

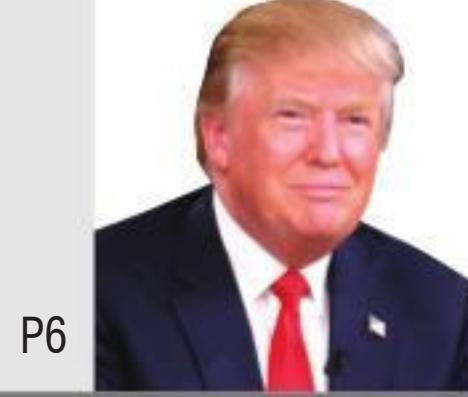


'CONGRESS MUST
FIND FULL-TERM
PRESIDENT'

P5



GOOD
BOUNCER



TRUMP BYPASSES
US CONGRESS ON
VIRUS PACKAGE

P10



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



MESSI HELPS BARCA
TO REACH CL
QUARTER-FINALS

P12

WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky. Moderate rain/thundershowers with one or two intense spells. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 33 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: 001.0 MM

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 89% Min: 74%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 35.0°C (+1) Min: 26.2°C (-1)
SUN RISES 05:49 hrs MOON RISES 23:08 hrs SUN SETS 19:05 hrs MOON SETS 12:21 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Bengal police personnel during a rehearsal ahead of Independence Day in Kolkata on Sunday.

BHASKAR MALLICK

Eleven of Pak migrant family found dead: Eleven members of a family of Pakistani Hindu migrants were found dead at a farm in Rajasthan's Jodhpur district on Sunday morning, police said. Police said they are yet to ascertain the cause and means of death, but that the family appear to have committed suicide by consuming some chemical in the night. The family belonging to the Bhil community had come to India from Pakistan's Sindh province in 2015 on a long-term visa and had been staying at the farm for the past six months.

P4

Idukki landslide toll: The death toll in the devastating landslide at Pettimudy near Munmar in Kerala's Idukki district rose to 42 with 16 more dead bodies retrieved from the debris on Sunday as over 200 rescue personnel and local people continued search operations for a third day. It is estimated that around 35 people might be still missing in the massive landslide which wiped out the settlement in the wee hours of Friday.

P4

740 tonnes ammonium nitrate in Chennai to be sent to Hyderabad

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 9 AUGUST

Ammonium nitrate weighing 740 tonnes stored in 37 containers at a container freight station (CFS) here is being moved to Hyderabad in a phased manner, said an official of the CFS.

"The first 10 containers of ammonium nitrate have left the CFS on Sunday and the balance will be moved over the next two days. All one has to do is to load the containers onto a truck as the ammonium nitrate was imported in containers and impounded by the customs," an official told IANS preferring anonymity.

He said that 10 containers will be sent out daily in order to avoid bunching and increasing the risk enroute.

A consignment of 740 tonnes of ammonium nitrate in 37 containers was imported by Amman Chemicals in 2015 as fertiliser from Korea.

However, as the importer did not have the necessary licence, the Customs Department confiscated the entire consignment and had it stored in Sattva CFS, Manali, here.

Some 2,700 tonnes of ammonium nitrate stored at Beirut port in Lebanon exploded on Tuesday, killing 135 persons and injuring thousands. Following that concerns were raised about the risks of storing 740 tonnes of ammonium nitrate at the CFS. The Customs had auctioned off the ammonium nitrate. The successful bidder, it is learnt, was Salvo Explosive and Chemical, Hyderabad.

The prime minister reiterated that India has a huge opportunity to invest in post-harvest management solutions like warehousing, cold chain and food processing, and build a global presence in areas such as organic and fortified foods.

He also mentioned that this scheme provides a good opportunity for startups in agriculture to avail the benefits and scale their operations, thereby creating an ecosystem that reaches farmers in every corner of the country.

Modi also interacted with farmers from Karnataka, Gu-

Record 64.4K new Covid cases; 861 deaths

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, 9 AUGUST

India recorded a new high of 64,399 coronavirus cases in one day as of Sunday morning, pushing its total tally to 21,53,010.

Out of the total cases, 6,28,747 are active cases, 14,80,884 have recovered from the deadly virus while 43,379 people have died, according to data posted by the Union health ministry at 8 a.m. Sunday.

A total of 53,879 persons recovered and were discharged in the last 24 hours, while 861 others lost their lives in just one day.

India also tested over 7 lakh samples for Covid-19 in the last 24 hours.

Maharashtra remained the worst-hit state in India with the total number of cases climbing to 4,90,262; however, in the last 24 hours, the number of active cases went down

by 723 and a total of 10,906 people recovered from the virus in the state.

Following Maharashtra is Tamil Nadu which has a total of 2,85,025 cases. However, the state reported 727 less cases in the last one day

while 6,488 people recovered from the virus. The state has recorded 4,690 deaths so far including 119 which occurred in the last 24 hours.

Karnataka, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana recorded their highest single-

day spikes of 2,618, 2,565, 2,488 cases and 1,151 cases, respectively.

On the global front, a total of 19,571,989 people have been infected with the deadly virus while the deaths have climbed to 725,914 with 162,422 in the United States alone. The United States and Brazil remained the worst-hit nations with a total tally of 49,97,705 and 30,12,412 cases, respectively. Brazil has recorded 100,477 deaths so far.

Delhi's Covid figures:

Delhi today recorded 1,300 fresh Covid-19 positive cases, which took the cumulative total of such patients in the national capital to 1,45,427, according to the latest health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain said that the recent rise in the number of single-day Covid cases in the city

FACT FILE
TOTAL CASES
21,53,010
ACTIVE CASES
6,28,747
NEW CASES
64,399
NEW RECOVERIES
53,879
TOTAL DEATHS
43,379

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 AM, SUNDAY 9 AUGUST 2020

was because of "patients from outside getting tested here".

(SEE ALSO PAGE 4)

Sonia Gandhi to remain interim Congress chief, says party

NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

The Congress on Sunday said Sonia Gandhi will continue as interim president till such time a "proper procedure" is implemented in the "not too distant future" to elect a party chief.

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

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

"Yes, her tenure comes to an end on August 10. But be rest assured that there is a process which goes through the CWC (Congress Working Committee). This will be followed in the near future and a result will emerge," he said. The procedure is written in the Congress' constitution and the party is committed to follow it, Singhvi said, adding that it was being done and information will be shared on it soon.

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

"Just like nature abhors a vacuum, political parties cannot function in a vacuum. It is true that the tenure is expiring tomorrow. There is a laid down procedure in the (party) constitution for elections. As you know it goes through the CWC etc," Singhvi said.

REMOVED AND MAJOR PUSH FOR AGRI-REFORMS ARE BEING GIVEN TO ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT IN RURAL INDIA FOR CREATING POST-HARVEST LINKAGES, HE ADDED.

Modi launched the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund through a video conference on the occasion of 'Balram Jayanti', a day when farmers worship the plough. Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and farmers from some states participated in the video conference. "On this auspicious occasion, a special fund of Rs 1 lakh crore has been launched to create agriculture-related infrastructure facilities in the country. This will help in creating better storage facilities and modern cold storage

chains in villages. Many employment opportunities will be created in villages," Modi said after the launch.

The prime minister reiterated that India has a huge opportunity to invest in post-harvest management solutions like warehousing, cold chain and food processing, and build a global presence in areas such as organic and fortified foods.

He also mentioned that this scheme provides a good opportunity for startups in agriculture to avail the benefits and scale their operations, thereby creating an ecosystem that reaches farmers in every corner of the country.

Modi also interacted with farmers from Karnataka, Gu-

jarat and Madhya Pradesh who are among the initial beneficiaries of the credit facility under this new fund through Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) for creating post-harvest facilities.

Under the Agri-Infra Fund, about Rs 1 lakh crore will be sanctioned under the financing facility in partnership with multiple lending institutions as loans to PACS, farmer groups, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), agri-entrepreneurs, startups and agri-tech players.

Already, 11 of the 12 public sector banks have signed initial agreements with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Under the fund, about 3 per cent interest subvention and credit guarantee of up to Rs 2 crore will be provided to the beneficiaries to increase the viability of the projects.

Loans will be disbursed in four years starting with a sanction of Rs 10,000 crore in the current year and Rs 30,000 crore each in the next three financial years.

Citing reasons for poor investment in agri-infrastructure, the prime minister said there was "negligible" investment due to legal hurdles in the wake of a provision of stock limit under the Essential Commodities (EC) Act. "Now, we have surplus production. The stock limit not only affects the farmers but also the country's economy and

consumers. But surprisingly the law (EC Act) was still continuing when we have become a surplus producing nation. This law is not required now," he said.

This law was creating hurdles in setting up of godowns and farm industry in villages. "Unfortunately, babus misused this law to threaten traders and investors. Now, traders and investors are freed from this threat," he said.

They can now set up modern agri-infrastructure taking credit facilities under the new fund, he added.

The prime minister said the government has brought two ordinances that allow farmers to sell their produce outside

mandis and even enter into an agreement directly with companies for sale of their produce.

Despite demand being there, the reforms were undertaken now because it was felt that when the non-agri industries have the right to fix price for their products and sell anywhere in India, why can't farmers be given a similar freedom. "Why don't farmers get similar facilities? Why is this injustice happening with farmers? It is not that a soap factory set up in a city will sell the product in that city's vicinity. Soap can be sold anywhere. In agriculture, it was not happening. Farmers sell their produce in local mandis alone," he said.

Legal hurdles are being removed now because it was felt that when the non-agri industries have the right to fix price for their products and sell anywhere in India, why can't farmers be given a similar freedom. "Why don't farmers get similar facilities? Why is this injustice happening with farmers? It is not that a soap factory set up in a city will sell the product in that city's vicinity. Soap can be sold anywhere. In agriculture, it was not happening. Farmers sell their produce in local mandis alone," he said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

Asserting that the government's agri-reforms are focused on empowering small farmers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a financing facility of Rs 1 lakh crore under the Agri-Infra Fund that will help create post-harvest infrastructure facilities in villages and ensure better income for farmers.

He also said the country does not face problems in farm production but in post-harvest losses, and therefore efforts are being made to strengthen post-harvest infrastructure facilities and ensure better income for farmers. Legal hurdles are being

removed and major push for agri-reforms are being given to encourage investment in rural India for creating post-harvest linkages, he added.

Modi also interacted with farmers from Karnataka, Gu-





It is true that the (Sonia Gandhi as Congress interim President) term is expiring but the party is not going to be headless at the stroke of midnight

ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI

CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON

Kejriwal unveils a 200-bed new Covid hospital in Delhi

The Ambedkar Nagar hospital will have a capacity of 600 beds in one-and-a-half months, says CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated a 200-bed Covid hospital in the Ambedkar Nagar area in the city on Sunday.

The hospital will ultimately have 600 beds, but at this stage it has 200 beds with the facility of oxygen supply. The capacity of beds and ICUs will be enhanced in coming days.

Kejriwal said this new hospital would serve as a major health care facility for the people of the area and others in Delhi.

Briefing media persons following his visit to the hospital, Kejriwal said, "Ambedkar Hospital is starting today.

There was no big hospital in this area and the nearby constituencies. The idea of construction of this hospital was conceived in 2013. Initially, 200 beds will be operational, but there is a plan for this hospital to have a capacity of 600 beds in one-and-a-half months or so."

The 200 beds in the hos-



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal along with health minister Satyendar Jain and others inaugurates a 200-bed Ambedkar Nagar Hospital in the Capital on Sunday.

available for Covid-19 patients, are not needed in the future, but we have to be fully prepared," the Chief Minister said.

Kejriwal went on to say that "It is said that coronavirus is an unpredictable pandemic and no one knows what might happen tomorrow.

The situation in Delhi is under control, but if it goes out of control again, the Delhi government is fully prepared to deal with such circumstances."

The Delhi government has increased the availability of hospital beds.

The construction of the new hospital in the Ambedkar Nagar area will further strengthen the position of the city as far as the availability of hospital beds for the treatment of Covid-19 patients is concerned, the CM said.

Kejriwal also congratulated all those involved in the construction of this hospital — engineers, doctors and others — for their efforts in making it a reality today much before the time set for its completion.

Delhi Cong holds training session for party rank and file on burning issues

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

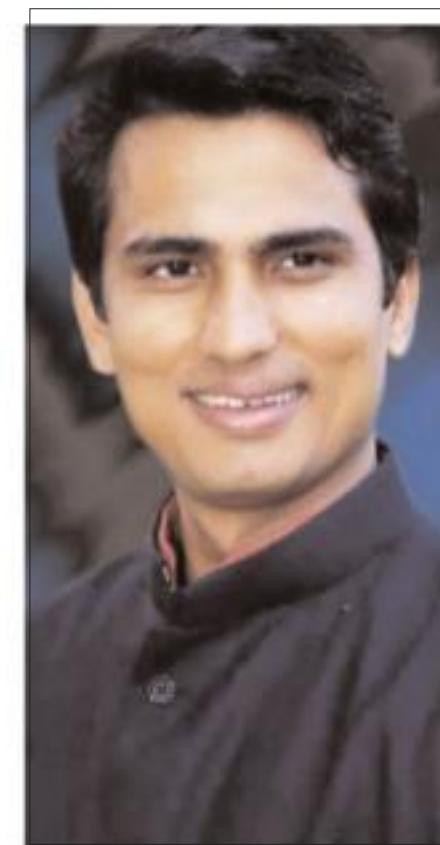
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) president Chaudhary Anil Kumar today inaugurated a two-day training session here for District and Block Congress Committee presidents with an aim to prepare the party workers to highlight the current social, political and economic situation in the country amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Earlier in the day, Anil Kumar organised a flag-hoisting ceremony to mark the anniversary of the Quit India Movement.

The DPCC president said that the two-day training programme, divided into two sessions — national and state-level issues — was designed to create awareness among the cadres of the party about the present social, political and economic situation in Delhi and the country in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said, "The Congress party is determined to rejuvenate the grass-root level workers, who are the backbone of the party, to get them play a proactive role in raising the issues affecting the people and ensure intervention of the party workers in



solving the problems of the people."

Among the prominent

Delhi Congress leaders who attended the first day's training session were AICC secretary and training in-charge Sachin Rao, DPCC vice presidents Jai Kishan, Abhishek Dutt, Shivani Chopra, Mudit Agarwal and Ali Mehndi.

Sachin Rao is conducting the national level session, while Arun Gargi is holding the state level session. The training camps will be taken to the booth level, said a DPCC leader.

Anil Kumar said that

under the present circumstances, it has become necessary to create awareness among the people regarding the total "mismanagement" of the Covid pandemic by both the Narendra Modi government at the Centre and the Arvind Kejriwal government in Delhi.

"The Modi and Arvind governments together have wrecked the economy of the country and Delhi, respectively, with the unimaginative and ill-planned Covid-19 lockdown without any preparation, and mishandling the subsequent developments," said the Delhi Congress chief.

He further alleged that as a result people have lost their jobs and livelihood, and the economy is in a total shamboles with an economic recovery unlikely to happen anytime soon.

"It was therefore essential for the Congress workers to be fine-tuned to the prevailing conditions as Congress's motto has always been 'service to the people', and Congress workers will work among the people to boldly face the hard times ahead as the Modi and Arvind governments have terribly let down the people, and they hope nothing better from these governments," said Anil Kumar.

DU differently-abled students accuse varsity of being 'discriminatory'

PTI

NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

With the Delhi University (DU) all set to conduct online open-book exams for final-year students from Monday, differently-abled students said they will not be able to take the test and accused the university of being "exclusionary" and "discriminatory".

The Delhi High Court has given its nod to the DU to conduct the exams.

Amid opposition from teachers and students, the university will be conducting the exams from Monday. A teacher from the English department, who did not wish to be named, said almost 50 per cent students may

not be able to take the exams. "Students who are in villages, where even electricity is a problem, may not be able to take the exams. We have written to the university multiple times, but there has been no resolution."

Students have gone back to their villages and some do not even have study material and internet connectivity. It seems difficult that they will be able to take the exams starting from Monday," a teacher said.

Another teacher, requesting anonymity, said students faced difficulties during the mock exams in uploading the answer sheets and the same problem may arise on Monday.

Man dupes Delhi riot victim family in U'khand, arrested

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 9 AUGUST

The Uttarakhand Police arrested a man for allegedly duping a Delhi riot victim's brother and cheating him of over Rs three lakh on the pretext of securing a government job for him.

Accused Virendra Singh was arrested from Adibadri in Chamoli on Sunday. The cheat took away Rs 3.25 Lakh from Devendra Singh, brother of Dilbar Negi who was killed in the Delhi riots earlier this year. The accused was absconding after duping the family in June.

Charred body of twenty-year-old Dilbar Singh Negi, hailing from Pauri (Uttarakhand), was found in Brahmputra locality in Delhi in February. He was working at a sweet shop and rioters first attacked Dilbar with swords and later burned him. State government and various social organizations provided the affected family some money.

According to Pauri Police, posing as a state government servant accused Virendra Singh approached the affected family at their village Rokhra in district Pauri. The accused, a native of Sirana in Pauri, claimed that he is working in the state secretariat and can help Devendra Singh get a government job. Taking the family into confidence the man claimed that some money will be required to execute the government process and took two bank cheques. The man withdrew Rs 3.25 Lakh from their bank account.

After withdrawing money from the bank, the cheat began giving different excuses. After getting fed up with the excuses and realizing that the person has cheated them, Devendra Singh filed a police complaint with Paithana police station on 23 June this year. The Pauri police formed a team and on Sunday they were successful in arresting the accused from Adibadri in Chamoli.

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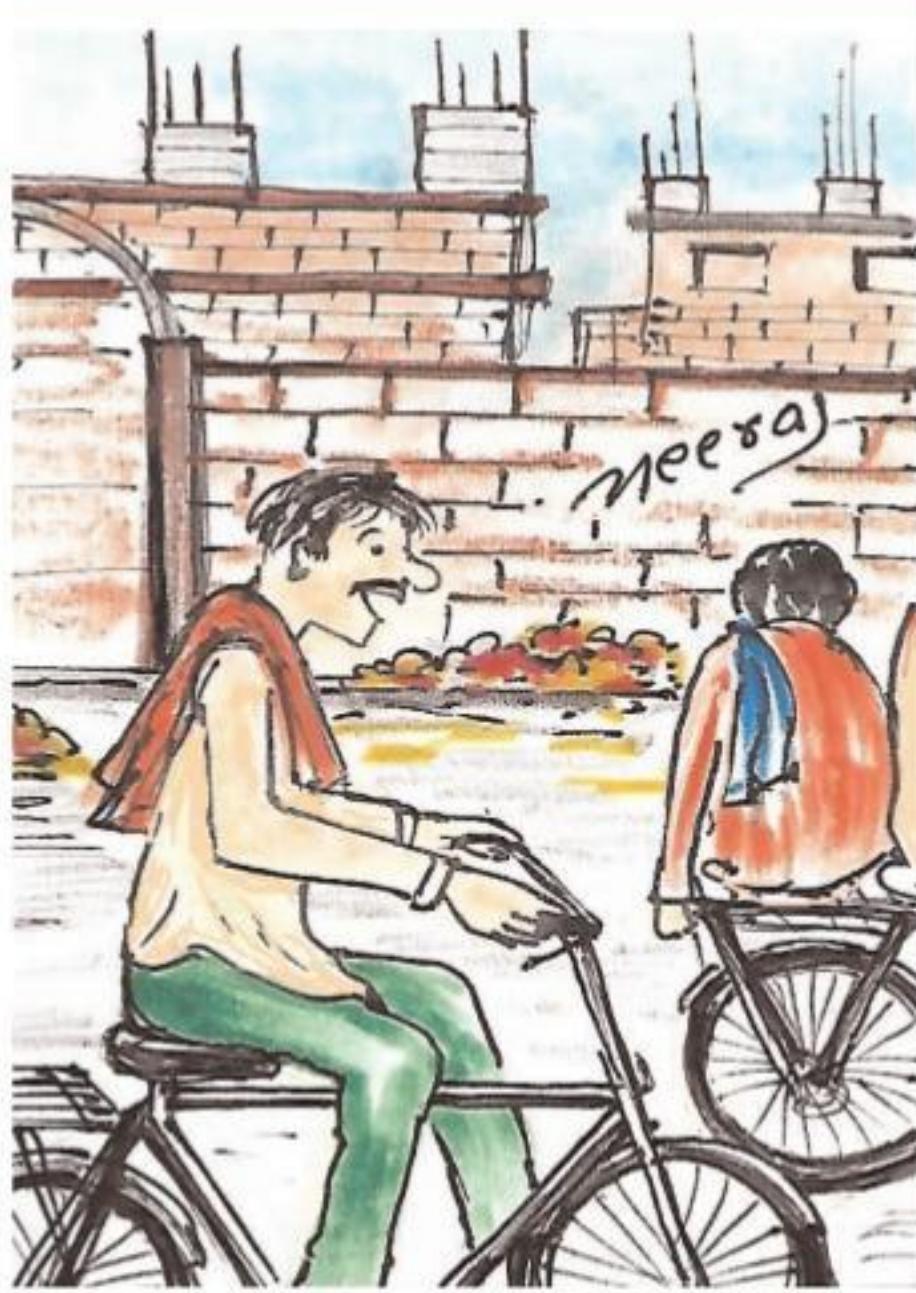
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TURNING THE TABLES



The three-month-long lockdown impacted almost everyone. But migrant workers, daily wagers and people with low income were the ones who were affected the most.

As most of the businesses were shut and construction activity came to a grinding halt, those working in this sector found it difficult to make both ends meet. But something unheard of happened in Bihar where a builder has allegedly been taken for a ride by his workers rather than the other way round.

The builder was constructing a set of houses with the labourers from West Bengal working at the construction site.

When the lockdown was imposed in March, they stopped construction and waited patiently to resume work. Needless to say, their food and lodging were taken care of by the builder.

When the lockdown continued to be extended, these workers became restless and wanted to go back to their native places. They asked the builder if he could lend them some money.

As the situation was not normal, the builder not only cleared all their dues but also gave them some surplus amount. Once they got the money, the first thing they did was to purchase bicycles and return to their native places.

But they are reluctant to return to work now even after the rolling out of the "Unlock" exercise.

Every time, the builder telephones them to plead with them to return, they reportedly look for some "lame excuses" and promise him that they would return soon to resume work. This must be among few cases in which a builder has apparently "suffered" at the hands of his workers.

July was the month of filing income tax returns. In Delhi, income tax payers every year could be seen rushing to banks to make last-minute tax deposits and complete other formalities.

This year, the deadline for filing IT returns has been extended to 30 November because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This has virtually taken the sting out of July, although the extension of the date was much needed because of the pandemic.

The staff attendance suffered in most offices and work in insurance companies and banks slowed down.

There were long queues outside the banks when they tried to normalise their services.

The social distancing norms meant only a few could complete their work in a day. Before the 31 July deadline came, 30 June was the deadline.

And what a deadline it was. During the last few days of June, the income tax department put up vast return filing centres

Little breather



under 'shamianas' at the Pragati Maidan and in the ITO's Central Revenues Building complex.

Those making photocopies of documents and deposit

receipts did a roaring business. The banks opened their counters to accept cheques. Drinking water was available.

While food stalls were open outside the 'shamianas'

and even under shamianas, one could have cold drinks, and complete the forms while sitting on 'durries'. There was a festive atmosphere.

The return filers who did

sion of the deadline to 31 July provided much breathing time to all, including the CAs and the TRPs.

Often there was relaxation of this deadline too for some days of August. The introduction of the online filing of the returns brought about a complete transformation.

As construction of convention centres began at Pragati Maidan, the venue could not host income tax camp counters.

The 'shamianas' at the income tax return centres disappeared from the ITO complex too, as e-filing of the returns got popular. Delhi lost some of its 'old world' charm.

The extension of the deadline has made things even more relaxed. Neither the CAs, nor the TRPs, are in demand as of now.

There is plenty of time to understand the return filing process. People may need professional assistance only if there are changes in the return forms.

The journalists were also eagerly looking forward to the resumption of get-togethers at the lush green lawns of the British envoy's official residence in Lutyens' Delhi. The get-togethers will indeed resume but Sir Philip would not be able to participate now.

TAILPIECE

Many MPs may not welcome a virtual Parliament session as that would surely curtail their 'democratic right' of vociferous protests and rushing to the well of the House," a veteran scribe quipped.

Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Rakesh Kumar, Savita Verma, Ashok Tuteja and Asha Ramachandran

India

HP CM pitches for safety measures to check Covid

Jai Ram Thakur alleges the Opposition leaders were politicising the coronavirus crisis in Himachal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 9 AUGUST

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday said the state government has started public transport and opened all business activities but people still need to adopt all safety measures to check spread of COVID-19.

Addressing a public meeting at Palampur in Kangra district, the CM said he was initially planning to perform laying of foundation stones and inauguration of developmental projects through video-conferencing from Dharamshala.

But it was on the request and assurance from the leaders of Kangra that they would ensure social distancing that he decided to hold public meetings by ensuring social distancing, he added.

The Chief Minister charged that the Opposition leaders were trying to politicise even this pandemic crisis.

"When I was holding meeting from office at Shimla, these leaders alleged that the Chief Minister was avoiding meeting the people of the state.

But now when I am visiting Kangra for such meetings, the same leaders are alleging I am defying social distancing norms by doing so," he said.

Thakur said that steps taken by the state government to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic were appreciated even by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The Leader of Opposition



Himachal CM Jai Ram Thakur at Palampur in Kangra district on Sunday.

Mukesh Agnihotri is making many baseless and uncalled for allegations," he said while advising him to have a look at the situation in Congress-ruled states like Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra where the situation was worse. He further said that the state government brought back about 2.50 lakh people, who were stranded in different parts of the country, and that it was "unfortunate" that the Congress leaders were even opposing this move.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has succeeded in tackling the spread of Coronavirus. In fifteen most developed countries of the world with a total population of 142 crore, over seven lakh deaths have been reported due to

Corona whereas in India with a total population of 135 crore, about 42,000 death have been reported. This was possible due to the timely steps taken by the Prime Minister," the CM claimed.

Thakur said the abrogation of Article 370 was possible due to the strong political will power and today "India is one nation with one Constitution" and "one flag".

"The decision regarding Ram Janambhumi has paved a way for construction of a magnificent temple of Lord Ram. We all were fortunate that we all were witness to the Bhumi Pujan of Lord Ram Temple at Ayodhya. Now the endeavour was to ensure 'Ram Rajya' in the country," he claimed.

The CM said the Centre

and the state government had dedicated several schemes for the people of the country and the state, which include Ayushman Bharat, HIMAL-CARE, Ujjawala yojna and Grihini Suvidha Yojna, housing schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, Mukhyamantri Awas Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojna, Social Security Pension, Sahara Yojna, Jan Dhan Yojna etc.

Thakur assured the people of the area that all their developmental demands would be considered sympathetically.

HP Vidhan Sabha Speaker Vipin Singh Parmar, Industries Minister Bikram Singh, Forest Minister Rakesh Pathania were present on the occasion among other leaders.

INDIA CONNECTION

New British High Commissioner Sir Philip Barton has perhaps

had the shortest tenure in New Delhi. Sir Philip, who has a strong 'India connection', was keenly looking forward to taking India-Britain relations to new heights in the post coronavirus phase.

But he has now been promoted as a minister in the newly formed Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in London and is scheduled to return to London.

At a media interaction with Indian journalists recently, he appeared quite excited about his role in New Delhi, saying he considered himself as a bridge between India and the UK.

You may have not heard even an Indian naming his/her daughter as "India" but the British envoy chose to do that when he was working in New Delhi earlier.

"My mother was born in

Shimla and I was posted here in Delhi in the 1990s. I met my wife, Amanda, when we both lived and worked here and we named our daughter 'India' — not knowing I would return one day as high commissioner," Sir Philip disclosed much to the pleasant surprise of the media persons.

He was British High Commissioner to Pakistan from 2014 to 2016, and served as Private Secretary to Prime Ministers John Major and Tony Blair. Before heading to India, Sir Philip was Director General in the cabinet office working on the UK's longer-term response to the COVID-19 crisis. The high commissioner regretted that he was meeting the members of the fourth estate online in view of the pandemic. He hoped he would meet them in person as soon as the COVID threat disappears.



DELHI POLICE
SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

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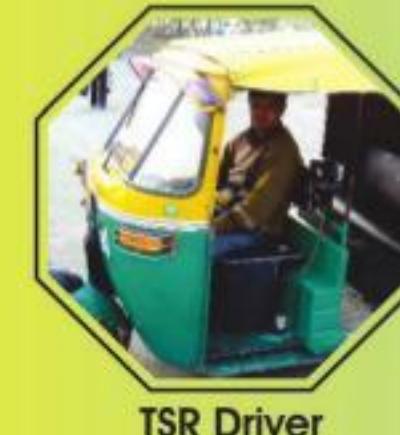
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DP/9244/2020

Kozhikode crash: Mortal remains of 16 passengers handed over to families

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

Air India Express said on Sunday that the mortal remains of the 16 passengers who lost their lives in the Kozhikode plane crash had been handed over to their families. The mortal remains of Captain Deepak Sathe, who was pilot-in-command of the ill-fated Air India Express plane that crashed in Kerala, were brought to Mumbai in a flight on Sunday afternoon.

The funeral of Sathe (58), who was a resident of suburban Chembur in Mumbai, will take place on Tuesday, a senior Air India official told PTI.

One of two sons of the Sathes will reach India from the USA on Monday night, he said. The mortal remains were kept at the Air India facility near the Terminal 2 of the Chhatrapati Shivaji international airport here for some time before being taken to Bhabha hospital this afternoon.

Sathe's wife Sushma and one of their sons accompanied the body. Pilots, crew of Air India and ground staff paid tributes to the late captain at the airport. The mortal remains of co-pilot Akhilesh Kumar were cremated on Sunday "with attendance from all family members as well as with the officials of Air India and Air India Express present to mark respect to the departed soul at Mathura, his hometown," it said.

The flight from Dubai with 190 people on board, including a six-member crew, overshot the table-

AAIB (Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau) has initiated the investigation into the accident with the support of Flight Safety Officials. "As regards the deceased passengers, the mortal remains have been handed over to the families with their consent," it said. A total of 149 people have been admitted to various hospitals, including Kozhikode Medical College.

top runway on Friday night while landing at the Kozhikode airport in heavy rain, fell into a valley 35 feet below and broke into two, killing 18 people, including both pilots.

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

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

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

WB Govt calls police, state admin 'errand boys'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 9 AUGUST

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar today chose to call the police and the state administration "errand boys" who act in disregard of Rules of Business, and claimed that all "amassed wealth" of the state government will be exposed.

The Governor lately has been demanding from the state government the details of the expenditure involved in organising the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS).

He wrote to chief minister Mamata Banerjee's office seeking the details but was perturbed to not have received any response and subsequently wrote to state finance minister, Dr Amit Mitra for the details.

Dhankar tweeted that the finance minister should feel "proud" in sharing the details with him and asserted that any delay in response would indicate "information is being hidden from the Governor."

Renewing his barbs at the state government that he recently described as an autocracy, terming it as "Hirak Rajar Deshi," he tweeted that all the police and the state administration, are nothing but "errand boys."

He added, "Top bureaucracy is playing with fire-disregarding Rules of Business under Article 166."

Dhankar had been persistent with his remarks against police administration in the state and have been dishing out repeated warnings, alleging West Bengal is turning into a state of "Police Raj."

Tagging Mamata Banerjee on Twitter, he reiterated his opinions of how the state is being run.

"While remembering millions of freedom fighters, who sacrificed for Independence on the 78th anniversary of the Quit India movement, let us pledge to ensure democracy



flourishes. All efforts to be made to salvage and restore Freedom and Democracy @MamataOfficial" wrote the Governor.

Meanwhile, commenting on the sought and delayed responses on BGBS details, he wrote, "Skeletoons would be on the street & amassed wealth exposed."

Dhankar has sought to know the year-wise expenditure amount spent since 2016 in holding BGBS and the agency/agencies involved through which the spending have been made for organising the event.

He also sought to know the names of event management companies for BGBS and whether payment was directly made or through the FICCI.

Dhankar has demanded to know what benefit the BGBS has yielded for the state and asked for information relating to the number of MoUs signed, investment and jobs promised in each of these BGBS annual events, since 2016. He inquired about the achievements of the business summit and the jobs created as per the promises made in the summits.

The Governor reminded in his letter to Dr Mitra that on earlier occasions also information sought from ACS Finance was not made available and "such a stance is inappropriate and contrary to conduct expected from senior officials."

Delhi govt attributes fresh rise in virus cases to 'outside patients'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

Delhi today recorded 1,300 fresh Covid-19 positive cases, which took the cumulative total of such patients in the national capital to 1,45,427, according to the latest health bulletin issued by the Delhi government. The number of coronavirus tests conducted in the city today was 23,787. The number of new coronavirus cases recorded in Delhi yesterday was 1,404 when the number of Covid tests conducted was 24,592. On 4 August, the number of such cases had come down to 674 in the city when 9,295 tests were conducted.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain today said that the recent rise in the number of single-day Covid cases in the city was because of "patients from outside getting tested here".

The health bulletin gave the number of patients getting treatment under home isolation in Delhi as 5,462.

The number of containment zones (red zones) in the city stood at 472.



Delhi. The health bulletin stated that the number of Covid-19 recovered patients in Delhi was now 1,30,587 with 1,225 patients discharged from various hospitals during the past 24 hours. The recovery rate stood at 89.79 per cent.

There were a total of 10,729 active coronavirus cases in the city now. With 13 cases of Covid deaths recorded today, the toll due to the coronavirus infection went up to 4,111.

The health bulletin gave the number of patients getting treatment under home isolation in Delhi as 5,462.

The number of containment zones (red zones) in the city stood at 472.



One after other, very frightening incidents reflecting the deteriorating situation of the state, are coming to the fore.

UNION JAL SHAKTI MINISTER GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

SPEAKING ON THE DEATHS OF 11 MEMBERS OF A HINDU MIGRANT FAMILY FROM PAKISTAN IN RAJASTHAN



Idukki landslide: Death toll rises to 42

Over 200 officials conducted search operations in the tea workers' settlement at Pettimudi to trace missing people

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 9 AUGUST

The death toll in the devastating landslide at Pettimudi near Munnar in Kerala's Idukki district rose to 42 with 16 more dead bodies retrieved from the debris on Sunday.

Over 200 members of the Defence Security Corps, Natural Disaster Response Force, Fire and Safety Force, local people, revenue, and forest staff searched every nook and corner of the tea workers' settlement at Pettimudi on the third day on Sunday for those who had gone missing in the landslide. It is estimated that around 35 people might be still missing in the massive landslide which devoured the settlement in the wee hours of

CM denies any bias in compensating victims of landslide and air crash

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 9 AUGUST

Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan has dismissed the Opposition allegation that there was discrimination in providing compensation to victims of Rajamala landslide and the victims of aircraft crash at Karipur. The solatium announced for landslide victims was an interim

one and the state government will "hold together" those who have lost everything, Vijayan said at a press meet on Saturday. The state government had announced a solatium of Rs five lakh to the families of those killed in the landslide and Rs ten lakh to the families of those who lost their lives in the plane crash. Vijayan said since the rescue operations were still on for missing persons in the landslide in high

range Idukki district and the government was yet to make a final assessment of the loss incurred.

"At Rajamala, we have declared the initial financial assistance. There the rescue operations are not over yet. "We need to hold them together as we have the responsibility of taking care of those who lost everything. We also need to ensure their livelihood and rebuild their lives," Vijayan had said.

Muralidharan demanded increase in the financial aid announced by the state government to the families of those killed in Pettimudi on Sunday.

Muralidharan demanded increase in the financial aid announced by the state government to the families of those killed in Pettimudi on Sunday.

dislodge to Rs 10 lakh from the already announced Rs five lakh.

Kerala reports 1,211 Covid-19 cases: Kerala on Sunday reported 1,211 fresh Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of persons affected with the virus in the state to 34,331. As many as 970 patients have recovered. Of the new patients, as many as 1,026 patients contracted the disease through contact. 76 persons are returnees from abroad and 78 are returned from other states.

As many as 27 health workers also tested positive while 103 persons contracted the disease through unknown sources.

Thiruvananthapuram (292) reported maximum cases, followed by Malappuram (170) and Kotayam (139).

11 members of Hindu migrant family from Pakistan found dead in Jodhpur

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JODHPUR, 9 AUGUST

they consumed something.

The family belonging to the Bhil community had come to India from Pakistan's Sindh province in 2015 on a long-term visa. They had been living at the Loda village farm, which they had hired for farming, for the past six months.

There was neither any injury mark on any of the bodies nor any evidences of any foul play, the SP said. "But we have roped in a forensic team and a dog squad before arriving at any conclusion," he said.

Preliminary investigation indicated that there was some dispute in the family over some issue.

"Once we interrogate the survivor, we would be in a position to find out what had led to this incident," he said. The victims lived under threat from the family of their daughter-in-law, the wife of Kewal Ram (35), the sur-

viving member of the victim family. She has been living with her family in Jodhpur for the past some time due to some dispute, said the police officer, citing this as a possible trigger for their suicide.

According to Kewal Ram (35), "They had dinner between 9 pm and 10 pm on Saturday night and went to sleep. I went to guard our crop from animals and slept there, he said.

"In the morning, when he came back, he found all his family members dead. I then called my nephew who rushed to the spot with some other persons and informed police," said Kewal Ram, expressing his ignorance about the incident.

Those who died have been identified as Budharam (75); his wife Antara Devi; son Ravi (31); daughters Jiya (25) and Suman (22); grandsons Mukdash (17) and Nain (12); Laxmi (40) and three minor sons of Kewal Ram.

Shekhawat slams state govt over migrant death:

Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Sunday slammed the Rajasthan government over deaths of 11 members of a Hindu migrant family from Pakistan, saying the incident reflects the working style of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

"The deaths of nearly a dozen refugees from Pakistan put a question mark on @ashokgehlot151's working style. The deceased include two men, four women and five children. One after other, very frightening incidents reflecting the deteriorating situation of the state, are coming to the fore. The government should swing into action and clear the picture," Shekhawat tweeted.

'CISF official asked if I am Indian as I don't know Hindi'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI/NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

DMK MP Kanimozi on Sunday alleged that a CISF official asked her if "she was an Indian" as she could not speak Hindi, prompting the para-military force to respond saying appropriate action will be taken.

The incident is reportedly took place when Kanimozi was at the Chennai international airport to take a flight to Delhi.

"Today at the airport a CISF officer asked me if 'I am an Indian' when I asked her to speak to me in Tamil or English as I did not know Hindi," Kanimozi, who is also the DMK's women's wing secretary, said on her official Twitter account.

"I would like to know from when being Indian is equal to knowing Hindi," she tweeted with the hashtag "hindimposition." The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) sought details from her soon after. "Warm greetings from @CISFHQs. We sin-

cerely acknowledge your unpleasant experience. Kindly DM journey details; name of airport, location, date, and time of the incident for appropriate action in the matter," the CISF tweeted.

According to party sources, the incident occurred in Chennai when the MP was at the airport to board a Delhi flight in the afternoon. She has reached the national capital and she will be there for a few more days as she has official engagements. Kanimozi is the member of Parliament from Thoothukkudi in Tamil Nadu. The CISF is the national civil aviation security force and it provides counter-terrorist and anti-sabotage cover to 64 such facilities in the country at present.

Mukhtar Ansari's 'aide' gunned down in encounter in Lucknow

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, 9 AUGUST

Pandey was allegedly involved in the killing of Raian MLA from Mau assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh. The legislator was killed on November 29, 2005.

The cavalcade of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai was fired upon by criminals equipped with AK-47, and more than 400 rounds of bullets were fired. Seven people including Krishnanand Rai died. Pandey was involved in this incident, the STF said. Pandey was a sharp shooter of mafia dons Ansari and Munna Bajrangi, it said. Around 12 cases were registered against Pandey, who was out on bail, in different districts. Police have recovered two pistols, ammunition and two mobile phones from the spot. The STF claimed Pandey was among the most reliable

men of Ansari, who is the sitting BSP MLA from Mau assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh.

The STF said it received a tip-off that Pandey had been seen in Lucknow's Gudumba area, and was collecting weapons to commit a crime. When the STF team reached Gudumba, it was learnt that the criminals are heading towards Kanpur Road, it said. Around 4.20 am, police tried to stop an SUV in which Pandey was travelling. He tried to flee and open fire at the police party, it added.

"However, the SUV collided with a roadside tree. A person stepped out and opened indiscriminate firing on the STF team," the statement said. "The STF fired in a controlled manner for self-defence to catch the criminal," it said.

RAISING THEIR VOICE



Farmers shout slogans as they burn an effigy of PM Narendra Modi during a protest against the Electricity Amendment Bill, and against agriculture-related ordinances brought by the Centre on the outskirts of Amritsar on Sunday. ■ AFP

MP Cong MLA booked for tampering with PM's photo

MLA Jitu Patwari had allegedly posted the photo showing the PM holding a begging bowl on social media. However, he deleted the controversial post later and told some media persons that said his comment was on the failure of the Union government on economic and employment fronts

An FIR has been registered against Madhya Pradesh Congress Working President and MLA Jitu Patwari on charges of tampering a photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and posting it on social media allegedly showing the PM with a begging bowl in his hand.

The FIR has been registered at the Chhattisgarh police station at Indore today, after BJP leaders lodged a complaint in the matter with the police. Indore DIG Harinayakan Mishra said the FIR has been lodged and further action would be taken, based on the investigations in the matter.

Patwari has been booked under Section 464 (making a false document) and other relevant sections of the IPC. Patwari, who deleted the controversial post, told some media persons that he did not make any defamatory or undignified comments against the PM. The former Congress minister said his comment was on the failure of the union government on economic and employment fronts. The photo, which Patwari posted on his Twitter account, was of Modi worshipping at the Ram Temple foundation laying ceremony. Patwari is accused of allegedly tampering with the said photo and showing Modi with a begging bowl in his hand.

Ravi hounding groups engaged in peace talks: Naga bodies to PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST



which is the apex body of different Naga tribal communities, said it felt that "peaceful settlement cannot be achieved with an interlocutor without empathy and without understanding our people's history and our aspiration".

The organisation told the prime minister that it continues to trust his leadership and urged him to look into the matter on priority. "With your personal and political commitment,



The defence minister promised a "bang" and ended with a "whimper"

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER P CHIDAMBARAM

HITTING OUT AT DEFENCE MINISTER RAJNATH SINGH ON THE DEFENCE IMPORT BAN

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, MONDAY 10 AUGUST 2020

05



A health officer collects swab samples to test for Covid-19 in New Delhi on Sunday.

6 die in J'khand after inhaling toxic gas: Six persons died on Sunday after inhaling poisonous gas in a septic tank in Jharkhand's Deoghar district, a senior police officer said. Two labourers - Govind Manjhi (53) and Tilu Murmu (24) - got into the septic tank of a private home to clean it in the morning in Devipur village of the district, Superintendent of police Piyush Pandey said.

PTI

Actor Natasha Suri tests Covid positive: Actor and former Miss India World Natasha Suri on Sunday said she has tested positive for Covid-19 and is currently quarantining at her home. Suri, 31, said she had gone to Pune earlier this month and fell sick on her return to Mumbai.

PTI

12 Naxals surrender in Chh'-garh: Twelve Naxals, five of them collectively carrying a reward of Rs 6 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Sunday, police said. The cadres turned themselves in before police and the CRPF officials in Dantewada town saying that they were impressed by the rehabilitation campaign being run by the local police and disappointed with the hollow Maoist ideology, SP Abhishek Pallava told.

PTI

One killed, 7 injured in LPG explosion: A man was killed on Sunday when the wall of his flat collapsed after LPG leaking from a cylinder in his neighbour's house exploded in Pimpri Chinchwad township in Maharashtra's Pune district, police said. Seven persons from both the families were injured. The blast occurred after a woman switched on an electric switch in her house.

PTI

K' taka Health Minister Sri-ramulu tests Covid +ve: Karnataka health minister B Sriramulu on Sunday said he has tested positive for coronavirus. He has been admitted to the Government Bowring hospital.

PTI

Scribe found dead in Assam

GUWAHATI, 9 AUGUST:

Various media bodies in Assam, while expressing shock over the mysterious death of Tinsukia based scribe Bijendep Tanti yesterday, demanded a high level probe into the incident.

Associated with a private news channel, Bijendep was found dead at his rented office room.

Reportedly Tanti used to run a Facebook portal named *DinPratidinNortheast*.

Bijendep, 32, is survived by his wife and two children along with other relatives.

As per reports, the journalist was away from his residence for the last two days. Family members thought he was staying in his office, as he used to do so occasionally, but his mobile was switched off.

The people near his office in Tinsukia town saw it was closed for two days and found foul smell came out of it. Police was informed by the locals.

After which the door was opened and Bijendep's dead body was found lying inside. His body had several injury marks on his neck.

The Police has started investigation and picked up two individuals for questioning.

SNS

'Ban on import of defence items to boost Atmanirbhar Bharat'

Industry reacts favourably, says move is a path-breaking reform towards becoming self-reliant

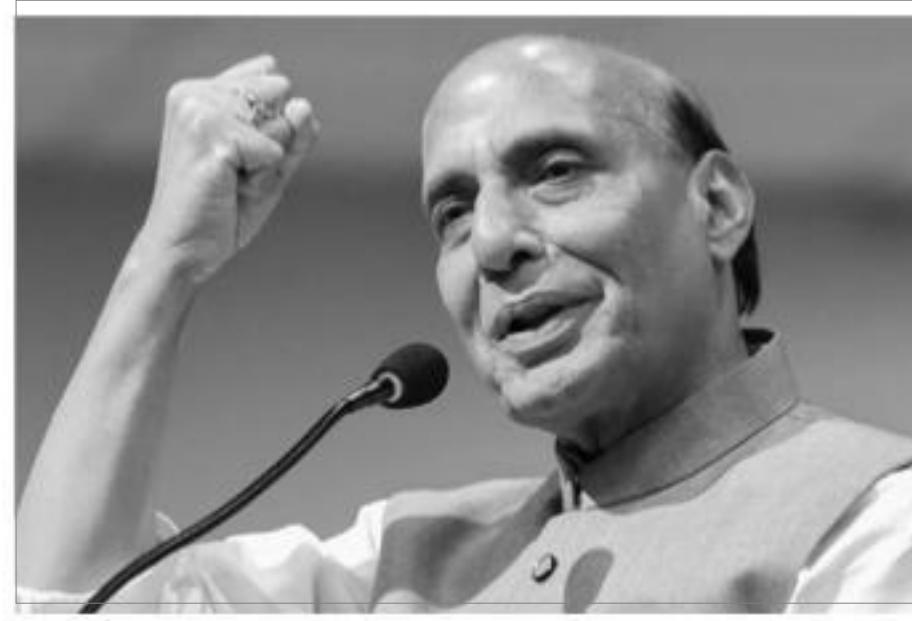
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

India Inc on Sunday said the Centre's decision to impose restrictions on import of 101 weapons and military platforms, and creation of a separate budget for domestic capital procurement in the current financial year is a 'path-breaking' reform towards becoming self-reliant and will boost indigenous defence manufacturing.

In a major reform initiative to boost the domestic defence industry, defence minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday announced restrictions on import of 101 weapons and military platforms, including artillery guns, assault rifles and transport aircraft.

"The Ministry of Defence is now ready for a big push to #AtmanirbharBharat initiative," Singh said on Twitter while making the announcement.

He said the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has prepared a list of 101 items for which the embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020



and 2024.

"MoD has also bifurcated the capital procurement budget for 2020-21 between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes. A separate budget head has been created with an outlay of nearly Rs 52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement in the current financial year," the Defence Minister tweeted.

Welcoming the initiative, CII Director General Chandrjit Banerjee said the defence minister's announcement of negative import list of defence systems and platforms marks the launch of a new glide

path for 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. "Announcement of Rs 52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement coupled with the list of 101 items for import embargo gives a tremendous boost to Atmanirbhar Bharat and indigenous defence manufacturing," he added.

Terming it a 'path-breaking announcement', the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said, "Today is a historic day for Indian industry in the defence and aerospace. Can assure the defence minister that the Indian defence and aerospace industry will

rise to the challenge and opportunities therein."

SP Shukla, Chair, FICCI Defence Committee, said the move is a great leap forward towards building a self-reliant India.

"FICCI applauds the announcement of 101 #defence items for embargo on imports. A great leap forward for #AtmanirbharBharat in RakshaUtpadan," Shukla tweeted.

"Great move to earmark Rs 52k cr for domestic capital procurement. It fulfills a request by FICCI Defence Committee to provide long-term visibility on defence procurement plans. Industry can now plan its capex and production capacity," he said in another tweet.

Assocham Secretary General Deepak Sood said with India being amongst the largest importers of weapons, ammunition and high technology systems for the armed forces, self-reliance in defence production is the most desired policy initiative.

"Increased capabilities in defence production not only offer a great economic opportunity for the domestic industry, but also give an immense strategic advantage to the country in a fast evolving geo-political situation," he added.

tunity for the domestic industry, but also give an immense strategic advantage to the country in a fast evolving geo-political situation," he added.

The list of 101 embargoed items comprises some high-technology weapon systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircraft, light combat helicopters (LCHs), radars and many other items.

Singh said all necessary steps would be taken to ensure that timelines for domestic production of equipment identified under the negative list for imports are met, adding the measures will include a co-ordinated mechanism for hand-holding of the industry by the defence services.

"The embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 and 2024. The aim behind promulgation of the list is to apprise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the armed forces so that they are better prepared to realise the goal of indigenisation," he said.

Congress criticises MoD's embargo on defence imports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

home minister said. What the defence minister said in his "historic Sunday announcement" deserved only an office order from the minister to his secretaries, Chidambaram said in a series of tweets.

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

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi also criticised Singh for dubbing the import restrictions as a push to achieve a self-reliant India, saying there was a "big difference between claims and reality."

"The MoD has given the slogan of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', but has not said when, how and what will be the direction. Just a slogan has been given because this government and the prime minister are fond of slogans," Singhvi said in an online media briefing.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said the defence minister promised a "bang" on a Sunday morning but ended with a "whimper".

"The only importer of defence equipment is the Defence Ministry. Any import embargo is really an embargo on oneself," the former

The Opposition party reacted after the defence minister announced restrictions on import of 101 weapons and military platforms including artillery guns, assault rifles and transport aircraft to boost domestic defence industry.

After Ladakh stand-off, India thinking of procuring light tanks

SOMA MOOKHERJEE
KOLKATA, 9 AUGUST

applications cannot be ignored by the professionals, said Lt Gen (rtd) A B Shivane.

At this point, India is seriously thinking of procuring Russian made air transportable Sputr SDM1 light tank, he said.

He said, "It is time to review our one size fits all strategy. The need of the hour is to have a mix of light and medium tanks to effectively meet the emerging threats and fights the next war differently."

According to Shivane, the primary mission used to be to deliver attack capability to the infantry troops.

"The unprecedented incursions in Ladakh and refusal to withdraw to erstwhile position are indicative of newfound

Chinese aggressive overtone", he added.

"Thus the immediate need is to dynamically reorient, reshape, restructure and rebalance forces and have a focused, time-sensitive capability development towards Northern borders," Lt Gen Shivane said.

The deployment of light tanks both at high terrains of Himalaya in Northern and Eastern sectors could be used in both offensive and defensive operations.

"The light tank encompasses rapidly closing with and destroying enemy forces thereby preserves freedom of manufacture for infantry formations in all weather and visibility conditions," Lt Gen Shivane said.

BJP ridden with factionalism: Ashok Gehlot

JAIPUR, 9 AUGUST

Rajasthan Chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday questioned the shifting of BJP MLAs to Gujarat, saying the opposition party was ridden with factionalism.

His comments came in the wake of the BJP herding its 18 MLAs in the past two days to party-ruled Gujarat ahead of the Rajasthan assembly session beginning 14 August.

The BJP had claimed that their MLAs were being harassed by police and the administration at the behest of the Congress government in the state.

Gehlot, on the other hand, defended the stay of Congress legislators at a Jaisalmer hotel, saying the party required to keep them together to thwart horse-trading.

But, what is worrying the BJP? They are herding their legislators to three-four places. I see a big split in them," Gehlot told reporters in Jaisalmer. Lashing out at the Opposition party, Gehlot said the tradition they are setting up is dangerous to democracy. He said while BJP is trying to topple his government, the government is making efforts to save lives amid Covid crisis.

Unfortunately, such pople-sitting in power are weakening democracy, which we saved for the past 70 years, Gehlot said. He added that their fight to save democracy will continue even after 14 August and the truth will prevail. "I can say this that the victory will be ours, truth will win, he said, stressing that his government will complete its five-year term", Gehlot said.

Indus Water Treaty: India wants video-conf, Pak insists on meeting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

In response, the Pakistan Commissioner, in his letter sent in last week of July, insisted on holding the conventional meeting at Attari Joint Check Post instead.

The Indian Commissioner responded stating that the situation in India is still not conducive for travelling of his delegation and holding the meeting at Attari JCP as proposed by his counterpart and may take some time to allow such meeting at Attari JCP or New Delhi as desired by Pakistan, a source said.

The Indian Commissioner also requested the Pakistani side to consider holding a virtual meeting as a viable option to discuss the pending and new issues, sources added.

Currently, one of the pending issues between the two sides is the disagreement over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectricity projects.

The Kishenganga project had been in operation since 2018 while work on Ratle stands abandoned since 2014 due to a contractual dispute between the Jammu and Kashmir government and the contractor.

After prolonged negotiations, India in 2016 sought appointment of a neutral expert to resolve this issue while Pakistan made a request for appointment of a Court of Arbitration (COA). In November 2019, after a meeting of the Indian delegation headed by Jal Shakti Ministry Secretary with the World Bank to explore a way forward, it was agreed that the matter may be discussed by the two commissioners as per the Treaty provisions to decide the mode of resolution - by the COA or a neutral expert.

The Indian Commissioner also requested the Pakistani side to consider holding a virtual meeting as a viable option to discuss the pending and new issues, sources added.

The Permanent Indus Commission, formed under the Indus Waters Treaty, was signed between India and Pakistan in 1960. Indus commissioners of both the countries act as representatives of the respective governments for the Treaty matters. The Treaty provides for both the commissioners to meet at least once every year, alternately in India and Pakistan.

'HP govt committed to ensure welfare of tribal people'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 9 AUGUST

'Rs 177.61 crore have been provided in the plan budget mainly for construction of buildings, roads and bridges, Rs 164.89 crore for education services, Rs 113.06 crore for health services and Rs 128.84 crore for irrigation and drinking water schemes'

The Himachal Pradesh government today iterated its commitment to equal and balanced development of the tribal areas of the state and ensure the welfare of the tribal people.

A state government official said the population of tribal community in the state is 5.71 percent of the total population and for their social and economic upliftment, nine percent of the total state plan amount is identified under the Tribal Sub-Plan.

"In the financial year 2020-21, a total of Rs 1758 crore has been provided under the Tribal Sub Plan which includes Rs 1008 crore in the plan and Rs 750 crore in the non-plan. Rs 177.61 crore have been provided in the plan budget mainly for construction of buildings, roads and bridges, Rs 164.89 crore for education services, Rs 113.06 crore for health services and Rs 128.84 crore for irrigation and drinking water schemes," Gehlot said.

"After the formation of BJP government as a result of the efforts of the state government, Union Home Affairs ministry has provided an additional amount of Rs 10 crore during 2017-18, Rs 8.45 crore in 2018-19 and Rs 9.91 crore in 2019-20.

Further, the Central government has approved the opening of 3 new Eklavya Adarsh Awasiya Vidyalaya in Pangli, Bharmour and Lahaul

An amount of Rs 24 crore will be provided for the construction of Eklavya Adarsh Awasiya Vidyalaya Bharmour," he said.

He further stated a total grant amounting to Rs 36.28 crore was received under Special Central Assistance from Union Tribal Affairs ministry in 2018-19 which includes additional grant of Rs 15.70 crore. Similarly, a grant of Rs 23.94 crore including additional grant amount of Rs 5.34 crore was received in 2019-20.

The official said the state government in 2018-19 had started telemedicine facility in the tribal areas Pangli and Bharmour under which a provision of Rs 1.74 crore had been made in 2019-20 and Rs 1.93 crore in 2020-21.

The facility is already operational in Kinnaur and Kaza, he added.

He added under The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, Monitoring Committee had been formed at state district and block level for fast implementation in tribal areas and non-tribal areas.

"In addition, helicopter service is provided by the government for tribal areas in winter and a total of 61 helicopter flights were undertaken in 2019-20 which benefited 1973 people," he added.

Cong must find full-term president to arrest perception of being 'rudderless': Tharoor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, AUG 9 (PTI)

welcomed Sonia ji's appointment as interim president last year, but I do believe it's unfair to her to expect her to carry this burden indefinitely," Tharoor told media in an interview.

"We also need to arrest the growing public perception, fuelled by a dismissive media, that the Congress is adrift and rudderless, incapable of taking up the challenge of a credible national Opposition," the former Union minister said.

That is precisely what the Congress needs to urgently address by expediting the process of finding a full-term president, through a participatory and democratic process that will offer the winning candidate a legitimate mandate and the credibility that will be indispensable in ushering in much needed organisational and structural

revival of the party, Tharoor said.

Asked about growing voices in the Congress that Rahul Gandhi must come back as party chief, Tharoor said, "Of course, if Rahul Gandhi is ready to resume the leadership, all he has to do is to withdraw his resignation. He was elected to serve till December 2022 and can just pick up the reins again."

"But if he

Turmoil in Thailand

Thailand appears to face turmoil again with protestors taking to the streets to press for democratic freedoms that were snatched after a military coup in 2014. On Friday, many protestors surrounded a police station in the capital Bangkok while others gathered outside a court to demand the release of activists arrested on charges of instigating political disturbances. The arrested persons, among them a human rights lawyer and a student activist, had been leading protests demanding greater freedom and ouster of the government of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha, who they claim had strengthened his hold on power after a disputed election last year.

Prayuth, a former dog trainer, songwriter and Commander in Chief of the Thai army, had led the military coup that in May 2014 displaced a civilian government. Immediately after seizing power, he cracked down severely on dissent and placed curbs on even discussions about democracy, and on all criticism of government. Five years later, he sought to legitimise his control of the country through a general election which many people say was orchestrated to serve his ends. Thailand has had at best a flirting engagement with democracy and the omnipresent military has stepped in often to snatch power. Equilibrium in public life, though, had been maintained because of the overarching and generally benign presence of the monarchy – an institution that commanded near universal respect during the long reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej that ended with his death in 2016.

Now even that might be changing, as at least one of the men arrested this week had on 3 August called for reforms even in the monarchy, to avoid what he called the risk of clashes between opposing political camps. It is illegal to defame or insult the monarchy under Thailand's stringent lese majeste law, and alleged insults have often been cited as justification for military coups. Under Prayuth, the law has been used frequently including in one instance for an alleged insult to the monarch's adopted dog and in one another for describing a dress worn by a princess as ugly.

So overwhelming has Prayuth's dislike for dissent been that even the normally phlegmatic Thai people may have begun to find life suffocating. In February 2015, he had claimed he had the power to close media outlets; a month later, when asked how he would deal with dissenting journalists, he reportedly joked, "We'll probably just execute them" – a remark that drew sharp condemnation from the International Federation of Journalists. His dislike for protestors is also well documented and he is once reported to have said, "If they want to engage in activism or whatever, it's up to them. If they aren't afraid of the laws, it's up to them, and if someone finds a gun and shoots them, or throws grenades at them, well, they have to live with that."

Good bouncer

One reason why much of what Shoaib Akhtar says is not really taken with any degree of seriousness even in Pakistan is that he never fails to set out as being deliberately provocative. It quite obviously ensures his own YouTube platform's popularity, which yields spin-offs, and the world rolls on as it must. From declaring his desire for a tutorial role with India's cricket squad to a putatively long-delayed revelation that he actually fought in the Kargil battle for his country is but a short hop for him, each of the avowals coming with an equal measure of machismo that seems to suggest that his audience is believed by him to be bewitched beyond belief. But the flip side of it is that he risks being bypassed even when making sense or, better still, pointing out something that is wrong. Akhtar, the fastest bowler, according to an impressive assortment of pundits, in the game's history has over the years harped on the world's dwindling resources in terms of express bowling, stressing in a recent interaction with the British Broadcasting Corporation how rule-makers were taking the competitive gilt off the gingerbread of routinely organised contests by making the game mollycoddle batsmen at the expense of pacemen. Some of the things Akhtar has highlighted – reduced numbers of bouncers, two balls from two ends ruling out reverse swing – are common complaints but our familiarity with them can scarcely be counted as an invalidating caveat. And much more serious is Akhtar's contention that new-ball bowlers, given the preponderance of limited-overs games in various guises, nowadays learn quite early to cut back on their pace so they can lengthen their careers playing in the ever-mushrooming Twenty20 tournaments – which call for a skill set completely different from the one required for Tests, the highest form of the game – for more money here, there and everywhere.

It is not as if he is the first one to have happened upon a hidden truth in saying this. But his argument reinforces the impression already established that Tests are being undermined by developments within the game we have a worldwide governing institution presiding over without trying to strike a balance between commerce, its priority, and cricket's fundamentals.

If they require a fast bowler to pull out all the stops and limited-overs matches reward attempts at economy more than a bowler's destructive potential, and a new entrant decides to take it easy so he can be self-servingly active as long as it suits him, it is the game which suffers the most. It ceases to be what it was popular for, pitting the pugnacious batsman at the top of the order against the explosive quick and letting spectators revel in the confrontation. Cricket can survive without a lot of its contemporary trappings and takings but not top-quality fast bowling. Akhtar's is a goodish bouncer.

Towards a New World

Need for promoting environment-friendly technology, for slowing down urbanisation and for encouraging alternative lifestyles while living in harmony with nature are now to be accorded highest priority. Our materialist cravings must be curtailed, and notion of development needs to be redefined, to ensure the continuation of our species



Though the rate of recovery from the Corona affliction is steadily rising and mortality rate slowly declining the world over, the pandemic is still raging quite viciously and humanity's struggle to overcome this deadly infection is far from over.

There is an all-pervading sense of gloom and despondency as people try to cope with the 'new normal', a state of being decidedly perceived as much inferior to what life was before Covid-19 struck us.

Pandemics in the past have invariably shaped the socio-political order, even to the extent of ushering in momentous changes. The 14th century Bubonic plague in Europe, commonly referred to as the Black Death, according to some estimates wiped out almost 60 per cent of Europe's population. As serfs dwindled in numbers, landlords were compelled to offer them better wages, leading gradually to end of the feudal system. As the deadly plague, causing untold agonies shook the foundation of men's unflinching faith in God, the sway of the Catholic Church weakened and the quest for scientific knowledge gained momentum, eventually ushering in the Industrial Revolution.

The Spanish Influenza, the deadliest pandemic of the last century which obliterated almost one-fourth of the world's population, disproportionately affected the young generation, and as the German army in World War I was badly hit by the pandemic, it became one of the significant contributing factors for Germany's eventual defeat in the war. The pandemic had far-reaching impact on the course of Indian history as well. Mahatma Gandhi contracted the flu but managed to survive, though heartbroken as he lost a grandson to the flu.

When the pandemic struck India, it became clear that the British had ignored healthcare in the country as the medical infrastructure was in shambles. The death and misery wrought by the pandemic fuelled anger against the colonisers and people rallied behind Gandhi, giving him the grass-roots support he needed to infuse momentum in our independence movement.

Covid-19 is also likely to bring about radical changes. Already, the economic fallout has been stupendous, as millions of jobs, particularly in tourism, aviation and entertainment industries

have been lost, manufacturing has been badly hit and the poor, particularly in developing countries have been bearing the brunt of the pandemic most severely.

The heavily congested mega cities all over the world, from New York to Mumbai, Sao Paulo to Kolkata, where the urban poor live with inadequate access to sanitation, clean water and enough space for practising physical distancing have been most intensely ravaged by the Covid outbreak, highlighting the need for better urban planning. As our cities, particularly in India are bursting at the seams, decentralised development, relocating businesses, commercial and educational institutions in the suburban areas so that rush to urban areas can be curtailed and more funding for and better management of public health infrastructure are the need of the hour.

The unprecedented economic downturn caused by the strict lockdown measures enforced by many countries in desperate attempts to control the spread of the highly contagious virus, has highlighted like never before the necessity of creating a more equitable and just social order to minimise human suffering. As nations locked their borders, closed air space and the global supply chain got disrupted, putting a question mark on the process of globalization, the need for self-reliance, particularly for a huge, densely populated country like India in essential sectors like food grain production, basic manufacturing, and very importantly, in pharmaceutical industries has been felt quite strongly, calling for a recalibration of economic activities.

Need for promoting environment-friendly technology, for slowing down urbanisation and for encouraging alternative lifestyles while living in harmony with nature are now to be accorded highest priority. Reckless interventions with natural habitats of flora and fauna have heightened the possibility of zoonotic transmission of pathogens like the coronavirus and as observed by scientists, climate change is further exacerbating outbreak of contagious diseases.

Our materialist cravings must be curtailed, and notion of development needs to be redefined, to ensure the continuation of our species.

The pandemic has also exposed deep fault lines of our socio-cultural setup. In medieval Europe, the Jews were blamed for incurring God's wrath thought to be causing the black death and in a similar way, certain communities have been blamed for the corona outbreak both in India and in other countries, thereby spreading other deadly viruses of superstition, prejudice, irrational hatred and concomitant violence.

As jobs have been lost and career prospects jeopardised, our youths have felt devastated. Being brought up with a notion of success measured in terms of material prospects only, they are unable to cope with uncertainties of the new normal situation and are sinking deep into depression. Cultural notions, value systems and mode of upbringing children must be changed, focusing more on being a worthy member of humanity, inculcating the spirit of service instead of acquisitiveness.

While granting Aristotle's famous aphorism about man being a social animal, lockdown and long period of isolation have taught us the imperative of making a journey inward and discovering our own selves, as pithily observed by our ancient sages in Upanishad, 'Atmanan viddhi' (Know thyself and be free). Developing hobbies, giving vent to one's creativity, and nurturing bonding with close family members and friends instead of finding excitement and pleasure only in parties and boisterous social gatherings are the ways of sustenance in such periods of forced isolation. While on one hand, fear and insecurity have driven some to be cruel and insensitive, making them behave inhumanly towards elderly, sick people and even frontline health workers, on the other hand, the crisis has brought out the best in many young people who have been running community kitchens and providing all kinds of services to the needy, keeping our hopes alive for the future of

human civilisation.

Many women have fallen prey to intense levels of domestic violence as being cut off from outside world, they have been forced to be in close proximity to their tormentors. Many have been compelled to share disproportionate burden of domestic chores. As access to education and work are likely to shrink in the post-corona world, particularly in countries like India, women's share in them will be severely curtailed and there will be a renewed push towards re-traditionalisation of women's role in almost all societies, as recently observed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Interestingly, prominent women leaders like Ms Merkel and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand have shown better acumen in dealing with the corona situation in their countries compared to their male counterparts of other advanced nations, signalling the innate capacity of women in responding to crisis situations.

In our own country, Kerala's Health Minister Ms K K Shailaja has succeeded in maintaining low mortality rates in the state due to early intervention and has been honoured by the United Nations for her efforts and commendable spirit of public service. Ordinary women have exhibited indomitable spirit in tackling the crisis.

The wife of a migrant labourer in a remote village of Bihar, whose husband could not come home due to lockdown, started working as a barber, shaving men to earn a living so as to feed her children, ignoring ridicule and sending a strong message to all women in this country that they should not give up their battle for a life with dignity.

Our politics should be less about primordial issues like caste, community, race, ethnicity and more about ensuring human security, measured along the parameters of health, education and other opportunities for better lives. The onus is on us to push our policy makers towards these goals instead of sabre rattling and one-upmanship vis-à-vis other countries.

For long, we took our natural habitat for granted, consuming earth's resources at an alarming rate and disturbing its fragile balance. The pandemic has given up a wake-up call to slow down, to conserve, to recreate, to redefine our priorities, social norms, personal predilections. We must not disregard this call.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Strongest ~ but unused ~ weapon

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana raised eyebrows this week when he disclosed that the Philippines would not join the navies of other countries such as the United States and Australia in maritime drills in the South China Sea, for fear of further escalating tensions in the disputed waters. "President Rodrigo Duterte has a standing order to us, to me, that we should not involve ourselves in naval exercises in the South China Sea except our national waters, the 12-mile distance from our shores," Lorenzana said. "We cannot exercise with them in the South China Sea."

This break from the tradition of joining allied nations in capability-enhancing military exercises should no longer come as a surprise, however, consistent as it is with this administration's deferential attitude toward China.

Indeed, China's encroachments will likely only escalate, enabled by the encouragement Mr Duterte had signaled when he said – during his fifth State of the Nation Address no less – that he was "inutile" and "cannot do anything" to counter China's aggression in the South China Sea: "(China) is in possession.

So what can we do? We have to go to war and I can't afford it. Maybe some other President can, but I cannot. I'm inutile on that matter, I tell you. And I'm willing to admit it. I cannot do anything."

But that defending the country's territory only means going to war against China is a patently false picture. As former Supreme Court senior associate justice Antonio Carpio has

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
consistently said, there are other ways, legal and peaceful, by which the President can assert the country's rights over its own territory, the same way neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia, which also have competing claims against China, have proudly done.

That is, of course, if Mr Duterte actually wants to. "A country does not need to go to war to assert its sovereign rights," said Carpio. He also cautioned Mr Duterte against declaring that China already has "possession" of territories claimed by the Philippines, as it certainly does not. More than being baseless, that assertion poses adverse implications for the country's national security and territorial integrity.

As Carpio and many others have pointed out, the Philippines has the strongest diplomatic weapon available against China the hard-fought arbitral ruling awarded in July 2016 by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague that invalidated China's sweeping claim over nearly the entire South China Sea and upheld the Philippines' exclusive rights in the West Philippine Sea.

But Mr Duterte has refused to wield that award in any significant way, preferring to cozy up to Beijing instead. Other countries have taken it upon themselves to cite the landmark ruling to stand up against Chinese actions and ensure freedom of navigation in the vital sea lane.

In a July 13 statement, US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, for example, said the United States was aligning its position with the tribunal's unanimous decision which "sided squarely with the Philippines," and that "We are making clear: Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Path-breaking

SIR, The new education policy announced by the government is certainly a path-breaking exercise that may go a long way towards making education a tool for transforming the nation, if

implemented in its true spirit. Language is not only the medium of expression, it is the carrier of the culture, tradition and history of any society.

We are fortunate to

have a language like Sanskrit which is not only potent in terms of vocabulary and grammar but is an ocean of knowledge.

All Indian languages follow Sanskrit for its words and substance. Elementary education in mother tongue with meaningful exposure to

Sanskrit shall certainly connect the students with our own land and culture. Hindi as the official language of the Indian Union must also find preference to English.

While it is true that English cannot be avoided at higher education levels, spe-

cially to understand modern scientific knowledge, it does not have to be the first language.

English may be introduced at post-primary stage. An average student can learn more than three languages with a little effort. Any foreign language inclu-

ding English could be better learnt if one is well versed in his own mother tongue and the language of his land. The newly introduced elements vis-a-vis higher education are also welcome.

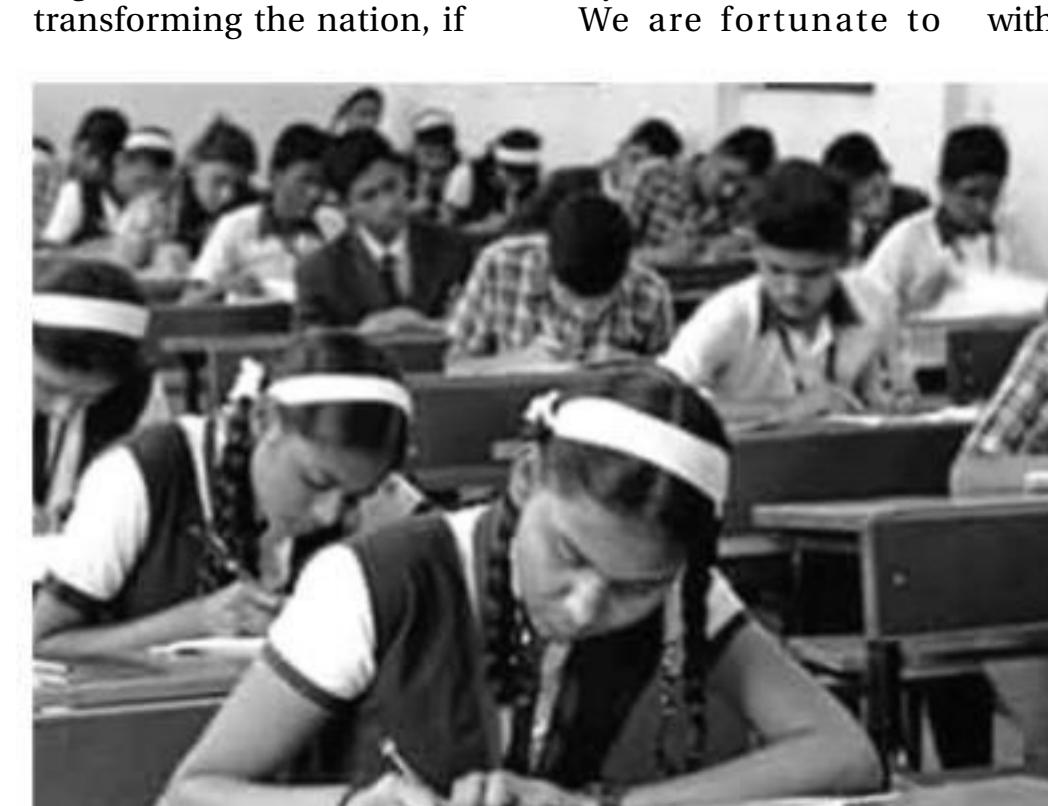
Yours, etc., Dr Jai Prakash Gupta, Ambala Cantt, 8 August.

RAM RAJA NOW?

SIR, The absence of a couple of leading faces of the struggle of the past three decades notwithstanding, the Bhoomi Pujan ceremony for the construction of the Ram temple has been accomplished.

Now, let us hope that the wish of Ram Raja comes true, where merit, truthfulness, justice for all and equality among all sections of society, irrespective of caste, class, creed, religion, gender etc., prevail.

Yours, etc., Chandan Kumar Nath, Assam, 8 Aug.



GARBAGE DUMP

SIR, At NewTown, Kolkata, a patch of bare ground between City Centre 2 and Tank No.11 has recently been turned into an unnotified hub for collection of municipal waste in violation of known pollution control rules.

All through the day, municipal waste is brought to the site in tractor-driven trolleys and vans and unloaded there in the open, emitting a foul stench. The next day, a truck visits to take some of the waste away leaving the rest for stray cattle to pick through.

This violates three basic rules of pollution control, (i) keeping municipal waste on bare ground in lieu of metal or plastic vats or concrete cases, thus contaminating soil underneath; (ii) uncovered waste contaminating the air, and (iii) unbarricaded waste harming cattle.

Finally, the whole operation is unproductive in terms of time and money. I hope the authorities will wake up to the irregularities that are being committed and take remedial steps.

Yours, etc., Kunal Kanti Konar, Kolkata, 8 August.

JAMIE MORGAN

Electric cars are one of the fastest growing sectors of the automotive industry. Record sales are being made despite the economic crisis posed by the coronavirus pandemic. Seven years ago, there were only 3,500 plug-in cars in the UK – there are now 300,000. Almost 120,000 of them run purely on battery power. Many view the current period, even though it coincides with the pandemic, as a watershed moment – a shift in consumer sentiment is expected to lead to a surge in electric vehicles.

All the major car manufacturers are now launching pure battery electric models and many governments and municipalities are legislating and regulating to encourage ownership. Current battery electric car ownership levels in the UK and globally are low – 6 per cent of new cars sold in the UK in June 2020 were fully electric – but the growth rate is high. The expectation is that the industry is set for take off, and battery electric cars are widely seen as a crucial part of the fight against climate change.

Cleaner transport is important for many reasons, not least meeting carbon emissions targets. But context matters. And, as I explore in a recent paper, based on current trends, the numbers do not seem to add up. If all existing vehicles were simply replaced by electric models, then a whole host of emissions problems remain unsolved. Instead, it seems likely we are going to need radical reductions in future ownership of private vehicles as we transition to cleaner transport. This is not sufficiently recognised.

This is because the fundamental issues are social and political, not merely technological. From a simplistic technological point of view, a battery electric car may be superior to one with an internal combustion engine – but that does not mean it makes sense for societies to opt for mass substitution of one for the other.

Nor does it make sense, if radically reducing carbon emissions is the aim, to facilitate growth in the numbers of privately owned vehicles, either domestically or globally. As UK Green Party MP Caroline Lucas suggests and ownership projections illustrate, many governments, including the UK's, are fudging this point. Most of the focus is on achieving the transition to electric cars.

Electric cars are not zero emissions. Mining and manufacturing produce emissions and, once on the road, an electric car must be charged, involving emissions from electricity generation based on the "energy mix": the combination of different

Why electric cars may not save us



energy sources that meet energy consumption needs.

An emissions "lifecycle" can be calculated for every new electric vehicle. The "embodied emissions" from manufacture and mining are gradually "paid off" if charging the car produces less emissions from the energy mix than a petrol or diesel car produces. One study in the UK estimates it can take two to six years for payback to be achieved. So, it can take years before a new car really becomes a source of lower emissions.

We only have a decade or so to radically reduce carbon emissions to around 50 per cent of annual emissions in 2017 and the long-term goal is net zero emissions by mid-century. The current UK target is for all new sales of vehicles to be ultra-low emissions by 2035. In the UK, there are more than 31 million registered cars, travelling in total nearly 260 billion miles a year. Currently, around two million new cars are registered each

year and the total numbers of cars registered is growing. Transport accounts for around a quarter of emissions in the UK.

Simply switching to electric cars assumes they can be produced in sufficient numbers. Even if this proves possible, it shifts attention from our continued reliance on emissions-producing private transportation. The result is what is known as "carbon lock-in".

Clearly, this is not just a UK issue, it is global. It is estimated that there are more than 1.5 billion vehicles in the world – and the total has been doubling roughly every 20 years since the 1970s. China is now the world's largest market, with more than 300 million vehicles and 250 million cars, and an increase of more than 15 million cars in 2018 alone.

In absolute terms, China also has the most electric vehicles. But this illustrates a further issue. Growth in private vehicle ownership in China

represents new sources of emissions, so some of the future net savings in emissions by choosing electric vehicles will be "savings" from new emissions sources. My point here is not to single out China, but to illustrate a basic problem built into current transport policy on a global level.

I am not suggesting that it is currently better as an individual not to buy an electric car. This is a systemic issue of viable alternatives. But the planet is not really interested in our preferences or in the way our societies have evolved to make cars so important to us. A transition to battery electric vehicles and other "ultra-low emissions vehicles" seems a good thing, since this means cleaner air and low or no emissions while driving the vehicle. But this is very different than whether it makes sense to pursue policy that facilitates mass private vehicle ownership.

Greater policy attention, then, must be paid to developing alterna-

tives to our dependence on private transport. This could take any number of different forms: greater investment in trains and other low-emission transport; encouraging people to work in their local communities rather than commute (something that coronavirus is already pushing forward); or introducing schemes that encourage car shares or co-operatives.

Societies need viable pathways for us all to make better choices. Expert advisers to government know this. But public awareness and policy emphasis evolve together. The pandemic has made us think differently about transport, in both positive and negative ways – new initiatives to encourage cycling, but a widespread fear of travelling by train. But going forward it is by being better informed and through politics, not just technology, that positive change is possible.

The writer is Professor of Economics at Leeds Beckett University. This article was published on www.theconversation.com

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07

100 YEARS AGO OCCASIONAL NOTE

The trade report published by the Times is not too optimistic though it says little that is really new. Any long sustained trade boom is almost impossible so long as the country is supporting a national expenditure of over a thousand millions sterling annually. Similarly, the continued compliance of the banks in the matter of trade overdrafts is impossible on the colossal scale necessitated by existing costing. Stability and health can be restored only by drastic national economy which will leave to industrial concerns at least a large proportion of the capital fund now drained from industry to support State extravagance. The best sign of the times is the alleged shyness of buyers in view of the inordinate prices now ruling. The Times, however, has shown itself too ready before this to exaggerate the disposition of purchasers to hold off. The war-time extravagance of buyers ceased months ago and there is today not much that the average consumer can cut out of his purchases. A fall in prices will be produced only through reduction of currency and the promotion of competition among producers. Any marked progress in either direction is at present impeded by extravagant Government expenditure and until that is checked lugubrious reports such as that summarised today will continue to be inevitable.

NEWS ITEMS BOMBAY POSTMEN

A deputation of the Bombay Postmen's Union waited on the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs in order to represent the intense dissatisfaction prevailing among the menial post and telegraph employees with regard to the Government of India's orders recently announced respecting revised salary and allowances. The Director-General, it is stated, took up a strong attitude and told the representatives that if they were not satisfied with the enhanced scale offered by Government of India they might leave the service. He told the deputation, which was headed by Mr. Ginwalla, solicitor, and Mr. V.G. Dalvi, barrister-at-law, chairman and secretary respectively of the Postmen's Union, that the attitude of the Bombay postmen was the work of political agitators and that Bombay was the spoilt child of the whole of the Indian Postal Department.

CIVIL AVIATION

The Indian Air Board proposes for the present to concentrate its attention for the development of civil aviation in India on the preparation of a trunk flying route over India from Karachi to Rangoon, via Delhi and Calcutta. This statement is made in a communication from the Government of India to the Bombay Chamber of Commerce. The preparation of an aerodrome at Dum Dum, added the Government of India, had been taken in hand, and the proposals of the Government of Burma for an aerodrome at Rangoon had been received. Surveys had also been made of the routes between (1) Delhi and Calcutta, and (2) Calcutta and Rangoon. These surveys were under examination by the Air Board, and a report of the survey of the Karachi-Delhi section of the route was expected.

BOLSHEVISM IN TURKESTAN

Peshawar, Aug 9
Accounts of Bolshevik oppression and hostility towards the Mahomedan population continue to be received here being brought by batches of pilgrims arriving in India from Turkestan. The latest accounts give the additional details that the Bolsheviks have dismissed all Muslim Kazis throughout Turkestan, and forcibly introduced the Bolshevik propaganda in the Islamia School at Samarkand, confiscated the valuables of various rich merchants there, and put them under surveillance in order to prevent them from escaping from the country. The whole Moslem population hate the Bolsheviks but have now to submit to force majeure. These pilgrims, who come from different parts of Turkestan, express themselves as so disgusted with the Bolshevik treatment that they say they do not intend returning to their homes.

BOMBAY COTTON BROKERS' ASSOCIATION

Tension between the members of the Bombay Cotton Brokers' Association and the Cotton Contract Board has if anything been growing. The Association, alleging that the Bombay Government have not attended to their grievances formulated in a petition, held a meeting during the week to represent their case to the Government of India. Speakers at the meeting stated inter alia that since the institution of the Government control over the cotton trade, dealers were at the mercy of a small coterie. The Cotton Contract Board was invested with very wide discretionary powers. The meeting resolved that, pending the satisfactory redress of their grievances the members of the Association should not till further notice have any dealings in respect of the new season's contracts, 1920-21.

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

A Man and His Children

When I visited Yad Vashem in Israel, I made it a point to look for Henryk Goldzmit. Yad Vashem is the famous memorial to holocaust victims and one is overwhelmed by the multitude of people from different lands the Nazis gathered and killed mercilessly. But I had a special reason to look for the name of a man from Poland few Indians would recognize.

Henryk did have a curious link with India. It was sheer coincidence that I had discovered it.

Henryk was an extraordinarily gifted man. A scholar and writer, he was also a doctor and human rights defender, especially an ardent children's rights advocate. In truth, children represented the very core of his passion. Though he went on to write more than twenty books and a thousand articles, his very first book questioned the way most parents rear their children. He believed (as I believe), for instance, that for a father to foist his religion on his child, instead of letting him choose his faith later when he turns an adult, was nothing short of ruinous brain-washing.

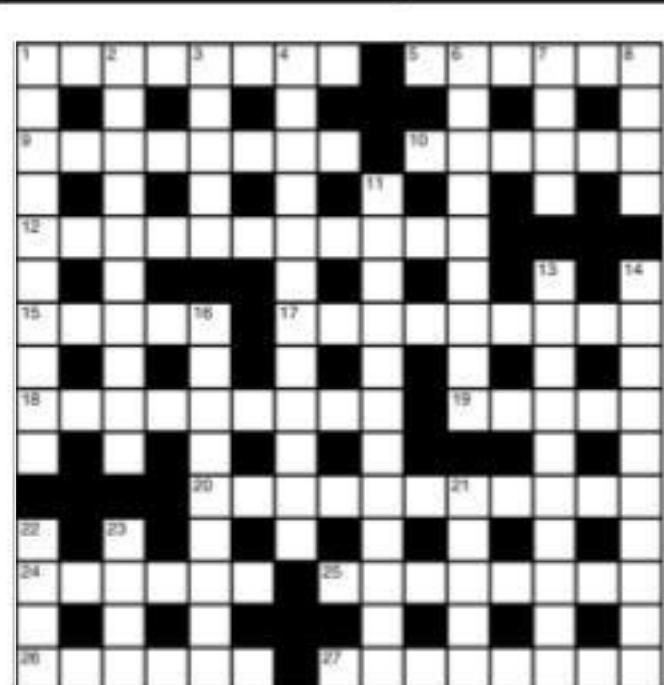
He studied medicine and became a pediatrician in a children's hospital in Warsaw. At the same time, he wrote for several Polish publications and gained a literary reputation for his adopted pen name, Janusz Korczak. For a while he served as a military doctor and studied in Germany, but eventually veered to head an orphanage for Jewish children. He invited a close friend, Stefania, to be his assistant and set about creating a new kind of institution for children.

Henryk's orphanage, Dom Sierot, was a children's republic, run entirely on democratic principles, where all decisions were collective, made through its parliament and court. Henryk even hired a novelist, Igor Newerly, as a secretary to help the orphans produce their newspaper, which came out as a supplement to a Warsaw newspaper.



ILLUSTRATION: DEBABRATA CHAKRABARTY

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Greek character out to lunch saves meat for prophet (8)
- 5 Dope invested in account having yen for business (6)
- 9 More dismal raise that is accepted by doctor (8)
- 10 Carnival in France is held by motor-racing authority (6)
- 12 Crime squad at first expecting to receive boost (11)
- 15 Social need at intervals to get drunk (5)
- 17 Ignorant learner one marked externally (9)
- 18 Deception about a Trojan Horse's cover (9)
- 19 Bones from arm and tibia where odd parts dislodged (5)
- 20 One was enthralled ordering English brands on TV (11)
- 24 Causing death is allowed by 2001 computer (6)
- 25 Chap to kill carrying large instrument (8)
- 26 Soldier ready to drop duke disembowelled in march (6)
- 27 To find new supplier is expedient (8)

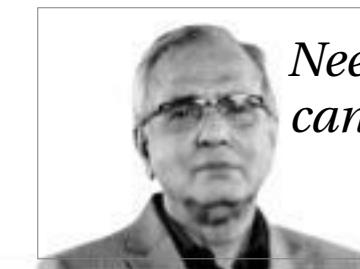
DOWN

- 1 Lawyer in film with pained expression shows financial talent (5,5)
- 2 Ropes twisted together with highly stylised symbol (10)
- 3 Work on wall shows Frenchman going over Russian river (5)
- 4 One can get so agitated about fine legal term (3,2,7)
- 6 Some quango in Government examination (5-4)
- 7 Machine-gun placed here in comfortable retreat (4)
- 8 Yankee coming to attention in

- revolutionary period (4)
- 11 Poster and sign broadcast entrance where fish sold (12)
- 13 Flash and shock enveloping extremely large megaphone (10)
- 14 Son is in a position to give help (10)
- 16 River animal died – one struck by arrows (9)
- 21 Idle cowboy's record in this Wild West show? (5)
- 22 Mates turned up in make-up (4)
- 23 Upset seen during tactless tirade (4)

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

NO 28039



Need to renew pledge to renewable energy as thermal energy can't take the country far due to environmental constraints

RAJIV KUMAR
NITI AAYOG VICE-CHAIRMAN

THUMBNAILS

Irdai permit: Amid rising cases of coronavirus and disruption in normal business activities, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India has allowed life insurers to issue life insurance policies electronically. The Irdai issued a circular exempting the life insurance companies from the requirement of issuing policy document and copy of proposal form in physical form, subject to certain conditions. This exemption will be valid for all policies issued during 2020-21, it said.

PNB cash chase: State-owned Punjab National Bank said its shareholders have approved a proposal to raise up to Rs 7,000 crore through share sale to enhance its capital base. Besides, the shareholders cleared the opening balance sheet of the amalgamated bank as on 1 April, which is post amalgamation of Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India into PNB, the lender said.

Indian Hotels loss: Indian Hotels Company has reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 312.60 crore for the quarter ended 30 June 2020 impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. It posted a net profit of Rs 4.98 crore for the year-ago same period, Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) said in a filing to BSE. Total income stood at Rs 175.34 crore during the quarter under review. It was Rs 1,057.06 crore in the same period last year.

Jubilant foray: Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd, which operates Domino's Pizza and Dunkin' Donuts outlets in India, has announced its entry in FMCG segment with a range of ready-to-cook sauces, gravies and pastes. Jubilant FoodWorks, through its new brand "ChefBoss", has launched a range of sauces and pastes, and will initially be exclusively available for consumers across e-commerce platforms.

Enough work, but not enough manpower, say jewellers

GJEPC seeks ₹900-crore package for the sector to set up 'model manufacturing workshop'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 9 AUGUST

The gems and jewellery industry, which is witnessing an increase in export orders, is facing challenging times due to lack of skilled manpower as workers are either unable to come back due to transportation restrictions or reluctant to leave their families in times of crisis, the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) has said.

"Even though the times are tough, demand for jewellery exports is seeing an upsurge, and that is a huge positive. Similar to every other sector in India, the jewellery industry, too, saw a massive exodus of its workforce amid the nationwide lockdown... today, there is enough work, but not enough manpower. It's a tricky situation."

Even though the times are tough, demand for jewellery exports is seeing an upsurge, and that is a huge positive. Similar to every other sector in India, the jewellery industry, too, saw a massive exodus of its workforce amid the nationwide lockdown... today, there is enough work, but not enough manpower. It's a tricky situation.

COLIN SHAH
GJEPC CHAIRMAN

GJEPC chairman Colin Shah said:

At present, an official government order allows for only 25 per cent of employees to attend work. Most of the skilled artisans are traditionally from West Bengal, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, who have left Mumbai due to the pandemic, he added.

"Exporters need to reassure their staff that they will be safe in the factories. Today, there is enough work, but not enough manpower. It's a tricky situation. While there is good demand for their products mainly from the US and China as well as other destinations, we add that we cannot carry out even 50

per cent of the demand as the output is only 25 per cent due to the skeleton staff."

"Each and every worker of ours hailing from Mumbai or Surat, has been paid since the lockdown was declared in March. The rest of them, who are unable to come to work, are being paid enough to run their households on a monthly basis. Unfortunately, the world is in the grip of the pandemic and it would be inhuman to pressure the workers to come back to factories. They have to come back willingly," he added.

Priority Jewels founder Shailesh Sangani opined that Priority Jewels founder Shailesh Sangani opined that

the Indian jewellery export sector, especially in Mumbai, is facing a tremendous shortage of manpower, specifically in the SEEPZ area.

"We are coaxing workers to return by offering more money, and even air tickets for a few highly skilled workers. But they are hesitant to leave their families after having been at home for such a long time. Then there is the constant fear of the ongoing pandemic and its proliferation across Mumbai, plus their family pressure. At the moment, working 2-3 shifts is the only answer to bridging the gap between increasing orders and the lack of workers," he added.

GJEPC further said that there is a fear that if exporters are unable to fulfil orders, they may lose business to other countries such as Thailand, Vietnam or China, all of which are working with a larger capacity at much closer to normal than factories in India.

Fine Jewellery Mfg owner and director Sohil Kothari said the export demand is pick-

ing up faster than expected, especially from western markets like Europe and the US.

Most exporters reveal that they are asking for longer lead times from clients and orders that normally took 4-5 weeks are now being delivered in 6-7 weeks, GJEPC said.

Pea for package: The Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) has sought a ₹900-crore package for the sector to set up "model manufacturing workshop" to upgrade skills and implement technology upgradation fund (TUF) that will help boost the industry.

"Almost 85 percent (5,931) of our members are in the MSME category, and most of them are involved in the manufacture of handmade gold jewellery, cutting and polishing of diamonds, precious and semi-precious stones and imitation jewellery. Our industry is highly labour-intensive and export-oriented," GJEPC chairman Colin Shah said in a statement.

would be driving growth in the segment going ahead," he noted.

He said the company has many products on the ground and there are new launches planned over the next 12 months as well.

"So finding partners for Mahindra Electric won't be such a difficult task as it would be for some other companies," Goenka emphasised.

He said M&M is keen on becoming a significant player in the EV space with Mahindra Electric on one side and its Italy-based arm Automobili Pininfarina (APF) with its high-end models on the other end. Goenka said M&M is also evaluating to further extend the APF product portfolio going ahead.

M&M also said it is seeking investors for its Korean arm SsangYong Motor Company (SYMC).

"We are looking for investors for SYMC as we have decided not to further invest in it. The South Korean firm is in dialogue with certain investors and we will be announcing that at an appropriate time on the status of those investors," Goenka said.

Taking steps to cut logistics cost: Shipping minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

The government has initiated multiple steps to reduce high logistics cost, including strengthening inland waterways, shipping minister Mansukh Mandaviya said, as he urged private players to join hands to propel India's growth.

Mandaviya, who was addressing a virtual event "Creating Multimodal Transport Network Using Big Data" organised by PHDCCI, also expressed concern over the high logistics cost in the country, which was 30 percent more than that in developed nations.

"The Government of India has taken a large number of steps to reduce logistics cost in the country in order to fuel growth. These include making a network of inland waterways to transport cargo in a cost-effective manner. We have made 1,400 km of waterways operational," Mandaviya said. The minister said the aim of creating a network of waterways is to reduce logistics costs, boost exports and make the country self-reliant, as per Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiative.

He said the shipping ministry has taken initiatives like introducing the "PCSIx" platform to reduce logistics costs. Port community system "PCSIx" is a cloud-based technology that offers services like notification, workflow and track and trace and it is estimated that this feature alone will reduce up to two days in the life of a transaction. Mandaviya further said inter-ministerial consultations were on to boost multimodal transport in the country.

Enhanced focus on waterways has resulted in higher cargo movement on inland waterways as well as the Indo-Bangladesh protocol route which has enabled faster delivery of cargo to north-eastern states, including Tripura, he added.

"It is time that private players join hands with government in PPP (public-private partnership) projects including ports to fuel economic growth," the minister said. He urged private sector companies to come forward for initiatives like indigenous building of cranes for ports which so far were being imported at an annual cost of about Rs 10,000 crore.

Coal India logs 22% growth in e-auction

NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) said it logged a 21.5 per cent growth in coal allocation at 19.76 million tons (MT) under the four-e-auction windows during the April-June quarter.

In the corresponding quarter a year ago, the fuel allocation by the PSU under all the four windows of e-auction was 16.26 MT, a CIL statement said.

The four categories of e-auction are spot e-auction of raw coal, special forward e-auction for power producers, exclusive e-auction for non-power sector and special spot auction.

Booking by non-power sector, under an exclusive e-auction to it, witnessed a three-fold rise during April-June 2020 over the same period in 2019.

Power transmission biz may see ₹1.8 lakh cr investment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

The domestic power transmission segment is expected to attract investments worth Rs 1.8 lakh crore in the next five years, according to a report by rating agency Icra.

It said evacuation infrastructure for renewable energy (RE) projects will drive investments in the power transmission segment.

"Icra expects an investment of Rs 1.8 trillion (Rs 1.8 lakh crore) over the five-year period from FY21 (financial year 2020-21) to FY25 in the power transmission segment at an all-India level, driven by evacuation infrastructure for RE projects," the rating agency said in the report.

It added that in line with

a shift in policy focus from conventional sources (coal and gas) to renewable power sources (wind and solar), the focus of the transmission segment is towards augmenting infrastructure for evacuation of power generated by RE projects.

Sabyasachi Majumdar, group head and senior vice-president (corporate ratings) of Icra, said the Centre has lined up 14 transmission projects under the tariff-based competitive bidding (RBCB) route for evacuating power from 25-gigawatt RE projects.

The government has also lined up another six projects in the intra-state segment, providing healthy pipeline for private sector players, he added.

There is likely to be a slow-

Sugar production to rise this yr: Ind-Ra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 9 AUGUST

India Ratings said it expects sugar production to increase to 305 lakh tons in sugar year 2020-21 (SS21).

Domestic oversupply to continue in SS21 due to high carryover stocks and an expected increase in production, India Ratings (Ind-Ra) said in a report. Sugar marketing season runs from October to September.

Ind-Ra said it expects sugar production to increase to 305 lakh tons in SS21, factoring in a cane diversion equivalent to 15 lakh tons of sugar. Sugar production for SS20 is estimated to be 272 lakh tons.

Oversupply to continue

» Domestic oversupply to continue in sugar year 2020-21 (SS21) due to high carryover stocks and an expected increase in production, India Ratings (Ind-Ra) said in a report.

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year 2020-21 registering some growth, resulting in an overall decline of around 3 per cent in FY21. The imposition of fresh lockdowns due to increasing spread of the pandemic, however, remains a key monitorable, it added.

The report also stated that the increase in minimum sell-

note to increase the fair and remunerative price of sugarcane by Rs 10 per quintal to Rs 285 per quintal for SS21, it said. However, Ind-Ra expects the moves to result in a net improvement in EBITDA margins as realisations should increase by 6-6.5 per cent against an increase of 3.5 per cent in cost, resulting in a net cash inflow of around Rs 2,500 crore.

Further, the report said that most large sugar companies have adequate liquidity with meaningful cash and equivalents, unused working capital lines or easy access to banks or capital markets for funding.

Some companies with weak standalone liquidity have strong parent or group to provide financial support.

Besides, sugar companies would generate cash flows from increase in MSP of sugar in the second half of FY21 onwards.

Electronics manufacturing to grow 30% annually: IT secy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

The government is expecting electronics manufacturing in the country to register an annual growth rate of 30 per cent over the next five years and clock Rs 11.5 lakh crore additional production during this period, electronics and IT secretary Ajay Prakash Sawhney has said.

Also, the exports of electronic products will grow in the range of 40-50 per cent annually over the next five years, he added.

"Electronics manufacturing in India has been growing quite significantly. We have registered 23 percent cumulative annual rate of growth over past five years. Now in this journey the growth is expected to be 30 per cent year-on-year for

next five years," Sawhney said at the Invest India Exclusive Investment Forum - Japan Edition.

He said that mobile manufacturing in the country has grown from 6 crore handsets five years ago to 33 crore at present, and over 90 per cent of country's mobile phone requirements are met through domestic production. "Last year we have seen a spurt of 25 per cent. In next five years, growth in exports could be 40-50 per cent year-on-year at a bare minimum," Sawhney said.

The country's electronics production will grow at least by \$153 billion (around Rs 11.5 lakh crore) in the next five years, the secretary said.

As many as 22 domestic and international firms, including iPhone maker Apple's contract manufacturer

turers as well as Samsung, Lava, Dixon and so forth, have lined up with proposals for mobile phones production worth Rs 11 lakh crore over the next five years.

According to Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, these proposals under the government's Rs 41,000-crore production-linked incentive scheme for mobile phone manufacturing are expected to create around 12 lakh jobs - 3 lakh direct and 9 lakh indirect jobs.

Sawhney said that Japanese companies have tremendous expertise and market share in capital goods which are used in the factories that manufacture electronic goods, digital displays, semiconductors, and India is looking forward to their engagement in the domestic market.

Biz optimism for Jul-Sep quarter slips to record low

NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

Business optimism for the July-September quarter slumped to a record low due to sharp rise in Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and staggered easing of restrictions, according to a report.

Dun & Bradstreet Composite Business Optimism Index for the July-September quarter fell to a record low of 29.4. The index registered a decline of 40.6 per cent over the last quarter.

The Business Optimism Index covered about 350 senior executives in June this year.

"The spike in the number of positive Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and the staggered easing of restrictions affected the business optimism levels," said Arun Singh, global chief economist, Dun & Bradstreet.

All six optimism indices - volume of sales, net profits, selling prices, new orders, inventories and employees - have registered a decline as compared to the previous quarter, the report said.

"The plethora of containment and non-containment zones, which are near-impossible to track in real time, and the rapid change in guidelines adopted by the various local governments have led to considerable uncertainty amongst businesses that are planning to resume their operations," Singh said.

While various measures have been taken to support the flow of capital to businesses, bank credit to industries continued to remain subdued, Singh said, adding that "muted credit disbursements might have also affected the optimism levels".

Fuel demand unlikely to recover very soon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 AUGUST

India's fuel demand may take 6 to 9 months to rebound to normal levels as several states impose lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus, Indian Oil Corp (IOC) director-finance S K Gupta has said.

Fuel sales had fallen by a record 45.8 per cent in April when a nationwide lockdown was in place to check the coronavirus infections. Lockdown restrictions have been progressively eased beginning May, but now several states are imposing lockdown to curb record daily infection rates. Speaking at an investor call on first-quarter earnings, Gupta said it was difficult to predict the demand recovery

rate given the rising infections in India and around the world. "It may take 6 to 9 months to return to normal," he said.

After making a smart recovery in May, fuel sales have dipped from the second-half of the year earlier, according to provisional PSUs sales data.

» Diesel sales fell by 13 per cent to 4.85 million tons in July from the previous month and by about 21 per cent from a year earlier, according to provisional PSUs sales data.

» Petrol sales fell by 1 per cent to 2.03 million tons in July from June, and by about 11.5 per cent from a year ago.

» Jet fuel sales in July rose by 4 per cent from the previous month but fell by 65 per cent from July 2019 as air travel curbs continued.

» The only fuel that has consistently seen a rise in demand is cooking gas LPG which at 2.27 million tons was 10 per cent more than June and 3.5 per cent higher than a year ago sales.



We're going down to a number less than 5,000 by the end of November. We need to brief Congress from what that looks like

CONFIRMING THAT US TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN WOULD BE REDUCED

US SECRETARY OF DEFENCE MARK ESPER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 10 AUGUST 2020

09

Afghan council frees 400 Taliban prisoners

The peace-offering looks to bring the United States a little closer to removing its troops and ending its longest military engagement

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL, 9 AUGUST

A traditional Afghan council concluded on Sunday with hundreds of delegates agreeing to free 400 Taliban members, paving the way for an early start to negotiations between Afghanistan's warring sides.

The declaration read out in both of Afghanistan's official languages of Pashto and Farsi calls for an immediate start to negotiations and cease fire. The move looks to bring the United States a little closer to returning its troops and ending its longest military engagement.

No date has been set but negotiations between Kabul's political leadership and the Taliban are expected to begin as early as next week and will most likely be held in the middle

eastern state of Qatar, where the Taliban maintains a political office.

The Afghan negotiations were laid out in a peace deal signed by the United States and the Taliban in February. At the time of its signing it was touted as Afghanistan's best chance at ending decades of war.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani praised delegates for their decision, urged the Taliban to stop fighting.

Taliban political spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the decision was a good step, a positive step. He said negotiations could start within one week of their prisoners being freed.

As for a cease fire, Shaheen said the Taliban was committed to the deal it struck with the United States and according to that deal the cease fire will be one of the items to be discussed during the intra-



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani sits next to Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah (R) during the first day of the Loya Jirga, a grand assembly, in Kabul. ■ AFP

Afghan negotiations."

The council's decision to free the prisoners does not come as a surprise as delegates were urged by the US at the start of the council, or jirga, on Friday to take this difficult action so negotiations could

begin to bring an end to the war.

To remove obstacle, to start peace talks and to stop the bloodshed, the jirga confirms the release of 400 Taliban prisoners, said Atefa Tayeb, a council secretary who read out

the final declaration at the conclusion.

The deal negotiated between the United States and Taliban calls for the government to free 5,000 prisoners and for the Taliban to free 1,000 government and military personnel in its custody as a goodwill gesture ahead of the start of negotiations.

Kabul balked at the release but eventually freed all but the last 400.

President Ghani said he was not authorized to free these because of the seriousness of their crimes, and asked for the council to decide instead. He did not detail of what the 400 were accused.

Delegates were therefore given the stark choice of either freeing the prisoners or seeing a war that has killed tens of thousands continue. The delegates said they wanted international guarantees that the

Taliban would not return to the battlefield.

Washington's Peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad spent more than a year and a half negotiating the deal with the Taliban to provide for the withdrawal of American soldiers after more than 19 years in Afghanistan.

The withdrawal began earlier this year but roughly 8,600 US soldiers remain in Afghanistan and their return will depend on the Taliban honoring its commitment to fight against other terrorist groups and ensure Afghanistan is not again used to attack the United States or its allies.

The withdrawal of US and NATO troops is not dependent on the success of negotiations between Kabul's political leadership and the Taliban.

But US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has made it clear that Washington wants

a negotiated end to the conflict, including a cease fire.

An attack against a military compound on Saturday that killed seven military personnel and injured another 16 was a reminder that Afghanistan's war would not be over easily. No one took responsibility for the attack but both the Taliban and Islamic State affiliates are active in the area.

A spike in recent violence in Afghanistan has been mostly attributed to the IS affiliate, whom the Taliban are fighting as are the Afghan government and US forces.

Previously a US department of defense official who could not be named because of the sensitivity of the subject said Washington considered IS its biggest threat in Afghanistan and wanted a deal that would recruit the Taliban in a coordinated fight against it.

Bangladesh FM seeks help to find fugitive killers of Mujib

DHAKA, 9 AUGUST

Bangladesh Foreign minister A.K. Abdul Momen has appealed to all Bangladeshis, including expatriates, to help in the search for the remaining fugitive killers of the nation's founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Momen said, "We had hoped to bring two of the fugitive killers to justice in 'Mujib Year' during Bangabandhu's birth centenary celebration. We have been able to catch one. We hope we will get another."

One of the six killers, Abdul Mazed was executed recently. The Indian government had arrested and handed over Mazed to Bangladesh. He was executed last April.

Three other absconding convicts are Abdur Rashid, Shariful Haque Dalim and Moslemuddin. All foreign missions in Bangladesh have also been told to search for the fugitive killers.

Momen said the government is doing whatever it can to bring Rashid back from the US and another convicted killer, Noor Chowdhury, from Canada.

"The Prime Minister herself wrote letters, even to US President Donald Trump. We hope we will succeed," the foreign minister said.

He also appealed to expatriate Bangladeshis to help the government with information about the killers.

'Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was murdered along with most of his family members at his home on August 15, 1975.

His daughters - current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana survived as they were in Germany at the time.

IANS

Azar leads highest-level US team to Taiwan in decades

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAIPEI, 9 AUGUST

US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar arrived in Taiwan on Sunday in the highest-level visit by an American Cabinet official since the break in formal diplomatic relations between Washington and Taipei in 1979.

Beijing has already protested Azar's visit as a betrayal of US commitments not to have official contact with the island. China claims Taiwan as its own territory

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with whom it is also at odds over trade, technology, the South China Sea and China's response to the pandemic. The US maintains only unofficial ties with Taiwan in deference to Beijing, but is the most important ally and provider of defence equipment.

Azar is the first health secretary to visit Taiwan and the first Cabinet member to visit in six years. In 2014, then-Environmental Protection Agency administrator Gina McCarthy visited Taiwan, sparking protests from Beijing.

Azar's office said he will hold discussions on Covid-19, global health and Taiwan's role as a supplier of medical equipment and technology. Azar's visit was facilitated by the 2018 passage of the Taiwan Travel Act, which encouraged US to send higher-level officials to Taiwan after decades during which such contacts were rare to avoid roiling ties with Beijing.

China has cut contacts with Tsai over her refusal to recognise China's claim to the island and has brought increasing diplomatic, economic and military pressure against her, including by poaching away several of its remaining diplomatic allies and excluding it from international gatherings including the World Health Assembly.

That, in turn, has increased already considerable bipartisan sympathy for Taipei in US and prompted new measures to strengthen governmental and military ties.

Azar is due to meet with the island's independence-leaning President Tsai Ing-wen along with health officials during a three-day visit aimed

at highlighting cooperation in the fight against the coronavirus. Taiwan's government-run health care system has been credited with keeping the number of coronavirus cases to under 500 with just seven deaths, despite its close proximity to China where the virus originated.

China sees Taiwan as a key irritant in its troubled relationship with Washington,

and has responded by cutting off aid to the island. China has also imposed strict travel restrictions on Taiwanese citizens and has restricted imports of medical supplies from Taiwan.

Azar's visit is seen as a test of how far US president Donald Trump is willing to go in supporting Taiwan. The US has maintained official ties with Taiwan since 1979, when the US established formal ties with China.

Supporters of the SLPP lit firecrackers to celebrate his swearing-in as the 13th Prime Minister at the Rajamah Vihara in Kelaniya, a north Colombo suburb, at the auspicious hour of 9:28 am local time.

The Rajamah Vihara, also known as the Kelaniya temple, dates back to 2,500 years. According to the website of the temple, it has often

been associated with the rise and fall of Sri Lanka.

The SLPP, led by Mahinda and Gotabaya Rajapaksa, registered a landslide victory in the 5 August general election, securing two-thirds majority in Parliament needed to amend the Constitution to further consolidate the powerful Rajapaksa family's grip on power.

Mahinda Rajapaksa completed 50 years of parliamentary politics in July this year. He was elected as a Member of Parliament at the young age of 24 in 1970. He has since been elected President twice. He was prime minister between April 2004 and November 2005. He was

PLAY TIME



Children play on the roof of a metro station entrance in Bangkok on Sunday. ■ AFP

Rajapaksa consolidates family's grip on Lanka throne

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, 9 AUGUST

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

The 74-year-old former president and Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) leader was administered the oath of office by his younger brother and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at a gathering of Buddhist monks, representatives of the diplomatic community and other senior officials.

"I am humbled by the opportunity given to me to serve my people again," he



tweeted soon after starting his fourth innings as prime minister.

Mahinda Rajapaksa said the trust bestowed on him by the people will inspire him to continue to serve the country. The prime minister vowed that he would ensure that Sri Lanka would embark on a progressive journey during his tenure.

Supporters of the SLPP lit firecrackers to celebrate his swearing-in as the 13th Prime Minister at the Rajamah Vihara in Kelaniya, a north Colombo suburb, at the auspicious hour of 9:28 am local time.

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been associated with the rise and fall of Sri Lanka.

The strong mandate received by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa provides a fresh opportunity for the two countries to enhance bilateral engagement, including mitigating the adverse economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, Bagley said.

Mahinda Rajapaksa completed 50 years of parliamentary politics in July this year. He was elected as a Member of Parliament at the young age of 24 in 1970. He has since been elected President twice. He was prime minister between April 2004 and November 2005. He was

prime minister for 52 days in 2018, and from November 2019 to August 5, 2020. In Wednesday's parliamentary polls, he received over 527,000 individual preference votes - the highest ever recorded by a candidate in the country's election history.

The Rajapaksa family -

including SLPP founder and its National Organiser 69-year-old Basil Rajapaksa, who is the younger brother of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, 71, and Mahinda Rajapaksa - has dominated Sri Lankan politics for two decades.

Mahinda Rajapaksa had won the November presidential election on the SLPP ticket. He dissolved Parliament in March and called for early snap elections.

Postal Service emerges as flash point heading into November election in US

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 9 AUGUST

Mail piling up. Constant attacks from the president. Cuts to overtime as record numbers of ballots are expected to pass through post offices this fall. The success of the 2020 presidential election could hinge on a most unlikely government agency: the US Postal Service. Current signs are not promising.

The Postal Service already was facing questions over how it would handle the expected spike of mail-in ballots due to the coronavirus pandemic, but several operational changes imposed by its new leader have led to mail backlog across the Unit-

ed States as rumors of additional cutbacks swirl, fueling worries about the November voter turnout.

It seems like they're just trying to turn customers away from the post office, said Jim Sizemore, president of the American Postal Workers Union chapter in the Cincinnati region.

He said his offices are behind on deliveries because of new rules specifying when mail can go out.

The pandemic has forced states to expand voting by mail as a safe alternative to in-person polling places. Some states are opting to send ballots to voters or allowing people to use fear of the virus as a reason to cast an absentee

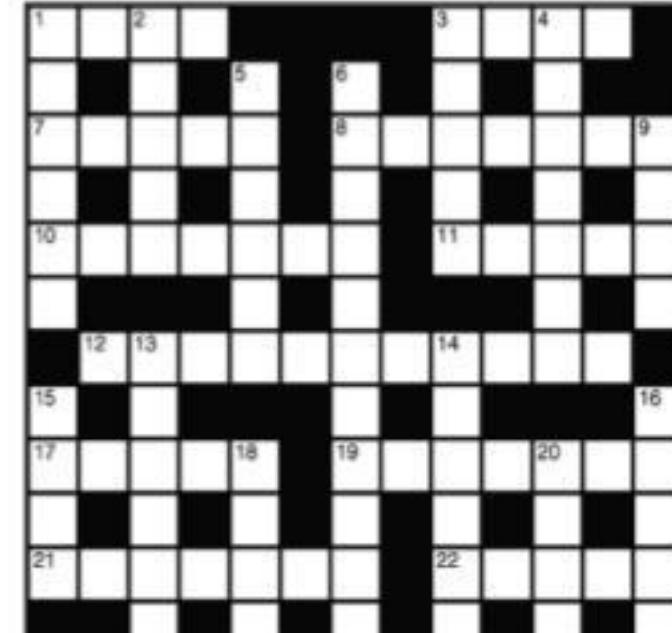
ballot. That's led to predictions of an unprecedented amount of mail voting in the presidential election.

Trailing in the polls, President Donald Trump has been sowing public distrust in the Postal Service's ability to adequately deliver ballots and has, without evidence, said allowing more people to vote by mail will result in rampant corruption.

The agency's new leader, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a former supply-chain CEO and a major donor to Trump and other Republicans, has pushed cost-cutting measures to eliminate overtime pay and hold mail until the next day if postal distribution centers are running late.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS: 1 Old man's beard, 19 Antenna, 20 Aside, 21 Sad, 22 Tanks, 23 Guitar accessory (4), 24 Network (4). DOWN: 1 Car accessory (6), 2 Box (5), 3 Pulsate (5), 4 Overturn accidentally (7), 5 Shrewd (6), 6 Part of a cooked fowl (7), 9 Ooze (4), 13 Cold beverage (4,3), 14 Hit (6), 16 Car foot pedal (6), 18 Trunk (5), 20 Vast crowd (5). ACROSS: 1 Mild exclamation (4), 3 Check mark (4), 7 Ursine animals (5), 8 With reference to (7), 10 Lines of approach (7), 11 Billiard table fabric (5), 12 Children's game (4-3-4), 17 Incompetent (5), 19 Arctic whale (7), 21 Stitches (7),



Our task today is to act swiftly and efficiently, to coordinate our aid on the ground so that this aid goes as quickly as possible to the Lebanese people

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMANUEL MACRON
AT THE EMERGENCY DONORS CONFERENCE FOR LEBANON

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	27 H
HONG KONG	30	26 CL
TOKYO	35	26 S
LONDON	34	21 CL
DUBAI	41	33 S
SAN FRANCISCO	20	14 S
NEW YORK	33	24 S
MOSCOW	26	16 CL

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

THUMBNAILS



A coronavirus mockup is seen during a demonstration against the curbs amidst the pandemic in Dortmund on Sunday. AFP

South Korea landslides: Landslides and flooding triggered by days of heavy rain in South Korea have left at least 30 people dead and 12 missing, officials said on Sunday, warning of more downpours. Torrential rain has wreaked havoc across the country since the beginning of August, but half of the deaths occurred in the past three days. AFP

Mauritius oil spill: Thousands of students, environmental activists and residents of Mauritius were working around the clock Sunday, trying to reduce the damage to the Indian Ocean island from an oil spill after a tanker ran aground on a coral reef. An estimated 1 ton of oil from the Japanese ship's cargo of 4 tons has already escaped into the sea, officials said. AP

Britain steps up efforts against Channel migrants



An official helps a child, part of a group picked up from boats in the Channel, in Dover port, on Sunday. AFP

LONDON, 9 AUGUST

The British government on Sunday appointed a former marine to lead efforts to tackle illegal migration in the English Channel ahead of talks with France on how to stop the dangerous crossings.

Warm weather and calm seas have in recent days seen a surge in attempts by migrants in France to cross the busy shipping channel on makeshift boats, aiming for the English coast.

With new arrivals each day, Home Secretary Priti Patel has become increasingly vocal in demanding action - even mooting bringing in the Royal Navy.

Today she appointed former Royal Marine Dan O'Mahoney, a maritime security expert, to take on a new role as the government's "clandestine Channel threat commander". "The number of illegal small boat crossings is appalling," she said.

"We are working to make the route unviable and arresting the criminals facilitating these crossings and ensure they are brought to justice.

Patel visited the French port of Calais last month to agree a new joint police unit to share intelligence on trafficking networks and her immigration minister, Chris Philp, is due in Paris for further talks on Tuesday.

The Sunday Telegraph newspaper reported that officials were planning for naval and border force vessels to pick up the migrants and take them directly back to northern France.

However, the deal will require French involvement and the newspaper said Paris was asking for £30 million from London to help fund patrols. AP

Covid toll: Brazil crosses 1 lakh milestone

The nation of 210 million people has been reporting an average of more than 1,000 daily deaths from the pandemic since late May

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RIO DE JANEIRO, 9 AUGUST

Brazil surpassed a grim milestone of 10,000 deaths from Covid-19 on Saturday night, and five months after the first reported case the country has not shown signs of crushing the disease.

The nation of 210 million people has been reporting an average of more than 1,000 daily deaths from the pandemic since late May and reported 905 for the latest 24-hour period.

The Health Ministry said there had been a total of 3,012,412 confirmed infections with the new coronavirus death and infection tolls second only to the United States. And as in many nations, experts believe that both numbers are severe undercounts due to insufficient testing.

In a tribute to Covid-19 victims on Saturday morning, the non-governmental group Rio de Paz placed crosses on the sand on the famed Copacabana beach and released 1,000 red balloons into the sky.

It's very sad. Those 100,000 represent various families, friends, parents, children, said Marcio do Nascimento Silva, a 56-year-old taxi driver.



A man who lost his son to the novel coronavirus, holds a Brazilian flag, crosses before a thousand red balloons are released, during a tribute to Covid-19 victims in Rio de Janeiro. AFP

verwho lost his children in the pandemic and joined the tribute.

"We reach that mark (100,000) and many people seem to not see it, both among the government and our people. They are not just numbers but people. Death became normal," Silva said.

President Jair Bolsonaro who himself reported being infected has been a consistent skeptic about the impact of the disease and an advocate of lift-

ing restrictions on the economy that had been imposed by state governors trying to combat it. He has frequently mingled in crowds, sometimes without a mask.

On the day that Brazil reached more than 1,000 deaths, the federal government's communication secretariat confronted criticism from former Justice Minister Sergio Moro on social media for the management of the pandemic.

Experts have complained of a lack of national coordination under Bolsonaro and

There are many numbers that deserve to be disclosed:

- ALMOST 3 MILLION LIVES SAVED OR IN RECOVERY - ONE OF THE LOWEST DEATHS PER MILLION AMONG LARGE NATIONS,

said the secretariat's official account on Twitter, sharing Moro's tweet. Bolsonaro answered the tweet with an emoji of shaking hands.

Experts have complained of a lack of national coordination under Bolsonaro and

scattershot responses by city and state governments, with some reopening earlier than health experts recommended.

Administrative incompetence ruined our chance to have a good response to Covid," said Miguel Lago, executive director of Brazil's Institute for Health Policy Studies, which advises public health officials.

Brazil is facing the pandemic with an interim health minister, Eduardo Pazuello, an army general who made his career in logistics.

Two earlier health ministers, both physicians, exited over differences with Bolsonaro about social distance measures and the use of hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug promoted by the president but which most studies have found to be ineffective against Covid-19, or even dangerous.

Bolsonaro said he recovered from a little flu, says he recovered from his own infection thanks to that drug.

Many of Brazil's 27 states have begun to reopen shops and restaurants, though responses have differed, as has the strain on the health system. While Brasilia, the capital, has recorded almost 80% occupancy of its ICU beds, Rio de Janeiro's occupancy rate

is now down to less than 30% in private hospitals.

In Rio, shopping malls and restaurants have already opened and people have returned to the beaches.

US tops 5 million confirmed virus cases: With confirmed coronavirus cases in the US hitting 5 million on Sunday, by far the highest of any country, the failure of the most powerful nation in the world to contain the scourge has been met with astonishment and alarm in Europe.

Perhaps nowhere outside the USA is America's bungled virus response viewed with more consternation than in Italy, which was ground zero of Europe's epidemic. Italians were unprepared when the outbreak exploded in February, and the country still has one of the world's highest official death tolls at 35,000.

But after a strict nationwide, 10-week lockdown, vigilant tracing of new clusters and general acceptance of mask mandates and social distancing, Italy has become a model of virus containment.

Yet, more than four months into a sustained outbreak, the US reached the 5 million mark, according to Johns Hopkins University.

NZ marks 100 days of being coronavirus-free

WELLINGTON, 9 AUGUST

New Zealand on Sunday marked 100 days since it stamped out the spread of the coronavirus, a rare bright spot in a world that continues to be ravaged by the disease.

Life has returned to normal for many people in the South Pacific nation of 5 million, as they attend rugby games at packed stadiums and sit down in bars and restaurants without the fear of getting infected. But some worry the country may be getting complacent and not preparing well enough for any future outbreaks.

New Zealand got rid of the virus by imposing a strict lockdown in late March when only about 100 people had tested positive for the disease. That stopped its spread. For the past three months, the only new cases have been a handful of returning travellers who have been quarantined at the border.

It was good science and great political leadership that made the difference, said professor Michael Baker, an epidemiologist at the University of Otago. If you look around the globe at countries that have done well, it's usually that combination.

From early on, New Zealand pursued a bold strategy of eliminating the virus rather than just suppressing its spread. Baker said other countries are increasingly looking to New Zealand for answers.

The whole Western World has terribly mismanaged this threat, and they're realising this now, Baker said.

Indeed, New Zealand's economy has fared better than many predicted. The country has managed to keep its unemployment rate at just 4%. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's leadership has been widely praised. She reassured people during the lockdown with daily briefings and a message that resonated: Go hard and go early. AP

Beirut explosion bares pitfalls of sending aid to Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, 9 AUGUST

Angry protesters clash with police



BEIRUT, 9 AUGUST

Hospitals and schools, then shattered and bent water pipes, then the crater that once was Lebanon's port.

The rebuilding needs of Lebanon are immense, but so is the question of how to ensure the millions of dollars promised in international aid is not diverted in a country notorious for missing money, invisible infrastructure projects and its refusal to open the books.

Sunday's donor teleconference is hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron, who was mobbed last week by tearful victims of the Beirut ammonium nitrate explosion begging him to ensure the corruption they blame for the blast that devastated the capital does not profit from its destruction.

International diplomacy usually calls for careful language. Rigged votes are irregular. The response to furious protests should be measured. Disappearing funds require transparency.

But Macron's response to the crowd, and later in a speech in Beirut, was unusually blunt: The aid will not fall into corrupt hands and Lebanon's discredited government must change. Germany, Lebanon's second-biggest bilateral donor, made similar demands.

That's precisely what the Lebanese people have rightly demanded: individual interests and old lines of conflict must be overcome and the welfare of the entire population must be put first, German Foreign Ministry.

In the short-term, the aid streaming into Lebanon is

purely for humanitarian emergencies and relatively easy to monitor. France, Britain, Canada and Australia, among others, have been clear that it is going directly to UN agencies or the Lebanese Red Cross.

But actual rebuilding requires massive imports of supplies and equipment. And the contracts and subcontracts that have given Lebanon's ruling elite its wealth and power, while leaving the country with crumbling

roads, regular electricity cuts, trash that piles on the streets and intermittent water supplies.

The level of infrastructure in Lebanon is directly linked today to the level of corruption, said Neemat Frem, a prominent Lebanese businessman and independent member of parliament.

We badly need more dollars but I understand that the Lebanese state and its agencies are not competent.

Lebanon has an accumulated debt of about \$100 billion, for a population of just under 7 million people 5 million Lebanese and 2 million Syrians and Palestinians, most of them refugees.

Officials quit in Lebanon in wake of deadly blast: Lebanon's information minister resigned on Sunday as the country grapples with the aftermath of the devastating blast that ripped through the capital and raised public anger to new levels.

The resignation comes after a night of demonstrations against the ruling elite, blamed for the chronic mismanagement and corruption that is believed to be behind the explosion in a Beirut Port warehouse. Manal Abdelsamad said in her resignation letter that change remained elusive and she regrets failing to fulfill the aspirations of the Lebanese people.

Her resignation comes as about half a dozen lawmakers offered their resignation in protest over government performance.

Local media also reported that another minister, and a close advisor to PM Hassan Diab, was also expected to resign.

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RAKHEE BHATTACHARYA

The National Education Policy 2020 has been released after about two years of multiple consultative processes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has termed the policy as transformative with the founding pillars of "accessibility, equity, affordability, quality and accountability".

It was long awaited. Since the last education policy in 1986, the country has transformed in many ways to become a part of the globalised world. The changing worldview has been largely reflected in India's policy space except in education. With persistently insignificant budgetary allocations, education implicitly remained at the policy margins. Being on the concurrent list, educational outcomes have also proliferated with wide regional variations in the past. The economically well-off states have done better than the rest.

A report by the National Council of Applied Economic Research in 2014 showed that India's Northern region provides access to higher education for about 15 per cent of youth while the Southern and North-Central regions provide 13 per cent and 10 per cent access respectively. The North-eastern region is at the bottom with only about four per cent access.

The 64th round of National Sample Survey data in 2007-08 pointed out that only two per cent of the rural population was educated beyond the higher secondary level compared to 12 per cent of the urban population and just three per cent women got a college education against six per cent men. Among communities, tribal people and Dalits are by far the worst-off having only 1.8 per cent access to higher education. Access to higher education in India is generally about 10 per cent against 22 per cent in China and 28 per cent in the US.

In the North-east, except Assam, higher education became accessible with states making progress in the 1970s and 80s. The North Eastern Hill University was the first Central University to be established in Shillong in 1972. By 2010, the region added 10 more Central Universities, while the rest were state and private universities, taking the total to 29. By 2017, the total number went up to 54 with an increase in state and private universities to 13 and 31 respectively.

The region, however, was generally identified with better educational infrastructure and outcomes as it boasted an inherited colonial English-based education system. The rise of ethno-centric political battles largely eroded its quality, plurality and inclusivity over time. A University Grants Commission report in 2010 identified 44 out of 88 districts in the North-east to be "educationally backward". That was mainly due to the challenges of "paucity of financial allocations, regional backwardness, political neg-



ligence and poor administration"; a higher education system failing to address its fast changing economic and social aspirations adequately, and forcing a large number of students to out-migrate every year to seek higher education in other states of India.

Profound discriminatory policies at the entry level also forced students of "other" and "minority" communities to leave the region in search of higher educational institutes. Geographical remoteness, political violence and social unrest made it the least privatised space in higher education, which otherwise could have been a blessing provided government-run universities delivered well.

Such accumulated challenges in the absence of any long-term holistic and inclusive vision gradually pushed the region to the lower ranks of India's higher education system. This, however, has begun to change slowly in the last two decades, and the region was given a few centrally funded and well-reputed private institutions, which successfully created a niche, both in terms of curriculum and student intake. IIT and TISS Guwahati are two exceptional institutes where interdisciplinary studies are encouraged with an emphasis on regional research. However, in the larger paradoxical ecosystem of the North-east, these institutions share space with many dysfunctional ones without any quality control.

The new education policy, which aims for holistic knowledge with flexibility, must be explored carefully to map the needs and aspirations of the North-east. With a proposed increase in the share of budgetary allocations, the policy is set to make a structural shift in the existing "content and intent" of higher education. If such ideas can be carried forward through educational infrastructure in the far-flung areas of the North-east, it can be gainfully implemented for the benefit of the region's youth.

The states of the North-east are repositories of traditional knowledge that prevail amongst various communities inter-generationally and through their everyday life. It can be incorporated into the holistic approach of the new education policy. Skill-building can also be manifested through this time-tested traditional knowledge in combination with modern innovative systems. It can augment value and make people purposefully engaged in both livelihood and entrepreneurial practices while being rooted to their cultural identity.

A study by Lant Pritchett of Harvard University's Kennedy School once reported that India produces about 100,000 students a year in the global top 10 per cent, but simultaneously churns out millions with zero skills. It needs to be changed, and a unique space like the North-east can be a part of India's larger skill-based education system.

The other major challenge is that the region's higher education infrastructure is too urban-centric and largely based in the state capitals. It has hindered accessibility for the rural youth, making it biased towards elite groups and urban-based communities. This is in opposition to the purpose of higher education, which, according to a UGC report in 2003, is to permeate into all strata of society.

The Covid-19 pandemic has opened new challenging frontiers in the higher education system. A recent United Nations report mentioned that it has "created the largest disruption in the history of education" affecting about 1.6 billion students across the world, with an additional 2.4 million in danger of dropping out due to loss of access in the coming year. The North-east in this contemporary historical moment is seemingly quite vulnerable. As there is a vigorous drive for digital learning systems, the region is confronted with a new challenge – the yawning gap of digital accessibility with merely 4.3 lakh Internet connections against 2.2 crore in Delhi (Telecom Regulatory Authority, 27 March 2017). The quality of connection also varies hugely depending on narrow-band and broadband facilities.

With such a level of disparity, digital learning will be unequal and higher education in particular will suffer in terms of outreach, quality and accountability. Though India's ambi-

The new education policy must be explored carefully to map the needs and aspirations of the North-east

tious Bharatnet project plans to connect its 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, the impending challenge to reach learners digitally remains grave.

The education policy that was released in this challenging time needs to be tested and understood more democratically in the North-east, where concerns are specific. The idea of over-centralisation through new institutional set-ups like the Higher Education Commission, National Testing Agency and Higher Education Funding Agency also needs to be debated in the context of this geographically different area. Education being a concurrent subject, it will be more sensible to implement it with a spirit of institutional autonomy and in a vibrant frame of educational federalism.

The policy will be successful only if it attempts to reach the farthest and bottom-most aspirant of the country by breaking the barriers of geography, caste, class and community. This was envisaged by Dr S Radhakrishnan in 1948 in the first University Education Commission of India.

The writer is a faculty member, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

PLUS POINTS

Better coordination



The Meghalaya health department held a meeting with the heads of all hospitals, located in Shillong, to ensure better coordination so that people are not deprived of basic health care facilities, according to a report in the Guwahati-based *Assam Tribune*.

The director of health services, Aman War, said that the aim of the meeting was to ensure that all hospitals work in a coordinated manner and patients are not denied their right to health care facilities. However, during the meeting, the heads of the hospitals expressed concern as doctors and nurses were being denied entry to their homes or asked to quarantine themselves for 14 days in their respective localities. War said that such an attitude should change, and appealed to the general public not to look down upon health workers or those patients who are discharged from hospitals after testing negative for Covid-19.

Meanwhile, a large number of patients recovered in the state and were declared Covid-19 free. Altogether 66 patients recovered and were discharged from hospitals. With this, a total of 330 patients have recovered from the infection. On the other hand, 15 more patients tested positive for Covid-19. The total active cases in the state went down to 582 with more recoveries and fewer people getting infected. Out of the 15 new cases, East Khasi Hills district registered nine, Ri-bhoi district one and West Garo Hills district five cases. The East Khasi Hills district has 473 active cases, Ri-Bhoi 55, West Jaintia Hills 16, East Jaintia Hills 17, West Garo Hills 14 and South Garo Hills two, as of last Wednesday.

Till date, 38,977 samples have been sent for testing out of which 37,684 were negative. Reports of 476 samples are awaited. Moreover, 25,218 stranded citizens of Meghalaya have returned to the state.

First in Mizoram



Mizoram's first golf course-cum-resort located in Thenzawl town was virtually inaugurated last week by Union minister of state for culture and tourism (independent charge) Prahla Singh Patel, says a report in the *Assam Tribune*.

The Thenzawl Golf Resort, implemented under the "Swadesh Darshan" scheme of the Union ministry of tourism, was inaugurated from New Delhi. The inauguration programme was joined by state tourism minister Robert Romawia Royte and commissioner and secretary for Mizoram's tourism department Esther Lal Ruatkimi, in Mizoram. The project was sanctioned under the Integrated Development of New Eco Tourism under the "Swadesh Darshan"- North East Circuit at Thenzawl. It was completed at a cost of Rs 64.48 crore.

Inaugurating the golf course, Patel described Mizoram as "one of the most beautiful states, a biological hotspot and having a rich eco-tourism potential". "It is an important state for implementing one of the most important of India's foreign policies, Act East Policy," the minister said, adding that there would be no dearth of funds for tourism development in Mizoram despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

"If the state government judiciously uses funds and completes the projects in time, there will be no trouble in funding from the Central Government. The state government needs to tap its rich eco-tourism potential for the post-Covid scenario," he said.

State tourism minister Royte said that he was happy that Mizoram has become one of the few states in India to get a golf course. He hoped that the golf course and resort would attract large numbers of visitors, which in turn would boost the income of the local people of Thenzawl.

The golf course at Thenzawl has been designed by Graham Cooke and Associates, one of the top-ranked Canada-based golf course architectural firms. The total site area measures 105 acres and the play area runs to 75 acres. There are 30 eco-log huts, a cafeteria, an open air food court, a reception area and waiting lounge.

The competitive advantage of the Thenzawl Golf Resort is that it will provide quality golfing experience and international facilities at a fair price.

ANOTHER LANGUAGE FEUD?

Manipuris in Assam are objecting to the state government's perceived discrimination of their mother tongue

YAMIBEM LABA

The 600,000-odd Manipuri people residing in Assam are up in arms against the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Dispur. That is following a notification by the Assam Public Service Commission whereby it was made mandatory for all aspirants to qualify in one of Assamese, Bengali or Bodo languages in any examination conducted by it. Exemptions were given, however, for the Karbis and Dimas Hajos tribal population of the state.

Taking exception to that, Hijam Rajen, a Manipuri hailing from Cachar and founder of the Pan Meitei Convention (Meitei being the indigenous name for Manipuris), wrote a strong letter of protest to the President of India Ram Nath Kovind. In his memorandum, he mentioned three advertisements of the Assam administration. The first was number AAP2/9/20/2018/10 dated 5 August 2019 issued by the department of personnel; the second was number 06/2019/ dated 19 November 2019 issued by the Assam Public Service Commission for recruitment to the posts of assistant engineers and junior engineers, and the third one was the advertisement issued by the secretary of the Medical and Health Recruitment Board of Assam, vide notification number MHRB/21/D/2019/307, calling for the post of inspector of drugs to be filled. All three warranted that candidates had to compulsorily clear one of three language tests for Assamese, Bengali or Bodo. It has left thousands of Manipuri aspirants in the lurch.

Rajen cited that Manipuri has

been included as an official language under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India since 1992 and from 2000, it has been made an optional subject in the Combined Civil Service examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission. Tracing the historical route of Manipuri, it was also pointed out that in 1924, Calcutta University had introduced it as a vernacular language for the Matriculation examination. Following Independence, Gauhati University introduced Manipuri as a modern Indian language in intermediary and Bachelor of Arts examinations from 1949. Assam University, Silchar has been offering Manipuri as a subject for its post-graduate, M Phil and PhD programmes since 1997. The Assam government had, as early as 1956, made Manipuri a medium of instruction at the primary level and then, did so till class X in 1976.

Rajen, in his appeal to the President, also pointed out that being a linguistic minority and an economically backward community of Assam, the Manipuris in the state had always encouraged their children to study in Manipuri medium with a view of safeguarding their language and culture but now their future appears dark. He demanded that the Assam government be advised to include Manipuri as an "associate" language for the purpose of appearing in it as a qualifying paper for the examinations conducted by the Assam Public Services Commission. He further asked the President to introduce Manipuri as an optional paper for the Main examination for recruitment to the Assam Civil and Police Services and other fields. And that in all future



recruitments of the Government of Assam, Manipuri be kept at par with the three other languages -- Assamese, Bengali and Bodo. Rajen also said that he approached Debrajata Saikia, Opposition leader of Assam, and RK Ranjan, Member of Parliament from Manipur, personally to press home the issue.

Further, the Joint Action Committee for Safeguard of Indigenous Manipuri People of Assam, a conglomerate of 16 powerful Manipuri organisations in Assam, including the All Assam Manipuri Students Union, Manipuri Youth Front Assam, Manipuri National Council Assam and All Assam Manipuri Women's Meira Paibi Co-ordinating Committee, stressed the demand to Assam's chief minister, Sarbananda Sonowal. Nandababu Singha of the Assam Civil Service, Professor Dhiren Singha of Assam University and Rajen cited historical documents including the Assam Accord to make their point.

The Union of Associations of Manipuri Rights, consisting of 28 dif-

ferent pressure groups, have also written to the President of India, Prime Minister, chief minister of Assam, N Biren Singh, chief minister of Manipur, and Najma Heptullah, Governor of Manipur. They reiterated that the Sahitya Akademi had recognised Manipuri as early as 1972 and it is now being taught at both Assam and Manipur Universities from the undergraduate to PhD level.

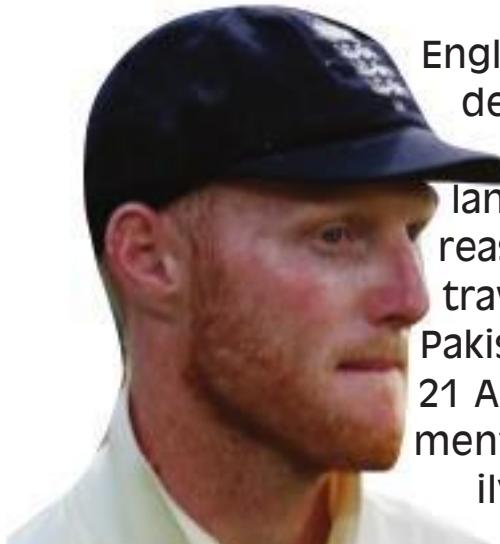
Meanwhile, observers have noted the insensitivity of the Assamese administration to such a delicate issue. From the 1950s, Assam has witnessed riots over language following the States Reorganisation Act whereby states were created based on the language of the people. It was in 1960 that Bimala Prasad Chaliya piloted the Bill, which would have made Assamese the sole official language of the state. In 1961, protests against the provision broke out in the Bengali-dominated areas of Karimganj and Cachar where many died. Rajen said that Sonowal would do well to remember that it was the Shanti

Parishad, spearheaded by the Manipuris of Cachar along with other indigenous populations comprising Cacharis as well as Muslims, which stood by the contentious provision.

Rajen said that it was noteworthy that both Bodos as well as Karbis came into prominence in Assam only after they took up guns. The Assam government should realise that it is not only about securing jobs but also showing respect to their mother tongue that is irking Manipuris in Assam. He also said that Sonowal, who has just coped with the Bodo and Karbi problems on one hand and Paresh Barua's United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) on the other, would have a bigger problem if a group like the "Manipuri Liberation Front of Assam" cropped up. It would augur well for the chief minister to put on his thinking cap and solve the problem before it became a prairie fire, Rajen said.

The writer is the Imphal-based Special Representative of The Statesman





England's star all-rounder Ben Stokes (in photo, left) will miss the remainder of the three-match Test series against Pakistan due to family reasons, the country's cricket board announced on Sunday. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), however, did not specify the exact reasons for his pullout. "Stokes will leave the UK later this week and travel to New Zealand. He will miss England's two Test matches against Pakistan at the Ageas Bowl starting on Thursday 13 August and Friday 21 August," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement. "The England and Wales Cricket Board, along with the Stokes family, requests that all media respects the family's privacy at this time."

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Saina begins training: London Olympics bronze-medalist Saina Nehwal has resumed training at a separate facility in Hyderabad after the coronavirus-induced break and is likely to join the national camp at the SAI Pullela Gopichand Academy in a couple of weeks. Saina is one of the eight Olympic hopefuls who have been allowed by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to resume training at the SAI Pullela Gopichand Academy from August 7 following the Telangana government's approval on 1 August.

Johnson leads: Dustin Johnson supplied the birdies, eight of them at the PGA Championship, the most he has ever made in his 157 rounds of major championship golf for a 5-under 65 and a one-shot lead. Brooks Koepka supplied the needle on Saturday. Koepka recovered from three straight bogeys to salvage a 69 and stay within two shots of a leaderboard more crowded than any of San Francisco's congested highways.

IOA's demand: The Indian Olympic Association wants the sports ministry to extend the deadline for submission of response to a questionnaire seeking age and tenure details of national sports federations' office-bearers which is crucial to a case pending on the NSFs recognition in the Delhi High Court. The IOA, however, wants more time to be given to the NSFs as they are working with depleted staff due to COVID-19 pandemic. The IOA wants a meeting with sports minister Kiren Rijiju to discuss the matter.

New stadium: The Punjab Cricket Association has decided to name its new stadium in Mullanpur after the last ruler of erstwhile Patiala state, late Maharaja Yadavindra Singh, who played a Test match for India in 1934. He was the father of Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh. This was decided in a meeting attended by PCA president Rajinder Gupta and secretary Puneet Bali apart from other office bearers of the association. "The idea was proposed by the PCA president and has been given approval," Bali said.

ICC board meet: Finalising the nomination process to elect Shashank Manohar's successor as the next independent chairman of the world cricket body is the sole agenda for the ICC Board, which will meet virtually on Monday. It is expected that the entire process irrespective of whether it's an election or unanimous selection will be over by four weeks. "The meeting tomorrow only has nomination process in the agenda. Normally, it is a two week window that is provided for filing nominations," a senior board member told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

Binder wins MotoGP: Red Bull KTM Factory Racing has done it. Brad Binder has done it. In an unearthy unpredictable MotoGP™ race at the Monster Energy Czech Republic Grand Prix, the South African - in just his third premier class race - stormed to an emotional first win to become the first rookie since Marc Marquez (Repsol Honda Team) to win in MotoGP™. Binder won by over five seconds to lead Franco Morbidelli (Petronas Yamaha SRT) over the line as the Italian picks up his first MotoGP™ rostrum, with pole sitter Johann Zarco (Esponsorama Racing) - despite taking a long lap penalty for an incident with Pol Espargaro (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) - taking a memorable podium. The South African cut through teammate Espargaro and then got by the latter's brother on the Aprilia with ease, and soon he was right on the tailpipes of Quartararo.

OUT OF ACTION

England's star all-rounder Ben Stokes (in photo, left) will miss the remainder of the three-match Test series against Pakistan due to family reasons, the country's cricket board announced on Sunday. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), however, did not specify the exact reasons for his pullout. "Stokes will leave the UK later this week and travel to New Zealand. He will miss England's two Test matches against Pakistan at the Ageas Bowl starting on Thursday 13 August and Friday 21 August," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement. "The England and Wales Cricket Board, along with the Stokes family, requests that all media respects the family's privacy at this time."

Woakes, Buttler win Test for England

AGENCIES

MANCHESTER, 9 AUGUST

Chris Woakes and Jos Buttler led England to an extraordinary three-wicket win over Pakistan in the first Test between the two sides at Old Trafford on Saturday. Finding themselves at 117/5 while chasing a target of 277, Woakes and Buttler's ballistic 139-run stand for the seventh wicket brought England right back into the chase.

Pitch offering bounce, pace and spin. England had reached 86-1 in reply with skipper Joe Root looking in control, but quick wickets left them reeling in their attempt at the second-highest successful fourth-innings run chase seen at Old Trafford.

When Ollie Pope gloved an unplayable brute of a Shaheen Afridi delivery to gully, England still needed 160 with five wickets left. But Buttler, and more surprisingly Woakes, took the game by the scruff of the neck.

"It was a fantastic win, it looked a long way away on Friday," Buttler said. "I think from the position we were in to get over the line was a fantastic effort." The only sad thing was there were no fans at Old Trafford to witness another great advert for test cricket.

Pakistan blotted their copybook on Friday when, having earned a 107-run first innings lead, they slumped to 137-8.

They were still in the driving seat though and more so after an extraordinary start on Saturday when Yasir Shah added 21 runs to his overnight total, including one audacious six off Broad. Broad eventually had him caught behind for 33 and Jofra Archer bowled 17-year-old Naseem Shah to restore order.

England openers Rory Burns and Dom Sibley looked relatively secure as they negotiated the opening burst from Mohammad Abbas and Shaheen Afridi before Abbas dismissed Burns lbw to leave England on 55-1 for lunch. Sibley dug in after the break and,



with Root looking increasingly comfortable, the pendulum swung England's way. But having made a patient 36, Sibley was tempted into a drive at Yasir Shah and edged to Babar Azam at first slip.

Asad Shafiq at slip. Root (42) was undone by a well-directed delivery from teenage quick Shah that took the splice of the bat and flew to Babar Azam at first slip.

We missed our chances: Pak captain Ali

Pakistan captain Azhar Ali rued the missed opportunities and lauded the Jos Buttler-Chris Woakes partnership that helped England snatch the first Test here.

He said Pakistan failed to

said after the match. "They took the game on and the pitch started to do nothing. They changed the momentum and we couldn't reply what they threw at us."

Buttler (75) and Woakes (84 notout) stitched a brilliant 139-run stand for the sixth wicket to help England chase down 277 and win the first Test.

"I would give credit to their partnership, tough to keep the field up and the boundaries dry. One of the best innnings of recent past was Stokes v Australia and this one is not far behind because conditions were tough," said the 35-year-old captain.

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN 1ST INNINGS: 326	Dominic Bess not out	0
ENGLAND 1ST INNINGS: 219	Extras: 7 (b 0; lb 2; w 0; nb 5; p 0)	
PAKISTAN 2ND INNINGS: 169	Total: 277 (7 wkt., 92.1 Ov.)	
ENGLAND 2ND INNINGS (TARGET: 277 RUNS)	Fall of Wickets: 22-4 (Rory Burns, 11.1), 86-2 (Dominic Sibley, 35.6), 96-3 (Joe Root, 38.4), 106-4 (Ben Stokes, 41.6), 117-5 (Ollie Pope, 44.5), 256-6 (Jos Buttler, 77.5), 273-7 (Stuart Broad, 81.3)	
RJ Burns c b Yasir Shah b Y-Shah 10	Bowling: Afridi 15.1-1-61-1; Abbas 16-4-36-1, N Shah 13-4-45-1, Y Shah 30-2-99-4, Khan 8-0-34-0	
DP Sibley c A Shafiq b Y-Shah 36	Man-of-the-Match: Chris Woakes	
J Root c B Azam b N Shah 42		
B Stokes c Md Irfan b Y-Shah 9		
OJ Pope c S Khan b S Afridi 7		
JC Buttler lbw b Yasir Shah 75		
CR Woakes not out 84		
Stuart Broad lbw b Yasir Shah 7		

Former India, Mohun Bagan footballer Manitombi dies at 39

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA, 9 AUGUST

Former India and Mohun Bagan footballer Manitombi Singh died only at 39 at his native village near Imphal in Manipur on Sunday.

Manitombi was suffering from a prolonged illness and breathed his last in the early hours of Sunday. The nature of illness was not clear and his family members did not share any details.

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

"Mohun Bagan family is deeply saddened by the untimely demise of former club captain Manitombi Singh," the club posted on its Twitter handle.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time. Rest in peace, Manitombi Singh," it added.

Manitombi was a key member of the Stephen Constantine-coached India Under-23 side that lifted the LG Cup in 2003 by defeating Vietnam 3-2 in Ho Chi Minh City. It was India's first international triumph since their victory at an eight-nation tournament in Singapore in 1971.

Manitombi also represented India in the 2002 Busan Asian Games. In the same year, the former right back also played in two friendlies against Jamaica at Watford and Wolverhampton in the United Kingdom.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) condoned the passing away of Manitombi. "It is sad to hear that Manitombi Singh is no more. I share the grief," AIFF president Praful Patel said in his condolence message.

"Manitombi was a talented footballer and full of energy. May his soul rest in peace," federation general secretary Kushal Das said.

Manitombi scored in his debut game for Mohun Bagan at the Calcutta Football League Premier Division in 2003 and went on to lead the club to victory in the All Airlines Gold Cup in 2004.

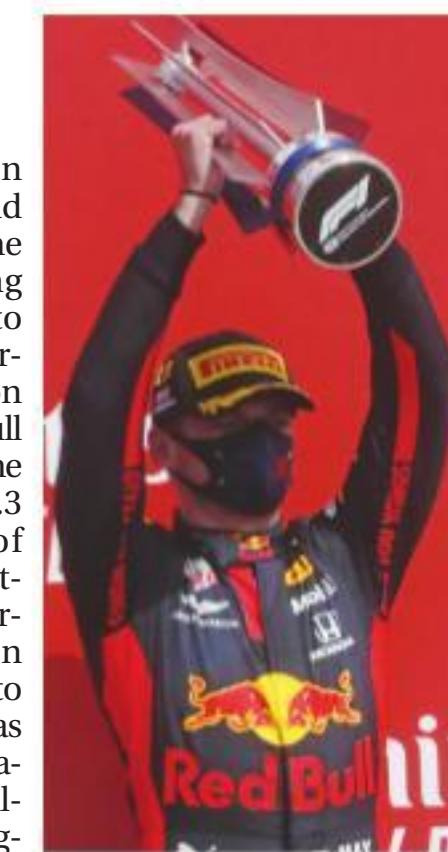
Having started out his playing career with Army Boys and Services, Manitombi also represented Air India and Salgaocar before making the big move to Mohun Bagan in 2003.

He was last seen playing for Manipur State League defending champions Anouba Imagi Mangal in the 2015-16 season before becoming their head coach.

Verstappen steps up to end Mercedes' winning start

AGENCIES

SILVERSTONE, 9 AUGUST



Max Verstappen sprung what could be the surprise of the season by beating Lewis Hamilton to win the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix on Sunday. The Red Bull driver crossed the line at Silverstone 11.3 seconds clear of Hamilton, with Valtteri Bottas third. Mercedes had been expected to cruise to their fifth win from as many rounds this season. But both Hamilton and Bottas struggled with their tires to clear the way for Verstappen to take an unlikely win.

Charles Leclerc finished fourth for Ferrari ahead of Red Bull's Alexander Albon. Racing Point's Lance Stroll was sixth.

Hamilton will head to next week's Spanish Grand Prix with a 30-point championship lead over Verstappen. Hamilton's Mercedes team has been the class act of the field this year, and after pole-sitter Bottas beat Hamilton to the first corner, it looked as though it would be a straight fight between the all-black cars for victory. But Verstappen, who moved ahead of Racing Point's Nico Hulkenberg at the opening bend, remained hot on their heels. Both Mercedes cars started on the medium tires, with Verstappen on the more durable hard tire. Verstappen sensed that the Mercedes cars were struggling and was soon hunting down Hamilton. At one stage, he was told to drop off Hamilton's gearbox to protect his tires.

"This is the only chance to beat Mercedes," he said over the radio. "I am not going to sit back like a grandma." And he remained aggressive. Bottas pitted from the lead on lap 13 with Hamilton following in for fresh tires on the following lap.

Verstappen took the lead and, when he came in for new tires at the midway stage of the race, he left the pits just behind Bottas. Verstappen took only a handful of corners to regain top spot after he resisted Bottas' tame defense. Both Verstappen and Bottas came in with 20 laps remaining for a second time, while Hamilton remained out on wearing tires until lap 41 of 52. Hamilton emerged down in fourth but the 35-year-old showed good pace on the fresh tires, posting the fastest lap of the race before overtaking Leclerc at Stowe for third. He then set his sights on hunting down Bottas and, with two laps to run, he passed his teammate around the outside of Brooklands.

Having started out his playing career with Army Boys and Services, Manitombi also represented Air India and Salgaocar before making the big move to Mohun Bagan in 2003.

He was last seen playing for Manipur State League defending champions Anouba Imagi Mangal in the 2015-16 season before becoming their head coach.

BCCI President Sourav Ganguly (in photo) has described the suspension of the IPL title sponsorship deal with Chinese mobile phone company Vivo as just a "blip", dismissing talk that it might lead to a "financial crisis".

The BCCI and Vivo on Thursday decided to suspend their partnership for the 2020 IPL beginning on September 19 in the UAE amid the clamour to boycott Chinese products in the wake of the Sino-India border stand-off.

The title sponsorship is a significant part of the IPL's commercial revenue, half of which is shared equally by the eight franchises. Vivo won the IPL title sponsorship rights for five years from 2018 to 2022 for a reported sum of Rs 2190 crore, approximately Rs 440 crore per annum.

"I wouldn't call it as a financial crisis. It's just a little bit of a blip," Ganguly said during a webinar on Saturday organised by educational book publisher S Chand Group.

"BCCI, it's a very a strong foundation - the game, the players, the administrators in the past have made this game so strong that BCCI is able to handle all these blips."

Ganguly said the BCCI always has a "Plan B" for these kind of

Messi helps Barca to reach CL last eight

AGENCIES

BARCELONA, 9 AUGUST

Just when it looked like Lionel Messi (in photo, 2nd right) had nowhere to go, the Argentine great bamboozled half of Napoli's team before scoring from an exquisite solo effort that helped Barcelona reach the Champions League quarterfinals in Portugal.

Messi netted Barcelona's second goal in the 3-1 victory that sent the Spanish side past Napoli on a 4-2 aggregate score on Saturday. Messi's goal in the 23rd minute was arguably the pick of the 31 he has scored this season in all competitions.

Napoli appeared to have him in check when Messi received the ball all alone outside the right corner of the area. Barcelona's all-time record scorer, however, dipped his head and took on the well-placed defense.

He kept control of the ball despite being knocked over while going past three Napoli players. Three more tried to intervene but Messi found the angle to fire while losing his balance to send the ball past the goalkeeper and inside the far post.

Clement Lenglet and Luis Muriel also scored for Barcelona which advanced five months after it drew 1-1 in Naples before the pandemic stopped European soccer.

Barcelona will meet Bayern Munich on Friday in the quarterfinals to be played in Lisbon in a "bubble" format of tight security to prevent a coronavirus outbreak from derailing the competition's finale.

"We are more than satisfied with our first half," Surez said. "Bayern is a great rival and is one of the favourites, along with us, of the eight that will be in Portugal." Messi's beautiful goal doubled Barcelona's lead after Lenglet headed in a corner in the 10th. The opener settled Barcelona down after Napoli's Dries Mertens had given the hosts a scare by hitting the post shortly after kickoff.

Video review had a busy

night. It disallowed another Messi goal for a handball by the forward and then awarded Messi a penalty after he slipped in front of Kalidou Koulibaly and was kicked in the lower left leg by the defender. Messi spent several minutes receiving medical attention, and Surez stepped up to convert the spot kick.

Barcelona coach Quique Setin said that Messi, who played the whole game, had a hard knock but "I don't think he will have a problem."

Lorenzo Insigne pulled one back for the visitors in first-half injury time with a penalty awarded after Ivan Rakitic fouled Mertens. Gennaro Gattuso's side came out from half-time on the attack, and in need of two goals to go through, Barcelona's defense held up and, once the Rakitic-led midfield got control of play, Setin had time to give a debut to youth player Ramon Rodriguez. Barcelona is searching for its first European Cup since 2015 and only a Champions League trophy will prevent it from ending the season without a title for the first time since 2014. It lost the Spanish league title to Real

Madrid last month and failed to reach the Copa del Rey final.

Bayern cruises past Chelsea

The coronavirus pandemic has changed almost everything about the Champions League. Empty stadiums, games in August and a tournament in Portugal. But Bayern Munich keeps winning and Robert Lewandowski keeps scoring.

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

Bayern has won 18 straight competitive games going back to February and hasn't lost since December. Next up is a quarterfinal against Barcelona, which beat Napoli 3-1 in Saturday's other game.

"We wanted to win the game and show we were picking up where we left off," Bayern coach Hansi Flick told Sky, adding of Barcelona: "As with any opponent, we have the requisite respect and we're going to prepare well."

Lewandowski has 13 goals