro train services should be started in a phased manner, on a trial basis. We have raised this issue before the Centre many times, I hope the Centre will soon take a decision in this regard," he said.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation said in a statement that it will implement coronavirus-related guidelines and commence operations whenever directed by the government.

"All necessary guidelines in place to combat the spread of the Covid-19 virus shall be implemented and all efforts shall be made to make travel safe for our value commuters," the statement said. The chief minister highlighted various steps taken by his government to revive the pandemic-hit economy of the city and said it would make some big announcements about the industry sector in coming days.

Kejriwal also assured the traders that anomalies in circle rates in some areas would be addressed.

"One suggestion that I received was that just like the job portal ('Rozgar Bazar'), we should launch a portal of industries and shops. Through this portal, Delhi's wholesale market and industries can put their products before the whole world and they can receive orders from the whole



world. We can call it 'Delhi Bazaar' where the people can market their products," he said.

"Delhi government to launch online 'Delhi Bazar' for traders. The whole world will know what goods are manufactured or sold in Delhi," a government statement later said quoting the chief minister.

Kejriwal reiterated that in the last five years, the people of Delhi have collectively overcome many challenges and they will also overcome the challenge of economic revival of Delhi by working together in this hour of need.

"The last 5-6 months have been very tough for us. The whole country and the whole world is suffering from the corona pandemic. On one hand, the most important things to control corona and save the people and ensure there are no deaths and on the other hand, what is important is getting Delhi's economy back on track, which has

dismantled because of no jobs, no businesses, and no trade due to corona lockdown," he said.

He also said Delhi did not have to reimpose lockdown like many other states.

"I am happy that the corona situation in Delhi is under control. The situation was a bit worrisome in the month of June for 15-20 days, but now, with the efforts of the two crore people of Delhi, help of the Centre, religious and social organisations, the situation is under control.

"There was a rise in the number of cases for 15-20 days since June 1 after the lockdown was lifted, but we did not impose the lockdown again. Probably, Delhi is the only city where lockdown hasn't been imposed again, as we understand work, and COVID management can go hand-in-hand," he said.

Talking about the suggestions received by him, Kejriwal said that some people faced problems in getting

loans under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Yojana, and his government will work it out in consultation with banks.

The virtual meeting was attended by more than 215 traders of Delhi from sectors like manufacturing, electronics, garments and automobiles, said Vice Chairperson, Dialogue & Development Commission of Delhi, Jasmine Shah.

The interaction was moderated by national convener of Chamber of Trade & Industries (CTI) Brajesh Goel.

The meeting was attended by representatives from all the major markets in Delhi including Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazar, Chawdi Bazar, Khari Baoli, Kashmiri Gate, Karol Bagh, Connaught Place, Lajpat Nagar, Khan Market, and South Extension.

Harshvardhan Bansal, chairman of Unity Group raised the issue of circle rate anomalies seeking the chief minister's help to fix it. President of South Ex Market Vijay Kumar demanded resuming Metro train services.

"Metro Rail service should be started soon. There is a lot of problem in the movement of people. The Metro is used both by the customers and employees. The staff is finding it difficult to commute on daily basis," he said.

Meenakshi Dutt, a salon owner, suggested for an exclusive cell for women entrepreneurs to be opened by the Delhi government to redress their grievances and provide them information about various schemes for them.

The representatives from marble and automobile parts industry suggested for opening separate hubs for them in the city to attract customers in large numbers.

Venkaiah: Give women equal opportunities in all spheres

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST



Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu today urged all political parties to reach a consensus on providing reservation to women in Parliament and state legislatures. In a Facebook Post titled 'End Discrimination, Empower Women', Naidu pointed out, "Women constituted about 50 per cent of India's population and thus progress cannot be achieved unless they are given equal opportunities in all spheres, including the political arena."

The Women Reservation Bill, which sought to provide reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures, was passed by the Rajya Sabha. But it lapsed following the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha in 2014.

Highlighting the government's flagship scheme 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', Naidu said it has undoubtedly created a positive impact, but much more to be done to change the societal mindset. "We need to show in action and in deeds that gender discrimination no longer exists. That should be our goal," said the Vice-President.

Naidu also emphasised the need to give equal property rights to women for their economic emancipation. The Vice-President recently released a report 'Status of Sex Ratio at Birth in India' which reads that there has not been any change in the sex ratio at

birth in India from 2001-2017. It means the number of girls born is much less than what is the general or natural norm. Talking about the report, Naidu said it is an alarming issue that needs to be addressed on a war footing by all the stakeholders "from the society at large to parliamentarians, government, policy-makers, opinion leaders, media organisations and various bodies working to empower women".

He asked elected representatives at all levels to draw the attention of people in their respective areas to the alarming aspect of skewed sex ratio. Naidu called upon every citizen to act as a warrior in completely eradicating social evils like dowry system and in eliminating 'son preference' mindset.

Naidu noted that India's culture has always accorded respect to women and treated them as equals. "In Vedic times, there were learned women like Maitreyi, Gargi, Ghosha and Vishwata, who enjoyed equal status to that of men and participated in debates. Respecting women, recognising their talent and contribution has been an Indian way of life," he said.

TIME TO SAY GOOD BYE



A volunteer immerses a clay idol of Lord Ganesha in an artificial tank in Mumbai on Sunday. AFP

Bengal's Hasimara Air Force base ready to house Rafael jets

SOMA MOOKHERJEE
KOLKATA, 23 AUGUST

By end of 2020, Hasimara Air Force Station in West Bengal's Alipurduar district is expected to be ready to house Rafael fighter jets, which are expected to arrive here by end of mid 2021. While the first squadron will be based out of Ambala Air Force Station in Punjab, the second such squadron will be located at the Hasimara Air Force Station in North Bengal, said Grp Captain (rtd) R K Das.

Earlier, it was planned that one squadron of the Rafale would be based out of the Sarawati Air Force Station in Uttar Pradesh. However, issues relating to land acquisition eventually led to the selection of the Ambala Air Force Station to prepare itself for a two-front war in the northern side from Pakistan and China, Grp Cap-

tain said. On the eastern frontier, Hasimara was selected as the base to house the second squadron. "We have some porous border in the Eastern sector, so Hasimara Air Force base being fortified," he said.

Hasimara earlier had a MiG-27 squadron which is being replaced by Rafales. The Hasimara Air Force Station has no squadron presently. The jets have started arriving from France on 29 July 2020 and a budget of Rs 400 crores has been allocated for these two Air Force Stations-Ambala and Hasimara to build facilities, develop shelters, hangers and maintenance facilities at the two bases.

The hangars are so built that it can accommodate both the Rafales and Sukhoi MKIs. It is expected that Rafale will serve the Indian Air Force for the next 40-50 years. Engineers and staff of the technical teams

of Dassault Aviation from France are working at the Air Force Station on war footing, Grp Captain said.

This apart, work on building a new facility in the Air Force Station and resurfacing of the runway has begun. Sukhoi and Rafales are jets that tend to pick up any particles on the runway. Hence, resurfacing is important for smooth landings and takeoffs. Work on resurfacing the runway has begun already. The runway will be ready in a year.

The last time the 8,500-9,000 ft in length runway was resurfaced was way back in 1993. While there were plans extending the runway, it was dropped later. Hasimara air base came up post the 1962 Sino-India War. This air base has housed several squadrons of the fighter jets like the - Gnats, Ajeets, Hunters, MiG-21Bis and the Mig-27 ML fighter jets.

Chopper fails, ITBP jawans ferry injured on stretcher

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 23 AUGUST

A team of Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawans ferried an injured village woman on stretcher, walking over 40 km in about 14 hours, from a remote village on Indo-China border to take her to the nearest hospital in district Pithoragarh on Saturday.

Rekha Devi suffered serious injuries after getting hit by boulders, when she had gone to the forest near her village Laspa to collect fuel wood, on 18 August.

The Laspa villagers informed the district administration and waited for the government helicopter to airlift the injured for six long days, but the aircraft never came.

Social worker Jagat Martolia came to know about the incident and urged the state government and Pithoragarh district administration to airlift the injured lady.

The Laspa villagers were constantly in touch with the



ITBP jawans ferrying injured woman in a remote part of Pithoragarh district. SNS

district administration and were getting regular assurances for the chopper from the local authorities.

But, the entire exercise failed and the six day wait was too long. When the villagers finally decided that they would ferry the injured to Munsyari, the district administration

jumped into action and involved the Indo Tibetan Border Police. Over two dozen Jawans were involved in the special operation.

Laspa village head (Pradhan) Chandra Devi said, "In the hope of getting a helicopter for airlift, we were taking the injured lady to the helipad near the village for six days and returning our homes dejected. The condition of the lady was critical and our situation was hopeless. The ITBP Jawans came to the rescue of the lady."

The special operation by the Indo Tibetan Border Police Jawans started on Saturday morning, at about 8 a.m., and crossing many dangerous points, including rivers and damaged roads/trek routes, they managed to reach Munsyari by 9.30 p.m. on Saturday.

The total distance of Laspa, from Munsyari, is about 53 kms. The team took vehicles in three different points- to move the injured lady- in

their long and tiring journey. Mahinder Ram, local villager who moved with the ITBP team, said, "The team was led by Chander Singh. Leaving a small lunch break at Bogdara, we were moving continuously."

On the way the team had to face rainfall for two hours. They moved by covering the lady with a waterproof sheet.

At five points they had to cross rivers/rivulets and Nullhas. Taking all precautions the team members execute an unique operation which local people will never forget.

Rekha Devi was hospitalized at the government operated hospital in Munsyari. Laxman Ram, husband of Rekha Devi said, "For X-ray and other medical care she will be taken to Pithoragarh or Haldwani. Our worry is to arrange the finance for the medical care as we are poor."

Even after reaching the nearest hospital, a huge challenge lies ahead for the affected family.

CBI questions Sushant's friend, house helps, visits his flat

PTI
MUMBAI, 23 AUGUST

CBI sleuths on Sunday questioned actor Sushant Singh Rajput's friend Siddharth Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh and domestic help Deepesh Sawant at the DRDO guest house here in connection with his death case and later visited the actor's flat in Bandra along with them, an official said.

In the morning, Pithani, Neeraj and Sawant arrived sep-

arately at the DRDO guest house in Kalina area of Santacruz, where the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) officials probing the case are staying, an official said.

These three persons, who were present in the flat when Rajput (34) was found hanging in his room on June 14, were questioned for about five hours, following which the CBI sleuths took them to the late actor's residence at Mont Blanc Apartments in suburban Bandra around 2.45 pm,



he said.

Forensic science experts were also part of the CBI team

which visited Rajput's residence, the official said.

Mumbai Police officials

were also present at the actors house, he added.

After spending three hours at Rajput's flat, the central agency team left the place along with Pithani, Neeraj and Sawant. The trio was again taken to the DRDO guest house in the evening for interrogation, the official said.

On Saturday also, the CBI team accompanied by Pithani, Neeraj and Sawant visited the late actor's house in Bandra to reconstruct the sequence of events before he was found

dead. Another CBI team on Saturday visited the state-run Cooper Hospital in the city, where autopsy had been performed on Rajput's body.

A third CBI team had visited the Bandra police station to meet Mumbai Police officials who were investigating Rajput's alleged suicide earlier.

On Friday, the CBI officials had recorded the statements of Pithani and Neeraj.

The Supreme Court had on Wednesday upheld the trans-

fer of an FIR, lodged by Rajput's father in Patna against actor Rhea Chakraborty and others for allegedly abetting his suicide, to the CBI.

After Rajput was found hanging in his apartment in June, the Mumbai Police registered a case of accidental death.

Later, Rajput's father filed a police complaint in Patna, accusing Chakraborty and her family of abetting the actor's suicide and misappropriating his money.

Ganesh idols immersed without processions in Goa

PANAJI, 23 AUGUST

Many Goans on Sunday bid adieu to Lord Ganesh, as many households follow the tradition of immersing the idols one-and-a-half day after Ganesh Chaturthi, which marks the beginning of the annual 10-day festival. In view of the COVID-19 epidemic, immersion was carried out in a staggered manner with devotees wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. PTI



The Statesman
Incorporating and directly descended
from THE FRIEND OF INDIA - Founded 1818

State tyranny

At least for the last 50 years, the people of Tamil Nadu have come to accept that nothing gets done in the State government unless some ‘speed money’ changes hands. For most services, rates are fixed informally and the system works smoothly. When lockdown was imposed following the coronavirus pandemic, the State government banned inter-district and inter-state travel and introduced a e-pass system for such travel. E-pass, like other government services, is supposed to be free, but unless a person shells out between Rs 500 and Rs 2,000, the elusive e-pass never materialises. State tyranny in the name of the pandemic has turned people into paranoid, order-following meek subjects. The lockdown and its accompanying rules and regulations have brought untold misery to the people and irrevocable harm to the economy. This is nothing but totalitarianism. The only ray of hope is the judiciary. A week ago, the Madras High Court impressed upon the State government to seriously look into scores of complaints regarding government officials making illegal money even during a grave situation posed by the pandemic by collecting bribes for issuing e-passes to people for travelling from one district to another. A Division Bench of Justices N Kirubakaran and VM Velumani observed, “For the past few months people have been unable to work or travel from one place to another for various purposes and they have been put to untold misery. Though the government is not responsible for the present position, some corrupt officials involved in issuing e-passes are bent upon making a bounty. They are like cruel bloodthirsty wolves and they should be dealt with an iron hand. Throughout the State there are allegations that brokers are available for getting e-passes and the rate ranges between Rs 500 and Rs 2,000.” Notwithstanding the chastisement by the High Court Division Bench, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami is not prepared to give up the e-pass system, a steady source of extra-constitutional levy, but he has promised e-passes for all. At present only a fraction of applicants get e-passes. If everyone is issued a e-pass, what purpose does it serve other than enriching a select few? Chief Justice of the Madras High Court Amreshwar Pratap Sahi, who is new to the State, on Wednesday refused to declare as unconstitutional the e-pass rule imposed by the State government. Presiding over the First Bench along with Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, he ruled there was nothing unconstitutional about the e-pass system since it only regulated free movement in the public interest and did not prohibit or restrict travel altogether. He said, “This has been done in the larger interest of the management of the entire Covid-19 pandemic situation and to regulate the travel of infected people coming in from other States or countries. We therefore do not find any reason to strike down the continuance of the e-pass system on account of any violation of the fundamental rights.” The Chief Justice, however, left it open to the State government to reconsider the system of issuing e-passes in the larger interest of the public.

Game on

A bio-secure bubble, with its science-fiction sound effect, suggests something out of Arthur C Clarke. Or, a succinctly smart dystopian vision portrayed by Anthony Burgess. Either way, you think it is futuristic, not something humanity is menaced by as of date. But, as cricket-lovers the world over know now, it happens to be part of the Covid-19-defiant game’s new normal: the supposedly fool-proof coop where players must be for mandatory periods so commercial plans hit upon by lounge-suited busybodies in the corridors of power are not endangered or affected in the slightest way. Tests follow tests, contacts with the world, inclusive of their own folks, are strictly prohibited and on-site accommodation implies movement only to and from the ground. Five Test matches in this abnormal setting have already been gone through and a sixth one is being staged now, with England hosting Pakistan. Indian Premier League cricketers are being sought to be cocooned similarly in West Asia. So far so bad. But the fact that some Australians, by the time they join their national peers in England after the IPL, will have spent quite a long while in such officially devised captivity, has wrung the assurance from captain Aaron Finch that cricketers’ mental well-being will henceforth be closely monitored by professionals on the right side of the men calling the shots in the boardroom. It is of no consequence that Finch’s was a statement basically made on behalf of Cricket Australia, and the game was given away when he, going on, said that if the bubble were not to be lived in, however hard it might be to be in the squeeze there, the players would lose their jobs. It may not be Auschwitz yet, but you do not see a vignette of paradise here either. And policies twist your arms even if you have managed to hold the novel coronavirus off. It apparently matters little that the absolutely abnormal situation, which can never accord well with sport of any kind, professional or amateur, makes huge psychological demands on players who always knew cricket, out there in the middle, was a lonely game but had never budgeted for value-added imprisonment off it. Independent expert opinion has spoken of the serious mental damage the restrictive orders can inflict on individuals who like the life lived outdoors, chilling after feeling the heat of the competition through the stress-filled day. That explains why Jofra Archer flew away after England’s first Test against the West Indies in the none too distant past. He copped it all right but that was all about authority cracking down on disobedience with so much cash at stake. Thus spectators are barred, cricketers are diminished to a do-as-you-are-told existence and hermetically sealed entrances ensure the Press is never close by and all of it combines to spawn a situation in which only officialdom grows in self-importance. How’s that?

Covid and Radio

Radio has been the cheapest way of delivery and extensively used for educational purposes all over the world for a long time. This technology has two aspects: radio broadcast for direct consumption and a recording of broadcasts to be stored and used much in the same way as audio material



Covid-19 has caused the biggest disruption to the education system not only in India but in the world. According to UNESCO, over 320 million students in Indian schools and colleges are impacted by the pandemic. An immediate response to the crisis was to go digital. E-learning solutions were developed, thanks to the responses by the government and partners all over the world including the Global Education Coalition led by UNESCO. But the widening digital divide has not allowed the shift to be an easy alternative, the main hindrance being the non-availability of high-speed internet in remote areas of India. The pandemic could also initiate reforms in fee structure and creation of cost-effective programmes, and so new trends are picking up momentum. It seems there is an opportunity to rethink the traditional education system.

Many effective ways must be thought of to substitute the old style of education delivery. Radio has been the cheapest way of delivery and extensively used for educational purposes all over the world for a long time. This technology has two aspects: radio broadcast for direct consumption and a recording of broadcasts to be stored and used much in the same way as audio material which has to be put directly on the storing apparatus by the producer without the intervention of broadcasting. The potential of radio broadcasting stems from two sources: its low capital requirements, low operating costs and wider coverage, and its pedagogical value.

The characteristics that contribute to its potential are easy accessibility even to the economically weaker section; wide coverage so that it can quickly reach the isolated rural populace; low capital investment and operating cost as compared to other electronic media; easy learner reception even as the learner is engaged in other work; motivation facilities by using special effects like music etc. and ease of production in that no complicated

mechanism or sophisticated instruments are required.

In fact, it was Lord Irwin who foresaw the true potential of this medium when he declared in 1927: “India offers special opportunities for the development of broadcasting. Her distances and wide spaces alone make it a promising field. Both for entertainment and for education, its possibilities are great and as yet we perhaps scarcely realise, how great they are”.

A time has come to realise that in terms of geographical, linguistic and numerical strength, the radio’s reach is far greater than that of all other media in the country. It may be recalled that the Radio Rural Forum Project, experimented in 1956 by All India Radio (AIR), was a significant milestone in forging a link between three elements involved in the process – the audience, the broadcasting agencies and the specialist agencies.

While studying the overall impact of rural broadcasting, the Vidyalankar Committee, appointed in 1963 by the Government of India to study the publicity programmes of the five year plans, observed: “Wherever radio has reached, its impact has been direct and decisive, radio has undoubtedly been a powerful factor in much of the changes in the political, economic and social outlooks and attitudes as have come about in rural India in recent days.”

Indian radio has about a four-decade long history of working towards educational purposes. Major projects in this sector include Rural Radio Forum for Agricultural Development (1967), promotion of adult literacy rate and GRAMS experiment of 1975 using the medium for training women panchayat members etc. As a part of the process of bringing the medium closer to the hearts of the people, the concept

of Local Radio Stations has also proved effective. The Indian experiment in establishing local radio stations began when the AIR ventured into a new phase of broadcasting with the establishment of the first local station at Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu in 1994.

As a tool for development communication reaching out to the people with relevant messages and useful information, community radio became the ideal medium. While in Sri Lanka, Mahaweli Community Radio starting in 1981 and in Philippines, Tambuli, a Community Radio Network operating in remote rural areas have been successful examples in organising and operating community radio, in our country the initiative was taken by Voices in 1996. The government liberalised the policy for Community Radio in December 2006 and decided to grant permission for setting up such stations to NGOs.

Gyan Vani is an educational FM Radio network operating through several FM stations from different places of the country. These stations were to operate as media cooperatives with day-to-day programmes contributed by different educational institutions, NGOs and national level institutions like IGNOU, NCERT, UGC etc.

Now that all educational institutions are closed for an indefinite period, a series of audio conferencing programmes may be initiated in collaboration with all AIR stations using space tuning of AIR at local level with local infrastructure and human resources. The main strength of this mode is that education delivery through decentralised distance mode might be provided. AIR is already broadcasting syllabus-based educational contents daily in its Vidhyabhyasa Rangam programme which can

be utilised by colleges and universities effectively. The service of a subject expert can be utilised by a large audience with a low per capita cost.

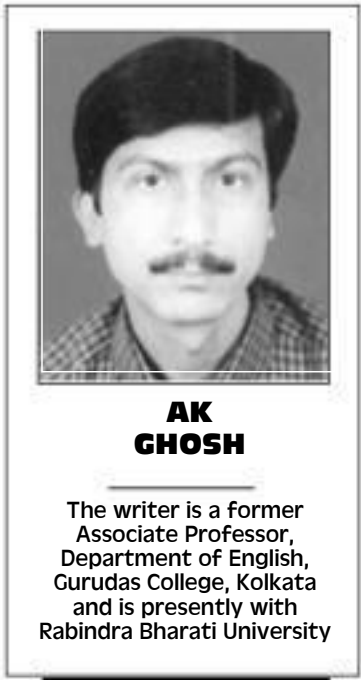
It is interesting to know that TV was launched in India in 1959 primarily as an educational medium. It was in 1975 that AIR conducted an ambitious experiment in serving the rural masses of the country. Doordarshan was still a constituent unit of AIR. Termed as Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE), it was carried out for transmission of programmes to 2,400 villages in six states of India. Under the scheme villages were provided with TV sets at Community places. Specially designed informal educational programmes were beamed for a couple of hours every day.

TV channels can do wonders in reaching out to learners in an easy way. Recently, Padashaala, an exam-based programme telecast by Doordarshan, Thiruvananthapuram was a great success. Unlike satellite channels, Doordarshan has a footprint over 80 per cent of India. The programme of DD in collaboration with the government of Bihar, Mera Doordarshan, Mera Vidhyalay, also had a great popularity.

Digital learning and teaching framework were introduced in India in 1985 with the setting up of IGNOU. Since then the digital learning platforms have been set up like Diksha, National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER), Swayam, National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement (NESTA), Swayam Prabha etc.

Today India has one of the largest radio, television and satellite or cable system networks in the world. As per the TAM Annual Universe Update 2015, India had over 167 million households with TV sets, of which over 161 million have access to cable TV or satellite TV.

Beyond the top band of educational excellence, Indian academia is set to need transformation. Let new challenges make way for novel solutions that can give pace to the stagnating education system.



AK GHOSH
The writer is a former Associate Professor, Department of English, Curudas College, Kolkata and is presently with Rabindra Bharati University

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN** ASIA NEWS NETWORK
ASIAN VOICES

Migrant Workers struggle to survive

Migrant workers in HCM City are seeking part-time work to compensate for reduced hours after the second Covid-19 outbreak. Many businesses have reduced their production scale, and have cut their workforce to adapt to the current circumstances. For instance, Huế Phong Leather and Footwear Joint Stock Company in Gò Vấp District recently announced that it would continue to cut 1,577 workers due to a shortage of orders. This is the third labour cut since mid-May at the company. More than 4,000 workers have lost their jobs. Many workers, especially migrants, have had to look for part-time jobs to survive. A worker at a shoe company in Bình Tân District, told Ngu3i lao đ3ng (Labourers) newspaper she had worked three days per week last month but only worked three days this month. “My income has dropped steeply,” she said.

She wants to find a new job, but said it was difficult to apply for this kind of job at her age. Depending on orders, the company often makes unexpected announcements and calls her for work. So, she must check her phone regularly. Another worker at a mechanical firm, said his job was stable with a monthly income of about VNĐ7 million (US\$300) (not including overtime) before Lunar New Year. “There has been less and less work for me since the virus reappeared. I only work two to three days per week, which is not enough for me to live,” he said. In the same situation, Nguy3n Th? Lien, a worker at a shoe company

Việt Nam News

in the district, said she was four months pregnant and worried about her labour contract expiring.

Her working hours have been reduced over the past two months, and she can barely cover her living expenses. “I heard that the company will continue labour cuts so I am very worried,” she said. Her husband’s job is also unstable and her oldest daughter is entering primary school. “If I become unemployed, I will not know what to do to survive,” she said. During the last three months, Nguyen Quoc Hung, 46, a worker at G.V. Co., Ltd in Th? Đ3c District, said he had to earn money by being a construction worker, porter, rental carrier and xe 3m (motorbike taxi drivers) because his employer had faced a drop in orders. His daily income is about 150,000 (\$6.5), only enough to cover daily expenses.

“These jobs are without labour contracts and social insurance, so I must accept the risks,” Hung said. A worker at F.T. Viet Nam Co., Ltd in the Linh Trung 2 Export Processing Zone in Thu Đức District, said she and a group of friends pool their money to buy vegetables from wholesale markets and sell them to earn a profit. “We take advantage of a temporary market near our company to sell vegetables after our working shift,” she said. They only earn a daily profit of VNĐ20,000-30,000 (\$0.9-1.3).

IN MEMORIAM

CHATTERJEE BELA — In birthday remembrance of my mother (24th August, 1914 — 22nd February, 1976) of 18/1, Beadon Street, Kolkata.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Lessons for many

SIR, This refers to the editorial, ‘Cities in spotlight’ (August 22). Madhya Pradesh’s Indore being crowned India’s cleanest city for the fourth consecutive year by Swachh Survekshan 2020 offers a lesson for administrators in other big cities. Hard work, co-operation of municipal authorities, NGOs, private companies and citizens, and a system of rewards and punishments are the recipe for Indore’s success. Chhattisgarh was ranked the cleanest state of India in the category of states with fewer than 100 urban local bodies (ULBs) category. Jharkhand was adjudged the cleanest state of India in the above 100-ULBs category. Among cantonment boards, Jalandhar was rated the cleanest followed by Delhi and Meerut. Overall, it is felt, the Survekshan assessments have been very holistic addressing different categories of cities and also including and acknowledging different city models on waste and sanitation.

This year, the ministry introduced a new category called Ganga Towns, ranking

the cleanliness of towns situated along the river’s banks. Varanasi ranked the cleanest of towns with a more than 100000 population. Gujarat has much reason to rejoice because four cities have been ranked among the top 10, with Surat occupying the second spot. Delhi’s performance is worrisome considering its status as the national capital. Even on previous occasions, the civic bodies have failed to improve basic sanitation conditions for the

people, despite the Swachh Bharat Mission being in its fifth year. Civic bodies’ careless attitude in managing garbage, poor sanitation, delay in releasing funds by Delhi government and blame game is responsible for poor performance.

Yours, etc., SS Paul, Nadia, 22 August.

FOOLING YOUTH

SIR, It’s astonishing to know about the decision regarding reservation of 100 per cent jobs in MP government departments for state residents. It

seems nothing else but an election gimmick to woo youth in view of the upcoming assembly by-polls in the state.

The state government should instead concentrate on creating more jobs in the state by inviting major industrial and IT players. It should offer single window clearance system for new investors on the lines of Gujarat. Just announcing that all jobs will be given to state youth doesn’t serve the purpose as jobs have to be available in the market.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 20 August.



CATCH THE VANDALS

SIR, Dr Sushovan Banerjee is a pride of Bengal, specially the medical fraternity. After graduating from R.G. Kar Medical College, he did post graduation in pathology and then went to England to do a Diploma in Hematology. He worked there for four years and then took a big decision, left everything and came back to his native village to serve his people. His name has been included in the Guinness Book of World records for treating the maximum number of patients in his professional career of 57 years. He is famous in the area as “EK TAKAR DOCTOR” meaning “one Rupee doctor”. He became an MLA in 1984. The Government of India awarded him with “Padma Shri” in 2000. To felicitate him a statue was installed in Shantiniketan.

On 19 August, anti-socials vandalized his statue and threw black ink on it, because he opposed vandalism in Visva Bharati, a central University. What can be more shameful than this? Even Vishwa Guru Rabindranath’s legacy can not be spared today in the state. There is no word appropriate to condemn this vandalism of an institution which is a pride of the whole country.

Legally the ground belongs to VBU and they are authorised to protect it from encroachment. It is obvious that there is more behind the curtain than what is visible in front. Proper investigation is needed to clear the cloud and bring the truth out.

Yours, etc., Dr RD Dubey, Kolkata, 21 August.

How Trump could win

SUNIL SHARAN

President Trump is trailing Joe Biden by about 10 points nationally, but in the key battleground states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Florida he is only behind by some 5 points.

The Democratic National Convention held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin has exposed the deep schisms within the Democratic Party. Key speakers like Michelle Obama and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have painted America as a hellhole and that it has become that helhole under Donald Trump.

But why then do tens of millions of people around the world still clamor to come to America? Even the Covid-ridden, Trump-plagued America of today?

Bernie Sanders made clear that he wants Joe Biden to win the presidency, and once he wins it, that he wants to push him further to the left. But Sanders has already pushed Biden to the left in the primaries, for instance on the Green New Deal and the minimum-living wage.

This is a clear line of attack against Biden that Trump should take, and intensify. Take the Green New Deal. It bans fracking. But fracking has created nearly 10 million jobs in the US and led to the resurgence of the American economy. Even President Barack Obama did not ban it. As someone who has been a green energy pioneer for two decades, I find the Green New Deal impractical and unsustainable.

It is true that Obama restored the economy, and that Trump inherited a strong economy from Obama. But it's also true that Trump lit up the economy with his tax cuts and deregulation, for which he must get credit. The economy promises to rebound post-Covid. Left-wing measures that Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez seek will set the economy back.

Ocasio-Cortez did not even nominate Biden for president. She chose Sanders. It is clear that the Democratic Party is far from being



united and that the disunity is only going to grow with time.

The second line of attack is vile, but then all is fair in love, war, and politics. Trump is painting Biden as senile. But it is also true that much of the anticipation around Biden's veep pick was that she could find herself president if something were to happen to Biden, or if he opted for just a single term.

One has to be careful about opting for the single-term bit. Once presidents taste the elixir of power, they suddenly become restored. Still, Trump is playing up Biden's age.

He's also started playing up Kamala Harris's Indian heritage. Notice how he and his chief of staff, Mark Meadows, pronounce Harris's first name. Harris herself says that it should be pronounced commala. They instead call her Kamaalaa. They stress the foreignness of her name, its exoticity. It's going low, but then who doesn't go low in politics? America is not that misogynist when it comes to white women. Hillary Clinton proved that. She lost because she didn't campaign in key states, and because she lacked charisma.

Harris has oodles of charisma. But

she is a black woman. Black women are seen to be angry, nasty, scary. Scary one can understand because the colour black scares white people. Black women are believed to give lip, maybe that's why they are seen as angry and nasty. But legions of movies like Gone with the Wind have portrayed them as caring and kind.

So I am still unclear where the stereotype of the angry, nasty black woman emerged from. But it is a stereotype that Trump can play to. That were Biden to be elected president, an angry, nasty, scary black woman would be just a heartbeat

away from the presidency. How would America's whites, even its liberal whites, feel about that?

Perhaps Biden would have been better off choosing a white woman as his running mate.

Five points. Five points is all that Trump is behind in battleground states. He who takes those states runs away with the ultimate prize. Trump's lines of attack are clear. He's going to press hard on them. Can Biden repel Trump?

The writer is an expert on energy and contributes regularly to publications in India and overseas.

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

Accents are for the birds

I have an accent.

So do Brad Pitt and Queen Elizabeth. And so did Laurence Olivier and Walter Cronkite.

There is no person alive who does not have an accent. The way you speak a language, say English, is heavily influenced by your first language if it is different from English. It is also influenced by where you come from, the level of education you have had, the social or economic class from which you spring, and even possibly the ethnic group to which you belong. We all have accents.

When people speak of a person having an accent, they mean, pejoratively, that the person has a non-standard way of speaking a language, whatever the standard is in their mind or that of their audience. Clearly, the standard varies sharply. Sir Laurence, who made a great deal of money by bringing his histrionic talent to the other side of the Pacific, did not at all sound like his Queen. The avuncular newscaster Cronkite, so beloved of Americans, read his daily bulletin in tones very different from Brad Pitt's.

Yet ridicule is poured on the Tamil Indian who has come to work on a network system in Alabama on an H1B visa or the Salvadoreño who has crossed the border from Mexico questioning for cleaning jobs in a New Jersey suburb. Even more ridiculous is the superior air with which a person, who has spent some time in Bristol or Boston, looks down on the average denizen of Manila or Mumbai.

During a short break in a meeting in downtown Washington, I side-stepped into a delicatessen to order a quick sandwich. Before even the Korean server asked, I told her the type of bread, meat and condiments I wanted. She didn't follow. When I repeated my choices, slowly and clearly, she still did not grasp. I said, "Just make a good sandwich and give it to me, please."

When I sat down to eat, I had a

momentary flash of annoyance that a person, whose work is to fashion a sandwich from the ingredients in front of her, should have so much trouble following a simple order. Then I realized that, in a country where live 50 million people for whom English is a second language, and in a city where the foreign-born outnumber the native-born 7 to 1, it was I, the customer, who should learn to cope with the limited linguistic skill of a low-wage server.

It is well-known that in the US people are discriminated against, in recruitment or in the assessment of their work, if they seem to speak with an unfamiliar accent. Routinely, new immigrants are treated unfairly the moment they open their mouths, even if their looks had misleadingly suggested a native. Even in jobs where the spoken language is not important, a prejudice against the non-native person masquerades as a bias against the non-native accent.

When I grew up in colonial India, I could understand – though not accept – the parochial preference of British rulers and their lackeys for a certain accent, but, agonizingly, it continued long after the British were ejected from the Indian shores. The tradition has continued. The extraordinary pains some seem to take to cultivate an expatriate accent belies the slipshod standard of their vocabulary and grammar. Accents are a poor predictor of language proficiency, as much as the size of one's head, which once riveted the bogus science of phrenology, is a pathetic indicator of a person's intelligence.

Of course, we want to be understood when we speak. Our intonation of words must bear a reasonable semblance to the expected sound of the words. This has become easier thanks to the internet. You can click on any word in a dictionary and hear the right sound, and you can do so in any major language. But to strive for the



Illustration: Debabrata Chakrabarty

correct pronunciation is a far cry from the inane attempt to ape the 'correct' accent. I learned Asian languages before I left India: Bengali, Sanskrit, Pali and Hindi. Those gave me a broad range of phonetics when I went on to learn French and Spanish, while I saw my American colleagues struggle mightily with the softer sounds of d and t. I feel a curious thrill when I am mistaken for a Hispanic when I converse in Spanish.

I learned English in India, including some mispronunciations, but never made the slightest attempt to

speak like my English colleagues. Later, I was equally loath to pick up the midwestern accent most current in the US. My effort was, as ever in every language, to learn it well, use it with elegance and precision. That effort has not ended. It never will. I admire Conrad, Nabokov and Rushdie, for none of whom English was the first language, but I try to write in my own way, battling to find my own idiom.

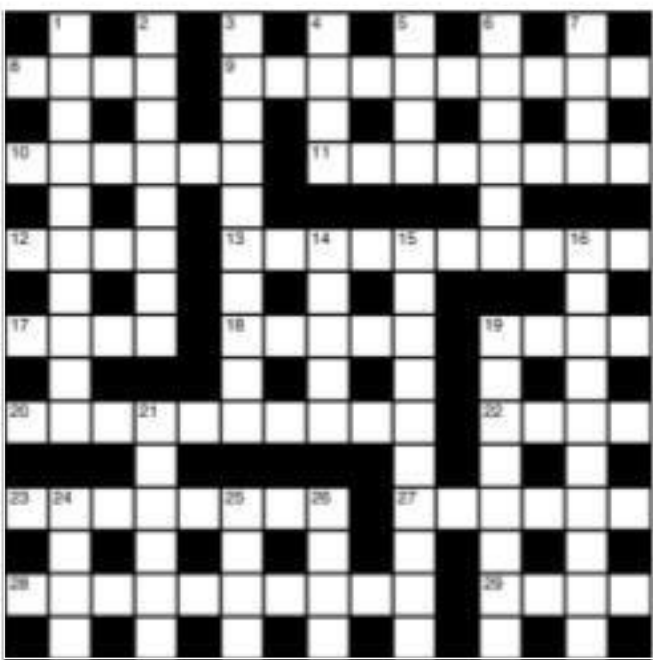
Getting some preferred accent I believe to be a fool's errand unless one works in a call centre or aspires to

an elevated social status. I have no desire to seem superior to anybody else. A large part of my work involved making presentations to groups, big and small, and I never experienced blank looks. Nobody complained that I was unintelligible; rather, some complimented me on my clarity. That to me was more important than being noted for an Oxbridge accent or taken for a Boston brahmin.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com)

CROSSWORD

NO 28052



ACROSS

- 8 Junior Scout putting away a very alcoholic drink (4)
- 9 French film featuring old artist – tons better! (10)
- 10 Choose to get involved, having zero alternative (6)
- 11 Prince wearing two hats, strangely, for riverside walks (8)
- 12 Tattoos damaged skin (4)
- 13 Correspondent recollected heartless perversions (10)
- 17 Duke is protected by fort (4)
- 18 Relative from Spain visiting

- somewhere in France (5)
- 19 Young hoodlums finally leaving shopping centre (4)
- 20 Authority figure wanting a pipe and new trousers (10)
- 22 Criticise guys going round taking ecstasy (4)
- 23 Beers consumed by damn stupid bloke from Richmond? (8)
- 27 Big cat biting a rabbit's head and part of the throat (6)
- 28 Coke possibly seen as college guard prepared to arrest girl (5-1,4)
- 29 Corporations rejected rude material (4)

DOWN

- 1 Nine preset switches? That's far from straightforward (10)
- 2 School arranged something for kids' amusement (5,3)
- 3 Start given to European entertainer (4,6)
- 4 Touched cloth (4)
- 5 Struggle with expectation (4)
- 6 Type of locks in frame of doors protecting study (6)
- 7 Long lead taken from back of Macintosh (4)
- 14 Glasses chip at the bottom in

- short amounts of time (5)
- 15 Study of deep space? (10)
- 16 Criminally bad Football team introduces international talent (10)
- 19 Suspect type of card set up with credit (8)
- 21 Incredibly wayward serve gets over (4,2)
- 24 Co-worker is friendly, though not at first (4)
- 25 Bacon, for one, made extremely vacuous art (4)
- 26 Awkward person regularly in tears on date (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The report of the police department in the Central Provinces for the year 1919 discloses an increase of crime, almost wholly confined to offences against property. The official review of the report, just gazetted, shows that this increase may be traced to the economic conditions of the year. Scarcity prevailed in fifteen districts, accompanied by an unprecedented rise of prices, and another important factor was the demoralisation caused by the severe influenza epidemic of the autumn of 1918. Thus the Central Provinces has presented a microcosm of the condition of things prevailing all the world over, for at the root of the growth of criminal instincts under the guise of political ideals lie the scarcity, high prices, sickness, and social suffering left by the war. The same causes have produced similar effects after every great war. There was another class of crime in the Central Provinces last year, apart from that due to economic trouble. Certain notorious outlaws had managed to elude capture for a time, and their success caused many imitators to arise in certain districts who appear to have ontrivalled the "bad men" of the wild and woolly West. Such was the terror of the names of the original outlaws, according to the official review, that "two or three village ruffians had only to announce themselves as members of the famous gangs to secure a terrified acquiescence in their impudent demands."

NEWS ITEMS

INDIAN TERRITORIAL FORCE

Simla, Aug 23

The text of the Indian Territorial Force Bill was published today. The Commander-in-Chief states that the Indian branch of the Indian Defence Force formed in 1917 was an experimental measure, and was admittedly an improvisation designed to afford some scope to those who desired to take a part in the scheme of Imperial Defence during the great war. It was not, like the European branch, produced by a process of evolution from an existing force. No organisation was in existence and owing to the heavy demands on the regular forces, it was not at that time possible to provide trained officers and instructional staffs for separate units formed from the newly-recruited material. Consequently men enrolled under the scheme had to be attached for training to a regular unit.

FARIDPUR COLLEGE CASE

In the Civil suit instituted by the Faridpur Rajendra College Council against Babu Mohendra Narayan Roy Chowdhury, Zemindar, Baisrash, claiming Rs 1,500 as the unpaid balance of his promised contribution of Rs 2,000 towards the Rajendra College funds, a compromise had been effected between the parties and it was filed yesterday in court. The terms of the compromise are as follows:- Defendant has paid Rs 1,500 to the College Council and the Council agrees to expend Rs 700 for liquidation of its debts and the balance of Rs 800 will be deposited in a local bank, the interest being spent for a free studentship to be awarded every alternate year and to be called Mohendra Narayan Free-studentship after the name of the donor.

"MEHTARS" STRIKE AT HOWRAH

About a hundred mehtars of the Howrah Municipality who have been on strike for the last five days assembled yesterday afternoon in the Court of Khan Bahadur A. Huq, Deputy Magistrate, when one of their comrades named Ulaki Mehtar was charged by the Howrah Municipality for interfering with municipal work and threatening to assault Bhola Koeri, a jamadar of the municipality. Bhola Koeri stated he was taking a cart through Khurut Road on Saturday morning when the accused came up and asked witness not to work the cart as a strike had been declared. Witness refused to do so when the accused threatened to assault witness. After some witnesses for the prosecution had been examined the hearing was adjourned, and the accused ordered to be released on bail.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Simla, Aug 23

Several Bills will be taken up for consideration at the meeting of the Legislative Council on the 26th instant, which include two Bills to amend the Indian Patent and Designs Act. One of these is very formal. The object of another, Sir Thomas Holland writes is to bring India into the inter-imperial arrangement for the provisional protection of inventions and designs within the Empire. A subsidiary object is to enable valid protection to be obtained for inventions which owing to war exigencies have been protected only in some parts of the Empire but would otherwise be invalidated by publication in other parts. India has hitherto been disqualified for admission to the inter-imperial arrangement provided for in section 91 of the United Kingdom Patents and Designs Act, 1907.



Healthcare and medical devices industry needs to leverage tools of technology to recharge domestic health system

PIYUSH GOYAL
UNION COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

THUMBNAILS

NSC-JCI pact: State-owned National Seeds Corporation (NSC) and Jute Corporation of India (JCI) have entered into a pact for supply of 10,000 quintals of certified jute seeds to farmers next year, a move that will help improve production and yield of raw jute in the country. The agriculture ministry said supply of certified seeds under the memorandum of understanding assumes importance because "the quality of raw jute produced in the country has been adversely affected over the years due to low-quality seeds and/or spurious seeds". PTI

Yatra-Amazon tie-up: Online travel firm Yatra.com said it has collaborated with Amazon Business to provide its hospitality partners with a wide range of products catering to their needs. Hospitality partners can leverage the Amazon Business marketplace as a one-stop destination to access a wide range of products across categories to cater to their various needs and procure products in a safe and efficient manner, Yatra said in a Press statement. PTI

Google's 'Kormo Jobs': Google said it is bringing its "Kormo Jobs" Android app to India to help job seekers find and apply for positions across India. The tech giant, which introduced "Jobs" last year in India as part of Google Pay to connect job seekers with opportunities in industries like on-demand businesses, retail and hospitality, said the offering will be rebranded to "Kormo Jobs". PTI

Muthoot Finance profit: Muthoot Finance has reported a 52 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs 858 crore in the first quarter ended June of the current financial year. The non-banking finance company had posted a net profit of Rs 563 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal, according to a regulatory filing. PTI

Private promoter ownership in NSE-listed cos hits new high

Share of government stake in such companies has hit a record low, according to a report

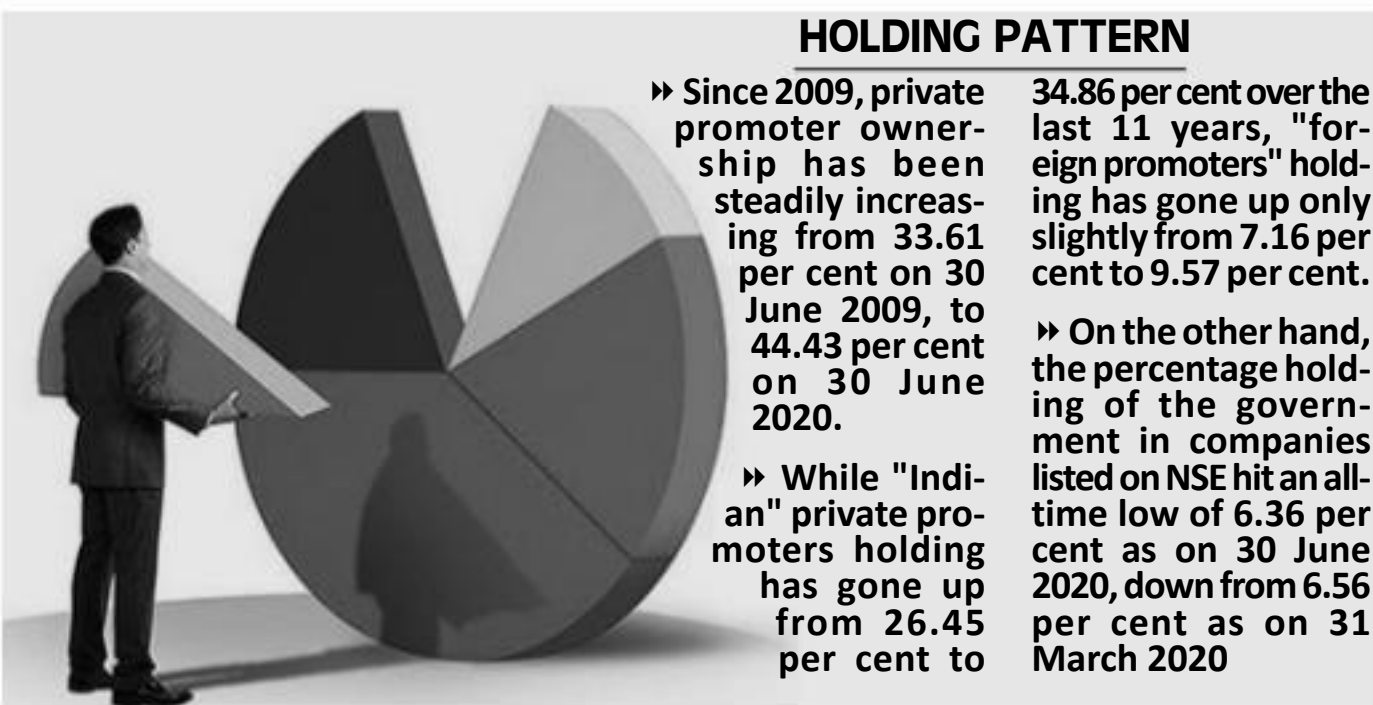
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

The percentage holding of private promoters in companies listed on NSE reached an all-time high at the end of June quarter, while share of government stake in such firms has hit a record low during the period under review, according to a report by primeinfobase.com.

Since 2009, private promoter ownership has been steadily increasing from 33.61 per cent on 30 June 2009, to 44.43 per cent on 30 June 2020.

While "Indian" private promoters holding has gone up from 26.45 per cent to 34.86 per cent over the last 11 years, "foreign promoters" holding has gone up only slightly from 7.16 per cent to 9.57 per cent.

On the other hand, the percentage holding of the government in companies listed on NSE hit an all-time low of 6.36 per cent as on 30 June 2020, down from 6.56 per cent as on 31 March 2020, as per a report by primeinfobase.com.



fobase.com, an initiative of Prime Database Group.

Over an 11-year period (since June 2009), such holding has been steadily declining, from 22.71 per cent as on 30 June 2009, due to the government's divestment programme, not enough new listings as also lacklustre performance of many CPSEs relative to their private peers, according to Pranav Haldea, MD of Prime Database Group. Holding of domestic mutu-

al funds in NSE-listed firms reduced to 7.81 per cent during the quarter ended on 30 June 2020, down from 7.96 per cent at the end of the preceding quarter.

This was the first decline on a quarter-on-quarter basis after a gap of 24 quarters. Prior to such drop, it has continuously increased from 2.86 per cent as on 30 June 2014, to 7.96 per cent as on 31 March 2020.

Besides, shareholding of

foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) also fell to 21.05 per cent as on June quarter from 21.17 per cent as on March quarter.

According to Haldea, FPIs are the largest non-promoter shareholders in the Indian market and their investment decisions have a huge bearing on the stock prices and overall direction of markets.

Retail holding (individuals with up to Rs 2 lakh shareholding) in companies listed

on NSE saw an increase to 6.74 per cent during the quarter under review from 6.54 per cent at the end of preceding three months.

However, what is significant to note, is the continuing overwhelming presence of retail investors in mid-cap and smaller companies, which institutional investors typically stay away from, the report noted.

On an overall basis, retail holding went up in a huge 1,018 companies listed on NSE in the last one quarter and the average stock price of these firms in the same period increased by 60.28 per cent. On the other hand, retail holding went down in 545 companies and the average stock price of such firms slightly rose by 61.08 per cent.

According to Haldea, unlike seen in previous quarters and years wherein retail would typically buy at the peak and sell at lows, the last quarter saw heavy buying by retail making use of the steep fall in share prices due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Sebi may ease minimum public holding norms for firms under insolvency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

Markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India has proposed relaxation in norms pertaining to 25 per cent minimum public shareholding for companies which undergo corporate insolvency resolution and seek relisting following the process.

Besides, it proposed enhanced disclosure for such companies.

The Sebi said it is possible that pursuant to implementation of the resolution plan, the public shareholding in such companies may drop to abysmally low levels.

In fact, in one recent case it was observed that post-corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP), the public holding decreased to 0.97 per cent, and it showed 8,764 per cent jump in share price in spite of additional preventive surveillance actions, including reduction in price band and moving the scrip into trade for trade segment.

According to the Sebi, such low public shareholding raises multiple concerns like failure of fair discovery of price

of the scrip and need for increased surveillance measures and may therefore be a red flag for future cases.

Low float also prohibits healthy participation in trading of such companies, majorly due to issues related to demand and supply gap of shares, the regulator added.

Accordingly, the regulator has proposed recalibration of threshold for minimum public shareholding (MPS) norms in companies which undergo CIRP and seek relisting of shares pursuant to implementation of the approved resolution plan.

It has sought views of public and market intermediaries till 18 September in this regard.

It has been suggested that post-CIRP companies may be mandated to achieve at least 10 per cent public shareholding within six months and 25 per cent within three years from the date of breach of MPS norm. Currently, the norms mandate that in case public holding of such company falls below 10 per cent, then the same will be increased to at least 10 per cent within 18 months and 25 per cent within three years.

Hiring picks up pace in April-June: LinkedIn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

There has been a significant rebound in hiring following the easing of lockdown restrictions and between early-April to end-June recruitment in India has increased by 35 percentage points, says a report.

According to LinkedIn's latest Labour Market Update, a monthly update on hiring trends and insights, though there has been a significant hiring rebound, the pace of these gains is expected to slow down given the continued economic uncertainty.

As per the data, in India, hiring declines reached a low of (-) 50 per cent year-on-year in April, before starting to slowly recover. The hiring sentiment stood at (-) 15 per cent year-on-year as of the end of June. "As risks of second wave of

infections emerge, some states have imposed lockdown measures again. Given this uncertainty, the recovery is expected to remain fairly flat in the coming weeks," it said.

Data also suggested that the gap between hires for males and females has narrowed from about 40 percentage points in February to around 30 percentage points in June.

The competition for jobs has also doubled compared to 6 months ago, with the average number of applications per job posted on LinkedIn increasing from around 90 in January 2020, to 180 in June 2020. The Update also highlighted the roles that are in demand. The top five in-demand jobs are software engineer, business development manager, sales manager, business analyst and content writer.

Govt eases credit guarantee scheme norms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

With a view to provide additional liquidity to crisis-ridden NBFCs and housing finance companies (HFCs), the government has relaxed norms for Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS) for purchase of bonds and commercial papers by public sector banks and extended its period by three months.

Keeping in view the progress under the scheme and the fact that the stipulated limit for AA/AA- rated bonds/CPs (commercial papers) has been nearly reached, while the appetite for lower rated papers is nearing saturation considering their lower ticket size, the government has now decided to modify PCGS 2.0.

"Additional three months have been granted to build up the portfolio. At the end of six

months, i.e. by 19 November 2020, the portfolio shall be crystallised based on actual amount disbursed, for the guarantee to come into effect," a finance ministry statement said.

At the portfolio level, AA and AA- investment sub-portfolio under the scheme should not exceed 50 per cent of the total portfolio of bonds/CPs purchased by public sector banks (PSBs) under the scheme as against 25 per cent stipulated earlier.

"It is expected that the above modification will provide greater flexibility to PSBs in purchasing bonds/CPs under PCGS 2.0," it said.

As part of Rs 20.97 lakh crore "Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan", announced by the government, PCGS 2.0 was launched on 20 May to provide portfolio guarantee for purchase of papers with a rating of AA and below, issued

MODIFICATIONS

► At the portfolio level, AA and AA- investment sub-portfolio under the scheme should not exceed 50 per cent of the total portfolio of bonds/CPs purchased by public sector banks (PSBs) under the scheme as against 25 per cent stipulated earlier.

► "It is expected that the above modification will provide greater flexibility to PSBs in purchasing bonds/CPs under PCGS 2.0," the finance ministry said.

by NBFCs/HFCs/micro finance institutions (MFIs), by PSBs.

It was envisaged to purchase bonds or CPs of Rs 45,000 crore under PCGS 2.0 of which the maximum headroom permissible for pur-

chase of papers rated AA/AA- was 25 per cent of the total portfolio i.e. Rs 11,250 crore, the statement said.

In addition, the government had separately announced the Special Liquidity Scheme (SLS) for purchase of CPs and non-convertible debentures (NCDs) issued by NBFCs/HFCs with a residual maturity of up to 3 months, which could be extended for a further period of upto 3 months, of a total value not exceeding Rs 30,000 crore to be extended by the amount required as per need.

Under PCGS 2.0, PSBs have approved purchase of bonds/CPs rated AA/AA- issued by 28 entities and bonds/CPs rated below AA- issued by 62 entities, amounting to Rs 21,262 crore overall.

The average ticket size of bonds/CPs rated below AA- is significantly lower than the average ticket size of

bonds/CPs rated AA/AA-.

Under SLS, proposals of Rs 7,464 crore have been approved for purchase so far, it said.

Any NBFC, including MFIs registered with the RBI under the RBI Act, 1934 (excluding those registered as core investment companies) and any HFC registered with the National Housing Bank under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987 which is complying with certain specified conditions, is eligible to raise funding from this facility.

Earlier this month, the government widened the scope of the Rs 3-lakh crore MSME credit guarantee scheme by doubling the upper ceiling of loans outstanding to Rs 50 crore and including certain individual loans given to professionals like doctors, lawyers and chartered accountants for business purposes under its ambit.

Microfinance sector likely to see consolidation post-Covid: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 23 AUGUST

Microfinance industry, which serves the unbanked, is likely to head towards the path of consolidation post-Covid, feel industry experts.

Micro lenders will also move towards digitisation of all processes for serving their customers who are going to see a change in their transaction habits, they said.

"A lot of people who are not here for the long term or don't have a very long-term vision of being in this industry and serving these (MFI) customers, will most likely find their way out. I would think that it also opens up some kind of path to consolidation in the industry," Ujjivan Small Finance Bank managing director and CEO Nitin Chugh said during

a panel discussion on the microfinance sector organised by CRIF High Mark, a credit bureau.

This microfinance industry will remain only for people who are invested, are following regulatory norms very seriously and have a roadmap ahead of them, he added.

Sharing a similar view, Jana Small Finance Bank's managing director and CEO Ajay Kanwal said: "It probably is the moment where more people will think of consolidation and rightly so because having scale, capital, management depth, does make a difference. Clearly, I think there will be a lot of conversation around it."

He said that post-Covid, digitisation will be a reality. The most positive feature of the whole crisis is that we



will move towards more digital approaches towards customers, banks and finance companies, which in a way will help a bit more of a formalisation and hence ability to give more credit to the underserved will become easy, Kanwal said.

He said the pandemic has given MFIs a bigger opportunity for growth because there is six months of pent-up demand. There are people who want to start businesses

and people have consumption needs that have been postponed, he added.

According to Manoj Nambiar, managing director of Arohan Financial Services and also chairperson of Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN), the sector will see a surge in non-performing loans once the Reserve Bank of India's moratorium on repayment of loans ends on 31 August.

The industry is bracing up for the spike in delinquency which will happen due to dormancy or inactivity levels that exist. Also, the pandemic has impacted the bottom of the pyramid, he said.

He, however, feels borrowers from the bottom of the pyramid segment are resilient in terms of overcoming any crisis.

Domestic coal demand may be subdued in Q2: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 23 AUGUST

Demand for domestic coal is likely to be subdued in the second quarter of the current financial year, due to lower demand from end-user industries amid the Covid-19 pandemic along with high inventory at power stations, according to a report by India Ratings.

The rating agency said domestic coal production remained subdued for the third consecutive month in June 2020 year-on-year as well as month-on-month due to low power demand and higher inventory at power stations.

Thus, the coal offtake reduced in June 2020 year-on-year but improved month-on-month with the gradual relaxation in lockdown norms, the agency

said. "Despite gradual relaxation in lockdown norms, demand over the second quarter of FY21 shall be further dampened by the onset of the monsoon season. Overall, domestic coal imports are also likely to be lower in Q2 FY21 year-on-year," it said.

According to Ind-Ra, domestic coal imports are likely to have been lower in July 2020 due to the low domestic demand from end-user industries amid the Covid-19 outbreak.

Also, the government has mandated Coal India to replace at least 100 million tons (MT) of avoidable imports with domestic coal in financial year 2020-21, to reduce imports.

"The share of imports in the total domestic consumption reduced to 22 per

cent in June 2020 from 28 per cent in FY20. While the non-coking coal imports reduced 34 per cent year-on-year, coking coal imports declined 41 per cent year-on-year," it said.

The agency, however, said the commercial coal mining and the associated reforms announced by the government will help in shaping the coal sector towards a more deregulated and competitive scenario in the long run.

"However, resistance by some states over environmental concerns for some mines on offer is likely to stall the auction of such blocks. Furthermore, a global shift towards greener fuels and simultaneous withdrawal from coal-based energy may be a key challenge to participation of industry players," it added.

Special group to resolve gems, jewellery industry issues

MUMBAI, 23 AUGUST

Gems and jewellery industry body GJEPC said that the government has called for constituting a special group, which will include both customs and banking officials, to resolve issues faced by the industry.

In a virtual review meeting recently, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman called for the formation of a special group to resolve all issues related to the gem and jewellery sector, the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council said.

The minister assured the GJEPC that if the industry does not get a satisfactory reply from this body then the matter should be referred to the ministry, it said.

"The exports of the gem and jewellery sector is witnessing some signs of recovery. We are hopeful that the market will recover soon as exports to the US, Europe and China have commenced. We are thankful to the finance minister for the special group formation under member customs."

"This would help address the sectoral concerns and resolve trade related bottlenecks. It's an important step towards attaining ease of doing business," GJEPC chairman Colin Shah said.

The various issues represented by GJEPC during the meeting included reduction of polished import duty to 2.5 per cent from the current 7.5 per cent, clarification on online equalisation levy for B2B international diamond auctions, reverse job work in SEZ and GST related concerns. The reverse job work in SEZ is not allowed currently. However, the officials have assured the industry that discussions are on between the department of commerce and department of revenue, Shah added. PTI

Agri exports rise by over 23% amid pandemic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 AUGUST

India's farm exports rose by 23.24 per cent in value terms to Rs 25,552.7 crore during March-June period amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the agriculture ministry has said.

To promote farm exports, a "comprehensive action plan" has been prepared under which "export promotion forums" are being created and existing agri-clusters are being strengthened besides identifying certain destinations for promotion of agricultural exports, the ministry said in a statement.

Promotion of farm exports is extremely important not only for earning precious foreign exchange for the country, but

also for achieving the goal of an "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", for which self-reliant agriculture is critical, it added.

"Even during the difficult time of pandemic lockdown, India took care not to disturb the world food supply chain and continued to export," it said.

Exports of agri-commodities increased by 23.24 per cent to Rs 25,552.7 crore during March-June 2020 as against Rs 20,734.8 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

According to the ministry, "clear and proactive interventions" are required to be taken to ensure India becomes a top exporting nation in agriculture commensurate with the production.

India holds second rank in

STEPS TO PROMOTE FARM EXPORTS

► To promote farm exports, a "comprehensive action plan" has been prepared under which "export promotion forums" are being created and existing agri-clusters are being strengthened besides identifying certain destinations for promotion of agricultural exports, according to agri-

culture ministry.

► Promotion of farm exports is extremely important not only for earning precious foreign exchange for the country, but also for achieving the goal of an "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", for which self-reliant agriculture is critical, it said.



world's wheat production, but ranks 34th in exports. Similarly, despite being ranked third in vegetable production in the world, India's export ranking is 14th. Same is the case for fruits, where India is the second largest producer in the world, but export rank is 23rd, the statement said.

Highlighting the comprehensive action plan for promotion of agri trade, the ministry said product specific export promotion forums (EPFs) have been created to lead agri exports to new heights.

EPFs for eight agricultural and allied products - grapes,

mango, banana, onion, rice, nuri-cereals, pomegranate and floriculture - have been constituted under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

Each EPF will have exporters of the related commodity as its members along

with official members representing concerned ministries of the Central and state governments.

APEDA chief will be the chairman of each of these forums, which will meet at least once in every two months.

The forum's recommendations will be placed before product committee of APEDA and the forum will be in close contact with the concerned organisation of ministry of agriculture.

The ministry has also emphasised on strengthening the existing "agri-clusters" and creating more product-specific clusters to fulfil the gap of bulk quantity and quality of supplies, it said.

"A time-bound action plan has also been prepared for

import substitution with particular focus upon edible oils, cashew, fruits and spices, thereby making India self-reliant," it added.

As specific strategy for export promotion has also been evolved for fresh fruits and vegetables with specific emphasis on grapes, mango, pomegranate, onion, potato and cucumber-gherkin.

The export strategy focuses on export promotion of fast-evolving niche markets of wellness food, health conscious food and nutraceuticals as well as development of "Brand India" to help penetration into new foreign markets, and on new products which automatically translates into higher value realisation.





The upcoming visit this week by UN's nuclear chief to Teheran has nothing to do with a US push to impose so-called snapback sanctions on Iran

IRAN'S ENVOY TO INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY, KAZEM GHARIBABADI
EMPHASISING THAT THE VISIT COMES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF IRAN'S INVITATION.

S. Korea tightens curbs as infections surge

397 fresh cases mark the 10th day of triple-digit increases, indicating that speed of spread was nearing levels seen during outbreak in spring

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL, 23 AUGUST

Beaches and churches are closed and baseball games will be played in empty stadiums on Sunday after South Korea added hundreds to its growing coronavirus cases amid concerns the epidemic is getting out of control.

The 397 new cases reported by South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention marked the 10th day of triple-digit increases and indicated that the speed of viral spread was nearing the levels last seen during the worst of the outbreak in spring.

The resurgence, which began in the densely populated capital area before reaching practically every major city and provincial town over the past week, is a major setback for the country that had been

eager to tout its hard-won gains against the virus.

KCDC Director Jeong Eun-kyeong said things will probably get worse before they get better. The daily jumps could become even bigger in the coming days because health workers are increasingly struggling to keep up with the pace of infection, scrambling to trace and test the contacts of virus carriers, she said.

We don't see the current state as the peak... we believe that infections could further increase, Jeong said during a virus briefing.

Patients are increasing not only in the Seoul metropolitan region, but also across the 17 (major) cities and provinces throughout the country, pushing us on the verge of a massive nationwide outbreak.

After avoiding stringent social distancing measures because of concerns over hurting the



Hikers sit at a viewpoint overlooking Seoul skyline on Sunday. AFP

economy, officials stepped up restrictions nationwide on Sunday.

They banned gatherings of more than 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors and shut nightclubs, karaoke rooms, buffet restaurants and computer-gaming cafes. Churches can hold online services only while fans were removed from professional

sports, just weeks after baseball and soccer teams had been allowed to sell limited portions of their seats.

The Seoul city government said it will require people to wear masks in public indoors and outdoors starting Monday. It wasn't immediately clear how the city could effectively enforce such requirements. Seoul has been man-

dating masks on mass transport since May, but enforcement has been relatively lax as it depends on bus drivers and subway station workers.

Some experts say such measures are too little and too late. There's a possibility that government officials this week could further elevate social distancing measures to Level 3, which could include prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people, shutting schools, halting professional sports and advising private companies to have employees work from home.

Sunday's jump in infections marked the third consecutive day they've crossed 300. Most of the new cases come from the Seoul area, home to half of the country's 51 million population. Cases were also reported in other major cities such as Busan, Gwangju, Daejeon and Daegu, the epicenter of

the previous major outbreak in late February and March.

The country managed to stabilize the situation in the Daegu area by April through aggressive testing and contact tracing. That approach worked because much of the infections had been tied to a single church congregation with thousands of members.

But it's unclear the formula would be as effective now, with the virus spreading nationwide and new clusters popping up from unpredictable places and groups as people increasingly venture out in public.

South Korea has 17,399 confirmed cases, including 309 deaths.

With the number of virus patients rising rapidly, it has become difficult for anti-virus measures alone to contain the outbreak -- the reduction of human-to-human contact is crucial, Jeong said.

Churches have constantly been a major source of infection. More than 840 cases so far have been linked to a northern Seoul church led by a bitter critic of the country's president.

The spread worsened after thousands of anti-government protesters, including members of the Sarang Jeil Church and its conservative pastor, Jun Kwang-hun, marched in downtown Seoul last week despite official pleas to stay home.

Jeong said at least 136 infections have so far been linked to the protest. Jun has been hospitalised since Monday after testing positive.

Health workers have used cellphone location data to identify some 50,000 people who spent more than 30 minutes on the street during the protest on Aug. 15 and have been alerting them to get tested.

NATO denies claim of troops on Belarus border as 'baseless'



Opposition supporters rally to protest against disputed presidential elections results in Minsk on Sunday. AFP

MINSK, 23 AUGUST

Nato has denied "baseless" allegations by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko that "foreign powers" were organising a build-up of troops on the country's border amid the ongoing tensions.

In a statement, Nato said it posed "no threat to Belarus or any other country" and had "no military build-up in the region", the BBC reported.

"Our posture is strictly defensive," it said.

Nato's remarks come after Lukashenko, dressed in military fatigues, said on Saturday that he had placed his armed forces on "high alert" and accused Nato of trying to split up Belarus and install a new president in Minsk.

He said troops in Poland and Lithuania were readying themselves, and that he was moving his armed forces to the country's western border.

Tensions have gripped Belarus after Lukashenko, who has been in power since 1994, won a sixth term during the 9 August elections, with the opposition refusing to recognize the results.

The President won 80.1 per cent of the votes, while the main opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya garnered only 10.12 per cent.

Protests calling for Lukashenko to resign continued in the streets of Minsk on Saturday. Protestors flew Belarusian flags in the streets of Minsk while chanting "freedom".

IANS

Iran retrieves data, cockpit talk from downed Ukraine plane



ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN, 23 AUGUST

Iran has retrieved some data, including a portion of the cockpit conversations, from the Ukrainian jetliner that was accidentally downed by the Revolutionary Guard forces in January, killing all 176 people on board, an Iranian official said on Sunday.

That's according to a report on the website of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, which described the official's remarks as part of the final report that Teheran plans to issue on the shutdown of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752.

The development comes months after the 8 January crash near Teheran. Iranian authorities had initially denied responsibility, only changing course days later, after Western nations presented extensive evidence that Iran had shot down the plane.

The shutdown happened the same night Iran launched a ballistic missile attack targeting U.S. soldiers in Iraq, its response to the American drone strike that killed Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in

Baghdad on 3 January.

At the time, Iranian troops were bracing for a US counterstrike and appeared to have mistaken the plane for a missile.

Iran, however, has not acknowledged that, only saying that after the missile attack, its air defense was sufficiently alert and had allowed previously scheduled air traffic to resume a reference to the Ukrainian plane being allowed to take off from Tehran amid such an unprecedented crisis.

The Ukrainian passenger plane was apparently targeted by two missiles. The plane had just taken off from Teheran's Imam Khomeini International Airport when the first missile exploded, possibly damaging its radio equipment.

The second missile likely directly struck the aircraft, as videos from that night show the plane exploding into a ball of fire before crashing into a playground and farmland on the outskirts of the Iranian capital. For days after the crash, Iranian investigators combed the site, sifting through the debris of the plane.

'Sharif an absconder, Britain approached for his extradition'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, 23 AUGUST

The Pakistan government has declared former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, currently in London for treatment, an absconder and approached the UK government for his extradition.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior, Shahzad Akbar said that Sharif's four-week bail on medical grounds expired in December last year.

The government is treating him (Sharif) as an absconder and has already sent a request to the British government to extradite him, Akbar was quoted as saying by the Dawn News on Saturday. The 70-year-old three-time premier, who was sen-

tenced in a graft case by an accountability court, informed a court in Lahore last month that he is unable to return to the country as his doctors have told him not to go out due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Sharif submitted his medical report to the Lahore High Court (LHC) through his counsel and said doctors have recommended him to avoid going outside due to the coronavirus as he has low platelet counts, diabetes, heart, kidney and blood pressure related problems.

Akbar said the government would request the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to pursue Sharif's extradition as well and it was also looking into legalities of guarantees of Shahbaz Sharif, who was sup-

posed to escort his elder brother back to Pakistan after his medical treatment.

His comments came after a new picture was shared on social media which shows Sharif walking on the streets of London with his son, Hassan Nawaz.

His stroll on London roads is a slap in the face of the judiciary and the government cannot allow this. There is nothing personal in it: we are only trying to implement the law, the adviser was quoted as saying.

He is currently in London for treatment after he was diagnosed with an immune system disorder. He left for the UK in November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him four-week permission to go abroad for treatment.

Local coronavirus outbreak in Myanmar sparks fears for Rohingya camps

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA, 23 AUGUST

Rohingya in Myanmar's conflict-wracked Rakhine state expressed fears on Sunday of a coronavirus outbreak reaching their overcrowded camps, after a spate of infections sent the state capital into lockdown.

Nearly 130,000 Rohingya Muslims live in what Amnesty International describes as "apartheid" conditions in camps around Sittwe.

The city has recorded 48 cases in the past week, making up more than 10 per cent of the about 400 cases so far registered in Myanmar.

"We are extremely worried about the virus because we are living in limbo and it won't be easy to control," said Rohingya Kyaw Kyaw.

The authorities visited the Thae Chaung camp this week to talk about social distancing - an impossibility as 10 families typically squeeze into a single house - and gave out hand sanitiser and face masks.

"But if the lockdown is for a long time, we will... need help," Kyaw Kyaw said, adding that everyone in the camps had locked themselves indoors.

Sittwe's streets were empty on Sunday, with masked residents encountering barricaded roads as they tried to



Rohingya women collect drinking water in Jamtoli refugee camp, near Ukha on Sunday. AFP

run errands. Street vendors hawked plastic face shields and surgical masks.

An overnight curfew order has been in place since Friday,

ACROBATIC



A boy kicks a ball while shooting at a football net along a beach in Libya's coastal city of Benghazi on Sunday. AFP

and religious conflict.

The embattled Rohingya Muslim minority are widely regarded as foreign "Bengalis" despite having lived in Myanmar for generations. They lack citizenship rights and their freedom of movement is restricted across the country.

A local Rakhine parliamentarian this week blamed the Rohingya for the virus spread in a Facebook post that was later taken down.

Some 750,000 Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh following a military crackdown in 2017 - operations that Myanmar is currently facing genocide

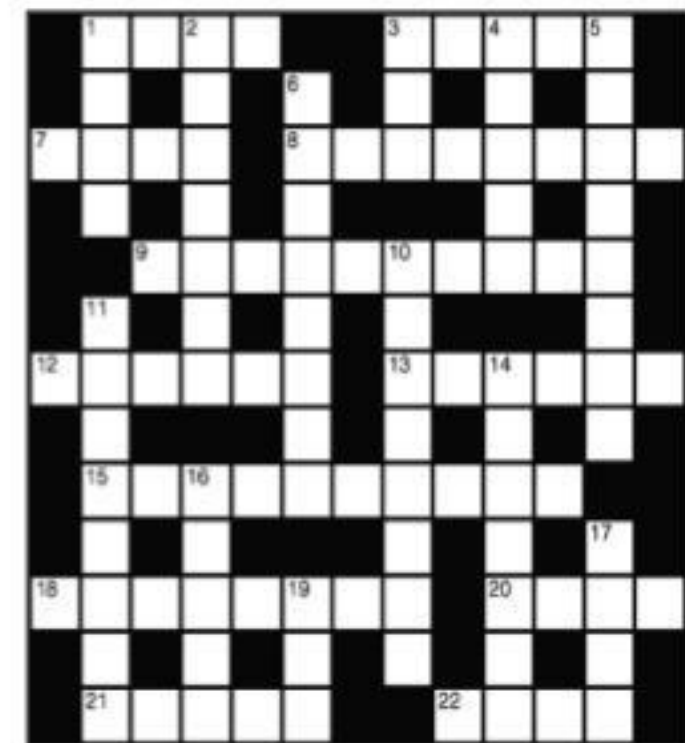
charges for at the UN's top court.

Further north in the state, the military is also battling the Arakan Army, a rebel group seeking more autonomy for the state's ethnic Rakhine Buddhists, and violent clashes have displaced thousands of civilians from their homes.

In Mrauk-U - where three cases were found this week - Rakhine residents feared a halt to food donations to the displacement camps, said camp leader Hla Maung Oo. "We have nowhere to run if the virus becomes widespread because we also can't go back to our villages," he said.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Long walk (4)
 - Anything at all (5)
 - Songbird (4)
 - Fully stated (8)
 - Skilled (10)
 - Draw aimlessly (6)
 - Response (6)
 - Of short duration (10)
 - Wary (8)
 - Keen (4)
 - Fatigued (5)
 - Charged (4)
- DOWN**
- Rent out (4)
 - Related (7)
 - Mountain (3)
 - Lead the way for (5)
 - A baker's dozen (8)
 - Altruistic (8)
 - Scold severely (8)
 - Type of picture (8)
 - Outside or upper layer (7)
 - Thespian (5)
 - Loadings (Informal) (4)
 - Unusual (3)

- SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**
- ACROSS**
- Beer
 - Did (Beard-ed)
 - Lacerate
 - Snap
 - Density
 - Eager
 - Alleviate
 - Bawdy
 - Referee
 - Visa
 - Prepared
 - Sty
 - Epee
- DOWN**
- Blazer
 - Eve
 - Deed
 - Dismantle
 - Panther
 - Layer
 - Salad days
 - Likened
 - Habit
 - Delete
 - Asp

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

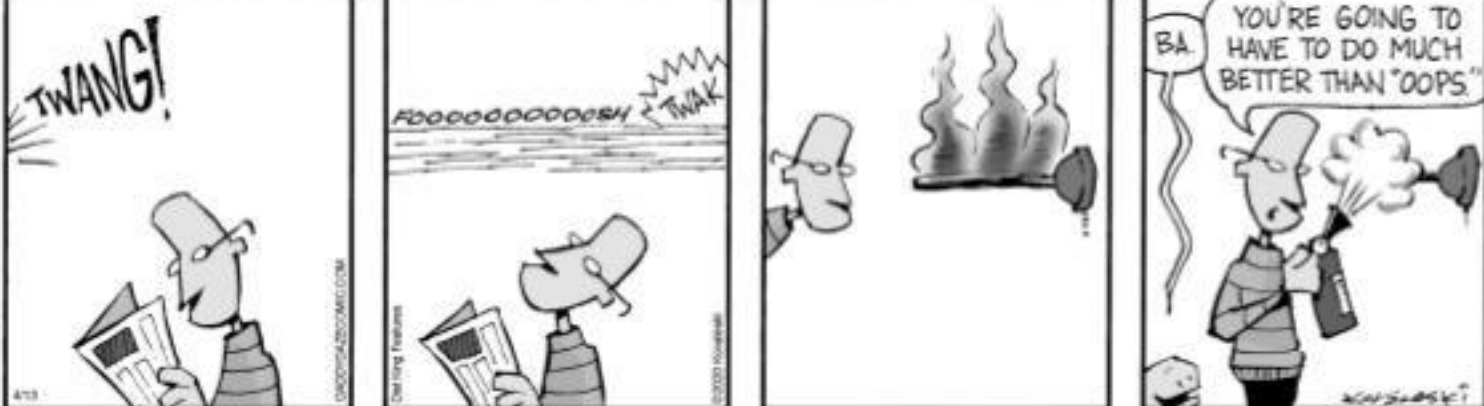
BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovalski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54359, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

22586262, 22585007

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- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

- Punjab Roadways 23867842, 23860626
- Rajasthan Roadways 23864470
- U.P. Roadways 23868709

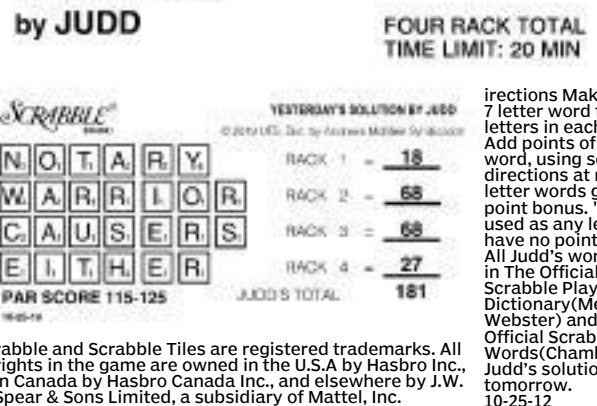
FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air-

- port 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111
- EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377
- Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373



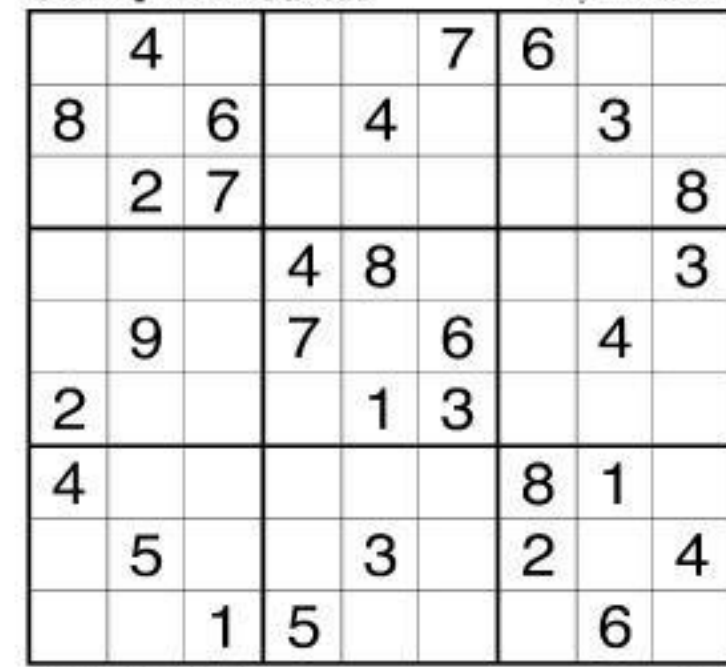
PAR SCORE 80-90 by JUDD



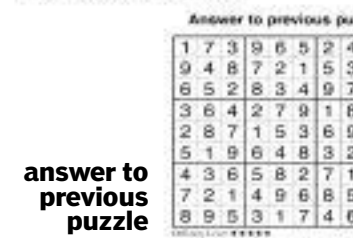
SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★



Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)	
SINGAPORE	31	26	CL
HONG KONG	32	28	S
TOKYO	33	25	CL
LONDON	21	16	R
DUBAI	41	32	S
SAN FRANCISCO	22	14	CL
NEW YORK	33	24	R
MOSCOW	22	14	R

S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...

THUMBNAILS



A man lies in the empty road on Tower Bridge in central London on Sunday which remained closed to traffic due to a technical fault the day before. AFP

California wildfires: An unwelcome change in the weather, with higher winds, temperatures and lightning that threatens to spark new fires came to parched Northern California. Firemen have for a week battled three huge complexes of fires that have destroyed hundreds of homes and forced thousands to flee. AP

Turkey floods: Five people have died in floods caused by heavy rain along Turkey's Black Sea coastline, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Sunday. 11 were missing after flooding around the mountain town of Dereli in Giresun province. AFP

Afghan blast: A roadside bombing on Sunday in eastern Afghanistan killed seven civilians, the latest in violence in the country amid new uncertainties over the start of talks between the Taliban and the Kabul government. AP

GOP to sell Trump reign as American victory

Reshaping the narrative has taken on greater urgency for Republicans and Trump, who trails in public surveys as pandemic ravages economy

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 23 AUGUST

Republicans will aim to recast the story of Donald Trump's presidency when they hold their national convention, featuring speakers drawn from everyday life as well as cable news and the White House while drawing a stark contrast with Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.

Trump is looking to shift his campaign away from being a referendum on a presidency ravaged by a pandemic and economic collapse and toward a choice between vastly different visions of America's future.

Reshaping the national conversation around the race has taken on greater urgency for Trump, who trails in public and private surveys as the coronavirus continues to ravage the nation's economy and his reelection chances.

The four-day event is themed Honoring the Great American Story, according to four Trump campaign officials involved with the planning process but not authorised to discuss it by name.

The convention will feature prominently a number of well-known Trump supporters, including members of the Trump family, but also those whom the GOP say are members of the silent majority of Americans who have been aided by Trump's policies. Some have been silenced by a cancel culture pushed by Democrats, the campaign officials said.

Where Democrats highlighted Republicans who crossed party lines to back Biden as an indictment of Trump's leadership, the GOP lineup will primarily feature figures on the conservative media circuit with the hope that they can deliver red meat for the president's loyal supporters though planners say they will feature some people who did not vote for Trump in 2016.

Planners insist they will put forward a more positive convention than Democrats'



US President Donald Trump during a meeting at the White House; (right) Hundreds of boaters parade on Lake Winnepesaukee to support Trump, in Laconia, New Hampshire, on Sunday. AFP



Trump ordered to pay \$44,100 in Stormy Daniels legal fees

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LOS ANGELES, 23 AUGUST

A California court ordered President Trump this week to pay \$44,100 in attorney fees to porn actress Stormy Daniels to pay for her legal battle over her effort to cancel a hush money deal brokered to keep her quiet about their sexual relationship a decade ago.

The order in Superior Court in Los Angeles determined Daniels won her lawsuit against Trump over the agreement that was signed 11 days before the 2016 presidential election.

The president's personal lawyer at the time, Michael Cohen, paid \$130,000 to Daniels, who filed the suit under her legal name Stephanie Clifford. After

Trump's election, Daniels sued to void the agreement. Trump and his supporters denied the president knew about the payment for several years before Trump acknowledged it on Twitter in May 2018 and said he reimbursed Cohen for the money paid to Daniels.

Daniels also sued Trump for defamation after the president's comments on Twitter that a man she said threatened her to stay quiet about their alleged affair in 2011 was nonexistent.

The defamation lawsuit was thrown out and Daniels is appealing the decision and an order to pay Trump almost \$300,000 in attorney fees. A judge ruled Trump's statements on Twitter were protected speech under the First Amendment.

roasting of Trump. Yet the president also appears intent on trying to seize on the nation's cultural divides, particularly around issues of racial injustice and policing, drawing on grievances to motivate his base.

The opening night Monday will highlight the Land of Promise, aiming to show how Trump helped renew the American dream. Featured

speakers include South Carolina Senator Tim Scott, who will deliver the coveted closing speech of the televised prime-time block; former Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley; presidential son Donald Trump, Jr.; staunch congressional defenders Reps.

Matt Gaetz of Florida and Jim Jordan of Ohio; and Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna

McDaniel. Tanya Weinreis, a Montana coffee shop owner who received federal loans to pay her employees during the coronavirus, will also speak, as will Andrew Pollack, whose daughter Meadow was among those killed in the 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Tuesday's theme is Land of Opportunity, which is expected to cast Biden's plans as socialist and radical left.

Speakers will highlight Trump's actions on trade, abortion and the nation's opioid crisis.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will address Trump's foreign policy record, an unusual foray into domestic politics by the nation's top diplomat, and Trump children Eric and Tiffany Trump will also speak.

Another speaker will be Nicholas Sandmann, who as a student at a Catholic high school in Kentucky gained national attention last year for his interaction with a Native American man during demonstrations in Washington.

First lady Melania Trump will deliver the marquee address of the night from a newly renovated White House Rose Garden.

Vice President Mike Pence will deliver the keynote Wednesday from Baltimore's Fort McHenry, to highlight Trump's opposition to professional athletes who protest racial injustice by kneeling during the national anthem.

Trump has no principles, Prez sister says in recordings

WASHINGTON, 23 AUGUST

President Donald Trump's older sister, a former federal judge, is heard sharply criticising her brother in a series of recordings released on Saturday, at one point saying of the president, He has no principles.

Maryanne Trump Barry was secretly recorded by her niece, Mary Trump, who recently released a book denouncing the president, *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man*. Mary Trump said on Saturday she made the recordings in 2018 and 2019.

In one recording, Barry, 83, says she had heard a 2018 interview with her brother on Fox News in which he suggested that he would put her on the border to oversee cases of immigrant children separated from their parents.

His base, I mean my God, if you were a religious person, you want to help people. Not do this, Barry says.

At another point she says: His goddamned tweet and lying, oh my God. She adds: I'm talking too freely, but you know. The change of stories. The lack of preparation. The lying. Holy shit. Barry can also be heard saying that she guesses that her brother has never read her opinions on immigration cases.

What has he read? Mary Trump asks her aunt. Barry responds: No. He doesn't read.

The recordings were first reported by *The Washington Post*.

In the weeks since the release of Mary Trump's tell-all book about her uncle, she has been questioned about the source of some of its information. Nowhere in the book does she say that she recorded conversations with her aunt. AP

House passes postal Bill to reverse changes blamed for mail delays

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 23 AUGUST

With heated debate over mail delays, the House approved legislation in a rare Saturday session that would reverse recent changes in US Postal Service operations and send \$25 billion to shore up the agency ahead of the November election.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi recalled lawmakers to Washington over objections from Republicans dismissing the action as a stunt. President Donald Trump urged a no vote, including in a Saturday tweet, railing against mail-in ballots expected to surge in the Covid-19 crisis. He has said he wants to block extra funds to the Postal Service.

Don't pay any attention to what the president is saying, because it is all designed to suppress the vote, Pelosi said at the Capitol.

Pelosi called the Postal Service the nation's beautiful thread connecting Americans and said voters should ignore the president's threats.

The daylong session came as an uproar over mail disruptions puts the Postal Service at the centre of the tumultuous election year, with Americans rallying around one of the nation's oldest and more popular institutions. Millions of people are expected to opt for mail-in ballots to avoid polling places during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ahead of voting the president tweeted, This is all another HOAX. More than two dozen Republicans broke with the president and backed the bill, which passed 257-150.

Democrats led approval, but the legislation is certain to stall in the GOP-held Senate. The White House vetoed the president would veto it. Facing a backlash over operational



changes, new Postmaster General Louis DeJoy testified on Friday in the Senate that his first priority is to ensure election mail arrives on time.

The new postal leader, a Trump ally, said he would not restore the cuts to mailboxes and sorting equipment that have already been made.

He could not provide senators with a plan for handling the ballot crush for the election. DeJoy is set to return on Monday to testify before the House Oversight Committee. The American people don't want anyone messing with the post office, said Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., the chair of the Oversight Committee and author of the bill. They just want their mail.

But Republicans countered that complaints about mail delivery disruptions are overblown, and no emergency funding is needed right now. It's a silly, silly bill, said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla.

Despite the postmaster general's vow election mail will arrive on time, Democrats remain skeptical. Maloney's committee on Saturday released internal Postal Service documents warning about steep declines and delays in a range of mail services since early July, shortly after DeJoy took the helm.

Portland police declare riot after night of clashes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PORTLAND, 23 AUGUST

Police forced protesters away from a law enforcement building in Oregon's biggest city early Sunday, as efforts to stop the demonstrators from gathering at the building seemingly fell apart.

The protesters apparently had plans on Saturday night to march from a park to the Penumbra Kelly public safety building, news outlets reported. But, a standoff between marchers and officers took place on a bridge along the way and the demonstrators retreated.

Protesters appear to have returned to the park, and then taken cars to the building, according to a reporter for The Oregonian/Oregon Live.

Police initially declared an unlawful assembly, saying items had been thrown at officers, green lasers had been pointed at them and paintball guns had been fired.



The gathering was later declared a riot. Officers had been hit with rocks, bottles and other objects, police said.

Images posted online showed officers using smoke to clear the area. Several people were seen being detained, but it's unclear whether any arrests were made.

Similar protests have previously occurred at the Penumbra Kelly building, including last weekend.

The unrest followed rivaling protests Saturday after-

noon. Federal authorities forced demonstrators away from a plaza near a federal building as dueling demonstrations by right-wing and left-wing protesters turned violent.

The area includes county and federal buildings and has been the site of numerous recent protests.

Department of Homeland Security officers moved through the plaza across from an 18-story federal building. A federal courthouse is also near that area. Violent demonstrations have gripped Portland for months, following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody.

The Saturday afternoon demonstration involving hundreds of people began about noon near the Multnomah County Justice Center, news outlets reported.

Demonstrators hurled rocks and other items at each other and got into fights. Streets were blocked amid the mayhem.

Right-wing groups had announced a rally near the Justice Center Saturday afternoon that quickly drew counter-demonstrators.

No arrests were reported. Portland Police said there had been questions about why the afternoon gathering wasn't declared a riot and why city police officers didn't intervene. Incident commanders have to determine whether police action will make things more dangerous, the statement said.

In this case there were hundreds of individuals and many weapons within the groups and an extremely limited amount of police resources actually available to address such a crowd, police said.

Portland police officers have been the focus of over 80 days of violent actions directed at the police, which is a major consideration for determining if police resources are needed to interject between two confronting groups.

13 die in Peru disco stampede after police lockdown raid

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LIMA, 23 AUGUST

At least 13 people suffocated in a crush during a raid on a nightclub in Peru's capital where a party was being held despite a coronavirus ban on such gatherings, police said.

Latin America has been badly hit by the pandemic, and this month Peru reimposed stricter restrictions on movement.

The illegal birthday party on Saturday was organised on social media and drew a crowd of around 120 at the Thomas Restobar, the interior ministry said in a statement confirming the 13 deaths.

"Faced with the police operation, which did not use any type of weapon or tear gas, those attending the party tried to escape through the single exit, trampling each other and getting trapped in

the stairway," the ministry said. However, some who were at the party and others living near the nightclub in Lima's Los Olivos district disputed the ministry's version of events. "It appears that police entered and threw tear gas canisters at them, and boxed them in," one local resident told RPP radio.

Six people, including three police officers, were injured, the interior ministry said. Local media reported that the victims were in their 20s. Women's Minister Rosario Sasietta said she was out-

raged. "It should never have happened. We are in a pandemic, in a health emergency. I am calling for the maximum punishment possible for the nightclub owners," she told RPP.

The interior ministry said 23 people had been detained and that the authorities are trying to identify the organisers and the owners of the premises.

Peru, with a population of 33 million, has recorded more than half a million coronavirus cases and over 27,000 fatalities.

This month, the country re-imposed a curfew on Sundays in response to the rising number of infections.

A nighttime curfew has been in place since 16 March while the borders are closed and school classes have been suspended for the rest of the year.

Comatose Russian dissident visited by wife, aide in Germany



BERLIN, 23 AUGUST

Alexi Navalny's wife and a top aide visited him on Sunday in a Berlin hospital where the comatose Russian dissident is being treated by German doctors after a suspected poisoning.

Navalny was flown to Germany on Saturday from Siberia after doctors determined he was stable enough to be brought to the capital's Charit hospital for treatment.

After his arrival, hospital spokeswoman Manuela Zingl said the 44-year-old would be undergoing extensive diagnostic tests and that doctors wouldn't comment on his illness or treatment until they were able to evaluate the results.

On Sunday, Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, and aide Leonid Volkov visited the Russian opposition leader in the hospital, making no comments to reporters.

Navalny, a politician and corruption investigator who is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, was admitted to an intensive care unit in the Siberian city of Omsk on Thursday.

His supporters believe that tea he drank was laced with poison and that the Kremlin is behind both his illness and a delay in transferring him to Germany.

Navalny fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Thursday and was taken to the hospital. While his supporters and family members insist that Navalny was poisoned, doctors in Omsk have denied that, theorising a metabolic disorder was the most likely diagnosis. AP

'End of the world': Countdown to Beirut's devastating blast

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, 23 AUGUST

The 10 firefighters who received the call shortly before 6 p.m. - about a big fire at the nearby port of Beirut - could not know what awaited them.

They and nearly all the population of Beirut were simply unaware. They were not privy to the warnings authorities had received, again and again, and ignored: ammonium nitrate is highly explosive, used in fertilizer and sometimes to build bombs. The stockpile was degrading; something must be done.

They knew, of course, that they lived in a dysfunctional country, its government rife with corruption, factionalism and negligence that caused so much pain and heartbreak. But they could not know that it would lead to the worst single-day catastrophe in Lebanon's tragic history.

Across the city, residents who noticed the grey smoke

billowing over the facility were drawn to streets, balconies and windows, watching curiously as the fire grew larger. Phones were pulled out of pockets and pointed toward the flames. The firefighters piled into a fire engine and an ambulance and raced to the scene - and to their doom.

Seven years ago, a ship named the *Rhosus* set out from the Georgian Black Sea port of Batumi carrying 2,755 tons of ammonium nitrate destined for an explosives company in Mozambique.

It made an unscheduled detour, stopping in Beirut on 19 November, 2013.

The *Rhosus* was soon impounded by Lebanese authorities for failing to pay port fees. It never left the port; it sank there in February 2018, according to Lebanese official documents.

The Port of Beirut is considered one of the most corrupt institutions in a country where nearly every public



institution is riddled with corruption. Port officials are notorious for taking bribes. A bribe from an importer, for example, will ensure an incoming shipment is mislabeled to get lower customs duties - or escapes duties and taxes completely. Confiscated goods are sometimes sold off on the sly for a profit.

For years, Lebanon's ruling political factions have divided up positions at the port and handed them out to supporters - as they have ministries, public companies and other facilities nationwide.

The Hezbollah militant group and, even more, its Shiite ally the Amal faction headed by Parliament Speak-

er Nabih Berri, also have loyalists at the port.

The result is a port divided into factional fiefdoms that don't necessarily work together and are sometimes outright rivals. The first known warning came on 21 February, 2014, three months after the ship docked at the port.

On 27 June, 2014, with the

ammonium nitrate still aboard the *Rhosus*, Jad Maalouf, a judge for urgent matters, warned the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation in correspondence that the ship was carrying dangerous material and could sink.

In October 2014, the ammonium nitrate was moved into the port's Warehouse 12, which holds impounded materials. A chemical forensic expert, commissioned by the courts and the owners of the ammonium nitrate, got a look at the stockpile soon after.

Over the years, Lebanese built and bought luxury property opposite the port, a nearby Beirut Marina, concerts were held, children rode their bicycles, oblivious to the massive "bomb" waiting to explode.

At some point, someone battered open a door to Warehouse 12 and knocked a hole in one of its walls. The report to President Michel Aoun and then-Prime Minister Hassan Diab warned that thieves

could steal the material to make explosives. Or, it said, the mass of material could cause an explosion "that would practically destroy the port."

Shortly after the 10 firefighters arrived at the port, they sent an urgent call back to headquarters, asking for reinforcements. No one told the emergency responders that dangerous material was stored in the warehouse. No port officials were even there to help.

A second team jumped into their vehicles and headed toward the port. All across the city, flames and the pillar of black smoke could be seen pouring into the sky, lit up by popping fireworks.

There was an initial explosion, sending shredded debris into the air. That first blast, sent some who had been watching the fire scurrying for cover. Twelve seconds later, at 6:08 p.m., the ammonium nitrate detonated in one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded.



The recently released contents of the framework agreement between the Union government and NSCN-IM have raked up old grievances once more

JELLE JP WOUTERS

When British colonial officers first climbed the Naga Hills and began probing into the ‘character’ of its inhabitants, they soon learned about the social institution of oath-taking, and how oaths were locally held in high regard. Among Nagas, they found, oaths were associated with right, truth and justice. Few dared to speak falsehoods when placed under oath because, as the administrator-cum-anthropologist JH Hutton writes, ‘A false oath is held to entail death or at least misfortune as a result of it’. Crucially, an oath was not just consecrated on the life of its taker, but also on the lives and well-being of close relatives. ‘Questions of fact’, Hutton thus observes, ‘are usually decided by an oath, and an oath, at any rate if the lives of others are made responsible for its truths as well as the life of the swearer, is usually accepted by either party, and is usually (...) evidence that the swearer and the other whose lives are offered believe in the truth of their case.’

Realising the sacredness and effectiveness of the Naga oath, British officials made this custom their own in their dealings and diplomacy towards the Naga. The colonial archive tells of numerous oath-taking ceremonies concluded between British officials and Naga leaders of different villages and tribes. In the 1830s, for instance, Grange narrates how one of his subordinate officers and an Angami Naga leader held a chicken by opposite ends and pulled it until the body was severed, which signified that ‘if either was treacherous his head would be divided from his body in the same manner’. Another commonly practiced form of sealing an oath was with the two parties involved holding a spear at opposite ends, which was then cut into two, with each retaining the bit in his hand.

Even when written agreements were drawn up, on which colonial officers too insisted, these had to be sanctified with an oath for it to carry value to the Nagas. To show their assent to one such written agreement, another colonial source tells, ‘they (Naga leaders) placed a double-barrelled gun between their teeth, after this a sword and spear and declared that, if they



Th Muivah and RN Ravi in August 2015 at the signing of the framework agreement

swerved from their oaths, they would fall by the one or the other’. In those days, the breaking of an oath amounted to a declaration of war, and often resulted in violent hostilities, both between the British and the Naga, and between Naga villagers, clans and communities.

While the form of Naga oath-taking has long since transformed, as a political practice and principle, its sacredness, once pronounced, remains a potent force. It is the reported defaulting on a modern oath, in the form of a written agreement, which has now brought a new low between the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak/Muivah and the Government of India represented through interlocutor-cum-Nagaland Governor RN Ravi.

In 2015, after 18 years of ceasefire and political negotiations, a so-called ‘framework agreement’ was signed into being between the NSCN-IM and the Union government. The agreement was presented as a prelude to a definite political settlement, which was expected to follow soon thereafter.

While contents of the agreement were not divulged for public scrutiny, its signing in the presence of the Prime Minister heralded the hope that the Indo-Naga conflict, which erupted in full-blown violence in the 1950s and has in various forms continued since, would finally witness a conclusion. Now five years on, not only has no definite political settlement been arrived at, but the wording and therefore the legitimacy of the oath that is the framework agreement has become shrouded in doubt. This is because the NSCN-IM accuses Ravi of editing a

crucial word out of it, and for having disseminated the altered version to stakeholders.

Whereas the original document, as now released by the NSCN-IM as an act of protest, tells that the framework agreement guarantees ‘an enduring inclusive new relationship of peaceful co-existence of the two entities’, the version circulated to Naga civil and tribal bodies by the interlocutor-cum-Nagaland governor does not contain the word ‘new’. In the context of a four-paragraph, tightly framed document, the presence or absence of the word ‘new’ indeed makes all the difference.

If interpreted, as the NSCN-IM does it, ‘new’ refers to a unique, first-of-its-kind political arrangement between the ‘two entities’. This, in turn, would allow for political arrangements outside the bounds of the Constitution; to a settlement, that is, ‘with’ but not necessarily ‘within’ India. The absence of the word ‘new’, on the other hand, would seem to preclude such a possibility, thus confining the settlement within the boundaries of the Constitution. Given that complete ‘merger’ has always been ruled out by the NSCN-IM, this is where the apprehension lies.

It is hardly surprising that this controversy has emerged after Ravi’s nascent ascent to the position and power of Nagaland governor, which took place four years after the conclusion of the framework agreement. As governor, his jurisdiction and duties, after all, are in conflict with those of his continuing role as interlocutor. Whereas in his capacity as governor,

Ravi is expected to defend and uphold the Constitution at any cost, as interlocutor he is expected to also think beyond Constitutional precincts and possibilities. These two positions therefore seem to cancel each other out, in the sense that performing well as governor would make him default as an interlocutor, and vice-versa.

As an illustration, when Ravi in a recent letter to the chief minister characterised Naga nationalist groups, including the NSCN-IM, as ‘armed gangs’ involved in ‘rampant extortion’ and so ‘challenging the legitimacy of the state government’, he was clearly speaking in his role as governor and with his prerogative to uphold law and order. However, the organisations labelled ‘armed gangs’ consist of the same people he is tasked to negotiate with as interlocutor. The NSCN-IM, and other Naga nationalist groups, however, are unlikely to be forthcoming in negotiations with an interlocutor who tags them as criminals instead of political actors. The two portfolios, of governor and interlocutor, simply appear irreconcilable.

The current allegation that the framework agreement was desecrated, and the NSCN-IM’s associated demand that the interlocutor be replaced is likely to further elongate, and thereby further institutionalise, the already long standing condition of a ceasefire without settlement. Who will benefit from a possible further delay? Arguably it is the Indian State. Seen broadly, the current ceasefire, now 23 years old, over time worked to the advantage of the Indian State, if only because it possesses two

things that Naga nationalist groups do not – patience and near inexhaustible resources.

The absence of violent conflict, even without a political settlement, enabled the Indian State to expand its administrative and development apparatuses in the Naga highlands, and to increasingly tie Naga livelihoods to existing State structures and the political status quo. Meanwhile, an entire Naga generation has grown up during the ceasefire, and their understanding and affinity with the Naga struggle is evidently different from previous generations.

Moreover, the longer the ceasefire continued, the Naga Movement found it harder to prevent disillusionment among ordinary Naga men and women, as well as restlessness, indiscipline, and conflict within its own rank-and-file. And while the Indian State draws systematic revenues and taxes throughout its territory, and which is lawful, Naga nationalist groups must rely on extractive regimes of taxation over the Naga populace to sustain themselves, but ever so at the risk of causing resentment. As such feelings of resentment have been on the rise.

But if all of this would seem to place the NSCN-IM in a tough spot, Naga political history reveals, with violent certainty, that the breaking of an oath always carries the potential to unleash new political passions, rake up old grievances, and inflame lingering resentments. And that is something to be wary about.

The writer is a social anthropologist and teaches in the department of social sciences at Royal Thimphu College, Bhutan

PLUS POINTS

Committee formed



The All Assam Students’ Union and the Asom Jatiyatbadi Yuba Chatra Parishad jointly last week announced the formation of a 16-member advisory committee to suggest the future course of action in the two organisations’ fight for the rights of the Assamese people, says a report in the Guwahati-based *Assam Tribune*.

The committee has been formed to suggest timely steps to secure the social, educational, economic and political future of the state, in the backdrop of the Citizenship Amendment Act and the Covid-19-induced situation in Assam, said Aasu president Dipanka Kumar Nath addressing the media.

Though Aasu leaders denied the move as a preliminary exercise towards the students body’s political entry ahead of the state Assembly elections early next year, they stated that amid recent socio-political developments, both Aasu and AJYCP have been getting public opinion regarding the need of a strong regional political alternative in the state.

The 16-member ‘Assam Paramarshadatta Committee’ has been formed with eminent writer and former Asam Sahitya Sabha president Dr Nagen Saikia and Padma Shri award-winning author Arup Kumar Dutta as advisors. Other members of the committee are former Meghalaya governor RS Mooshahary, filmmaker Jahnu Barua, educationists Dr Krishna Gopal Bhattacharya, Basanta Deka, Ali Haider Laskar, Rana Changmai, Abu Shahid Rafikuddin Ahmed, former bureaucrat Dhiren Saikia, writer Sanjay Kumar Tanti, actor Prithviraj Rabha, journalist Surya Thausen, former ACS officer Hussain Ahmed Laskar, advocate Pranabjyoti Saikia and eminent citizen from Dibrugarh Pradip Koch.

The initial work of convening the committee would be handled by Aasu general secretary Lurinijyoti Gogoi and AJYCP general secretary Palash Changmai. ‘The Aasu would retain its apolitical character as a student body. However, both Aasu and AJYCP are well aware of the fact that from the beginning of the anti-CAA movement in the state, the people of Assam have openly expressed their support towards formation of a strong regional alternative,’ Aasu chief advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya said.

Nath said all office-bearers of Aasu would also remain apolitical till they are associated with the student body. ‘Initially, a state-level convention was planned for deciding the next course of action of the anti-CAA activists. However, due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown and restrictions on mass gathering, the idea of a convention was dropped. Instead, we have the Assam Paramarshadatta Committee that would suggest suitable action in the present context,’ he said.

Once again, the Aasu and AJYCP lambasted the national and regional political parties for their apathy towards the issues and problems being faced by the local people, including illegal migrant influx. AJYCP president RP Barua and general secretary Palash Changmai said that over the years, the people of Assam have been cheated of and denied their rights by the ruling parties in the state and at the Centre.

‘With support and guidance of the people of Assam, we look forward to finding solutions to the long pending problems affecting the state,’ the youth body leaders added.

Best in Arunachal



Lika Ori of Yigi Kaum village in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh has bagged the state’s Best Artisan Award 2019-20 in the handicraft sector, says a report in the Itanagar-based *Arunachal Times*.

The award consists of a cash amount of Rs 75,000 and a certificate. The certificate was handed over to Ori by Aalo East MLA Kento Jini on Independence Day.

Ori, an expert in traditional handicraft, had completed his cane and bamboo training under the textile and handicraft department in 1987-88 and took part in various skill development training programmes at Itanagar and Guwahati. He has also won many prizes in exhibitions conducted in the district.

FREE FROM FEAR & ALIENATION

TS HAOKIP

The boycott and shutdown calls for Independence Day this year, by six militant groups based in Manipur, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya, as well as the United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) and Government of the People’s Republic of Nagaland/National Socialist Council of Nagaland in the entire North-east, evoked childhood memories. It was customary for militants to boycott Independence Day and fire gunshots at the stroke of midnight on 14 August every year.

The sound of those gunshots, though similar to celebratory crackers like elsewhere in India on Independence Day, had quite the opposite connotation in the North-east. It was frightening as security forces would be everywhere, looking for those rebels who had fired the shots. There was a reason why people were wary of the so-called operations by the security forces – boys and men would be paraded and a masked man would scan all the faces one by one. The fact that anyone whom the man in the mask pointed to would be nabbed irrespective of whether they were innocent or not (everyone was innocent as no militant stayed in a village after firing shots on 14 August midnight) frightened most people. And that made them all the more suspicious in the eyes of the masked man. Independence Day was a day not many people would look forward to then. For a decade or so, the story was the same.

After the ceasefire and Suspension of Operation agreements between the Government of India and a few militant organisations, hitherto trouble-torn states like Manipur and Nagaland have witnessed considerable change. Independence Day is celebrated now in

In the month of our 74th Independence Day, it is time for all stakeholders to address the concerns of people in the North-east

the Hills and not boycotted. That development, by its own standards, is worth applauding.

However, a real sense of freedom is yet to be experienced as one would have expected in a country that has lived through 73 years of Independence. As far as the militancy issue is concerned, we have come a long way but there is still a long way to go as there are many organisations who are yet to come for peace talks. People have long been held to ransom with the promise of a separate homeland based on a historical cause.

While we pay much attention to history, our future, and the future of our children are drifting towards serious economic gloom. Militants should consider what is most feasible for the people if they truly represent the causes of the people, as is often proclaimed by them. It is time for all stakeholders concerned to prioritise ‘negotiation’ and ‘solution’.

The government on its part should also accord due importance to resolving militancy issues in the North-east to usher in peace and development. Efforts should be made to bring all rebels to the talks table as



‘disturbed area’ tags have disturbed the economic growth of the region for far too long now.

Except for millennials, not many people have a happy story of Independence Day celebrations, especially in states like Manipur and Nagaland. Coupled with that experience, the history books of schools and colleges seem to dwell mainly on the narratives of mainland Indians and their fights. It will be interesting to know how many people from mainland India are aware of the heroics of Maniram Dewan, U Tirot Sing, Bir Tikendrajit, Chengjapao Kuki, Rani Gaidinliu, U Kiang Nangbah, Taji Mideran, Kushal Konwar, Shoorvir Pasaltha, Bhogeshwarii Phuakanii, Kanaklata Barua and Matmor Jamoh.

The day India got its Independence merits a celebration every year but to ensure that, the establishment doesn’t need to conduct operations to nab those not celebrating. Nation-

alism can’t and shouldn’t be enforced, rather it should come from within. If we, in any way, contribute to the feeling of alienation, discrimination and subjugation felt by our own countrymen, it is us who should rethink. Primarily, we will have to make certain the prevalence of an India that is accommodative, understanding and sympathetic to the concerns of people of all faiths, castes and colour.

India is free from the British. But are its people free from oppression, authoritarian rule, inequality and poverty? The slogan of freedom from poverty had long been a movement within the development world. ‘Garibi Hatao’ (eradicate poverty) was modelled along that concept. Today it appears as if the movement has been misunderstood as ‘Garibi Hatao’ (eradicate the poor). It is our responsibility to ask if it is justifiable that the freedom our forefathers – whether rich or poor, from north or south, Brah-

mins or Adivasis, Muslims or Hindus – gave their life for should only benefit a few select people. What is Independence worth if people die hungry, untreated and communalised? Is this the India that was envisioned?

While we look at the different aspects of freedom, it is equally important to remember that there are certain responsibilities, which we as citizens owe to the country. Eight decades ago, people were ready to sacrifice their lives so that generations thereafter could decide their future with no foreigner dictating terms.

In the month of our 74th Independence Day, may those ideals and dreams that our freedom fighters fought for be revived throughout the country. We would do well to remember the words of Rabindranath Tagore, ‘Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high’.

The writer is author of the book, *Hilly Dreams: The Story of Aboi*



For more updates www.thestatesman.com

SAKSHI'S GRUDGE

Olympic bronze medalist Sakshi Malik expressed her displeasure at missing out on the Arjuna Award this year in a tweet addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju. "Which other medal should I get for the country to be honoured with the Arjuna award. Or in this wrestling life, I would never have the good luck of winning this award?" Sakshi wrote in her tweet.

THUMBNAILS

Dutee's hope: Her personal best is not yet enough to make the cut for the Tokyo Games but India's top sprinter Dutee Chand says her selection for the Arjuna award has come at the right time as it would motivate her to breach the "difficult" Olympic qualification mark.

Chess Olympiad: R Praggnanandhaa and Divya Deshmukh starred with crucial wins as India stunned a formidable China 4-2 in the ninth and final preliminary round to make the quarter-finals of the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad on Sunday.

'Best ever': Sunil Gavaskar has described the current Indian Test side under Virat Kohli as the best ever, saying that the lethal bowling attack makes it more balanced than the teams of earlier eras. Under Kohli, India reached the top of ICC Test rankings and the team is currently at number one spot in the World Test Championship standings.

IPL teams arrive: Wearing masks and face shields, Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad's Indian players and support staff arrived Sunday in hot and dry Dubai for the upcoming IPL. Moved out of India due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 13th edition of the world's biggest T20 league will be played in the UAE.

UEFA's plan: UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin will hold talks about retaining the single-game elimination format that has been used to complete the pandemic-disrupted Champions League and Europa League seasons.

Murray wins 1st match in 9 months; men's tennis returns

AGENCIES

NEW YORK, 23 AUGUST

Andy Murray wore a coronavirus-conscious mask on his way to the unusual, no-spectators setting and avoided handshakes when he left. In between, the three-time Grand Slam champion offered his usual mix of hustling and muttering.

Murray's first match in nine months as he resumes his climb back from two hip operations came at the first ATP tournament for anyone in five months, a 7-6 (6), 3-6, 6-1 victory over Frances Tiafoe at the Western & Southern Open on Saturday.

"Physically, I thought I did pretty well," said Murray, who won Wimbledon twice and the U.S. Open in 2012. "I moved maybe better than what I expected to."

The men's tennis tour had been suspended since March



because of the pandemic; the resumption came at a hard-court event moved from its home in Ohio to the site of the U.S. Open, which begins 31 Aug.

Murray moved into a second-round test against No. 5 seed Alexander Zverev. Other men advancing Saturday included two-time Grand Slam runner-up Kevin Anderson, Canadians Milos Raonic, Felix Auger-

Aliassime and Denis Shapovalov, and Americans Taylor Fritz and Reilly Opelka.

"To have no sound during the whole match, it was really odd," said No. 15 seed Auger-Aliassime, the first winner of an ATP match since March, 6-4, 6-1 against Nikoloz Basilashvili.

"Obviously, we're used to it in practice, but now it's an important match, it's a Mas-

ters 1000, and to have nobody, to have no crowd, it feels weird."

Shapovalov had a similarly straightforward victory over 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic, winning the day's last match 6-3, 6-3.

"I was ready. I was training ... these last couple months and throughout the pandemic," Shapovalov said.

"It didn't really faze me that I hadn't played in a while."

The women's tour returned earlier this month, and among Saturday's first-round results in New York was No. 13 seed Maria Sakkaris' 6-1, 6-3 win over 16-year-old Coco Gauff, while No. 9 Elena Rybakina was eliminated by Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-5, 7-6 (6), and 18-year-old Amanda Anisimova beat No. 11 Alison Riske 6-3, 6-3.

Two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka defeated No. 15 Donna Vekic for her first tour win in a year, while 40-year-old Venus

Williams lost to 20-year-old Dayana Yastremska 5-7, 6-2, 7-5.

Murray had surgery on his hip in January 2018, and again in January 2019, and while returned to action later last year, a pelvic problem prevented him from playing at the start of 2020.

There were stretches against Tiafoe who pulled out of an exhibition event in Atlanta last month after testing positive for COVID-19 where Murray looked as if he'd never left.

That included when the former No. 1-ranked man erased a 5-2 hole in the tiebreaker to grab six of that set's last seven points, capped by a down-the-line forehand passing shot.

After Tiafoe was better in the second set, Murray quickly regained control. He broke for a 2-0 edge in the third with some classic scrambling defense on a 13-stroke exchange until Tiafoe flubbed a volley.



Ali scores gritty fifty as Pakistan reach 158/5

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
SOUTHAMPTON, 23 AUGUST

Skipper Azhar Ali scored a gritty fifty to help Pakistan reach 158/5 against England at tea on Day 3 of the rain-affected third Test between the two sides at the Ageas Bowl on Sunday.

At the break, Ali was batting on 82 with wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan on 22 as the pair added 83 runs for the sixth wicket.

Earlier, England pace spearhead James Anderson snared four wickets to leave Pakistan reeling at 41/4 at lunch.

Just after the break, the visitors lost Fawad Alam with

spinner Dom Bess having him caught behind by Jos Buttler for 21. Ali looked in good nick as he staved off challenges from the likes of Anderson, Stuart Broad and the gun-quick Jofra Archer to hold one end up. Veteran Anderson added to his three wickets from the second day as he removed Asad Shafiq who was caught at slip by skipper Joe Root for just five runs.

Pakistan still trail England by 425 runs. Earlier, England tailenders helped the hosts pile up 583/8d before Anderson knocked off Pakistan's top three towards the end of the second day.

Earlier, Jos Buttler was dismissed by Fawad Alam, who had never bowled before

in Test cricket. Looking to steer the ball along the ground, Buttler ended up offering it straight back into the hands of the bowler, thus ending his innings on 152 off 311 balls.

Chris Woakes, Dom Bess and Stuart Broad then put up a combined 53 runs before England captain Joe Root

declared the innings.

England then managed to squeeze in about 11 overs. Shan Masood was the first to go, falling to James Anderson yet again after making just 4. Masood's opening partner Abid Ali was then caught in the slips in Anderson's very next over.

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND 1ST INNINGS: 583

*PAKISTAN 1ST INNINGS

*Shan Masood lbw b Anderson 4

Abid Ali c Sibley b Anderson 1

Azhar Ali (c) not out 82

Babar Azam lbw b Anderson 11

Asad Shafiq c Root b Anderson 5

Fawad Alam c Buttler b Bess 21

Md Rizwan not out 22

Extras: (b 2, lb 6, nb 2, w 2) 12

Total: 158

Fall of wickets: 1-6 (Shan Masood, 2.3 ov), 2-11 (Abid Ali, 4.1 ov), 3-24 (Babar Azam, 10.5 ov), 4-30 (Asad Shafiq, 12.5 ov), 5-75 (Fawad Alam, 36.2 ov)

*Bowling: JM Anderson 16-2-42-4

SCI Broad 12-4-18-0 JC Archer

11-3-31-0 CR Woakes 10-1-26-0

DM Bess 11-2-33-1

A generation apart, Lewandowski and Mbapp seek first Champions League title

AGENCIES

LISBON, 23 AUGUST

Robert Lewandowski (photo, left) had already been playing for nearly a decade when Kylian Mbapp (photo, right) started his career.

The Bayern Munich and Poland striker had scored more than 100 goals by the time the young Frenchman made his professional debut, and he had won the German Bundesliga five times before Mbapp lifted his first domestic league trophy with Monaco.

The 32-year-old Lewandowski and 21-year-old Paris Saint-Germain forward Mbapp are a generation apart but they will meet in Sunday's Champions League final with the same goal winning the European title for the first time.

It would be a first for Lewandowski in nine attempts, while Mbapp would be clinching it in his fourth try.

"It's precisely the reason why I came here," Mbapp said on Saturday.



"I've always said I wanted to go down in my country's history. Tomorrow will be another opportunity to do so."

Lewandowski on Sunday will also have a chance to break Cristiano Ronaldo's record of 17 goals in a single Champions League season. The Portugal star reached the milestone in the 2013-14 season. The Bayern marksman enters this year's final with 15 goals from nine matches.

"The fact (Lewandowski) naturally poses an enormous threat in front of goal has not only been known since this season, so for me he is simply the world's best center-forward," Bayern coach Hansi Flick said.



"So I'm just curious to see how things will go and, of course, hope that he also scores against Paris."

Lewandowski is the third player to score in at least nine consecutive Champions League matches, along with Ronaldo and Ruud van Nistelrooy.

The four he bagged 15 minutes apart against Red Star Belgrade in the group stage this season was the fastest quadruple in the history of the competition. Lewandowski has 50 Champions League goals with Bayern and 68 in total, only behind Ronaldo (130), Lionel Messi (115) and Ral Gonzalez (71).

The Polish star was a Champions League runner-up with

Borussia Dortmund in 2013, losing 2-1 to Bayern. Against Real Madrid, he became the first player to score four goals in the semi-finals.

Lewandowski has reached the last four on three occasions since joining Bayern in 2014 but this is his first appearance for the German powerhouse in the final.

Mbapp made it to his first semifinal during Monaco's surprise run in 2016-17 and then endured consecutive round-of-16 eliminations after joining PSG.

"Since I joined in 2017 we've experienced a few disappointments, but we are in the final and it shows that we didn't give up, that I didn't give up," Mbapp said.

"It would be a terrific reward to win the Champions League with a French club. It's the mission I set for myself when I signed here."

Mbapp played in this month's quarterfinals nursing an ankle injury but now appears fully fit.

Kallis, Abbas, Sthalekar inducted into ICC Hall of Fame

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DUBAI, 23 AUGUST

Legendary South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis (photo, left), Pakistan batting great Zaheer Abbas (photo, centre) and Pune-born former Australian captain Lisa Sthalekar (photo, right) were on Sunday inducted into the International Cricket Council's Hall of Fame in a virtual ceremony.

Among the finest all-rounders to play the game, Kallis represented South Africa in 166 Tests, 328 ODIs and 25 T20s between 1995 and 2014.

The 44-year-old is Proteas' highest run-getter in Tests and ODIs with 13,289 and 11,579 runs respectively. He also picked up 292 and 273 wickets in Tests and ODIs as a fast bowler.

Remarkably, he is the only player to score at least 10,000 runs and take at least 250 wickets in both Test and ODI cricket.

The ICC conducted the ceremony virtually owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was attended by, among others, Kallis' longtime teammate



Shaun Pollock and Indian great Sunil Gavaskar.

"It is something that I never expected when I started playing. I certainly did not play the game for any accolades or anything like that, I only wanted to win the games for whoever I was playing for," said Kallis in an ICC release.

"But it is nice to be recognised when one has succeeded in the sport, it is nice to be recognised by people for something that you have achieved in the game, something that I am really proud of."

Kallis is the fourth South African player to be inducted into the Hall of Fame and Abbas the sixth from Pakistan.



Sthalekar is the 27th from Australia and the ninth woman player in the list, which includes five from her country.

In all, 93 players have been inducted so far under the system, which sees retired players become eligible five years after playing their last international match.

Former ICC Cricket Hall of Famers formed the majority of the adjudicating panel with representation from the media, ICC and Federation of International Cricketers' Association (FICA).

Gavaskar, who himself was inducted into the elite club in 2009, spoke highly of Kallis. "He is a colossus. The word



fits him like a glove. No praise is too high for this colossus. Very well deserved to be in this ICC Hall of Fame," said Gavaskar.

Gavaskar was also all praise for women's cricket great Sthalekar.

"It is good to have another 'Kar' in the ICC Hall of Fame. Well done. You are an inspiration, not just in Australia also in India (as she was born there).

"You have interacted with many cricketers in India including the junior cricketers. You have shown with your feistiness that women can play at the highest level."

Sthalekar represented Australia in eight Tests, 125 ODIs and 54 T20s.

Shadows over Qatar's sporting project as PSG plays CL final

AGENCIES

LISBON, 23 AUGUST

An lyse Palace lunch a decade ago deepened the sports business bonds between Qatar and France ahead of the takeover of Paris Saint-Germain. Now the \$1 billion-plus invested in the club could finally lead to European football's biggest prize being collected on Sunday.

The grand and costly ambitions of a sporting project entangled in political objectives will reach new heights when PSG plays Bayern Munich in its first Champions League final.

"Tomorrow is an opportunity for us to join the elite circle by winning the Champions League," PSG forward Kylian Mbapp said on Saturday.

Mbapp is one of the symbols of the lavish PSG transformation from an underperforming club to one of the most glamorous in world foot-

ball since the Qatari buyout in 2011.

The France forward ultimately cost 145 million to add to the squad two years ago, a fee only eclipsed by the world record 222 million spent on Neymar a year earlier.

"We know what a big club we are," Mbapp said, "and we know how much the club has grown over the years."

Sunday's rival five-time European Cup winner Bayern also enjoys financing from Doha through Qatar Airways sponsorship, an association with the Gulf nation that has sparked criticism from human rights groups.

"A game for the ages that we call the #Classico," Qatar Airways tweeted ahead of the game in Lisbon.

But it is PSG controlled by the Qatari state after the 2011 takeover through a sports investment vehicle that has

become a diplomatic mechanism to exert further soft power through football by the 2022 World Cup host nation.

That tournament will be staged in the Middle East for the first time after being secured in December 2010.

The contentious FIFA vote took place weeks after then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy, a PSG fan, hosted the lyse Palace meeting with the future Emir of Qatar as well as France footballing great Michel Platini, who was president of European governing body UEFA.

As a FIFA vice president, Platini had a say in the destination of the World Cup. "Sarkozy never asked me to vote for Qatar," Platini told The Associated Press in 2010, "but I knew what would be good."

Within seven months, a struggling PSG, which hadn't won the French title since 1994,



had been bought by a company linked to Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who became the Emir.

Nasser al-Khelaifi, as chairman of Qatar Sports Investments, became president of the club. He was also running the Qatar-owned sports network that became beIN the following year.

It bought broadcasting rights for Ligue 1 that PSG has won in seven out of the last eight seasons and launched French

channels.

When it came to replacing Dubai-based airline Emirates as PSG sponsor, Accor Hotels bought the rights to appear on the jerseys in a 2019 deal. Accor's third biggest shareholder with 11.3% is the Qatar Investment Authority.

PSG declined to make a club official available for interview to discuss the club's rise ahead of the game.

Any joy at winning the Champions League final could be short-lived for Al-Khelaifi, a former tennis professional and close friend of the ruling Emir who also sits on UEFA's ruling executive committee.

Al-Khelaifi will go on trial in Switzerland on Sept. 14 over how a senior FIFA official gained the use of a luxury villa on the Italian island of Sardinia without paying rent valued at up to 1.8 million euros (\$1.94 million) in 2014 and 2015.

At the time, Jerome Valcke was FIFA secretary general with influence over FIFA broadcast deals, including an extension of beIN's Middle East rights for the 2026 and 2030 World Cups.

Al-Khelaifi, who denies any wrongdoing, was charged in February with inciting Valcke to commit aggravated criminal mismanagement.

Middle East rights to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups were bought by beIN soon after winning the FIFA hosting vote.

The court case, which is listed to last eight days in September, will also see Valcke and another broadcasting executive stand trial.

But it is not the end of Al-Khelaifi's legal difficulties, who has hit out at a "relentless agenda to smear my reputation in the media."

He has also been implicated in a corruption investigation

by French prosecutors that is linked to Qatar seeking hosting rights for the track and field world championships, and has denied any wrongdoing. Doha hosted the 2019 edition.

French authorities are also investigating how the gas-rich nation won the rights to host the 2022 World Cup, with a trail that leads to that November 2010 gathering at the official residence of the French president.

Platini was questioned after being arrested in June 2019 by police as were two former Sarkozy aides over the awarding of FIFA tournaments.

No charges have been filed against Platini, but the investigation remains open by the French financial crimes prosecutors scrutinizing the process by which Qatar was handed hosting rights.

That won't diminish any joy for PSG fans or the players if they

win the Champions League as the first French champions of the European Cup since Marseille in 1993.

Just winning the semifinal against Leipzig sparked wild celebrations in Paris where fans flooded onto the Champs-lyses and in Lisbon where players danced into their hotel on Tuesday as if they already had the trophy.

There won't be widespread support for PSG across France, as there was when Marseille beat AC Milan in the 1993 final, according to French football expert and author Philippe Auclair.

"Because of Qatar, this club has become unbeatable, almost invincible," said Auclair, whose 2015 book "Fifagate" examined investigations into Qatar.

"People see them (PSG) as a completely artificial project and led to a completely unbalanced league."

