

DECCAN Chronicle

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RAJAHMUNDRY | TUESDAY | 4 AUGUST 2020



NATION | 4

SSR death: Bihar IPS detained in Mumbai



WORLD | 5

Ransomware feared to affect US Prez polls

SPORTS | 8

BCCI draws up training plan



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WEATHER

Max: 33.0°C
Min: 24.0°C
RH: 71%
Rainfall: 7.5 mm
Forecast: Rain and Humid.
Max/Min temp.
33/24 °C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+47,898)	(+811)
18,52,156	38,969

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+983)	(+11)
TS: 67,660	551
(+7,822)	(+63)
AP: 1,66,586	1,537

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

1,83,44,776

DEATHS

6,94,820

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Bahula Padyami till 9.57 pm
Star: Shravanam till 8.11 am
Varjyam: 12.24 pm to 2.06 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.33 am to 9.24 am; 11.14 pm to 11.59 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HURI CALENDAR
Zulhijja 13,1441 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.15 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.38 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.34 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.59 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.20 PM

COUNTER POINT



Be alert... now, political community spread of virus has started!

IN BRIEF

Gehlot: Locusts national disaster

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding that the locust menace affecting many states of the country be declared a national disaster, according to a statement on Monday. In the letter, Gehlot said the locust outbreak was an international problem and the Centre should coordinate with all affected countries to tackle the menace, the statement said.

55 lakh affected in Bihar floods

Patna: Flood situation remained grim in Bihar on Monday as waters from overflowing rivers, mostly those originating in Nepal, inundated more areas leaving 55 lakh plus residents of over a thousand villages affected by the calamity. According to a bulletin by the disaster management department, no fresh loss of life was reported from the 14 flood-hit northern districts and the death toll stood at 13, stable for more than 48 hours. Nonetheless, the number of affected people grew by two lakh since the previous day and reached 56.53 lakh. The number of distressed panchayats has risen to 1,082 from 1,059 on Sunday.

Rakhi time



YSR Congress legislators V. Rajani and Ushasree Charan tie a Rakhi to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan at the camp office on Monday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Jagan's E-Raksha Bandhan gift to protect women, kids

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has launched a first-of-its-kind innovative programme “E-Rakshabandhan” to protect women and children of the state from cyber and other crimes. Announcing that it is a gift to women on the Raksha Bandhan Day, he said 484u.appolice.gov.in web portal will provide information on various issues, like how woman can deal with cyber crimes, harassment and

other issues. The portal will inform how and where to complain about the crime and how to download the Disha App. It also has all important phone numbers that can be contacted.

The CM said, “I am happy to start two women-oriented programmes on Rakshabandhan. Three MoUs have also been signed with major international companies today, which will empower women. And the web portal for women safety is also being launched on the same day.”

CM Jagan said, “We have already passed the Disha Bill. It is awaiting President's nod. We have also started 18 Disha police stations, besides appointing special public prosecutors. Women welfare was high on our priority. Immediately after forming the government, we provided 50 per cent reservations for women in nominated posts and in government contracts, besides implementing several schemes for them.”

■ **Page 2: Home minister post given to woman: CM**

J&K cites violence, Covid to slap curfew in Srinagar

Officials expect Black Day on 1st anniversary of revocation of Article 370, shut UT's capital

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, AUG. 3

Curfew was clamped in Srinagar from Monday night. The authorities said that curbs would continue to be in force in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital on Tuesday and Wednesday to hold back protests and ensure maintenance of law and order on the first anniversary of the Centre's stripping the state of its special status and splitting it up into two Union Territories.

Curfew or curfew-like restrictions are likely to be imposed on some other towns of the Valley as well whereas the security is being beefed up further in various parts of Jammu region.

The authorities have also announced the extension

● Curfew or curfew-like restrictions are likely to be imposed on some other towns of the Valley as well whereas the security is being beefed up further in various parts of Jammu region.

of the virtual lockdown necessitated by the spike in Covid-19 deaths and positive cases till August 8.

Kashmir Valley reported 433 and Jammu 157 fresh positive cases whereas eleven more people died of the virus on Monday, taking the toll to 407. The number of positive cases has already crossed the 22,000 mark.

Srinagar's District Magistrate Shahid Iqbal Choudhary in an order said that the concerned

SSP has reported that a series of inputs have been received suggesting that separatist and Pakistan sponsored groups are planning to observe August 5 as a ‘black day’ and, therefore, there is apprehension of “violent actions and protests” which could “endanger public life and property.”

The DC said that such an activity could also defeat the purpose of imposing lockdown to stem further spread of Coronavirus infections. “Therefore, it was decided to clamp curfew and strict security restrictions in the entire district with immediate effect till Wednesday night, he said adding that Covid-19 related emergency services have, however, been exempted from curfew restrictions.”

CAPITAL | IN COURT **Seek stay against shifting**

Panel for Amaravati files plea against Bill

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

The Amaravati Capital Conservation Committee has filed a petition in the High Court to suspend the Gazette of the three capitals. They challenged decentralization of administration and cancellation of CRDA orders as they were against norms.

They urged the court to direct the government not to shift Raj Bhavan, CM's office and the secretariat from Amaravati.

ACCC secretary Dhanekula Rama Rao and

seven other farmers filed the petition in the court. They sought a stay on the shifting of Executive Capital to Visakhapatnam and further on formation of Judicial Capital at Kurnool and switching of Amaravati as Legislature Capital.

The petitioners claimed that earlier the government appointed a High Power Committee on decentralized development of the State but there is no legality to that committee. They lamented that the government approving the report of the

High Power Committee decided to trifurcate Amaravati into three capitals, which is against the Constitution. They claimed that the AP Reorganization Act clearly indicated single capital and hence the division of Amaravati into three capitals is illegal.

Meanwhile, several other leaders of TD also are planning to file petitions in the HC to stall the process of three capitals and further to restrain moving of administration to Visakhapatnam by Independence Day.

TN rejects 3-language policy proposed in NEP

AIADMK says two-language policy will remain in force

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami's expression of pain and anguish on Monday over the three-language formula in the new National Education Policy, and asserting that the state would continue with C.N. Annadurai's two-language policy, did not satisfy a belligerent Opposition that wanted a total rejection of the NEP as it had more flaws.

After holding a discussion with ministers and officials concerned with the education departments and educationalists, the Chief Minister came out with a statement that categorically said that the government was firm in following the two-language system as per the aspirations of the people and political parties, including the AIADMK.

Urging Prime Minister

● **TAMIL NADU** will never allow the Centre's three-language policy. The state will continue with it's dual language policy (of Tamil and English). The three-language formula in the NEP is painful and saddening.

EDAPPADI PALANISWAMI, TN Chief Minister

Narendra Modi to take into consideration the sentiments of the people and reconsider the NEP and allow the states to implement their own policies in education, Palaniswami said people had expressed their views on the issue through various agitations at different points of time.

Recalling the various protests against Hindi imposition in the state, Palaniswami said that former chief ministers M.G.

Ramachandran and J. Jayaalalithaa were firm on it. He said he had written to the Prime Minister in June 2019 against the proposal in the NEP for introducing a three-language system in schools and that his government would defend Tamil people and Tamil language if there was any threat to them.

While the founder of PMK, an electoral ally of the AIADMK, Dr S. Ramadoss welcomed the stand taken by the Chief Minister, the Opposition camp, led by DMK president M.K. Stalin, urged the CM to call a Cabinet meeting and pass a resolution against the implementation of the NEP.

In a letter to the CM, written by leaders of 11 political parties belonging to the Secular Liberal Alliance, the other flaws in the NEP were pointed out. In higher education the autonomy of the universities and the rights of the

states were sought to be taken away, the letter said.

The other charges included imposing Vedic culture in education, ignoring social justice but being silent on reservations, not concerned about women's education, attaching the autonomous Classical Tamil Research Institute to a university and saffronising school education.

Kamal Haasan, the founder of the Makkal Needhi Maiyam, in a tweet, welcomed the Chief Minister's stand but said that some other structures suggested in the NEP like National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, National Testing Agency and National Curriculum Framework would rob the states of their right and hence should be rejected.

BJP's state media president A.N.S. Prasad disputed Stalin's claim that the two-language policy was followed in the state.



RAMESH TAKES CHARGE, TO WORK SANS HATE

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar has assumed charge as State Election Commissioner following his reinstatement by the state government as per the directive of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

The SEC arrived at the State Election Commission office here on Monday. He told media persons that following a direction by Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan to the state government that appropriate action is taken on his (Ramesh Kumar's) representation; the state government issued an order reinstating him.

Ramesh Kumar said that his assumption of office as SEC has been communicated to all district collectors and officials concerned by the State Election Commission secretary G. Vani Mohan.

The SEC said, “The State Election Commission is a constitutional institution that functions independently. The commission will function without prejudice on any issue. I wish the state government extends support to the State Election Commission and helps it discharge its duties as earlier.”

Ventilators of Vizag AMTZ substandard

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

Certain private doctors are overcharging to provide healthcare to Coronavirus-infected patients in several parts of Andhra Pradesh.

In one case at Rajahmundry, a senior advocate developed Covid-19 symptoms of fever and difficulty in breathing. On testing at a government facility, he was found to be Covid-19 positive. However, he was denied admission in the government hospital for want of beds. When he approached a private hospital for treatment, a doctor allegedly demanded payment of a non-refundable deposit of ₹5 lakh to treat him.

However, after bargaining, the deal was settled at ₹3 lakh. The patient died while undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Private doctors contend that they have to spend a lot of money for oxygen supply to patients and engage health personnel by giving them twice the usual wages, as none was otherwise turning up to work for fear of getting infected with the virus.

In a case at Kakinada, a patient suffering with breathing difficulty tested Covid-19 negative. However, his chest scan showed infection in lungs. When he approached a government hospital, he was informed about shortage of beds.

When he proceeded to a private hospital, doctors demanded that he pay ₹40,000 per day for treatment. With that, the patient moved back to the government hospital, where doctors told him he could be accommodated in

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 3

The much-hyped Andhra Pradesh Medi-Tech Zone in Visakhapatnam, popularly known as AMTZ, has turned out to be a hoax, as it has not served the very purpose of establishing it. Ventilators made by AMTZ, which were sent for clinical trials to King George Hospital (KGH) in Vizag, failed for the second time on Monday.

Following this, a detailed report has been sent to the Union Health

Ministry on the issue. King George Hospital had earlier too rejected the equipment in June, citing faulty sensors and other technical deficiencies.

Sources in the intelligence wing said the ventilators had been sent for testing to five hospitals across India.

Reports from other hospitals too have given a negative assessment of the equipment.

■ **Page 2: Equipment needs lot of improvement**

● **Patients complained that they take admission in private hospitals as government hospitals are full**

a ward with Covid-19 suspects. He could be shifted to a Covid-19 ward based on his test result. However, he chose to remain in the ambulance with oxygen supply the whole of Sunday night and went back to the private hospital. He took admission by paying ₹30,000 immediately and promised to pay the remaining ₹10,000 later. Still, the doctors allegedly took a letter from him stating that they would not be held responsible if anything went wrong. Doctors even video recorded the conversation as proof.

Several patients complain that they are approaching private hospitals as they are not being admitted into government

hospitals due to want of beds. They are forced to pay a high fee to private hospitals just to save their lives. Though the state government has fixed the rates for providing treatment to Covid-19 infected patients in private hospitals, some of them are not complying with these rates. They are charging exorbitantly, taking advantage of the helpless situation of patients.

AP Private Nursing Homes Association ex-secretary M. A. Rehman said, “It is very unfair on part of some private hospitals, which are demanding a high non-refundable deposit to treat Covid-19 patients. Though the cost of treatment of such patients is a bit more, given the high risk factor involved, ₹5 lakh deposit is certainly a very high amount.”

■ **Page 3: Patients are dying due to fear**

Jadhav case: Pak to let India hire lawyer

Islamabad, Aug. 3: The Islamabad High Court on Monday ordered the Pakistan government to give “another chance” to India to appoint a lawyer for death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav, Pakistani media reports said.

Jadhav, the 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017. India appr-

oached the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an “effective review and reconsideration” of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

On Monday, a two-mem-

ber bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb heard a petition filed by the Pakistan government to appoint a lawyer for Jadhav. The Pakistan government, in the petition, asked the IHC to appoint a legal representative for Jadhav so that it can fulfil its responsibility to see to the implementation of the ICJ's decision. “Now that the matter is in the high

court, why not give India another chance,” Justice Minallah was quoted as saying by *Geo News*.

The judge said that the Indian government or Jadhav may reconsider their decision pertaining to the review petition.

In New Delhi, external affairs ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava last month said Pakistan has blocked all avenues for a remedy available to India in the case. — *PTI*

IN BRIEF

BIE results on website today

Vijayawada: The AP Board of Intermediate Education (BIE) to declare the results of re-verification of answer scripts of the Intermediate Public Examinations held in March, on August 4 at 10 am. The BIE Secretary V. Ramakrishna in a release said that on Monday that the re-verification results would be kept available for download from their official website 'bie.ap.gov.in' from 10 am onwards on Tuesday. He advised all the students who applied for re-verification to download their answer scripts from their website.

HOME MINISTER POST GIVEN TO WOMAN

FROM PAGE 1

The Chief Minister stated, "We have given the post of home minister to a woman as well to show our commitment. We have regulated liquor sale and have drastically brought down the sale of liquor: Permit rooms and belt shops have been closed. The latest portal too is in the best interest of the women."

Home minister M. Sucharita requested women to make good use of 4su.appolice.gov.in web portal and become aware of laws and facilities for their welfare, and to lodge complaints and track the status of their complaints. DGP Goutham Sawang, additional DG Sunil Kumar, State Women Commission chairperson Vasireddy Padma, MLA Vidadala Rajani, State Mala Corporation chairperson, P. Ammaji and others participated in the function. Later, Sucharita, Padma, Rajani and Ushasri Charan, a student tied Rakhis to the Chief Minister.

UNIONS BLAME MANAGEMENT FOR HSL MISHAP

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 3

Is there any management lapse in the crane crash at Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL)? It appears so given that the management had let the crane equipment remain at its premises for years together, but suddenly decided to erect the crane during the Coronavirus pandemic. This is the first major accident in the history of 75-year-old HSL, which took the life of 11 of its personnel. Trade unions are alleging that that the incident reveals complete irresponsibility of shipyard's chairman and managing director L.V. Sarat Babu, who is going to complete his tenure by the end of August.

Leaders of CITU allege that the HSL CMD forced the maintenance department to erect the crane before he retired. "Only his haste resulted in the ghastly accident," a CITU leader remarked.

Union home minister Rajnath Singh has ordered a departmental enquiry into the accident. But the trade unions are demanding a probe by a sitting Supreme Court judge to unravel the facts behind the accident. They feel departmental enquiry will serve no purpose as the CMD himself is at the helm of affairs and would influence the enquiry.

According to insiders, Anupama, one of the contractors, left the job of commissioning the crane in the middle after taking 90 per cent of the bill amount in 2013. Since then, the crane had remained idle for eight years. Finally, it was being erected without taking any safety measures, leading to the mishap. "This is the first time that a crane has collapsed, even breaking the nuts and bolts," K. M. Kumara Mangalam and S. Jyothiswara Rao, convenor and co-convenor of Public Sector Co-Ordination committee told Deccan Chronicle. They demanded immediate arrest of HSL and Gold Field management personnel under section 304 of IPC.

AP CITUC president Ch. Narasinga Rao blamed the incident on lack of safety audits in the name of "ease of doing business". According to HSL workers, the accident is due to negligence of the management who had ignored safety measures. After not using the crane for about eight years, how could CMD and other senior officials okay the trail run with full load, they asked. In fact senior workers had alerted the engineers to check the ground-level erections before the full load trial run. But senior engineers and top level management went ahead with the erection work.

Competitive protests on 3Cs

Amaravati farmers continue Save Amaravati protest in Velagapudi and other areas

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

Competitive protests in support of Amaravati and three Capitals. The Amaravati supporters were continuing protests demanding cancellation of trifurcation of Amaravati into three Capitals and countering the same the supporters of three Capitals led by Bahujana Parirakshana Vedika staged a competitive protest at Mandadam of Amaravati on Monday. They cleansed the photo chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy with milk and announced that they will stage a protest against TD for opposing three Capitals decision. They further cleansed photos of BR Ambedkar and YSR in support of three Capitals.

The Amaravati farmers were continuing Save Amaravati protest in Velagapudi, Mandadam, Thullur and other places of Amaravati Capital Region. Former minister and TD senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao visited protest camps at Thullur and Velagapudi on Monday expressing support to agitators. He said that there are constitutional rights to Amaravati farmers as they signed agreements with the government to offer their valuable lands to Amaravati. He said that Amaravati is not the issue of the 29 villages but it is the issue of 5 crore people of the State. He affirmed that Amaravati will get justice in the Courts in the legal battle.

Meanwhile, the leaders and supporters of 25 Dalit organisations led by Bahujana Parirakshana Vedika started to Mandadam but the pro-Amaravati farmers at Peda Parimi forcibly stopped them. The police intervened and allowed Dalit organisations to Mandadam. The leaders stated that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy tried to develop Amaravati as "Capital of all" hence allotted house sites to 54,000 people belonging to SC, ST, BC and minorities but TD stalled the development by filing false cases in the Courts. They alleged that TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu was promoting artificial protests in Amaravati as original farmers were unwilling to join the protests. They further alleged that Mr Naidu and other leaders were supporting Amaravati to protect interests of TD leaders and party supporting realtors who invested largely in the Amaravati lands.

The Dalit leaders said that they will conduct a padyatra from Mandadam to AP High Court seeking distribution of house sites in Amaravati. They announced the starting of state wide protests in support of 3 Capitals to expose the conspiracy of TD.

● The leaders and supporters of 25 Dalit organisations led by Bahujana Parirakshana Vedika started to Mandadam but the pro-Amaravati farmers at Peda Parimi forcibly stopped them. The police intervened and allowed Dalit organisations



Bahujan Parirakshana Vedika leaders and activists conducting counter protest at Mandadam in Guntur district on Monday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

TD's 48-hr ultimatum on capitals

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday gave an ultimatum to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy that the three capitals decision be withdrawn within 48 hours. Otherwise, the CM should dissolve the State Assembly and seek a fresh public mandate on his decision for trifurcation of the AP's capital.

Mr Naidu reminded the CM that YSRC and its leaders had promised people of Andhra Pradesh in the 2019 election campaign that Amaravati will be the only capital city of AP. After making such a promise, the Chief Minister has no right to split the capital without first taking approval from all the five crore people of the state.

Addressing a press conference here, the former CM dared the AP Chief Minister to seek a fresh mandate if the latter is fully confident of total approval from people for his three capitals plan. Mr Naidu announced, "If the people vote for and bring the YSRC back to power in the re-election, then the TD would humbly accept their mandate. It will not raise any dissenting voice against the decision. If the CM does not come out with a proper response on this issue, the TD, along with the other Opposition parties, will intensify their protest not just through legal means, but also to make the CM an accused in the people's court."

The TD chief listed how YSRC leaders made innocent voters of AP believe that the capital at

Seek re-election on capital: YSRC to TD

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

Asserting that the mandate was for five years, YSRC Congress has asked N. Chandrababu Naidu and his MLAs to seek reelection as it was TD that has been opposing the three capitals concept. Speaking to the media here on Monday, minister for water resources, K. Anil Kumar Yadav slammed Mr Naidu for trying to promote commercial activity by concentrating development only at Amaravati and to serve the real estate business of his cohorts.

Mr Anil Kumar Yadav claimed that TD has no moral right to talk about the capital issue or accuse the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of bringing up decentralisation. He said that Mr Naidu was seen more distressed towards the approval of three capitals than the State bifurcation. He clarified that Mr Jagan had given consent for establishing capital in Amaravati and suggested

Amaravati would not be disturbed even if they made Jagan the Chief Minister in 2019. But after coming to power, the CM has backstabbed and betrayed all the five crore people of the state by going ahead with his plan to split the capitals without discussing or taking prior approval from the people.

Mr Naidu claimed that

going with degraded forest lands or government lands instead of pooling agriculture lands.

Mr Anil Kumar alleged "Naidu had spent only ₹10,000 crore and tried to push the State into more debts to pool in the remaining ₹95,000 crore. TD leaders are misleading the public with baseless allegations for gaining political mileage. People of the state, including those from Coastal Andhra, are hailing decentralisation."

He clarified that Amaravati was still a capital city (legislative) and the State government is committed to its development. He pointed out that the Chief Minister had his own house in Amaravati but Mr Naidu built a lavish house in Hyderabad and did not dare to enter Amaravati in the last five months. He further termed Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan as a confused man, for demanding MLAs of Krishna and Guntur districts to resign in support of Amaravati.

Mr Jagan himself repeatedly uttered the election slogan that he would never break his promises and that he would worship his party manifesto like the Bible, Bhagavad Gita and Quran. But despite swearing on the holy books, the Chief Minister has now broken his promises without any conscience, the TD president pointed out.

YSRC GOVT RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATHS: NAIDU

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday accused the YSRC government of causing endless misery to farmers of Amaravati capital city by following unconstitutional policies, because of which many farmers had committed suicide.

He blamed the government's three capitals' plan for the latest death of Nannapaneni Venkateswara Rao, who took part in the protests for capital city at Amaravathi till Sunday and died due to a heart attack on Monday. Mr Naidu lamented that till now, over 65 Amaravati farmers and farm workers have died because of the heartless treatment meted out to them by ruling party leaders.

The TD president pointed out that farmer Venkateswara Rao had given away all his four acres of ancestral lands for building a good capital city for AP state as a whole. But he sadly died due to the sorrow of the capital being split.

Mr Naidu said even though farmers are succumbing one after another, nobody from the side of the government has come forward to console the bereaved families, which is inhuman. He charged the ruling party with following oppressive policies that are breaking the hearts of farmers and residents of Amaravati.

WOMEN DEMAND PAWAN TO JOIN FARMERS' STIR

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

The pro-Amaravati women leaders and activists staged an innovative Raksha Bandhan protest demanding Jagan Mohan Reddy and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to continue Amaravati as the only Capital of AP. The women tied Rakhis to two persons who were adorned with photos of the two leaders. They demanded justice to farmers who sacrificed their livelihoods to the Capital. They demanded Pawan Kalyan to join Amaravati agitations to protect the world class Capital city.

Amaravati Women JAC leader Penmatsa Durga Bhavani said that both the State and Union government had deceived Amaravati farmers by shifting Executive Capital to Visakhapatnam.

Congress party leader and AWWJAC leader Sunkara Padmasri welcoming the statement of Pawan Kalyan seeking justice for Amaravati farmers sought the actor-politician to join Amaravati agitations to pressurise Union and State governments. She claimed that Jagan Mohan Reddy has no right to administer the government from Secretariat in Amaravati due to annulment of APCRDA. She affirmed that AWWJAC and Amaravati farmers would continue their protest till cancellation of the three capitals decision.

AWJAC leader and former ZP chairperson, Gadde Anuradha, Donepudi Rama Devi and others blamed Jagan Mohan Reddy for destroying the livelihood of many women.

BJP STANDS FOR AMARAVATI AS CAPITAL: BJYM

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, AUG. 3

BJP Yuva Morcha (BJYM) state president Nagotu Ramesh Naidu has asserted that the saffron party is committed to establishing the capital of Andhra Pradesh at Amravati. He pointed out that establishment of mere High Court in Rayalaseema will in no way help, as what the region needs is irrigation projects and industries.

Speaking to media at the YSR Press club in Kadapa on Monday, Mr Ramesh Naidu said BJP stands with farmers who are agitating for establishment of the AP capital at Amaravati.

He maintained that the BJP in Rayalaseema has launched several agitations for decentralised development in AP. He questioned the setting up of executive capital at Visakhapatnam.

TAMIL NADU FIRM GIFTS 32 E-VEHICLES

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

A fleet of 32 e-vehicles, provided by TN-based VSL Industries, was flagged off by State ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) here on Monday. The fully battery operated and non-pollutant vehicles are valued at ₹1 crore.

Meanwhile, 12 each would be distributed to panchayat raj and municipal administration departments while four each are earmarked for medical and health and civil supplies departments.

They were handed over to the AP government free of cost by VSL Industries.

While 15 vehicles would be used for lifting trash from houses, four would be used for spraying disinfectants for containing Covid-19 pandemic, four for testing Covid-19 and four for distributing food to houses.

Mr Ramachandra Reddy said that the vehicles would be useful in containing pollution as they are battery-operated.

VSL Industries chairman Harikrishna was felicitated on the occasion.

LOK AYUKTA TO LOOK INTO EVACUATION

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, AUG. 3

The Lok Ayukta will inquire into the issue of victims evacuated at Polavaram on August 28. The plea was filed by Adivasi Mahasabha seeking implementation of New Land Acquisition (Amendment) Act-2013.

The Mahasabha's legal adviser Inapurapu Suryanarayana said that according to Section 24 and 41 of the Act, every victim belonging to Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities should be given one acre of land and the Joint Collector of East Godavari should take responsibility of it. Many of the tribal people in the agency area like Devipatnam, Vararamachandrapuram, Kunavaram, yetapaka and Chinturu mandals are adversely hit by Polavaram Project.

Suryanarayana alleged that those families have not been given even a single acre of land so far, even as officials are trying to evacuate them from their native villages without showing any alternate shelter.

He also said that the district administration has failed to implement Koneru Rangarao recommendations. He said that when Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy was Chief Minister, the then government had issued GOs to implement the recommendations by framing some guidelines. But, the JC has not implemented it, he said and added the issue has been also brought to the notice of Lok Ayukta.

Equipment needs lot of improvement

FROM PAGE 1

"We received five ventilators of three categories. We tried to use one on a non-Covid patient who required ventilation for a short period. But the team of doctors, constituted to evaluate the equipment, found deficiencies with it. The technical approval for its testing had been given earlier by a panel in New Delhi," said principal of Andhra Medical College and in-charge superintendent of King George Hospital Professor P.V. Sudhakar.

He told DC on Monday that the committee of doctors, which tested the ventilator, has prepared a report pointing out that the equipment needs considerable improvement before it can be put to use

on patients for saving their lives.

AMTZ, one of its kind institutions in Asia, was established to manufacture medical equipment to cut down on their imports. It had assured the Central government that it would manufacture or assemble around 50,000 ventilators, along with other Covid-related equipment, needed on an emergency basis.

Two months after the outbreak of Covid, the Central government announced procurement of 60,000 ventilators from AMTZ to meet the crisis. In this regard, it made an agreement with Bharat Electronics Ltd., AgVa and AMTZ in Vizag. AMTZ in Visakhapatnam was asked to manufacture 13,500 ventilators.

Industry giants to support state

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

The state government on Monday signed MoUs with renowned companies like Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Procter and Gamble in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. They will generate good income for women through Asara and YSR Cheyutha programmes. The Chief Minister pointed out that the government was focussed on women's self-empowerment.

He said that the government had given Rakhi gifts to women by taking another step toward their self-reliance. He said that after the tie-up with cooperative major Amul, the State has roped in Hindustan Unilever, Procter & Gamble and ITC.

During a conference at

the camp office, the Chief Minister said that women empowerment and their self-reliance were vital for strengthening the rural economy. He announced that the Government will launch YSR Cheyutha on August 12 under which SC, ST, BC and minority women in the age group of 45 to 60 years will be given financial assistance of ₹75,000 in four years which will help their sustenance. He urged industry giants to give them a hand holding and the government will give guarantee.

Mr Reddy explained that under YSR Cheyutha ₹4,500 crore will be distributed and under YSR Asara, to be launched in September, 90 lakh women from nine lakh self-help groups will benefit. He further explained that while ₹6,700 crore would be distributed

● The Chief Minister said that women empowerment and their self-reliance were vital for strengthening the rural economy. He announced that the Government will launch YSR Cheyutha on August 12.

tributed under Asara the two schemes put together, the State will distribute ₹11,000 crore per year working out to ₹44,000 in four years benefiting over one crore women.

Speaking on the occasion, Sanjeev Mehta, Managing Director of Hindustan Unilever (HUL) said that he agrees with the Chief Minister that economic empowerment of women leads to family welfare. He mentioned that HUL has been

running a programme called Shakti for women empowerment in Chittoor district and stated that they were happy to work with the Andhra Pradesh government and appreciated welfare schemes like Amma Vodi and initiatives for women, farmers and students.

Sanjeev Puri, CMD, ITC said, within one year, the Chief Minister has brought in revolutionary reforms in the economic and social sectors with special focus on women self-reliance. Mentioning that the government has been focussing on the social sector, he said that they could extend cooperation in watershed programmes, social forestry, health and sanitation and post-harvesting.

Madhusudhan Gopalan, CEO and MD of Procter & Gamble lauded the vision

of the Chief Minister and said the company has been helping about 20 lakh students and they were delighted to be part of YSR Cheyutha.

Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) CEO, Raja Babu signed the MoUs on behalf of the Government while, Joseph Varkey on behalf of Procter and Gamble, Rajnikant Rai for ITC and Ramakrishna Reddy for HUL.

Ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Botsa Satyanarayana, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, Government Advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, and representatives of the Companies were in attendance. Sanjeev Mehta, Sanjeev Puri and Madhusudhan Gopalan and others participated through video-conference.

IN BRIEF

Agri JD suspended for harassment

Anantapur: The Anantapur district agriculture department joint director, Habib Basha, was suspended on Monday following charges of sexual harassment against him. Sources said that a group of women employees made a representation to SP Satya Esubbau against Basha. Also, the employees sent representations to the agriculture minister Kanna Babu and other higher authorities of the agriculture department. Reacting to the representation by the women employees of Anantapur agriculture offices, the minister ordered suspension and the orders were issued on Monday. Sources from the agriculture department also said that the official had sexually harassed women staff when he was the PD of DRDA in Guntur district.

Maoist blast kills two tribals

Visakhapatnam: A landmine blast killed two tribals in Kondrum and Chintalaveedhi forest area under the Pedabayalu police station limits in Vizag Agency on Monday evening. The deceased were identified as M. Mohan Kumar, 26, and M Ajay Kumar, 20, both tribals and cattle grazers and residents of Chintalaveedhi village. The incident took place on the last day of the Martyrs Week observed by Maoists from July 28 to August 3. The incident took place when Rao and Kumar, who went to the forest area for cattle grazing, were returning home with their cattle. SP, Visakhapatnam, B. Krishna Rao, said that the landmines were planted by Maoists targeting the security forces.

Prisoner absconds from Covid centre

Kakinada: A remand prisoner, undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at GSL Covid Hospital escaped from the ward by breaking the window on Sunday night. According to Rajanagar police, the 40-year-old person was sent to Central Jail in Rajahmundry in February under 498 A domestic violence case. Recently, he tested positive for Covid-19 and he was admitted at GSL hospital on July 30.

Mystery shrouds student's death

Nellore: Mystery shrouds the death of an intermediate final year student who died on Sunday in Chenethapur village in Vetapalem mandal of Prakasam district. While his relatives claim that he succumbed to a heart stroke quoting the doctors, the locals blame the PUBG game for his death. The deceased has been identified as Vangara Murali, and he collapsed when he returned home after spending time with his friends late on Sunday evening. His family members rushed him to the area hospital in Chirala where doctors declared him dead and attributed the demise to a cardiac arrest. Locals said that many among Murali's friends are playing PUBG while suspecting that Murali fell prey to the dreaded game.

COVID PATIENTS ARE DYING DUE TO FEAR

From page 1

AP Civil Liberties Association state president Muppala Subba Rao said, "Some patients are dying of fear and anguish over lack of proper testing facilities, long delay in getting test reports, non-availability of beds and availability of proper medication.

The government should enhance Covid-19 tests, address lack of coordination between government and private hospitals in handling Covid-19 patients, and allow pharmacies to sell medical kits comprising antibiotics, vitamins and pulse oximeter on prescription. This will enable infected people to be in home quarantine and recover, instead of going through a series of troubles."

In Visakhapatnam, the in-charge nodal officer of King George Hospital tested Covid-19 positive. Some contacts of the officer advised him home quarantine.

Meanwhile, in the medicine department of a government hospital in Vijayawada, two senior doctors are on leave due to ill health.

■ In the medicine department of a government hospital in Vijayawada, two senior doctors are on leave due to ill health.

Negligence alleged

A woman argues with the police personnel in the presence of tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao at VIMS in Visakhapatnam on Monday. She blamed the doctors for the death of her husband, who passed away at VIMS two days ago. However, the minister said the government was committed to providing proper treatment to the Covid patients and that it was spending Rs 1,000 crore towards Covid emergencies. He interacted with the patients and enquired the doctors about the condition in the hospital.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

62 Covid deaths take toll to 1,537 in state**AP tested 39,530 samples for one million population**

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

Andhra Pradesh has registered 7,822 new Covid-19 cases rising the overall tally to 1,66,586 and 62 deaths taking the toll to 1,537 in the last 24 hours.

The state health department in its Covid-19 bulletin released here on Monday reported that out of 45,516 samples tested, 7,822 individuals have been found infected with Coronavirus. Out of 21,10,923 samples tested so far, 88,672 infected patients have been discharged after recovery while 76,377 patients are undergoing treatment at several hospitals in the state.

Among new infections, East Godavari has registered highest number of 1,113 followed by 1,049 in Visakhapatnam, 953 in Anantapur, 677 in Vizianagaram, 602 in Kurnool, 576 in Kadapa, 573 in Guntur, 500 in Nellore, 495 in Srikakulam, 440 in West Godavari, 364 in Prakasam and 240 each in Krishna and Chittoor.

With regard to cumulative Covid-19 cases, East Godavari has been worst affected with 23,314 cases followed by 19,679 in Kurnool, 17,476 in Anantapur, 16,881 in Guntur, 14,196 in Visakhapatnam, 13,794 in West Godavari, 12,348 in Chittoor, 9,395 in Kadapa, 8,823 in Nellore, 8,012 in Srikakulam, 7,819 in Krishna, 6,317 in Prakasam and 5,637 in Vizianagaram.

Among active cases, Visakhapatnam tops the list with 10,124 followed by 9,406 in East Godavari, 8,750 in Kurnool, 7,879 in Anantapur, 6,755 in Guntur, 5,636 in West Godavari, 5,557 in Chittoor, 5,235 in Nellore, 4,931 in Kadapa, 3,422 in Srikakulam, 3,272 in Vizianagaram, 2,784 in Prakasam and 2,626 in Krishna.

East Godavari has topped in number of patients getting discharged from hospitals after recovery by registering 13,727, followed by 10,719 in Kurnool, 9,975 in Guntur, 9,473 in Anantapur, 8,048 in West Godavari, 6,671 in Chittoor, 5,015 in Krishna, 4,504 in Srikakulam, 4,415 in Kadapa, 3,943 in Visakhapatnam, 3,531 in

Nellore, 3,456 in Prakasam and 2,300 in Vizianagaram.

Out of 62 deaths, West Godavari has registered 11 followed by nine in Visakhapatnam, eight in Prakasam, seven each in Nellore and Srikakulam, four in Vizianagaram, three each in Chittoor, Krishna and Kurnool, two each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Guntur and Kadapa.

With regard to cumulative death toll, Kurnool has recorded the highest number of 210 so far followed by 181 in East Godavari, 178 in Krishna, 151 in Guntur, 129 in Visakhapatnam, 124 in Anantapur, 120 in Chittoor, 110 in West Godavari, 86 in Srikakulam, 77 in Prakasam, 65 in Vizianagaram and 49 in Kadapa.

Retd. docs to serve Covid-19 patients

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 3

Retired medical officer and radiologist Dr B. Govindarajulu offered his services to the district administration in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Govindarajulu, who is also a coordinator with the Indian Medical Association (IMA), called on district collector V. Vinay Chand and offered to serve as a health coordinator for the district.

He told the collector that many doctors who retired from the government services were willing to work for the district administration in its fight against Covid-19.

The collector appreciated his gesture and welcomed him to help the administration.

Dr Govindarajulu later called on IMA secretary Dr K. Phani Kumar and Andhra Medical College principal and in-charge superintendent of KGH Dr P.V. Sudhakar.

TOTAL SHUTDOWN IN MANTRALAYAM

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, AUG. 3

Mantralayam witnessed a complete lockdown when all the roads were closed to avoid devotees rush from other parts. The police announced lockdown from August 3 to 8 until the completion of 349 Aradhana fete of Guru Raghavendra Swamy. Aradhana celebra-

tions were started by the pontiff Sri Subendendra Theertha Swamiji with a limited number of a devotee, mostly staff members.

The Mantralayam of Sri Raghavendra Swamy Muth decided not to permit devotees for the annual Aradhana celebrations at all Muths and branches across the country in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

ASI | FINDING**Installation of statues in temple recorded in writing****Tamil inscription found in Perur**

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 3

A team of officials from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have found an inscription engraved on a rock located in front of Gopura of ancient Vakulamatha temple at Perur in Chittoor district in AP on Monday.

According to the ASI authorities, the inscription has been found in the Tamil language, and the characters were issued by the Chola king

called Kulottunga Chola-I during his 20th rental year (1101 AD).

Though the inscription has been found in a damaged condition, the inscription was meant to record the installation of deities 'Anchadavinna (Kara) Perumal and his wife named Pirattiyar, in the Anchadavinnakar temple of Talayur-perur in Kudavurnadu of Thiruvengadam K o t t a m , Jayangondachola mandalam, by some person from Puliyur Kottam.



Inscription engraved on a rock in front of the Gopura of Vakulamatha temple in Perur of Chittoor district. —DC

Refusing treatment to Covid-19 patients is violation of law: Judge

DC CORRESPONDENT SRIKAKULAM, AUG. 3

Covid-19 patients, who often try to hide the infection fearing stigma, cannot be refused treatment. They will be liable for punishment as per the law if they turn down medical help, said the district judge and chairman of District Legal Services Authority G. Ramakrishna.

Reacting to the growing number of deaths due to Covid-19 in the district, the judge said that people testing positive to the infection should immediately get admitted into the hospital for treatment.

The administration created enough facility in the government sector for treatment and the patients need not approach the private and corporate hospitals to cough up a large amount of money.

If people need treatment in corporate hospitals, the management should not charge excess amounts other than what has been suggested by the government.

The judge also cautioned the corporate hospitals that action would be initiated against them if the patients complain of excess billing. He appealed to the people to inform the District Legal

Services Authority against such erring hospitals so that action could be taken against them.

He also appealed to the medical service personnel to pay special attention to the elderly persons who could have weak immune systems and children who cannot fight oxygen deficiency. If the oxygen intake levels fall below 94 per cent, the patients should be rushed to the nearest hospital.

Suggesting the importance of prevention, the judge appealed to the people to maintain social distance and wear masks to avoid infection.

PORT PROMISES ₹5L AID TO KIN OF COVID VICTIMS

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 3

Krishnapatnam Port Company Ltd. promised to pay ₹5 lakh compensation if anyone among the employees succumbs to Covid-19.

It may be noted that Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) has obtained a 75 per cent stake in Krishnapatnam Port Company Ltd. a few months back.

In a statement, the new management said that they had arranged medical facilities for the employees at the Navaneetha School located in the vicinity of the Port.

According to the statement, as many as 1085 employees have been screened for Covid-19 till Aug. 1.

Patients with mild and moderate symptoms have been shifted to isolation wards arranged in NWS School and NPS School of KPCL for 14 days quarantine.

They have been given a special diet, regular medical check-up by doctors, given free medicine and are made to follow the quarantine time table scrupulously.

On completion of the quarantine period, they have been re-tested.

Oxy-zone set up at Covid centre

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, AUG. 3

Under the aegis of the Covid-19 coordination committee, Chittoor district administration has established an oxygen zone in the District Central Covid-19 Care Centre (DCCC) attached to Padmavathi Nilayam near Tirupati on Monday.

Government whip and Tirupati Urban Development Authority (TUDA) Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy formally inaugurated the oxygen zone in the presence of medical, paramedical and the district administration staff.

On identifying the need for oxygen to some COVID-19 victims admitted at the DCCC, the district administration has created a special oxygen zone inside the centres. About ten beds were equipped with oxygen support systems, and patients in need of oxygen can avail this facility.

Meanwhile, as part of publicising information on Covid-19, the committee also started a 24x7 call centre at Shilparamam in Tirupati last week.

People in and around Tirupati can speak to the experts by dialling 7799511003/4/5/6, and their grievances or doubts can be clarified.

FIX RATES FOR PVT. HOSPITALS, DEMANDS RPS

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, AUG. 3

Senior Congress leader and Rayalaseema Parirakshana Samithi (RPS) convener P. Naveen Kumar Reddy has expressed serious concern over exorbitant charges being collected from Covid-19 patients by certain private hospitals of Tirupati. He demanded that the state government set up an effective monitoring mechanism to keep a tab on treatment charges at private hospitals.

Speaking to mediapersons here on Monday, the RPS convener said government authorities have failed in checking exploitation by private hospitals in Tirupati in the time of pandemic. "Private hospitals allowed to treat Covid patients should display their charges for treatment at the reception counters. The officials should also set up a call centre and circulate a toll free number for registering complaints," he said.

NELLORE-BASED NEPHROLOGIST DONATES PLASMA

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 3

Noted nephrologist Dr. A. K. Chakravarthi of Nellore, who recovered after testing positive for Coronavirus, donated his plasma to Red Cross Society at Nellore on Monday. The nephrologist is the first person in SPSR Nellore district to offer plasma for benefit of patients severely affected by the virus.

Incidentally, Dr. Chakravarthi is the son of noted physician Dr. A. V. Subramanyam, who established the Red Cross Society in Nellore and did yeomen service while serving as the society's chairman for 28 years. He also set up rabies centre.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Dr. Chakravarthi said plasma donors should be in the age group of 18-60 years. They will be eligible to donate plasma once they test negative for two times after completing 14 days of quarantine or one time in case they have completed 28 days of quarantine.

ICMR: VIRUS DOES NOT EXIST AFTER SIX HOURS IN COVID BODIES

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, AUG. 3

In a bid to remove the fears and stigma over cremation or burial of bodies of Covid-19 victims, Chittoor district administration launched a campaign to show their concern for the dignity of those succumbing to the virus.

As part of the campaign, district collector Dr Narayan Bharat Gupta along with Tirupati municipal commissioner P.S. Girisha, Urban SP Avula Ramesh Reddy and revenue personnel on Monday

attended the funeral of two Covid victims.

The funeral was held in the outskirts of Thukivakam on Monday. Officials wore a mask and stood at a distance watching the funeral, while municipal health workers buried the bodies of victims as per Covid-19 protocol. Speaking to mediapersons here, Dr Gupta said that there was nothing to fear about cremation or burying the body of a Covid patient, as the WHO and ICMR had declared that the virus does not stay in the body for more than six hours.

FRESH INFLOWS TAKE STORAGE CAPACITY OF TUNGABHADRA RESERVOIR TO 40 TMC FT

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, AUG. 3

The water storage in the Tungabhadra reservoir was 40 TMC ft on Monday with inflows of 6348 cusecs, which receives inflows from upstream areas of Western Ghats. Outflow into the river was about 7219 cusecs from the dam.

Last year, water was available about 32 TMC ft on August 3 but inflows were heavy with about 20091 cusecs. The board authorities assessed heavy rains in

the last two weeks of July. AP authorities hope the High Level Main canal and the Low Level Canals of AP may get more than 25 TMC ft based on a prorata basis of the available flows in the reservoir. This year heavy rains were witnessed in the early season.

Given the silt formation, the dam storage in the reservoir, water storage capacity got reduced, and the present storage capacity was only 100.85 TMC ft as against the actual capacity of 132.47 TMC ft.

SHORT TAKES

IMD ISSUES RED ALERT FOR MUMBAI

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 3

The India Meteorological Department has issued a red alert for Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts in Maharashtra for Tuesday after upgrading its earlier rain forecast from “heavy-very heavy” to “extremely heavy”.

An IMD official informed that the rest of Maharashtra was very likely to get rain and thundershowers in isolated places during this period. He said the “extremely heavy” forecast means Mumbai, Raigad, Thane, Pune and Ratnagiri may get more than 204.5 millimetres of rain in a period of 24 hours.

“Mumbai, Thane, Pune would receive extremely heavy rainfall in isolated places on Tuesday and Wednesday. Raigad has a similar forecast between Monday and Wednesday,” he said, adding that the probability of the forecast is very likely, which means 51 per cent to 75 per cent of actualisation.

Neighbouring Palghar district would get heavy to very heavy rains at a few places on Tuesday and the intensity would increase on Wednesday, the IMD said.

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN TESTS POSITIVE AGAIN

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, AUG 3

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's samples tested positive again on Monday making him extend his stay in the hospital here where he was admitted on July 25 for treatment of Covid-19. A health bulletin where he has been admitted, said, “CM's RT-PCR test for SARS-Cov-2 on the 9th day was positive. His medical parameters are normal”.

Earlier on Sunday, Mr Chouhan tweeted that he was healthy and not showing any symptoms of infection. He would be discharged from the hospital if his latest samples tested negative.

State home minister Narottam Mishra also confirmed that Mr Chouhan would stay in hospital for now. Mr Chouhan would chair Tuesday's virtual cabinet meeting from the hospital, he added. Madhya Pradesh has reported 33,535 coronavirus positive cases and 886 deaths so far.

KIN OF ABDUCTED TA JAWAN APPEAL FOR HIS RELEASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, AUG. 3

The parents of a Territorial Army jawan who was abducted by suspected militants from a remote village of Jammu and Kashmir's southern Kulgam district a day ago while making an appeal for his release said on Monday that they needed him the most “to stay alive”.

The soldier Shakir Manzoor was reportedly abducted by gunmen after they intercepted his car while he was travelling through Damhal Hanjipora, a militancy-infected area of Kulgam, on Sunday evening.

Before taking him along forcibly, the suspected militants reportedly torched his vehicle, the police sources here said.

The police said a massive search operation was soon launched in the area to secure the release of Mr. Shakir who is a resident of Harmain village of neighbouring Shopian district.

The police also said that he was on leave and was heading home for Id when his car was intercepted by gunmen.

Mr. Shakir's parents while making a passionate appeal to his captors said that he has to take care of his four sisters and them.

“We appeal to the abductors to please forgive him if he has committed a mistake and let him go for the sake of God. He is needed by us to stay alive,” his father told reporters.

He added, “We learnt that his vehicle was burnt and when we reached the spot we only found the damaged car, but no trace of him.”

One of his sisters said, “We appeal to the abductors to please let him go. We don't need anything, we have everything. Just let our brother go and return to us. He is needed by his aged parents and us. We don't need this job. We just need our brother.”

Spl dress with nine gems for Lord Ram

Clothes are made using soft material such as ‘makhmal’ as they are for Ram Lalla who is a child

Ayodhya, Aug. 3: For the past three and a half decades, brothers Shankarlal and Bhagwatlal ‘Pahaadhi’ have been stitching clothes for Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. Their dedication will manifest in the splendid dress they have meticulously crafted for the deity to wear on August 5, during the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram temple.

Operating from their shop named after their late father Babulal and located in the city's Badhi Kutiya area, the brothers stitch clothes for only deities and seers.

“My father late Babulal started stitching the clothes of Ram Lalla in 1965. He used to carry our sewing machine to the Ramjanmabhoomi and stitch the clothes with me and my elder brother in tow,” Shankarlal, 54, said on Monday.

“The three of us used to make the clothes of Lord Ram. The dresses were made and stitched virtually in front of the deity. Since then, our work is continuing,” he said.

Shankarlal said that for Wednesday, the day of bhoomi puja to mark the beginning of the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, two sets of dresses have been made — one is green, while the other is orange.

“The clothes are made using soft material such as makhmal (velvet). After all, they are for Ram Lalla who is a child. The green dress has been made keeping in mind the day-specific colour, while orange is considered auspicious,” he said.

On Wednesday, the green dress will be worn first and the orange one later, Shankarlal said.

The special dress for the

ceremony has nine gems stitched in golden thread. “There is grandeur in the clothes of the Lord as well,” he said.

On Sunday, the dresses were handed over by the tailors, said Acharya Satyendra Das, the chief priest of the Ram temple.

“A day-specific colour scheme is followed for the dresses worn by Lord Ram. On Monday the dress is white, on Tuesday it is red, while on Wednesday it is the turn of the green dress for the Lord,” Shankarlal said.

On Thursdays the idol is dressed in yellow, Fridays are for cream-coloured dresses, on Saturdays it is the turn of blue clothes while on Sundays pink clothes adorn the deity.

Shankarlal also said the same cloth, with which Ram's dress is stitched, is used to make dresses for Lakshman, Bharat, Shatrughan, Hanuman and Shaaligram.

“Earlier, 11-metre-long fabric was required to make the dress, but now, we need about 17 metres of cloth. Once the grand temple is built, I do not know how much cloth will be required to make one set of dresses for Lord Ram and others,” Shankarlal said.

At present, Shankarlal is assisted by his nephews Pawan Kumar, Sanjay Kumar and Shrawan Kumar.

“My son Rajveer is in class 7. As soon as he clears class 8, he will join me,” he said.

Shankarlal's elder brother Bhagwatlal ‘Pahaadhi’ attributed their stitching expertise to God.

“The entire family is involved in this. Whatever qualities have been given by God, we are making dresses using those qualities only. It is He who is



A model of Ram temple displayed at Kar Sewak Puram in Ayodhya on Monday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the Bhoomi Puja ceremony of Ram Temple in Ayodhya on August 5. — PTI

● **FOR THE DAY** of bhoomi puja to mark the beginning of the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, two sets of dresses have been made — one is green, while the other is orange.

getting them made by us, as He gets everything done.”

Interestingly, the brother duo and their family members depend on other tailors for their own apparels.

“We only make clothes for Lord Ram and some clothes of seers. We do not accept any orders from the common people. We even do not make our own

clothes. Our own clothes are made using the services and expertise of other tailors,” Shankarlal said.

Meanwhile, as details of the invitation card and guest list were unveiled on Monday, reports said that only five people will be on the stage for the event — Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat, Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Mahant Nritya Gopaldas.

The invite, which has an image of the idol of “Ram Lalla” or infant Lord Ram, mentions Modi and three others. — PTI

Thackeray unlikely to attend event

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Owing to the Coronavirus outbreak in Ayodhya, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray is not likely to attend the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram Mandir in the holy town.

“The situation is critical in Ayodhya and everyone believes VIP movement should be as less as possible. The Prime

Minister is going there, we wish him well. The Chief Minister can go there later any time,” said senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Monday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will perform the bhoomi puja of the proposed Ram Mandir at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh on August 5.

Raut's remarks have come after UP minister Kamal Rani Varun succumbed to the virus.

SSR death: Patna cop quarantined

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, AUG. 3

The tussle between Bihar and Maharashtra police over the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput intensified on Monday after an IPS officer from Patna, Vinay Tiwary was directed to stay under home quarantine by the BMC authorities.

Reacting over the incident Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, “Whatever happened to the officer was unfortunate. Our DGP will speak with the authorities in Mumbai”.

When asked whether he would speak with Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray regarding the alleged mistreatment of Bihar cadre IPS officer in Mumbai, Nitish Kumar said that “this is not a political issue for us. We are aware of our legal responsibilities. Bihar DGP would be discussing the issue with authorities in Mumbai”.

The alleged mistreatment of the Bihar police team in Mumbai also snowballed into a political controversy. Political leaders across the party line on Monday raised the issue in the state Assembly and urged Nitish Kumar to recommend a CBI probe into the

death of Sushant Singh Rajput.

The demand was first raised by Neeraj Singh Bablu, a BJP MLA and Sushant Singh Rajput's cousin.

“It is evident that the Maharashtra government is trying to create hurdles in the way of Bihar police who has been sent to investigate the case. Forcing an IPS officer to stay under home quarantine hours after he arrived in Mumbai to lead the probe also raises serious doubts”, BJP MLA and Sushant Singh Rajput's cousin said.

Neeraj Singh's demand for CBI probe was supported by the leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav who said that “the RJD was the first party to make the demand. I have also requested the state government that the upcoming film city in Rajgir should be named after Sushant Singh Rajput”.

The Bihar police had launched an investigation into the case after the deceased actor's father K.K. Singh lodged an FIR against actress Rhea Chakraborty on July 25. He had also alleged huge financial irregularities and accused Rhea's family of cheating and abetment of suicide.

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
inputs from agencies
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

Amid daily reporting of a huge number of coronavirus cases, India has taken a step forward in race against time to develop a vaccine. The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has given approvals to the Serum Institute of India (SII) to conduct Phase 2 and 3 human clinical trials of the Oxford University developed Covid-19 vaccine candidate in the country.

The SII, one of the largest manufacturers of vaccines in the world, has been chosen by Oxford and its partner AstraZeneca to manufacture the vaccine COVISHIELD once it is ready for larger use. Currently, phase 2, 3 clinical trials of the Oxford sponsor vaccine are going on in the United Kingdom, while phase 3 clinical trials are on in Brazil and phase 1, 2 clinical trials are going on in South Africa. The vaccine candidate has shown promising results during its phase-1 trials in the UK in which two Indians were also administered the vaccine.

The SII had last month sought permission from

● **AS PER THE STUDY** design, each subject will be administered two doses at a gap of 4 weeks - first dose on Day 1 and second on Day 29.

● **OFFICIALS SAID** the safety and immunogenicity will be assessed at predefined intervals.

DCGI to conduct these trials in India. The approval for conducting phase-2 and 3 clinical trials by the SII was granted by the DCGI after an evaluation based on the recommendations of the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Covid-19.

The SII will conduct an “observer-blind, randomised controlled study” to determine the safety and immunogenicity of COVISHIELD on healthy Indian adults, said sources. Accordingly, 1,600 persons at 17 sites will participate in the trials.

As per the study design, each subject will be administered two doses at a gap of 4 weeks - first dose on Day 1 and second on Day 29. Officials said the safety and immunogenicity will be assessed at predefined intervals. SII will have to submit safety data, evaluated by the

Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB), to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

The clinical trial sites which have been proposed for the study be distributed across India and include AIIMS-Delhi, B.J. Medical College-Pune, Rajendra Memorial Research Institute of Medical Sciences (RMRIMS)-Patna, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research- Chandigarh, AIIMS-Jodhpur, Nehru Hospital- Gorakhpur, Andhra Medical College- Visakhapatnam and JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research- Mysore.

Covid-19 cases in India are on a steep rise as the country reported 57,972 fresh cases in the last 24 hours taking the country's overall figures to 18,03,695, as per union health ministry. So far 38,135 deaths have been reported out of which 771 took place in the last 24 hours. However, according to COVID19India.org by Monday evening, India had about 18.31 lakh total cases and close to 38,500 deaths.

India is now reporting the highest number of daily cases in the world

followed by Mexico as daily high reporting in the United States of America and Brazil came under check. According to ICMR chief Dr Balram Bhargava it is difficult to predict whether or not India will see a second wave of Covid-19 infections and there will be smaller peaks at different times due to the varied geography of the country. According to the union health ministry, India continues to improve the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) which is now 2.11 per cent and recovery rate is 65.77%. Country's Test Per Million (TPM) has increased to 14,640 and 24 states and UTs have reported higher testing per million than the national average.

Meanwhile, the union health ministry on Monday issued protocols to be followed at fitness centres like gymnasiums and yoga institutes. As per guidelines, only asymptomatic persons with Aarogya Setu app should be allowed and they must maintain social distancing and wear of visor while exercising. Such centres in containment zones will not be allowed to open and spas, sauna, steam bath. Swimming pools too will remain closed across the country.

BABRI LITIGANT INVITED FOR CEREMONY

Ayodhya, Aug. 3: Iqbal Ansari, who was a litigant in the Ayodhya land dispute case, has decided to gift a ‘Ram namī’ stole and a copy of the Ramcharitmanas to Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he attends the bhoomi puja ceremony for the Ram temple here on Wednesday.

“Yes, I have received the invitation from Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust for the bhoomi puja ceremony. I will certainly attend it. The dispute is over now after the court's verdict,” said Ansari (69).

“Our Prime Minister is coming. I will meet him and give him a ‘Ramnamī’ stole (with Ram's name written on it) and Ramcharitmanas as a present,” Ansari said.

His father Hashim Ansari, the oldest litigant in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi land dispute case, died at the age of 95 in 2016 after which the son started pursuing the case in the court.

Talking about Wednesday's ground-breaking ceremony to mark the beginning of the construction of a grand Ram temple here, Ansari said, “I belong to Ayodhya. All this (temple's construction) will change the fate of Ayodhya. We all want our child to get better opportunities”.

He further said, “I respect sadhus and saints. I am happy to have received the invitation for the ceremony. I think it is Lord Ram's will that I attend it”.

— PTI

WOMAN SELLS EARRINGS FOR DAUGHTER'S ONLINE CLASSES

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 3

A mother of standard VIII student in Odisha had to sell her earrings to buy a smartphone for enabling her child to attend online classes.

According to reports, Archita Bhoi, a student of Rodhapur Government Upper Primary School and native of Balisahi village in Cuttack, was not able to attend the online classes as her family did not have a smartphone. Her father, a daily wage earner, could not buy her a smartphone.

Archita was forced to stay at home after her school was closed while her father, Gagan Bhoi, was also left jobless after the Covid-19 lockdown.

“Initially, I was attending online classes with a friend who lives around two kilometers away from my village. But visiting so far every day was getting difficult,” she said.

With no option left, Archita's parents decided to buy her a smartphone so that she could take online classes. But, as it was too costly for them, so Archita's mother decided to sell her gold earrings.

No. of active terrorists in Valley comes down

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

There has been a decrease in terrorism in the Kashmir Valley with 70 incidents reported this year against 107 during the same period last year, said sources in security establishment on Monday.

According to the report, security forces were able to foil six attempts of IED blast in Kashmir Valley by the terrorists through their timely detection, preventing serious casualties. The report said that the security forces have been able to stabilise situation in Kashmir after Article 370 was abol-

ished last year.

It said security forces carried out aggressive anti-terrorists operations to prevent them from creating trouble in the Valley and also increased vigilance at the Line of Control so that Pakistan reportedly is not able to send terrorists into Kashmir.

Due to these measures, the number of active terrorists present in Valley has come down to less than 200.

Last year, there were Intelligence reports that some 350 terrorists were waiting at various launch pads in PoK to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir.

IN BRIEF

Ex-Pope Benedict ill after German trip

Berlin: Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI has fallen ill after his return from a trip to his native Bavaria to visit his brother, who died a month ago, a German newspaper reported Monday. The daily Passauer Neue Presse quoted Peter Seewald, a biographer of the retired pontiff, as saying that the 93-year-old has been suffering from a facial infection since his return to Rome. Seewald, who has published several book-length interviews with Benedict, handed over a copy of the biography to the former pontiff on Saturday, the newspaper reported.

Isaias forecast to turn into hurricane

Vero Beach (US): Isaias was forecast to become a hurricane on Monday as it neared landfall in the Carolinas after bands of heavy rain from the tropical storm lashed Florida's east coast. The US National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane warning from South Santee River, South Carolina, to Surf City, North Carolina, in its 5 am advisory. Tropical Storm Isaias had maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (110 kph) and was expected to strengthen into a Category 1 hurricane, with winds of 74 mph (119 kph) or more. "We are forecasting it to become a hurricane before it reaches the coast this evening," senior hurricane specialist Daniel Brown said.

Drug peddling cat escapes Lanka jail

Colombo: A cat detained at Sri Lanka's main prison while allegedly trying to smuggle drugs and cell phone SIM cards has escaped, media reports said on Monday. The feline was detected by jail intelligence officials on Saturday at the high-security Welikada Prison, a police official said. He said nearly two grams of heroin, two SIM cards and a memory chip were found in a small plastic bag tied around the cat's neck. But it escaped on Sunday from a prison room where it was kept, the *Aruna newspaper* said. There was no immediate comment from prison authorities. The prison had reported an increase in incidents of people throwing small packets of drugs, cell phones and phone chargers over the walls in recent weeks.

China, Oz envoys fight over SCS

Beijing: A look at recent developments in the South China Sea, where China is pitted against smaller neighbours in multiple territorial disputes over islands, coral reefs and lagoons. The waters are a major shipping route for global commerce and are rich in fish and possible oil and gas reserves. Chinese and Australian diplomats sparred on Twitter over Beijing's actions in the South China Sea following Australia's endorsement of a US statement that it would recognise virtually none of China's territorial claims there. Australia recently filed a memorandum with the United Nations saying the claims were "without legal basis," plunging Canberra into the controversy that has drawn angry responses from Beijing.

EX-BELGIAN KING'S STATUE DAMAGED DURING PROTEST

Brussels, Aug. 3: A bust of late Belgian king Leopold II, who exploited the country's brutally-run former central African colony as a personal estate, has been vandalised for a third time. Ruling the Belgians between 1865 and 1909, Leopold II was revered at home as the builder of his country, but his legacy came under the spotlight this year as anti-racist protests spread around the world. During his reign, the land that was then the Belgian Congo and is now largely in the Democratic Republic of Congo was run for his profit and millions of Africans were killed, tortured or died of the hardship of forced labour. When "Black Lives Matters" protests erupted this year triggered by anger in the United States at the latest police killings of unarmed black suspects, Leopold's many monuments were targeted. The latest incident is thought to have taken place late Friday, when a statue of Leopold outside the Africa Museum just outside Brussels was once again daubed in blood-red paint.

Ransomware fear looms on US polls

FBI, security dept alert local governments

Washington, Aug. 3: Federal authorities say one of the gravest threats to the November election is a well-timed ransomware attack that could paralyse voting operations. The threat isn't just from foreign governments, but any fortune-seeking criminal.

Ransomware attacks targeting state and local governments have been on the rise, with cyber criminals seeking quick money by seizing data and holding it hostage until they get paid. The fear is that such attacks could affect voting systems directly or even indirectly, by infecting broader government networks that include electoral databases. Even if a ransomware attack fails to disrupt elections, it could nonetheless rattle confidence in the vote. On the spectrum of threats from the fantastical to the more probable, experts and officials say ransomware is a particularly realistic possibility because the attacks are already so pervasive and lucrative.

The FBI and Department of Homeland Security have issued advisories to local governments, including recommendations for preventing attacks. "From the standpoint of confidence in the system,

● **RAMSOMWARE ATTACKS** targeting state and local governments have been on the rise, with cyber criminals seeking quick money by seizing data and holding it hostage until they get paid.

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I think it is much easier to disrupt a network and prevent it from operating than it is to change votes," Adam Hickey, a Justice Department deputy assistant attorney general, said in an interview. The scenario is relatively simple: Plant malware on multiple networks that affect voter registration databases and activate it just before an election. Or target vote-reporting and tabulation systems.

"With the 2020 election, election infrastructure has a target on its back," Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold said. "We know that election infrastructure was attempted to be undermined in

2016, and we know the techniques are shifting." The number of attacks has escalated in recent years, with targets including Texas' transportation agency and city computers in New Orleans.

A December report by cybersecurity firm Emsisoft tracked attacks against at least 966 entities that interrupted 911 services, rendered medical records inaccessible and hindered police background checks. "We're seeing state and local entities targeted with ransomware on a near daily basis," said Geoff Hale, a top election security official with Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Steps taken to improve security of voter registration systems after the 2016 election could help governments fend off election-related ransomware attacks. They've also acted to ensure they can recover quickly in the event of an attack. Colorado, for example, stores redundant versions of its voter registration data at two separate secure locations so officials can easily shift operations.

Backups are regular so the system can be quickly rebuilt if needed. — *AP*

Pak FM, defence minister visit LoC

Islamabad, Aug. 3: Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Defence Minister Pervez Khattak on Monday visited the Line of Control (LoC) where they were briefed by the Army about the latest situation, according to officials.

The two ministers, accompanied by the Prime Minister's Special Assistant on National Security Moeed Yusuf, visited the Chiri Kot Sector.

In a video message released before his LoC visit, Qureshi said he was visiting the LoC along with the Defence Minister to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people. The two ministers visited the Chiri Kot Sector where they were briefed by the Army about the latest situation of the LoC, officials said.

India has firmly told Pakistan that the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been, is and shall continue to be an integral part of India. Issues related to Jammu and Kashmir are an inter-

● **IN A** video message released before his LoC visit, Qureshi said he was visiting the LoC along with the Defence Minister to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people. The two ministers visited the Chiri Kot Sector where they were briefed by the Army about the latest situation of the LoC, officials said.

nal matter of India, the Ministry of External Affairs has reiterated. Pakistan has been unsuccessfully trying to drum up international support against India for withdrawing Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5 last year and bifurcating it into two union territories.

India has categorically told the international community that the scrapping of Article 370 of the Constitution was its internal matter. It also advised Pakistan to accept the reality and stop all anti-India propaganda. — *PTI*

RAJAPAKSA BANKS ON DIVIDED OPPN

Colombo, Aug. 3: Sri Lanka's ruling party led by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa is assured of a sweeping victory in the twice-postponed general election on Wednesday as the main Opposition is "badly divided," according to Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) senior leader Basil Rajapaksa.

"The oldest party, (United National Party), is badly divided and they would be soundly defeated," Basil, the main organiser of the party led by his eldest brother Mahinda, told reporters on Sunday as the public campaign ended.

"The UNP would only finish fourth in certain areas, they can't even be the second in other areas," he said. He said that the entire Opposition would poll less than half of the SLPP's total votes. However, he said that the ruling party is expected to finish short of its target of 150 seats in the 225-member Parliament. — *PTI*



Afghan security personnel gather in front of a prison after an attack in the city of Jalalabad, east of Kabul, Afghanistan on Monday.

— AP

Afghan troops take over jail after battling IS for hours, 29 killed

Jalalabad, Aug. 3: Afghan forces said they retook a prison in the country's east on Monday afternoon, following an hours-long battle a day after the facility was targeted by the Islamic State group in an attack that killed 29 people.

The prison is believed to be holding hundreds of IS members. The attack highlighted the challenges ahead for Afghanistan, even as US and NATO forces begin to withdraw following America striking a peace deal with the Taliban.

Defence Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman said

● **DEFENCE MINISTRY** spokesman Fawad Aman said the prison was taken back in the afternoon. The fighting also left at least 50 wounded.

The prison was taken back in the afternoon. The fighting also left at least 50 wounded. Even as Afghan troops seized the prison in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province, some 115 kilometres (70 miles) east of Kabul, IS militants continued to fire on Afghan security forces from a nearby neighbourhood. Sporadic gunfire

rang out from nearby residential buildings in central Jalalabad, an area of high security near the provincial governor's office.

As security forces swept through the prison, they found the bodies of two Taliban prisoners apparently killed by the Islamic State group, showing the tensions between the two militant factions battling each other in eastern Afghanistan.

The 29 dead included civilians, prisoners, guards and Afghan security forces, said Attaullah Khogyani, the provincial governor's spokesman. The

attack began on Sunday, when an Islamic State suicide bomber drove a car laden with explosives up to the prison's main gate, detonating the bomb. Islamic State militants opened fire on the prison's guards and poured in through the breach. The IS affiliate in Afghanistan, known as IS in Khorasan province and headquartered in Nangarhar province, later claimed responsibility for the attack.

The motive of the attack wasn't immediately clear. However, some of the 1,500 prisoners there escaped during the fighting. — *AP*

Covid-19 outbreak hits Norway cruise ship, 40 tested positive

Copenhagen, Aug. 3: A Norwegian cruise ship line halted all trips and apologised on Monday for procedural errors after an outbreak of Coronavirus on one ship infected at least 4 passengers and 36 crew members.

The 40 people on the MS Roald Amundsen who tested positive have been admitted to the University Hospital of North Norway in Tromsø, north of the Arctic Circle, where the ship currently is docked.

"A preliminary evaluation shows that there has been a failure in several of our internal procedures," Hurtigruten CEO Daniel Skjeldam said in a statement. He added the company that sails along Norway's picturesque coast between Bergen in the south and Kirkenes in the north is "now in the process of a full review of all procedures, and all aspects of our own handling."

The cruise line has contacted passengers who had been on the MS Roald Amundsen for its July 17 and July 24 departures from Bergen to the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, which is known for its polar bears. All 158 crew members on MS Roald Amundsen have been tested and 122 were negative. There were 209 guests on the first voyage and 178 guests on the second voyage. But since the cruise ship line often acts like a local ferry, traveling from port to port along Norway's western coast, the virus may not have been contained onboard. — *AP*

London, Aug. 3: Two new tests, both able to detect the Coronavirus in just 90 minutes, will be rolled out to hospitals, care homes and laboratories across the UK to increase testing capacity and distinguish between Covid-19 and winter flu in the coming months, the British government said on Monday.

One of the tests, the 90-minute LamPore swab tests, will be supplied by Oxford Nanopore, an Oxford University spin-off co-founded by Indian-ori-

gin CEO Gordon Sanghera, who believes it also offers an "accessible global testing solution".

"We are honoured to be playing a part in fighting Covid-19 in the UK, and preparing the country for the winter virus season. Ever since we founded Oxford Nanopore, our mission has been to create disruptive, high performance technology that has a profound, positive impact on society," Sanghera said.

Oxford Nanopore will be making 450,000 90-minute

LamPore swab tests available across adult care settings and labs in Britain from next week. These tests will be able to process swab and saliva samples to detect the presence of Covid-19 in 60 to 90 minutes.

The other new rapid test, which uses DNA to detect viruses, will be rolled out across NHS hospitals from September, with 5,000 DNA machines supplied by DnaNudge to provide 5.8 million tests in the coming months. — *PTI*

Masks mandatory outdoor in France

Paris, Aug. 3: Beach resorts along France's Atlantic coast, picturesque promenades on the Loire River, farmers markets in the Alps - they're among scores of spots around France where everyone is now required to wear a mask outdoors.

The outdoor mask rules taking effect on Monday are on top of a nationwide decree last month requiring people to wear masks in all stores and other indoor public places. Pressure is grow-

ing on the government to mandate outdoor mask use on a national level, too.

France is seeing an uptick in Coronavirus infections, with hundreds of new clusters in recent weeks, notably as young people gather at waterside cafes or dance parties and families get together for summer vacation. Several sites around France have started requiring masks outdoors in recent days.

— AP

VIKAS KHANNA TO HELP INDIAN STREET VENDORS

New York, Aug. 3: Michelin-star chef Vikas Khanna, who will soon reach the milestone of having distributed 25 million meals across India amid Covid-19, is now aiming to provide essential supplies to 10 million street vendors and their families facing hardships due to pandemic. "We are securing ration and are planning about 10 million meals around the country for street vendors, who actually hold the true heritage of Indian food in their hands," Khanna said. — *PTI*

SPACE | ODYSSEY**After 45 years, US astronauts land into Gulf of Mexico in a dramatic manner with parachute**

Nasa astronauts back safely in SpaceX module

Cape Canaveral, Aug. 3: Two Nasa astronauts returned to Earth on Sunday in a dramatic, retro-style splashdown, their capsule parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico to close out an unprecedented test flight by Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

It was the first splashdown by US astronauts in 45 years, with the first commercially built and operated spacecraft to carry people to and from orbit. The return clears

the way for another SpaceX crew launch as early as next month and possible tourist flights next year.

Test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken arrived back on Earth in their SpaceX Dragon capsule named Endeavour, less than a day after departing the International Space Station and two months after blasting off from Florida. The capsule parachuted into the calm gulf waters about 40 miles off

the coast of Pensacola, hundreds of miles from Tropical Storm Isaias pounding Florida's Atlantic coast.

"Welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," said Mission Control from SpaceX headquarters. "It's a little bit overwhelming to see everybody here considering the things that have gone on the last few months since we've been off planet," Hurley said after arriving back home

in Houston on Sunday evening where they were greeted by a small masked-gathering of family and officials, including Musk.

Musk had rushed to Houston from SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California, to welcome them. He was clearly moved — and relieved — while addressing the group.

"I'm not very religious, but I prayed for this one," he said. The astronauts' ride back to Earth was

fast, bumpy and hot, at least on the outside.

The spacecraft went from a screaming orbital speed of 17,500 mph (28,000 kph) to 350 mph (560 kph) during atmospheric reentry, and finally to 15 mph (24 kph) at splashdown. Peak heating during descent was 3,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,900 degrees Celsius). The anticipated top G forces felt by the crew: four to five times the force of Earth's gravity. — *AP*



The SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour spacecraft lands with Nasa astronauts Robert Behnken and Douglas Hurley onboard in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Pensacola, Florida.

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

4 AUGUST 2020

Restoring status quo in Ladakh: Long haul ahead

The border stalemate with China continues in eastern Ladakh. This is a sanitised way of putting things. However, the bitter reality is that the military standoff is in areas that lie well to the west of the absurd claim line of China first propounded in November 1959 - as its westernmost region; in other words, many kilometers inside Indian territory, which India did not accept. The threat is that even if China vacates some of this in order to appear reasonable in diplomatic or military negotiations, it will still be inside Indian territory or on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). And the risk — on the basis of what appears to be in the minds of policy makers in Beijing behind the scenes — is that China may seek to compel India to accept the territories it may vacate as no man's land. This means Indian patrols may not return to those areas. The Chinese ambassador in New Delhi was unambiguous in his public remarks less than a week ago that Chinese forces were within the "traditional" frontier of China. This would appear preposterous not only to Indians but also to objective international observers of China's frontier regions, particularly in relation to its sovereignty claims on Tibet and Xinjiang and also China's ambitions in respect of its southern and south-eastern maritime frontiers that rub up against several countries of the Indo-Pacific. The region China claims in Ladakh has been incorporated as part of its Xinjiang military district. This means China has pushed the Uighur country by thousands of square kilometres west of the Tarim river basin to which it is geographically, historically and culturally confined after gobbling up Aksai Chin in the 1950s.

Regrettably, China's present claims, no matter how outrageous, have been buttressed by the Prime Minister's June 19 remarks made in a conference with senior Opposition leaders, leaving them aghast. Now Beijing throws Mr Modi's words at us and tries to absorb territories to which it laid no formal claims before November 1959 (which India had not accepted in any case). It is not likely to be easy correcting this Himalayan blunder, although our external affairs minister, our defence minister and top military leaders are working hard at it. Four rounds of military negotiations and conversations between India's and China's foreign ministers, and our national security adviser with his counterpart on boundary negotiations, have been largely futile. A fifth round commenced Sunday and nothing is known about its outcome. In light of the Chinese ambassador's recent observations, it is unrealistic to expect encouraging news. In response to Chinese moves all along the approximately 4,000-kilometre Himalayan frontier, India too has massed its forces. But the job they have is to push back invaders. It looks like it will be a long haul through a bleak winter. Accompanying international political moves are an imperative.

Not the model patient

These are testing times. Home minister Amit Shah, Uttar Pradesh BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh and Karnataka CM B.S. Yediyurappa have all been diagnosed with Covid-19 within hours of one another. In a sobering turn, the only woman in the UP Cabinet passed away a day after another senior party leader in Andhra Pradesh also succumbed to the Coronavirus. The SARS-CoV-2 is indeed the great leveller — or not — with MP Karti Chidambaram and TN Governor Banwarilal Purohit found positive among others. India's Covid-19 tally has risen to 18 lakhs — the daily case count surpassed 57,000 on successive days.

Over in Ayodhya, 15 policemen and a priest had contracted the Coronavirus and by Monday, the number rose by five. But that — and the pandemic raging — has not deterred the Prime Minister and his loyal entourage from their bhoomi puja agenda. At any rate, only five people will be on the dais — including RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and the PM.

Commendably, a few are distancing — despite receiving an invitation even while Babri demolition co-accused L.K. Advani and M.M. Joshi were only asked over telephone, Uma Bharti will not attend — she would be at another spot on the Saryu bank. She would arrive only after "everyone has left, in order to protect the PM and thousands others".

Mr Shah's decision to get himself admitted in Medanta, Gurugram, has drawn flak. Opposition leaders wondered as to why he chose to give reputed facilities like AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital a miss since public institutions need the patronage of the government to inspire trust. But conversely, when the country's home minister chooses private hospitals over public ones, it does say something about, if not the latter's efficiency, but the government's own investments in and expectations from public healthcare. The virus has completely exposed it. India simply does not have the infrastructure to tackle the Coronavirus.

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Subhani



China's real target may be Arunachal Pradesh



Mohan Guruswamy

I have always believed that with having Lobtained by hook or crook just about all they wanted in Ladakh, the real prize the Chinese are eyeing is Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese have never been explicit on how much of Arunachal they seek. I once saw an official map in a travel agent's office in Lhasa that showed only the Tawang tract as Chinese territory. In other maps I have seen in China, they have their border running along the foothills, which means all of Arunachal or what they now call "Southern Tibet".

The Chinese based their specific claim on the territory on the premise that Tawang was administered from Lhasa, and the contiguous areas owed allegiance to the Dalai Lama. Of late, the Chinese have given a glimpse of what their true intentions are by laying claim to Bhutan's Sakteng wildlife reserve area, which falls just below the Tawang tract.

When you look at this in the map, their intentions become clear. They are looking for a direct passage from occupied Tibet into the Assam valley.

The Mughals' Imperial India spanned from Afghanistan to Bengal but didn't go very much below the Godavari in the South.

The Imperial India of the British incorporated all of today's India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It was the British who for the first time brought Assam into India in 1826 when they defeated Burma and formalised the annexation with the Treaty of Yandabo.

Only in 1886 did the British first foray out of the Brahmaputra valley when they sent out a punitive expedition into Lohit valley in pursuit of

marauding tribesmen who began raiding the new tea gardens. The area was apparently neither under Chinese nor Tibetan control: there were no protests either from the Dalai Lama or the Chinese agent in Lhasa. The British stayed put.

Tibet remained in self-imposed isolation and the race to be first into Lhasa became the greatest challenge for explorers and adventurers in the second half of the 19th century.

Not the least among these were the spies of the Survey of India, the legendary pundits. The most renowned of these was Sarat Chandra Das, whose books on Tibet are still avidly read today. As the adventurers, often military officers masquerading as explorers, began visiting Tibet, the British in India began worrying.

Reports that the most well known of Czarist Russia's military explorers, Col. Bronislav Grombchevsky, was sighted in Tibet had Lord Curzon, Governor-General of India, most worried. In 1903 Lord Curzon decided to send a military expedition into Tibet led by Grombchevsky's old antagonist, Col. Francis Younghusband. A brigade of Gurkhas and Tommies went over the Nathu La into the Chumbi valley and advanced unhindered till Xigatse. A Tibetan military force met them there but offered what can only be described as passive resistance at a place called Guru near Gyantse. Not a shot was fired back as the British Indian troops rained bullets on them, killing thousands.

From Xigatse, Younghusband made a leisurely march into Lhasa. The British got the Tibetans to agree to end their isolation and

having extracted trade concessions, withdrew in 1904 the way they came. In 1907, Britain and Russia formally agreed that it was in their mutual interest to leave Tibet "in that state of isolation from which, till recently, she has shown no intention to depart".

In 1913 the Tibetans declared independence after the collapse of the Chinese Qing dynasty and the establishment of a republic under Sun Yat Sen. They drove the Chinese garrisons in Tibet into India over the Nathu La. Also, in 1913, the British convened the Simla Conference to demarcate the India-Tibet border. The British proposed the 1914 McMahon Line. The Tibetans accepted it. The Chinese representative, however, initialed the agreement under protest. But his protest seemed mostly about the British negotiating directly with Tibet as a sovereign state and not over the McMahon Line as such.

In 1935, at the insistence of Sir Olaf Caroe ICS, then deputy secretary in the foreign department, the McMahon Line was notified. In 1944, J.P. Mills ICS established British Indian administration in NEFA, but excluding Tawang, which continued to be administered by the Lhasa-appointed head lama at Tawang, despite the fact that it lay well below the McMahon Line. This was largely as Henry Twynam, Assam's governor, lost his nerve and did not want to provoke the Tibetans.

In 1947 the Dalai Lama (the same gentleman now in Dharamsala) sent newly-independent India a note-laying claim "to some districts" in NEFA/Arunachal.

On October 7, 1950, the Chinese attacked the Tibetans at seven places on their frontier and made known their intention of reasserting control over all of Tibet. As if in response, on February 16, 1951, Maj. Relangnao "Bob" Khatang, IFAS, raised the Indian tricolor in Tawang and took over the tract's administration.

The point of this narra-

tion is to bring home the fact that India's claim over Arunachal Pradesh doesn't rest on any great historical tradition or cultural affinity. We are there because the British went there. But then the Chinese have no basis whatsoever to stake a claim, besides a few dreamy cartographic enlargements of the notion of China among some of the hangers-on in the Qing emperor's court. The important thing now is that we have been there for over a hundred years and that settles the issue.

Arunachal Pradesh has a very interesting population mix. Only less than 10 per cent of its population is Tibetan. Indo-Mongoloid tribes account for 68 per cent of the population.

The rest are migrants from Nagaland and Assam. As far as religious affinities go, Hindus are the biggest group with 37 per cent, followed by 36 per cent animists, and 13 per cent Buddhists. Recent census figures suggest a spurt in Christianity, possibly induced by pocketbook proselytising. In all, there are 21 major tribal groups and over 100 ethnically distinct sub-groupings, speaking over 50 distinct languages and dialects. The population of about a million is spread out over 17 towns and 3,649 villages. With the exception of a few villages of Monpas that live north of the McMahon Line, it's an ethnically compact and contiguous area.

It is true that historically India never had a direct border with Tibet till the British took Kumaon and Garhwal from Nepal in 1846 and extended its domain over Arunachal in 1886. But the formidable Himalayas were always culturally a part of India and formed a natural barrier against ingress from the north, whether Tibetan or Chinese.

(The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, has held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.)

LETTERS

HUMANITY DEAD

It is very sad to hear that 70-year old woman committed suicide after recovering from Covid-19 assuming it to be a dangerous disease. From this incident, we can understand that lack of humanity is more dangerous than Covid. We have to remember the great leaders B.R.Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi struggled against this dangerous disease. We must appreciate those who fought and succeeded to beat the disease which shows the real change in their lives.

Ch. R.S. Kavya
Visakhapatnam

CONGRESS OLD GUARD

The sinking Congress wants young leaders to infuse new blood. That means the old leaders are either a spent force or rudderless as they are unable to face the BJP juggernaut. That the old guard is still trying to guide the "young" leaders indicates the lack of ideas to resurrect the party. Bharat Yatra is a good suggestion as Rahul needs to brush up his oratory skills and knowledge of problems faced by the common people.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

COVID RANGE

Now, Covid-19 is increasing its ambit to the big guns and celebrities and sending a message loud and clear that nobody can escape its range unless its protocols are strictly adhered to (Amit Shah and BSY test positive, hospitalized, DC, Aug. 3).

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Contract labour to go

NEW DELHI, August 3

Mr D. Sanjivayya, Minister for Labour, categorically declared in the Lok Sabha today that "Government's intention is to abolish contract labour."

He said, he considered it necessary to make the government's position on this issue known clearly for some members appeared to have some misgiving. But the Select Committee, to which the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Bill was referred had favoured exemption from this legislation of units employing less than 20 persons. The government had accepted this, Mr Sanjivayya said in his reply to the general debate. — PTI



Kishwar Desai
London Diary

Covid-19 returns, holidayers bear brunt; A Suitable Boy looks great!

Another scorching weekend, 100°F! And while we dither as a country between being locked down or being let out, pubs are full — especially those which can offer outside seating. You don't see much social distancing there nor on the beaches where people flock every warm weekend. Many are working from home, so office time is flexible — and what can one do when sunshine beckons?

But now everything is changing, because Covid-19 is back. Leicester was the first city to be out under lockdown a fortnight back. Now the virus has spread to Manchester, East Lancashire and Yorkshire. With Id, there was a lot of inconvenience for Muslims as any meeting between more than two families indoors is banned under lockdown.

Before that, the rules of going out kept changing as well as for holidaying abroad. After an initial complacency till mid-March, and a tight lockdown till mid-July, things had begun to finally move forward. Both the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson and the Chancellor "Disby" Rishi, wanted to restart the economy in a hurry. But Boris is now worried,

scared of a second wave. So rules changed again, catching holiday makers unawares.

Earlier last week, foreign travel to European destinations was allowed. Then Spain had a second wave of Covid-19. Many who had landed in sunny Spain, including a UK Cabinet minister, were told that upon return they face a fortnight's quarantine. As the policies are now being made keeping in mind the capricious ways of the virus, the rest of the year is going to be tough, till the vaccine arrives.

Last Sunday, we had the first episode of *A Suitable Boy*, based on novelist Vikram Seth's much loved book, and directed by Mira Nair. This is the first TV serial from the BBC with all Indian characters, who are not (for a change) caricatures or stereotypes. And not served with a dash of colonial masala, either. Nor is this a story of the Raj like *Jewel in the Crown* with mixed nationalities. This is hundred per cent desi. It looked beautiful and got five star reviews in the newspapers. So India, of a distant past, should be

This is the first TV serial from the BBC with Indian characters, who are not caricatures or stereotypes.

part of our Sunday evenings for a while. Yes, the local Indians are being critical about it — as are Indians elsewhere too — but this is the BBC version of India, and it looks good and feels good.

Speaking of the BBC, it is sad to record the passing away of Kailash Nath Budhwar, the first Indian head of the BBC Hindi and Tamil service. He had heralded an important change — as before him the head of the Hindi service had invariably been White. For many in the United Kingdom and listeners of the BBC Hindi Service he had been the voice of India, and will be missed.

Central London is deserted. But at the Trafalgar Square, there is a new presence. The fourth plinth has been reserved for bold and experimental sculpture which is given space for a while and then another one comes along. The latest

is called *The End is by Heather Phillipson*. It is a sculpture of whipped cream with a cherry on top. But it's not all cheery as there is a fly climbing up the side and a small drone. Don't laugh. It is thirty feet high and weighs nine tonnes. The artist said that it symbolised something about to collapse, like the United Kingdom after Brexit. Previous sculptures have been equally adventurous or pretentious, depending on which side you are on. One was a 'thumbs up', another was of Nelson's famous ship Victory inside a bottle.

It was Ken Livingstone, while Mayor of London, who had the idea of opening up the empty plinth for installations or sculptures by young artists. Well done Ken! Looking at it I am always reminded of the empty canopy near India Gate. After the removal of the statue of King George V, in 1968, it has remained empty. Perhaps it too could be given over to modern Indian sculptors, displaying contemporary work.

Every time a new list comes out of people raised to Peerage, the House of Lords gets

abused in the media as useless, waste of money and so on. Boris has just announced his list and it is the usual mix of party political cronies—donors, retiring MPs, dissidents from the Opposition etc. But two names are noteworthy as friends of India. Jo Johnson, an old friend who was posted in Delhi as a correspondent for *Financial Times*, then became an MP and minister in the United Kingdom under successive Conservative governments. Jo had resigned on grounds of conscience because he could not agree with brother Boris's Brexit policy. Jo was helpful in setting up the Gandhi statue in Parliament Square. The other is Nemat Talaat (Minouche) Shafik the Director of the London School of Economics (LSE). She has set up Mahatma Gandhi Scholarship Fund for Indian students coming to LSE with a donation of £100,000 from the Gandhi Statue Memorial Fund.

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author. Her 6th book, the biography of the 1930s superstar, Devika Rani, The Longest Kiss, will soon be out.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	36,939.60	-1.77
Nifty 50	10,891.60	-1.64
S&P 500*	3,298.16	0.83
Dollar (₹)	75.00	-0.26
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.18	-0.37
Euro (₹)	88.30	0.55
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,678▲185	0.33
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.17	0.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.837	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.566	0.030

* As of 9:30 PM IST

UPI transactions reach a new high in July

As more people preferred contactless payments due to Covid-19 fear, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions touched a new high in July. UPI transactions in July reached 1.49 billion compared to 1.34 bn in June, a growth of 11 per cent. After a decline in April, transactions had picked up and had stood at 1.23 bn in May. In value terms, UPI recorded transactions worth Rs 2.9 lakh crore in July, up by 11 per cent.

SpiceJet asked to stop 5-day discount sale



The DGCA has asked SpiceJet to stop its five-day discounted sale of tickets as the government-imposed fare limits, with upper and lower fare limits, are in place till November 24. SpiceJet on Monday morning announced a five-day "1+1 offer sale", offering one-way base fares starting as low as Rs 899 and a complimentary voucher with a maximum value of Rs 2,000 per booking for use in future bookings.

Job search for WFH rises 440% in February-July

Job searches for remote work or work from home in India have increased by over 442 per cent between February and July, the highest globally. Amid the pandemic, many jobs have become work-from-home jobs and with the flexibility and a variety of career options, it has become more popular than ever, global job site Indeed said. The job postings grew in sectors such as software tech, healthcare and marketing.

PVR's rights issue offer oversubscribed

Multiplex operator PVR's rights issue has been oversubscribed, according to data available with stock exchanges. Its rights issue opened on July 17 and closed on July 31. According to issue subscription data, PVR proposed to issue 38.23 lakh equity shares. The company's board had fixed rights issue price at Rs 784 per equity share, including a premium of Rs 774 a share over face value of Rs 10 per share.



Person days under MGNREGA drops 57% Steep fall in rural job days in July

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Employment generated under the MGNREGA has dropped 57 per cent in July against the previous month. The rural employment guarantee scheme has been seeing month-on-month increase in person-days since April after the lockdown hit urban centres.

The initial data published by the government shows that the number of person-days has dropped from 64 crore in June to 27.3 crore in July, which is a massive drop of 57 per cent. Even the employment provided to households has come down by 41 per cent from 3.89 crore in June to 2.29 crore in July.

Both person-days and household employment have been growing since April. In the lockdown month of May, person-days stood at 56.8 crore, which was higher than the initial data for July. Work demand too dropped 31 per cent in July-from 6.2 crore in June to 4.26 crore in July. Work demand among households too dropped by 27.7 per cent.

According to Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, the sowing under kharif crop happened faster this year and the lower levels of farm activity in July would have reflected in the MGNREGA employment data. "The CMIE data also shows that the farm jobs have come down by 4 mil-



lion in July compared to June. During the lockdown months, farm jobs had bucked the overall employment trend. Seasonally farm jobs are

lesser in July compared to June," Shah said.

Compared to July 2019, person-days generated last month are still higher as a better monsoon improved the kharif acreage and sowing activity this time. Further, availability of labour also was higher this time due to the reverse migration of the labourers from urban centres.

Chances of these labourers having gone back to urban centres are very less in July as has been evident from the lower manufacturing PMI data. Manufacturing PMI, which was rebounding after hitting a historic low in April, dipped in July. "In July many of the industrial centres were still under lockdown. More relaxed restrictions in August can see better industrial activity. By September, we could see re-migration of the labourers happening as the wages as well as job demand are better in urban centres compared to rural areas," said Shah.

REALTY SENTIMENTS HIT ALL-TIME LOW

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Real estate sector sentiments have hit an all-time low in the June quarter. While future sentiments have seen an improvement, they still remain pessimistic.

The Knight Frank-Ficci-Naredco Real Estate Sentiment Index fell to 22 in the June quarter from 31 in March and 53 in December.

However, the score for future sentiments moved up to 41 in the June quarter against 36 in the March quarter.

Economic indicators dampen market spirit

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Stock market's benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty continued their losing trend due to deteriorating economic indicators on account of rising Covid cases and the lockdown impact.

RBI policy announcements scheduled for later this week also kept investors cautious and bearish. The Sensex declined 667 points, or 1.77 per cent, to 36,939.60 in one of the biggest single-day fall in the last five months. The Nifty-50 closed below 11,000 at 10,891.60, losing 181.85 points, or 1.57 per cent.

The market, after outperforming global peers in July, saw profit taking on Monday as the July manufacturing PMI data came lower at 46 compared to 47.2 in June, an indicator of low economic activity in the country compared to other parts of the world.

The July manufacturing PMI data in China came in at 52.8 and the Euro area PMI came in at 51.8,

which seemed to have raised alarm bells among investors in India.

Domestic loan growth also moderated to 5.8 per cent year-on-year for the fortnight ended July 17, 2020, said a report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services, adding "We expect loan growth of private banks to moderate to around 10 per cent versus around 18 per cent projected earlier (pre-Covid) for FY21."

Financials lost the most on Monday, as the Nifty Bank Index fell 2.33 per cent, led by IndusInd Bank (-3.74 per cent), Kotak Bank (-3.57 per cent), Axis Bank (-2.93 per cent), HDFC Bank (-2.60 per cent) and ICICI Bank (-0.88 per cent).

IT stocks also saw profit booking after gaining maximum among all sectors in July. The Nifty IT Index was down 0.64 per cent led by TCS (-1.42 per cent), Infosys (1.11 per cent) and Tech Mahindra (1.05 per cent).

"Most private banks reported sequential decline in loan growth," Motilal Oswal said.

Manufacturing PMI contracts in July

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

With continuous slump in the manufacturing activities from intermittent lockdowns, India's manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index, or PMI, declined to 46 points in July from 47.2 in June, still an improvement over the decline from 30.8 in May.

The manufacturing PMI in July contracted for the fourth month in a row, staying below the 50-mark separating contraction and expansion in growth. This is the index's longest spell of contraction since March 2009.

"The survey results showed a re-acceleration of declines in the key indices of output and new orders, undermining the trend towards stabilisation seen over the past two months," noted Eliot Kerr, an economist at IHS Markit.

"Anecdotal evidence indicated that firms were struggling to obtain work, with some of their clients remaining in lockdown, suggesting that we won't see a pick-up in activity until infection rates are quelled and restrictions can be further removed," Kerr added.

Last week, the IMF said high-frequency indicators signal plateauing of economic activity in India as the positive impact from unlock is not as strong as the negative impact of the lockdown.

GMR Infra to sell land, other non-core assets

New Delhi, Aug. 3: GMR Infrastructure is working on disinvestment of non-core assets, including land, and hopes to yield "significant value" even from 50 per cent of land monetisation, according to a document.

The airport-to-port conglomerate in an investor presentation said land at strategic industrial locations will benefit from the possible manufacturing dislocation from China.

"Plan is to divest large part of other assets identified as non-core divestment initiative," the document said and noted that it has 10,500 acres of port and industrial land and "even 50 per cent land monetisation" could yield significant value.

About its Kakinada Special Investment Region (SIR) in Andhra Pradesh, the group said that it is in discussion with a large number of clients for monetisation of land.

"Government of Andhra Pradesh signed MoUs with Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd to set up a refinery cum petrochem project in 2,500 acres and with HPCL-GAIL consortium for Petrochem complex in 2,000 acres land," it said and added that in addition, a pact has been inked with a stainless steel manufacturer for 500 acres and an Australian lithium refinery for 100 acre.

The port-based Kakinada SIR in the Krishna-Godavari basin has plans to set up an all



weather multi-purpose deepwater port, a logistics park, a petrochemicals cluster and an eco-industrial park, it said.

As per the document, an area of 4,650 acres there has been notified as SEZs and utility and environment approvals are in place.

In the Kakinada SEZ in Andhra Pradesh, however, the company has continued its efforts for various government approvals and technical studies and added that demand for industrial parks is expected to revive to pre-Covid-19 levels.

The group said infrastructure has not been much affected in the region due to Covid-19 as the company was able to re-mobilise and commence work quickly as workers were hailed from neighbouring areas and Hosur.

About the Krishnagiri SIR (Tamil Nadu), the

company said infrastructure development in 275 acres is in progress with all approvals in place.

The company said it is leveraging locational advantage to create clusters in aerospace, automobile, logistics, engineering and electronics sectors besides setting up a special investment region in joint venture with Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (Tidco).

It said while the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (Sipcot) will acquire 500 acres for an industrial park, it has leased 20 acre to Toyota Boshoku for a manufacturing unit.

GMR Infrastructure's consolidated net loss for the quarter ended March 31 narrowed to Rs 1,126.82 crore, as against Rs 2,341.24 crore loss in the January-March period in FY19.

—PTI

Samsung crafts comeback as anti-China wave surges

SANKALP PHARTIYAL, HEEKYONG YANG NEW DELHI/SEOUL, AUG. 3

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd is forging a comeback in India's smartphone market with a new range of budget devices and a ramped-up online presence, aiming to recoup ground ceded to Chinese rivals such as Xiaomi Corp. Samsung, the only major non-Chinese player in the country, has already begun to gain ground, and a surge in anti-China sentiment in India following a border clash in June is expected to provide a fresh boost.

Samsung jumped to the No. 2 spot with 26 per cent market share in the second quarter behind Xiaomi's 29 per cent, according to tech researcher Counterpoint, as the South Korean company's diverse and inhouse supply chain helped it avoid product delays suffered by rivals during coronavirus lockdowns.

It was in the third position with a 16 per cent share in the previous quarter.

Once the unrivalled leader in the world's sec-



ond-biggest smartphone market, Samsung has over the past three years lost Indian customers to Chinese brands, whose devices are perceived as better value.

But India still accounts for some \$7.5 billion in annual retail smartphone revenues for Samsung, according to Counterpoint, making it the company's biggest market outside the United States.

It has built what it has described as the world's largest mobile phone man-

ufacturing plant on the outskirts of New Delhi, where it tests new devices and often assembles them for export.

That manufacturing power, and Samsung's ability to source many components internally, is helping it gain ground amid the pandemic. Chinese smartphone brands Xiaomi and Oppo suffered local production hiccups and product delays due to Covid-19, but Samsung was able to keep delivering phones smoothly.

Now it is building on the momentum. Samsung has launched seven new smartphones since June, three of them under Rs 10,000, including one in the Rs 5,600 range.

"The Covid crisis has pushed people to use smartphones for everything from online education to digital payments to even connecting with friends on video calls. That's why these budget phones are focused on the mass market," said a source familiar with Samsung's strategy in India.

—Reuters

Wockhardt to supply vaccines to UK



Bengaluru, Aug. 3: Wockhardt Ltd will supply millions of doses of multiple Covid-19 vaccines, including that being developed by Astra-Zeneca and Oxford University, under a deal with the UK government announced on Monday.

Shares of Wockhardt jumped 10 per cent after the news in a downcast Mumbai market.

The company has reserved fill-and-finish capacity—the final manufacturing step of putting vaccines into vials or syringes and packaging them—as part of the agreement, it said.

This is the latest step by the UK to secure supplies and production of Covid-19 vaccines after striking four deals with drugmakers to buy their potential shots.

"Fill finish is a critical step in the process to get the vaccine in a form to be given to patients. The agreement with Wockhardt will boost our capability to ensure that," Kate Bingham, chair of UK Vaccines Task Force, said in a statement.

The UK government has also reserved one fill-and-finish production line at a Wockhardt subsidiary in Wrexham, Wales for its exclusive use for the next 18 months to secure supply. It is expected to start the Wexham line in September.

AstraZeneca has indicated it would need 30 million fill-and-finish doses of their vaccine candidate. —Reuters

Consumer behaviour changing: Chandra

New Delhi, Aug. 3: A

tremendous transformation, stemming from Covid-19, is expected in the mobility segment over the next two years, as consumers' move to "slow" travel—with personal versus public/shared transport—is likely to shape the future demand for passenger vehicles, according to Tata Motors chairman N. Chandrasekaran.

The turnaround journey of the company's domestic business has also been disrupted in 2019-20, as demand deteriorated sharply on the back of an abruptly slowing economy coupled with the spread of Covid-19.

Addressing shareholders at the company's annual report for 2019-20, Chandrasekaran said the global auto industry has grappled with multiple

issues during the year.

"On one hand, we saw greater clarity emerge on Brexit; yet on the other hand, mounting trade tensions, muted global growth and enhanced regulatory norms have fundamentally changed the contours of the business environment in which we operate. Next came the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the final quarter of the year, which has ushered in a new reality for industries across the world," he said.

Chandrasekaran further said, "As we look ahead over the next two years, we anticipate a tremendous deal of transformation stemming from Covid-19.

Consumer behaviour will change in numerous ways, from demanding more integrated digital experiences to



N. Chandrasekaran

prioritising health and safety features across purchasing decisions. The move to 'slow' travel and personal (versus public and/or shared) transport may shape future demand for passenger vehicles."

Greater scrutiny will be placed on building environmental sustainability and climate resilience into the very core of business models, he said adding the Tata Motor Group is "well placed to

meet the demand opportunities that will arise from these important and fundamental shifts".

Referring to the performance of Tata Motors Ltd (TML), he said over the past two financial years, TML focused on refreshing its portfolio, improving structural efficiencies and streamlining internal processes. In doing so, TML turned a corner and delivered improved market shares, profitability, and positive free cash flows.

"In FY19, we delivered positive net income of Rs 2,021 crore, after making losses for five years. In both FY18 and FY19, TML produced positive free cash flows, following five years in negative territory." However, in FY20, this turnaround journey has been interrupted. —PTI

BAJAJ AUTO SALES DROP 33%

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 3

The pandemic pulled down Bajaj Auto's total sales in July by 33 per cent on a year-on-year basis. The auto major's total sales during the month fell to 2,55,832 units from 3,81,530 units sold during the same month last year. Domestic sales of the Pune-based company in July this year were at 1,58,976 units as against 2,05,470 units, down 23 per cent, Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing.

SHORT TAKES

Top flight tennis resumes in Italy

Palermo, Italy: Tour-level tennis resumed after a five-month enforced break on Monday, and players at the Palermo Ladies Open had to handle their own towels and not shake hands of opponents.

The strict rules because of the coronavirus pandemic included no showers on site, and no autographs or photos with fans. Players in the singles main draw come from 15 countries, all in Europe.

A limited number of fans were allowed into the 1,500-seat stadium court and had to follow social distancing measures.

They watched sixth-seeded Donna Vekic of Croatia beat Arantxa Rus of the Netherlands 6-1, 6-2 in the first official event — for men or women — since early March. Vekic sealed a place in the second round on her second match point. Players and anyone who comes into contact with players were tested for Covid-19 before they departed for Palermo, upon arrival, and then again every four days. — AP

Payment issues, says players body

New Delhi: Many players have been dealing with the issue of late payment or non-payment of salaries in a host of domestic T20 leagues across the world, states the latest annual players' report.

The Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA) found that over a third of all players have suffered in recent years. The Men's Global Employment Report 2020, put together by FICA, found that 34 per cent of all players had experienced payment issues. Global T20 Canada, Bangladesh Premier League, Abu Dhabi T10, Qatar T10, Euro T20 Slam and Masters Champions League are the six league identified as having problems in clearing the players' dues. While the BPL is the only established Full Member-run league in the list, others such as the GLT20 Canada, the Abu Dhabi T10 and the Euro T20 Slam have attracted well-known players from across the world. — PTI

Cool Keshavan is luge coach

New Delhi: Shiva Keshavan, the first Indian representative to compete in the luge event at the Winter Olympics, has been appointed chief coach as well as the High Performance Director of the national team by the Luge Federation of India. In a letter addressed to the Arjuna awardee, the federation informed Keshavan of its decision to appoint him for the twin role while acknowledging his achievements representing India in the past 22 years. "The federation considered your performance and achievements and noted with appreciation that you have represented India for 22 years and have participated in 6 Olympic Games," federation president Deepa Mehta wrote. The 38-year-old has also been handed the responsibility of talent scouting, infrastructure planning.

Keshavan represented India in six Winter Olympics from 1998 to 2018. He quit after the 2018 edition of the Games. — PTI

NIS STARTS A COURSE IN NUTRITION

New Delhi: The Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports (NSNIS) Patiala and CSS-SRIHER, Chennai, on Monday launched six-month online courses in sports physiotherapy and sports nutrition aimed at grassroot-level development in the country. It was a part of an MOU signed between the two institutes to launch these certificate courses in sports science which will give an opportunity to young qualified professionals to further specialise.

In the first leg, sports physiotherapy and sports nutrition courses have been launched online with admission to the courses starting on Monday. Sports Authority of India also plans to introduce courses in physiology, sports biomechanics, strength and conditioning, sports psychology. — PTI

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AGE OLD PROBLEM
BCCI moves in to weed out overage players

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The BCCI on Monday said it will grant amnesty to registered players who voluntarily declare any age fraud but those found to be in breach of the unusual scheme could be slapped with a two-year suspension.

The measures will be applicable to all cricketers participating in the board's age-group tournaments from the 2020-21 season onwards.

"Under this scheme, players who voluntarily declare that they have manipulated their date of birth by submitting fake/tampered documents in the past will not be suspended and allowed to participate in the appropriate age group level if they disclose their actual date of birth (DOB)," the BCCI said in a release.

"Players have to submit a signed letter/email along with supporting documents to BCCI Age Verification Dept. revealing their actual DOB before 15th September 2020."

The apex body also made it clear that if the players don't accept it now and are later found to be guilty of age fraud then they will be heavily sanctioned.

"However, if registered players do not disclose the facts and are found to have submitted fake/tampered DOB proof documents by BCCI, then they will be banned for 2 years, and after completion of 2-year suspension, they will not be allowed to participate in age group tournaments of BCCI, as well as, age group tournaments organised by the State Units."

The BCCI also said that "all cricketers committing Domicile fraud, including senior men & women, will be banned for 2 years" and "voluntary disclosure scheme does not apply for cricketers who have committed domicile fraud."

Among other measures, the governing body said for the under-16 age group tournament "only players who are between 14-16 years old will be permitted to register." — PTI



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (right) with NCA chief Rahul Dravid in this file photo.

Board draws guidelines to resume cricket training

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The BCCI is forming a Covid-19 task force and it will include, among others, former captain and National Cricket Academy chief Rahul Dravid, the apex body said in its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to State associations.

Players will have to sign a consent form before resuming training at their respective centres as per the standard operating procedure, which bars anyone above 60 years of age and individuals with underlying medical conditions from being part of the camp.

For resumption of training at the NCA in Bengaluru, the Covid task force will include Dravid, a medical officer, and BCCI AGM, Cricket Operations.

The 2019-2020 domestic season ended in March but the upcoming season, which usually starts in August, is set to be cur-

tailed due to the health crisis. "The health and safety of players, staff and stakeholders will be the sole responsibility of respective State Cricket Associations," read the BCCI guidelines on resumption of cricket. Support staff, officials and ground staff over 60 years of age and with individuals with underlying medical conditions are barred from attending

training camps until "suitable guidelines are issued by the Government".

Before the commencement of the camp, the medical team should acquire travel and medical history (past 2 weeks) of all players and staff through an online questionnaire. Any player and staff suspected to have Covid-19-like symptoms should undergo PCR tests.

"Two tests one day apart (Day 1 & Day 3) should be done to account for false negatives. If both the test results are negative, only then they should be included in the camp," read the SOP.

The players will have to wear a N95 mask (without a valved respirator) on the way to the stadium and will be encouraged to wear eyewear in public places as well as during training. Players are advised to take their own transportation on way to the stadium. — PTI

SJM SLAMS BCCI FOR CHINA LINK

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Shocked over the BCCI's decision to continue with the Chinese sponsors for the IPL, the RSS-affiliate Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) on Monday said people should consider boycotting the T-20 cricket league.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Indian Premier League (IPL) Governing Council have shown utter disrespect to the Indian soldiers killed by Chinese troops with its decision to hold the cricket league with its Chinese sponsors," SJM's co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan said in a statement.

"At a time when the country is striving hard to make our economy free from Chinese dominance in the markets, the government is making all efforts to keep China out of our markets, this act of the IPL Governing Council is an aberration," Mahajan said.

VIVO, a Chinese mobile phone manufacturer, is the title sponsor of the IPL and has paid over ₹2,000 crore to the BCCI for a five-year deal.

BCCI invites bids for kit sponsor

Meanwhile, the BCCI on Monday invited bids for the team's kit sponsor and official merchandising partner rights through a tender process to replace Nike, whose contract is set to expire next month. The sports apparel giant had a four-year deal for ₹370 crore with a royalty of ₹30 crore.

Under the Invitation to Tender (ITT), the winning bidder will be granted the right to be the kit sponsor and/or the official merchandising partner and various other associated rights. — PTI

Indian shuttlers in cozy groups

New Delhi, Aug. 3: India have been handed relatively easy draws in the twice rescheduled Thomas and Uber Cup Finals slated to be held from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark.

The Indian men's team has been placed in Group 'C' alongside 2016 champions Denmark, Germany and Algeria, while the women's side has been clubbed with 14-time winners China, France and Germany in Group 'D' in the draw which was staged at the Badminton World Federation (BWF) headquarters in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

Both the men's and women's team are seeded fifth in the tournament, according to the BWF release.

Indonesia, 13-time former champions, and six-time former winner Japan will headline as the top seeds for the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup respectively.

The prestigious event was originally scheduled to be held from May 16-24 but was postponed to August 15-23 before finally rescheduling it in October due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

No tournament has been possible since BWF had

shut down their World Tour and other sanctioned tournaments following the completion of the All-England in March due to the global health crisis.

In Thomas and Uber Cup Final, the top two teams in each group at the end of the group stage will make it to the knock-out round.

The Indian women's team had lost to champion China in the semifinal stage in the 2016 edition of Uber Cup. They also reached the semifinal in the 2014 New Delhi edition.

— PTI

THOMAS CUP (men)
Group A: Indonesia, Malaysia, Holland and England.

Group B: China, Taiwan, Australia and France.

Group C: Denmark, India, Germany and Algeria.

Group D: Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Canada.

UBER CUP (women)

Group A: Japan, Taiwan, Egypt and Spain.

Group B: Korea, Indonesia, Australia and Malaysia.

Group C: Thailand, Denmark, Scotland and Canada.

Group D: China, India, France and Germany.

FAN FRAME



Aditya Bidarkar (centre) had the opportunity to meet South African cricket legend Jonty Rhodes (right) and Ryan Maron in Bengaluru in November last year.

RUSSELL, JAMES BOOST ROCKETS PAST BUCKS

Miami, Aug. 3: Russell Westbrook scored 31 points and James Harden added 24 Sunday to rally the Houston Rockets over NBA overall leader Milwaukee 120-116 despite a big night for Giannis Antetokounmpo. The Bucks led 112-104 after Khris Middleton's three-pointer with 3:14 to play, but Houston closed the game with a 16-4 run.

The Rockets went 21-of-61 from three-point range, matching an NBA record for the most three-point attempts by a club in a non-overtime game, with Daniel House hitting four and Harden among five other players who landed three from outside the arc.

The Rockets also rallied from seven points down in the final minute to defeat Dallas on Friday.

Westbrook, on a career-best run of 36 consecutive games with 20 or more points, hit 10-of-21 from the floor, 1-of-3 from beyond the arc, and 10-of-12 free throws. Harden had six steals, seven rebounds and seven assists.

Greek big man Antetokounmpo led the Bucks with 36 points, 18 rebounds and eight assists. Middleton had 27 points and 12 rebounds and Brook Lopez added 23 points and 12 rebounds. — AFP

Eye on Fifa Cup, talent hunt is on

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday said the government is riding on "mainstay" football to make India a sporting powerhouse and announced the formation of five zonal committees to hunt talent across the country.

Rijiju said the talent hunt initiative, to be funded by the Sports Authority of India under the Khelo India Programme in partnership with the All India Football Federation, will be the "most aggressive exercise" ever done. The committees will be formed in the next few months.

"We will form five talent scouting committees in the next few months, one for each zone — north, south, east, west and northeast — under Khelo India Programme of SAI in partnership with AIFF," Rijiju said during a virtual programme organised by Football Delh to mark the 36th birthday of India captain Sunil Chhetri.

"We cannot go with the usual approach, we have to go deeper in a professional way. It will be the most aggressive exercise we had ever done. We have to find out talented children below 12 years from every nook and corner of the country," he added. — PTI

GAMES IN GOA LEAGUE UNDER FIX SCANNER

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The Asian Football Confederation has red-flagged six matches of last year's Goa Professional League for possible "match manipulation" but the state association on Monday said there was not enough evidence.

The AFC had written to the integrity officer of AIFF, Javed Siraj, in March informing about "suspicious betting patterns indicative of match manipulation" in six matches held between October 16 and November 19 last year.

Goa Football Association secretary Jovito Lopes said his organisation had conducted an investigation but said match-fixing could not be proved due to a lack of evidence.

The matches involved local teams Calangute Association, Panjim Footballers, Guardian Angel Sports Club, FC Goa II and former I-League sides Dempo, Salgaocar and Sporting Clube. — PTI

Trott is England batting coach

London, Aug. 3: Former batsman Jonathan Trott has been appointed England's batting coach for the upcoming three-Test series against Pakistan, starting on Wednesday.

The 39-year-old, who scored 3,835 runs in 52 Tests between 2009-2015 for England, will be joined by former New Zealand spinner Jeetan Patel and Warwickshire seamer Graeme Welch, the 'BBC' reported.

Trott, who played 68 ODIs and seven T20 matches, has scored 18,662 runs in first class cricket.

England and Pakistan will lock horns in a three-match Test series starting Wednesday at the Old Trafford in Manchester, followed by the next two games in the Ageas Bowl in Southampton.

England won the recently-concluded three-Test series, that mark the resumption of international cricket, against West Indies 2-1.

Swann hits out at England selectors

Meanwhile, former off-spinner Graeme Swann has slammed selectors for splitting England's most successful new-ball pairing of Stuart Broad and James Anderson during the recently-concluded Test series against the West

Indies, saying "you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly".

England paid the price for dumping Broad in the first Test as they lost by four wickets at Southampton. With Jofra Archer missing the second Test due to a bio-secure breach, Broad returned to take six wickets as England bounced back with a 113-run win.

In the third Test, Broad was awarded the Man of the Match after he took 10 wickets to cross the 500-wicket mark and also scored a crucial 62 with the bat as England sealed the series with a 269-run win.

"How stupid did it look to break up England's most successful bowling partnership of all-time when we lost that first Test match?" Swann, who has taken 255 wickets in 60 Tests, was quoted as saying by 'Mirror.co.uk'.

"Jimmy and Broady have formed one of the most successful bowling double acts Test cricket has known. Why would you want to chuck it out before its sell-by date? I can understand the attraction of 90mph pace, and both Jofra and Woody are huge assets."

"But I'm sorry, you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly," Swann said. — PTI

Misbah wants Pak to get off blocks early

London, Aug. 3: Pakistan coach Misbah-ul-Haq has urged his side to get off to a flying start in their Test series with England, saying they must be at their best "right from the word 'go'".

England are notoriously sluggish starters and have lost the opener in eight of their past 10 Test series,

including a recent 2-1 home success against the West Indies that marked international cricket's return from the coronavirus lockdown.

Misbah, suggesting England would have the advantage of momentum, told reporters on Monday: "We should be ready for an England team that

have already had three matches of experience and they won their last two Test matches. We have to really come in this Test series right from the word 'go' at our best if we want to win a Test series or a Test match here.

"We are aware that England have a slight advantage but if we are

alert and go 100 percent in the first Test match, that is the only way we can beat England, otherwise we will find ourselves in difficulty."

Misbah believes his side also have the batsmen to give their bowlers enough runs to defend. "It's always tough with the Duke ball in England

where the ball moves around off the seam and also in the air," Misbah said, adding, "but this is where you can really fight and our batting looked in great shape in the last two series. We played in Pakistan but even in Australia we managed to score good."

— AFP