

SHORT TAKES

'Slight improvement in Pranab condition'

New Delhi: Respiratory parameters of former President Pranab Mukherjee have shown a slight improvement, though he continues to be on ventilator support, the hospital said on Thursday. Mr Mukherjee, who was admitted to the Army's Research and Referral Hospital on August 10, developed a lung infection on Wednesday. Doctors attending on him said his vital parameters remain stable. "The respiratory parameters of Pranab Mukherjee have shown slight improvement though he continues to be on ventilatory support. His vital and clinical parameters remain stable and are being closely monitored by a team of specialists," a hospital statement said. Mr Mukherjee was operated on for removal of a clot in the brain on August 10 at the Army Hospital in Delhi Cantonment. — PTI

Strict lockdown enforced in Bengal

Kolkata: West Bengal on Thursday witnessed strict enforcement of the government's twice a week complete lockdown with the police cracking down heavily on violators in a bid to check the spread of the contagion. The lockdown will remain in force on Friday too. A total of 2542 people were arrested from across the state, including 378 in Kolkata, on the charge of violation of the lockdown guidelines and safety precautions. The complete lockdown on Thursday is part of the state government's plan to implement shutdowns every week since July 23 to break the chain of Covid-19 infection amid admission of community transmission in some parts of the state. All public transport, government and private offices, and other commercial establishments, barring those dealing with essential services, remained closed due to lockdown. — PTI

2 electrocuted to death in WB zoo

Kolkata: Two employees of a private firm, engaged to install a hoarding inside Alipore Zoo, died on Thursday after coming in contact with a live wire, an official said. The two were rushed to hospital where they were declared dead, Alipore zoo director Asis Samanta told PTI. Another employee of the firm, who was also electrocuted, is in hospital and his condition is stated to be serious, Samanta said. West Bengal Zoo Authority (WBZA) has ordered a probe into the incident, chief wildlife warden Ravikant Sinha said. A zoo source said the electrocution could have been caused due to heavy rain in the metropolis since Thursday morning. — PTI

Doc ends life due to 'work' pressure

Bengaluru: A 43-year old government doctor on coronavirus duty died of suicide in Mysuru district in Karnataka with some of his colleagues alleging he was under work pressure. The state government said an inquiry has been ordered into the death of the doctor and advised those battling the virus not to succumb to any pressure. According to the police, Taluk health officer S.R. Nagendra was found hanging at his quarters in Alanahalli where he had been staying alone. Nagendra's family was residing in another area in Mysuru district and he chose to stay alone out of fear of contracting the virus and spreading it, they said. Some of his colleagues alleged there was intense work pressure on him as he had been on Covid-19 duty. — PTI

2 top LeT men among 6 ultras killed in 4 days

Infiltration from PoK down by 50%: J&K DIG

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 20

Jammu and Kashmir's director general of police Dilbagh Singh on Thursday claimed that the security forces combating a three-decade old insurgency in the erstwhile state have wreaked the leadership structure of separatist militant organisations apart by killing as many as 26 of their top commanders in, so far, this year.

He said that two of them — both belonging to outlawed Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) — were "neutralised" in the past three days along with four other militants in three separate operations.

Mr Singh also claimed that infiltration of militants from across the border had decreased by half this year. "The alertness of our forces and border management are so good that for the first time the level of infiltration has come down by fifty per cent when compared to the past. Also, the local recruitment into the mil-

▶ **LOCAL RECRUITMENT** into the militant outfits has decreased considerably. I think people, particularly our children, are listening to our advice and appeals and staying away from the gun, J&K DIG Dilbagh Singh said.

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Speaking to reporters in Handwara town, he said, "We've succeeded in breaking the leadership structure of militants in Kashmir. Twenty-six top most commanders have been killed in encounters across the Valley, so far, this year."

Taking about the killing of LeT commander Naseer-ud-Din Lone along with another militant in the latest gunfight with security forces that took place in Kralgund area of Handwara, the DGP said, "He was

involved in the killing of six CRPF personnel in two separate terror attacks besides similar other acts including the murder of a local policeman. We had had reports that he was planning to carry out a big strike in north Kashmir after the killing of Sajad Ahmed Mir alias Sajad Hyder." Mir, also a senior commander of the LeT, was among three militants killed in a gunfight with security forces in Kreeri area of neighbouring Bandipore district earlier this week.

The group led by Mir had on Monday killed two CRPF jawans and a local Special Police Officer in a sneak attack carried out by them in Kreeri. In the ensuing encounter which continued for about thirty hours, all the three assailants including Mir, his close associate Innayatullah and their Pakistani aide Osman and two Army jawans Grenadiers Ravi Kumar Singh and Prashant Singh were killed.

Pt. Jasraj cremated with state honours



Family members carry the mortal remains of late classical singer Pandit Jasraj during his funeral in Mumbai on Thursday. Pandit Jasraj (90) died due to a cardiac arrest at his home in New Jersey on Monday. — PTI

Heavy rains hit lives in several parts of country

New Delhi, Aug. 20: Heavy rains disrupted normal life in many parts of the country, including Delhi and adjoining Gurgaon, on Thursday and led to worsening of the flood situation in Uttar Pradesh where over 870 villages in 16 districts have been affected.

In Bihar, the flood situation remained grim. With two more deaths, the toll in the Bihar flood climbed to 27 as 81.79 lakh people were affected in 16 districts.

Low-lying areas were submerged and electricity and road links snapped at several places in Odisha after torrential rains triggered by a low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal lashed the state.

In Jammu and Kashmir, multiple landslides triggered by heavy rains blocked the 270-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir to rest of the country.

Rains in Delhi and its neighbouring areas this morning led to long traffic snarls and damaged property. The Ayanagar weather station recorded 122.8 mm between 8.30 am on Wednesday and 8.30 am on Thursday, which was 11

times the normal rainfall.

On an average, the national capital gauges 11.3 mm rainfall from 8.30 am on August 19 to 8.30 am on August 20 every year.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative figures for the city, recorded 54.8 mm rainfall.

The Palam, Lodhi Road and Ridge weather stations gauged 89.1 mm, 62.4 mm and 77.3 mm precipitation during the period.

Rainfall recorded below 15 mm is considered light, between 15 and 64.5 mm is moderate and above 64.5 mm is heavy.

Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD regional forecasting centre, said moderate rains will continue till Friday morning.

Thereafter, the intensity will decrease and the city will witness on and off light rains.

There was severe flooding in Gurgaon, where roads turned into small rivers and parks resembled swimming pools. — PTI

India-aided projects in Bangla to finish soon

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 20

Several Indian developmental assistance projects in Bangladesh, including the Rampal Maitree Power Plant, India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline and rail links between Akhaura-Agartala and Chilahati-Haldibari and Khulna-Mongla rail line are expected to get completed next year, New Delhi said on Thursday.

During the two-day visit of foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla to Bangladesh that culminated on Wednesday — during which he called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina — it was proposed that a high-level monitoring mechanism be set up to regularly review the progress of the ongoing projects, New Delhi added.

In response to a question, the ministry of external affairs made it clear that Bangladesh did not raise either the issue of the NRC process in Assam nor the Indian Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) during discussions with India during the visit. The visit of the Indian foreign secretary came at a time when China has been trying to extend its economic influence in Bangladesh.

HAM chief upset with RJD over no talks before taking decisions Blow to Bihar alliance, Manjhi quits

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, AUG. 20

Hindustani Awam Morcha —Secular (HAM-S) on Thursday announced that it has decided to part ways with the grand alliance led by the RJD in Bihar.

HAM leaders said that party chief Jitan Ram Manjhi has been upset with the RJD for not consulting alliance partners before taking any decisions and ignoring his demands for the formation of the coordination committee. Sources said that besides



▶ **SOURCES SAID** that besides Mr Manjhi others in the party were also in favour of snapping ties with the RJD and forming an alliance with other like-minded political parties in Bihar ahead of the Assembly polls later this year

Mr Manjhi others in the party were also in favour of snapping ties with the RJD and forming an alliance with other like-minded political parties in Bihar ahead of the Assembly polls slated to be held later this year. The final ultimatum

served to the RJD for the formation of coordination committee had ended a month ago following which it was being speculated that Mr Manjhi may quit the alliance and join hands with either the JD(U) or BJP. On Thursday after the decision to quit the grand

alliance was announced HAM spokesperson Danish Rizwan said that "those who don't listen to coalition partners will not listen to the people after coming to power. The decision to quit the grand alliance has been taken after our repeated demand for the formation of a coordination committee was turned down by the RJD".

While both RJD and Congress have been silent on the development, BJP hailed Mr Manjhi's decision to quit the grand alliance.

10 injured as Naxals thrash villagers in C'garh district

Raipur, Aug. 20: Ten persons, including five women and a minor girl, were injured after allegedly being beaten up by Naxals for supporting development activities in their village in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district, the police said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday night in Chikpal village, where a group of 25 to 30 armed cadres thrashed over 20 villagers with sticks and butt of their guns, Dantewada SP Abhishek Pallava said.

The SP said the district collector had visited the village last month and assured to take up development works there.

On the collector's direction, women in villages of Dantewada formed groups and nominal funds were given to them to carry out various activities in their villages, he said. — PTI

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

Fresh-Tender work.
(A) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 03.09.2020 upto 5.00 PM and shall be opened/downloaded on dated 04.09.2020 at 11.00 AM.

S.N.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1.	50/GM(R)/Sr.M.(E&M)-II/2020-21/ET	Providing of New Traffic Signals at Various Sectors in Noida.	9.31
2.	52/GM(R)/Sr.M.(E&M)-II/2020-21/ET	Providing & Fixing of Park Light in Rajat Vihar, Sector-62 and Sector-63A, Noida.	11.01
3.	53/GM(R)/Sr.M.(E&M)-II/2020-21/ET	Supply and Installation of New Windows Split Type Air Conditioner in Sport Complex Building at Stadium Sector-21A, Noida.	19.16
4.	54/GM(R)/Sr.M.(E&M)-II/2020-21/ET	Maintenance of Windows Split Type Air Conditioner in Sport Complex Building at Stadium Sector-21A, Noida.	7.18
5.	09/GM(R)/Sr.M.(E&M)-II/2019-20/ET	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Fountain with LED Colour Changing Lights at Round about underpass NH-24 (Noida Entry Point), Sector-62, Noida.	20.10

Re-Tender work.
(B) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 27.08.2020 upto 5.00 PM and shall be opened/downloaded on dated 28.08.2020 at 11.00 AM.

S.N.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
6.	17/GM(R)/Sr.M.(E&M)-II/2020-21/ET	Annual Maintenance of Park Light in Sector-62, Noida.	19.76

General Manager
Noida

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CLP leader Nath tightens grip over party

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 20

Former CM Kamal Nath has been declared leader of Opposition in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly.

State Assembly pro-tem speaker Rameswar Sharma accorded him status of the Leader of the Opposition in the House following a letter written to him by MP Pradesh Congress Committee apprising him of the party's decision to appoint



▶ **KAMAL NATH** had stepped down as chief minister on March 20 in the wake of 22 Congress legislators, loyal to Jyotiraditya Scindia, resigning from the Assembly

him the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader.

"I declare Mr Nath leader of Opposition in the House following a letter written to me by the Congress in this regard," Mr Sharma told reporters on Wednesday evening.

Mr Nath, who stepped down as chief minister on

March 20 in the wake of 22 Congress legislators, loyal to Jyotiraditya Scindia, resigning from the House, also holds the post of president of MP PCC.

Later, Mr Scindia and 22 ex-MLAs joined BJP.

With his fresh appointment as CLP leader, Mr Nath has tightened his grip

over the party, virtually gaining the status of supreme of state Congress.

BJP leader Pankaj Chaturvedi who switched over to the saffron party from Congress along with 22 former Congress MLAs, took a jibe at Mr Nath for holding dual posts of PCC chief and CLP leader.

A senior Congress leader said there was no violation of party rules or constitution in the appointment of Mr Nath as the Leader of the Opposition.

DELHI POLICE
SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

This GANESH CHATURTHI
Bring your Ganesha home

In the fight against coronavirus, Celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi at home

No idol of Lord Ganesha shall be set up in the tent/pandal/public places.

People are advised to celebrate the festival at their homes.

Maintain social distancing of at least 2 yards.

Refrain from personal greeting.

If you step out of the house, wear a mask, carry a hand sanitizer and maintain social distancing.

Stay home and have a safe Ganesh Chaturthi!

E-mail to CP, Delhi at: cp.snshrivastava@delhipolice.gov.in | Write to CP, Delhi at P.O. Box No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112

FOR HELPLINE SERVICES CALL 1090

SHORT TAKES

Russia wants to partner with India for Covid vaccine

New Delhi: Russia is looking for a partnership with India for producing Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V, Kirill Dmitriev, the CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, said on Thursday. Russian President Vladimir Putin had announced that his country has developed the world's first vaccine against Covid-19, which works "quite effectively" and forms a "stable immunity" against the disease. Sputnik V has been developed by the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, along with the RDIF. The vaccine has not been tested in Phase 3 or larger clinical trials. Addressing an online press briefing, Dmitriev said several nations are interested in the production of the vaccine from countries in Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. "The production of the vaccine is a very important issue. Currently, we are looking for a partnership with India. We believe that they are capable of producing the Gamaleya vaccine and it is very important to say that those partnerships to produce the vaccine will enable us to cover the demand that we have," he said. Dmitriev said Russia is looking forward to international cooperation. "We are going to do clinical trials not just in Russia but also in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, probably in Brazil and India. We are planning to produce the vaccine in more than five countries and there is a very high demand from Asia, Latin America, Italy and other parts of the world regarding the delivery of the vaccine," he said. Alexander Gintsburg, the director of the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology and an academically at the Russian Academy of Sciences, said more than 20,000 people have taken part in the clinical trials, based on human adenoviruses or human adenoviral vectors. — PTI

Blow to RJD as Lalu 'samdhi', 2 other MLAs join JD(U)

Patna: The main opposition RJD on Thursday received yet another jolt ahead of the polls when its three more MLAs including old-timer Chandrika Rai, whose daughter is locked in a nasty marital dispute with Lalu Prasad's son, joined the ruling JD(U). Rai hinted that his daughter might contest the coming assembly polls. He, however, did not specify the name of the RJD leader against whom his daughter Aishwarya would contest polls, but asserted that there is no "safe seats" for both brothers -- Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav -- in the state. Rais daughter Aishwarya had tied the knot with Prasad's elder son Tej Pratap Yadav in May, 2018 though the latter filed a divorce petition barely six months later citing incompatibility. The matter is pending with a Patna court. Apart from Rai, the other two RJD MLAs who embraced JD(U) are Jai Vardhan Yadav, the Paliganj (Patna) MLA and grandson of former Union minister and famous Yadav leader Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav besides Faraz Fatmi, MLA from Keoti (Darbhanga). — PTI

Bus hijack kingpin in UP arrested after encounter with cops

Agra/Firozabad: The alleged mastermind behind the hijacking of a bus with 34 passengers on board was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Police following an encounter in Firozabad district on Thursday, officials said. Agra Senior Superintendent of Police Babloo Kumar said the police will invoke the stringent National Security Act (NSA) against Pradeep Gupta alias Gudda for the "sensational and audacious" act once the case is chargesheeted. The gunfight broke out around 5 am near a village in Fatehabad area between the accused and police teams, including Agra and Firozabad units, and a special operations group, he said. "Key accused Pradeep Gupta and his associate Yatendra Yadav were on a motorcycle but seeing the police check, they opened fire and tried to flee. Gupta got injured in retaliatory firing, while Yadav managed to escape through the farmlands," SSP Kumar told reporters. — PTI

27.7% in containment zones exposed to Covid

Punjab's 1st survey was conducted in 5 zones from Aug. 1 to 17

Chandigarh, Aug. 20: Antibodies against the Covid-19 infection have been found in 27.7 per cent of people in Punjab's containment zones, according to the findings of a sero-survey.

This was Punjab's first exclusive survey and was conducted in five containment zones from August 1 to 17 among a systematically selected random sample population of 1,250 people. There were earlier surveys, but they were more generalised and conducted by the state government in coordination with the Indian Council of Medical Research, according to a government statement issued here.

The latest survey's findings were submitted to chief minister Amarinder Singh at a Covid review meeting on Thursday. "A total of 27.7 per cent of the people in Punjab's containment zones are found to be positive for Covid antibodies, indicating that they have already been infected and have recovered from the coron-

CORONA CHECK IN PUNJAB



■ The survey was Punjab's first exclusive survey and was conducted in five containment zones from August 1 to 17 among a systematically selected random sample population of 1,250 people

■ The findings showed that the Sars-CoV2 (Covid-19) antibodies' prevalence in the containment zones to be the highest at 40 per cent in Amritsar district, followed by 35.6% in Ludhiana, 33.2% in SAS Nagar, 19.2% in Patiala and 10.8% in Jalandhar district

■ The sample size was 250 people from each containment zone, and from each of the selected households, one person above the age of 18 was randomly chosen for the survey

avirus," as per the sero-survey's findings.

The findings showed that the Sars-CoV2 (Covid-19) antibodies' prevalence in the containment zones to be the highest at 40 per cent in Amritsar district, followed by 35.6 per cent in Ludhiana, 33.2 per cent in SAS Nagar, 19.2 per cent in Patiala and 10.8 per cent in Jalandhar district.

The survey report came on a day when Delhi released its second sero-

survey findings, which showed that antibodies against the Covid-19 infection have been found in 29.1 per cent of people in the national capital.

For the latest Punjab sero-survey, one containment zone each was selected in Patiala, SAS Nagar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar districts. These zones had reported a high number of Covid cases. The sample size was 250 people from each zone, and from

each of the selected households, one person above the age of 18 was randomly chosen for the survey.

Overall, the sero-prevalence of Sars CoV-2 antibodies was found to be 27.7 per cent in the containment zones where the highest number of Covid-19 cases had been reported. The survey was aimed at finding out the prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies using Rapid Antibody testing kits. — PTI

■ Rahul says Modi govt decisions hit small businesses badly

'Modi ruined unorganised economy'

Raipur, Aug. 20: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday accused the Narendra Modi government of decimating the unorganised economy, comprising farmers, labourers and small businesses, in the last six years of its rule, and said that the country will not be able to generate jobs in the coming period as a result of that.

Addressing via video conferencing the foundation stone-laying ceremony of the party's offices to be built in 22 districts headquarters of Chhattisgarh, he said that although the unorganised economy generates 90 per cent of the country's employment, the Modi government destroyed it through various moves like demonetisation and

implementation of "wrong GST".

The event was organised on the occasion of the birth anniversary of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been attacking the unorganised economy for the last six years. He did this because this sector has money and Modi wanted to transfer it to big businessmen," Gandhi alleged.

"Wherever there is a Congress government (in the states), we work to balance the unorganised and organised economies. The unorganised economy acts as a shock absorber in adverse situations."

"If the country's unorganised economy is secured and strong, it can absorb any kind of shock

Farmers, labourers, small and medium business have been decimated as a result of demonetisation and extremely complex GST decisions by the Centre

— Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

and cope with difficult situations. Our mother and sister keep money at their home, because it works as a shock absorber," he added.

"Farmers, labourers, small and medium business have been decimated as a result of demonetisation and extremely complex GST decisions by the

Centre," the Congress leader alleged.

"The first attack on the unorganised economy was the decision of demonetisation by PM Modi. He made people deposit their hard-earned money in the banks and then with that money he waived loans of 10-15 businessmen friends and crony capitalists. Then he imposed the wrong GST that led to collapse of small and medium businesses and farmers," he said.

Slamming the Centre over the handling of the coronavirus situation, Mr Gandhi said, "Modiji suddenly implemented lockdown without any prior notice. Why did he suddenly do this? There was a thinking behind it which was to target our unorganised sector." — PTI

Ram Mandir work starts, no iron will be used: Trust

Engineers now testing soil health at temple site

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 20

The Ram Mandir in Ayodhya will be constructed by adhering to India's ancient and traditional construction techniques and copper plates will be used to fuse stone blocks with each other. The construction has "begun" and currently soil testing at the site is being done. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had performed the "bhoomi puja" of the temple on August 5.

Members of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, Supreme Court appointed trust for the construction of the temple, held a meeting in New Delhi on Thursday. Asking "Ram bhakts" to donate copper for the construction, the trust said donors can "engrave family names, place of origin or their community temples' names" on copper plates which should be 18 inches long, 30 mm wide

and three mm in depth.

"This way, the copper plates will not only symbolize the unity of this country but also be a testament to the entire country's contribution towards mandir construction," tweeted the trust. Iron will not be used in the construction.

"The Mandir will be built by adhering to India's ancient and traditional construction techniques. It will also be built to sustain earthquakes, storms and other natural calamities. Iron won't be used in the construction of the Mandir," the Trust said.

The Trust also called upon devotees of Lord

Ramb to donate copper plates for the construction

After the meeting, Trust's general-secretary Champat Rai said, "We are taking help of Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee and IIT Chennai. 1200 pillars with one metre diameter will be brought up from depth of 30-35 metre for a strong foundation." The temple will be built to sustain earthquakes, storms and other natural calamities. Engineers from CBRI Roorkee, IIT-Madras along with L&T are currently testing the soil at the temple site and the construction work is expected to finish in 36-40 months, said the trust.

The temple will be 161 feet tall, three-storey structure on a raised platform with multiple turrets, pillars and domes and in 'Nagara style' of architecture. The original design by renowned temple architect Chandrakant Sompura in 1983 has been slightly modified.

Govt hikes aviation security fee by ₹10

New Delhi, Aug. 20: The civil aviation ministry has decided to charge higher aviation security fee (ASF) from domestic as well as international passengers from September 1, senior government officials said on Thursday.

Making the air travel slightly costlier, the officials said the ASF for domestic flyers will be increased to ₹160 from ₹150 starting next month, and international passengers will pay \$5.2 instead of \$4.85 as the ASF from September 1. The ministry had increased the ASF last year too. On June 7,

2019, the ministry said domestic passengers would be charged ₹150 instead of ₹130 as the ASF and international passengers would be charged \$4.85 instead of \$3.25 as the ASF from July 1, 2019.

The aviation sector has been significantly impacted due to the travel restrictions imposed in India and other countries in view of the coronavirus pandemic. All airlines in India have taken cost-cutting measures such as pay cuts, leave-without-pay and firings of employees in order to conserve cash. — PTI

■ Surat, Navi Mumbai bag 2nd, 3rd spot in Swachh Survekshan

Indore gets cleanest city tag for 4th time

New Delhi, Aug 20: Indore was adjudged India's cleanest city for a fourth straight year while Surat and Navi Mumbai grabbed the second and third positions respectively, as the Centre announced the results of its latest annual cleanliness survey on Thursday.

Varanasi, represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Lok Sabha, was adjudged the 'Best Ganga Town' in the country, followed by Kanpur, Munger, Prayagraj and Haridwar. Chhattisgarh was given the 'Cleanest State' award in the category of states having more than 100 urban local bodies, followed by Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

Chandigarh, Aug. 20: Amid rising coronavirus cases, Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday ordered a series of emergency measures, including extension of weekend lockdown, with daily night curfew from 7 pm to 5 am in all 167 cities and towns in the state from August 21. Besides, the chief minister also ordered a total ban on all gatherings except weddings and funerals across the state till August 31.

Amarinder, making the announcement on Thursday evening, called for "war-like preparedness" to deal with the spike in coronavirus cases.

"Enough is enough. We need to be tough without affecting the state's economy," the Chief Minister said today, adding that each of the more than 900 Covid-linked deaths in the state "pains me".

The government and private offices will work at 50 per cent capacity till the end of this month, as per the directives issued by the CM during a video conference meeting to review the COVID situation in the state.

Punjab has been witnessing a surge in Covid-19 cases and death toll for the last several days. On Wednesday, the state had reported 36,083 coronavirus cases with 920 deaths so far.

The chief minister also directed the police to ensure the ban on political protests and gathering is followed, and asked his own party — the Congress — to self-enforce the ban strictly.

Punjab on Thursday saw its biggest single-day spike of 1,741 coronavirus cases on Thursday, taking the Covid-19 tally to 37,824 in the state, according to a

medical bulletin.

Thirty-seven more fatalities were also recorded in the state and the death toll now stands at 957, it said.

The record jump in the caseload came on a day when the state government announced extension of night curfew by two hours in all cities from August 21.

On August 17, the state had reported a maximum daily increase of 1,704 cases. Of the fresh fatalities, 10 deaths were reported from Ludhiana, five each from Mohali, Patiala and Sangrur, three from Jalandhar, two each from SBS Nagar, Amritsar and Hoshiarpur and one each from Gurdaspur, Kapurthala and Muktsar, as per the medical bulletin. One death case reported from Amritsar on Wednesday was deleted as it was counted twice, it said. — PTI

Remembering Rajiv Gandhi



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi pays tribute to his late father and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his 76th birth anniversary at Vir Bhoomi in New Delhi on Thursday. Paying respects to his father, Rahul Gandhi said his father was a man with a tremendous vision and was far ahead of his time. Taking to social media and using the hashtag "Remembering Rajiv Gandhi", several Congress leaders hailed Rajiv Gandhi's contribution to nation building and his leadership. — PTI

Rajput case: CBI team to visit crime scene today

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 20

The CBI, probing the death case of Sushant Singh Rajput, is expected to collect all forensic, scientific and other crucial evidences pertaining to the case from Mumbai police on Friday.

Sources said a team of officials, along with forensic experts, has already reached Mumbai. "Forensic experts will on Friday visit the crime scene in Mumbai where the Bollywood actor was found dead," sources said. The experts will collect fresh scientific evidences pertaining to the case, sources said.

Rajput (34), was found dead in his rented apartment in Mumbai's suburban Bandra on June 14.

"The experts will ask police to provide the belongings of the victims for a fresh medical and forensic analysis. They will also meet doctors who had conducted Sushant Singh Rajput's autopsy," sources said.

Yes Bank fraud case: Wadhawans get bail

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 20

The Bombay high court on Thursday granted bail to Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd promoters Kapil Wadhawan and Dheeraj Wadhawan, who have been accused of money laundering by the Enforcement Directorate in the multi-crore Yes Bank fraud case. The brothers, however, will remain in jail as they have also been booked by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the same case.

Justice Bharati Dangre granted them bail as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) failed to file its charge sheet in the case within the stipulated 60-day period. The court noted that there is a period prescribed in law for filing of the charge sheet, and an accused cannot be kept in custody even for a day after that stipulated time and they have the right to default bail.

An accused can seek default bail if the investigating agency fails to file a charge sheet against him or her in the case



Kapil Dheeraj

within the period prescribed under section 167 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, appearing for ED, sought the court to stay its order for two weeks so that the agency could appeal in the Supreme Court. Justice Dangre, however, refused and said once the right of default bail is due, the accused cannot be kept in custody thereafter even for a day. The court directed the duo to deposit ₹1 lakh each as surety and surrender their passports.

The brothers had sought bail claiming the ED failed to file its chargesheet within the stipulated period of 60 days. They were arrested by the ED on May 14 on money laundering charges.



THE ASIAN AGE

21 AUGUST 2020

CBI's Sushant probe may set troubling precedent

The Supreme Court's decision to hand over the entire investigation into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in Mumbai on June 14, and the circumstances surrounding it, to the CBI might seem, at first sight, to be justified given the ongoing political wrangling between the Bihar and Maharashtra governments over competing claims to jurisdiction by the Patna and Mumbai police forces, but it also sets a whole new precedent, one that may prove troubling in future.

The single-judge bench of Justice Hrishikesh Roy, taking recourse to the court's plenary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution, that enable it to pass any order to do "complete justice" in any case, said there was "no impediment" to endorsing the ongoing CBI investigation, and that due to "acrimonious allegations" at the political level, the "legitimacy of the investigation (by the Mumbai police) had come under a cloud". The CBI had taken over the investigation of the FIR registered by the Patna police, on a complaint by Sushant's father K.K. Rajput, after the state government's referral. The

Sadly, public faith in the CBI's ability to effectively investigate even high-profile cases is low. It has been probing the death of actress Jiah Khan for almost seven years. NCP supremo Sharad Pawar hoped the CBI's Rajput probe won't be like the one into rationalist Narendra Dabholkar's 2013 murder, which remains unsolved.

Mumbai police, which was probing the actor's death under Section 174 CrPC, has been directed to hand it over to the CBI. The real mistake by the Mumbai police may have been its failure to file an FIR, as much was made of the fact that the only FIR in the case was registered in Patna.

The court said it was handing the case to the CBI as "the trust, faith and confidence of the common man in the judicial process will resonate", but sadly, public faith in the CBI's ability to effectively investigate even high-profile cases is quite low. It has been probing the death of actress Jiah Khan for almost seven years, with little progress. NCP supremo Sharad Pawar said Wednesday, after the Supreme Court

order, that he hoped the CBI's Rajput probe won't be like the one into rationalist Narendra Dabholkar's 2013 murder, which remains unresolved. And memories are still fresh of the slipshod way in which it probed the 2008 murder of Aarushi Talwar, with matters hitting a dead end. That shocking crime remains an unresolved mystery.

The Supreme Court noted that the "steps taken" by the Mumbai police while probing Sushant's death "cannot be faulted", yet it directed the CBI to take over. More important, by endorsing the "Zero FIR" registered by the Patna police, which the Bihar government later transferred to the CBI, a new principle has been established. In India's federal system, law and order (and thus investigation of crime) is a state subject. A "Zero FIR" is meant as an enabler: to let people file FIRs near their homes or workplaces, which would then be shifted to the jurisdiction where the incident occurred. If everyone impacted by an event filed FIRs in the places they came from, and have it investigated there, it would mean chaos. If Rhea Chakraborty's family, for instance, were to file an FIR in West Bengal to protect her interests, would the Kolkata police investigate the Sushant case? And, hypothetically, if a crime had multiple victims from different states, could they or their families file separate FIRs in their home states? Would all these cases then be probed by the CBI?

That said, one only hopes the CBI now investigates Sushant's death effectively and ensures that he and his family get justice swiftly.

Time to legalise betting?

Indian cricket and online gambling sites have been willing bedfellows for years. The association of IPL with a business witnessing exponential growth now is further strengthened by Dream11 winning the bid to IPL 2020 title rights. Dream11 is also partly owned by the major Chinese new economy company Tencent. The nationalistic outcry that saw mobile phone maker Vivo step aside in the face of India-China hostilities along the LAC has led to this more queasy association with Dream11.

A hue and cry at the turn of the millennium over bookmakers inducing cricketers to throw matches and fix spot events with the lure of filthy lucre led to BCCI banning a few players, including a captain. But Indian cricket has been cavorting freely with gambling since the advent of IPL. The show goes on despite the image of the cash-rich league being shredded in Supreme Court over betting shenanigans linked to two IPL franchises, which were banned for two years.

The paradoxical stand of the game that runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds stands exposed by legitimising of gambling interests that have gone online in the expanding Internet era after a semi crackdown on mobile-networked illegal bookmakers. While the politicians and police stood to gain the most from links with bookmakers at a time when all sports betting in India took place underground, IPL's endorsement of online gambling lends this strange legitimacy even as the internet explodes with betting.

Players, including the BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and the modern game's leading icon MS Dhoni, are endorsing gambling sites as brand ambassadors. Of course, our laws are to be blamed for the stigma traditionally attached to gambling, except in horse racing. Proposals to legalise sports betting are gathering dust in the face of the the great wall of Indian hypocrisy. It is a pity then that an ambiguous status quo is buttressed by an ambivalent moral attitude. While match-fixing must be shot down with the keenest eye, India can take an honest look at legalising betting.

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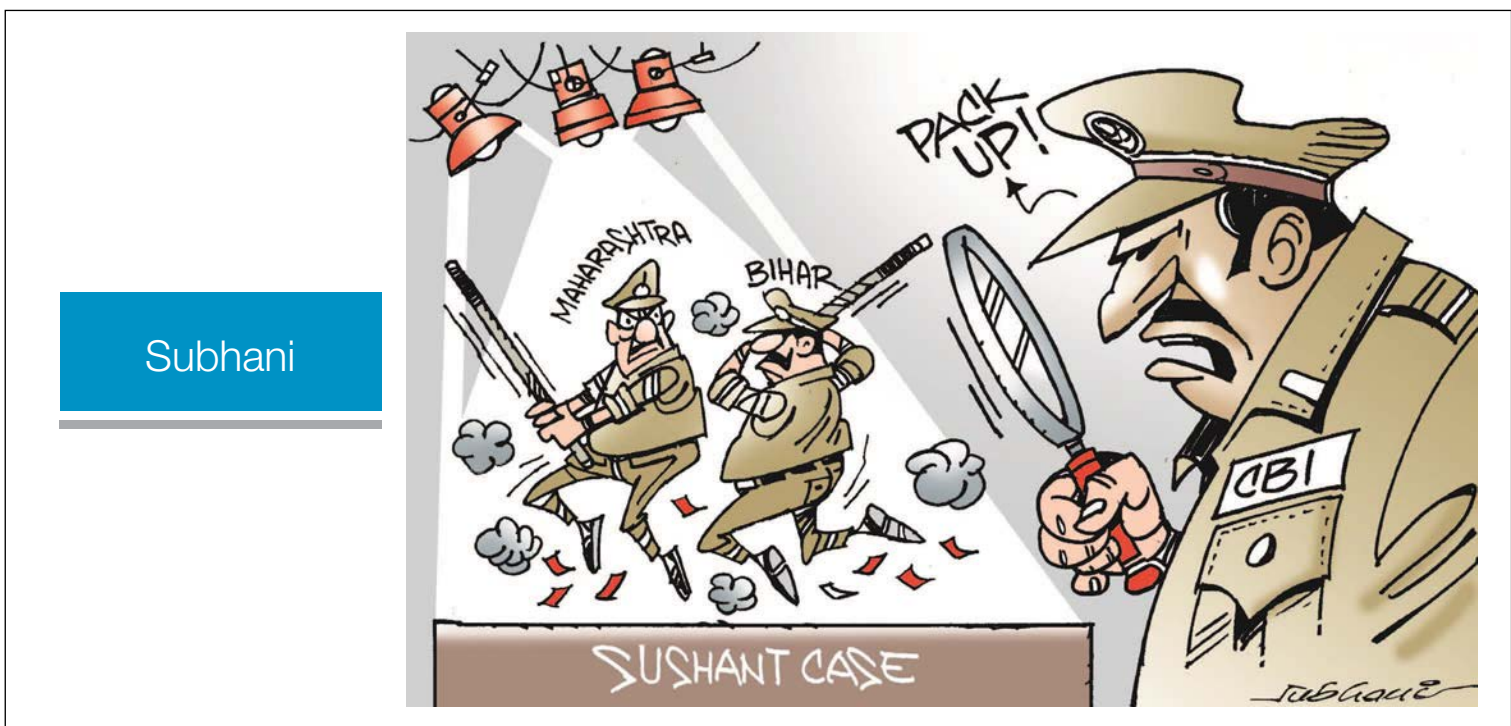
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Subhani

Democrats' Joe Biden: The man in the muddle



V. Sudarshan

Much has been made of America's Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's remarks at a diaspora event three days ago that he is "standing with India in confronting the threats it faces in its own region and along its borders". This is what the Democratic Party's 2016 platform, where there was precisely one sentence to do with India, said: "We will continue to invest in a long-term strategic partnership with India — the world's largest democracy, a nation of great diversity, and an important Pacific power." If you were hoping for a significant advance on this, here is the single sentence that embraces India in the 2020 draft: "And we will continue to invest in our strategic partnership with India — the world's largest democracy, a nation of great diversity, and a growing Asia-Pacific power." Note carefully the highlighting of the geographical preciseness.

"Strategic partnership" is one of those overblown phrases that the more it is thrown about, indicate a situation that is often inversely proportional to the reality it purports to convey. It is unclear, for instance, exactly how many times India and the United States have met for a strategic dialogue ever since the US-India strategic and commercial dialogue was kicked off with much fanfare in 2015. Maybe once? Twice? Yet Joe Biden's supportive statement comes as New Delhi faces, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out in his Independence Day speech, that there is a simultaneous situation both on the Line of Control as well as the Line of Actual Control. Unfortunately, both are joined at the hip with the erstwhile state of Jammu

and Kashmir. Irrespective of whether the LAC situation is the result of poor "chowkidari" or substantial vigilance, it is a two-in-one situation that is going to provide the strategic overhang as New Delhi manoeuvres itself out of its nonplussed state.

Though both Joe Biden and Donald Trump have spoken warmly of their support for India vis-à-vis China and Pakistan, there are practical limits to how much Washington can or will swing its weight exclusively behind India and in what manner. Its record remains patchy irrespective of the politics of the occupant of the White House, even on core Indian interests such as effective prevention of terrorism in any form emanating from Pakistan. Given America's continued stakes in the stability of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the next US President's approach to regional issues will be tempered by many factors, considering that all three major players — India, China, and Pakistan — operate under the nuclear umbrella.

The situation is unique and unparalleled, with Chinese troops sitting in presumptive Indian territory, and the United States having little or no leverage over China to moderate its strategic goals. Some previous instances blow like straws in the wind. Whether it was our response to the attack on our Parliament in 2001, the 1999 Kargil intrusions, the July 2018 response to the attack on the Army camp at Uri or the February 2019 Balakot airstrike after a car bomb killed around 40 paramilitary jawans in Pulwama, the American emphasis has been strictly to hasten de-escalation. The situation has not been helped with our leaders using phrases like "qatal ki raat" — or a night of

slaughter, for those requiring translation — to describe a putative rain of missiles on Pakistan, which Prime Minister Modi did after Balakot. Nor such boasts as "Pakistan ke paas nuclear button hai. To hamare paas kya hai be? Yeh diwali ke liye rakhe hai kya?" Again, this was the Prime Minister. Remarks of this kind make the threat of the use of nuclear weapons more likely, not less likely, and reactions unpredictable. American war gamers at the Pentagon and at their various war colleges are certain to be busier now than ever before with more hitherto improbable scenarios. And consequently, much more worried.

Any analysis of America's coming to New Delhi's aid vis-a-vis China should thus start with the Indian government's spurning any offer at mediation, which US President Donald Trump continues to hold out at the drop of a hat. It is another matter that Mr Trump thinks that he has enough leverage with China to knock some sense into it, even as he pivots his country's relationship with China into free fall. It is worth pointing out that if the US turned tail from Afghanistan after years of trying to fix it, it is largely because it was unable to prevail effectively over Pakistan even where its core national interests are concerned. How wise would it then be to trust the US to intervene effectively in our interest? Indian policymakers know this is only a chimera which only strengthens instincts and conditions for mediation. In the end, our self-inter-

est trumps all other interests. Though the Americans have indeed tried, whatever Americans have tried with Pakistan have not worked so far, except de-escalation. Even when we mobilised our entire armed forces during Operation Parakram, in January 2002, neither were the Pakistanis frightened nor did the Americans yield to faux brinkmanship, which ultimately with Americans controlling the sea lanes and air over Pakistan, was plain silly and had very bad outcomes for hundreds of our soldiers and others who died collaterally due to the rigours of mobilisation. Are we still so short of policy options?

All that the LAC situation gives the Americans is the wherewithal to sell us more and fancier, not to mention urgently required, military hardware and software to prepare us to better defend ourselves under the rubric of "deeper strategic ties", while we still continue to battle the Chinese at the LAC with stones and clubs for fear of escalation. How this can be done openly with all the talk of "atma nirbharta" going on, is worth pondering over. Whether all this will effectively improve chowkidari also remains a matter of inspired speculation at best. Curiously, the Prime Minister felt it pertinent to point out in his Independence Day speech that as many as 184 out of the 192 countries in the United Nations backed India for the rotating non-permanent Security Council seat. That is neither here nor there. How many more countries' support do we need to throw the last Chinese PLA soldier out of our territory and keep them permanently out? Or in other words, if only the USS Nimitz could be brandished more effectively, say... in the Himalayas?

The writer is the author of Adrift: A True Story of Survival at Sea and Anatomy of an Abduction. He writes, among other things, on diplomacy, security, strategic affairs and foreign policy.

Any analysis of America's coming to New Delhi's aid vis-à-vis China should thus start with the Indian government's spurning any offer at mediation, which US President Donald Trump continues to hold out at the drop of a hat

LETTERS

CLEAN UP FACEBOOK

Facebook has become a part and parcel of everyone's life. It is no exaggeration to say that today no one's life is complete without a daily peek into the world of social media.

Facebook brings friends together. In the Kozhikode aircraft accident, Facebook was used to arrange blood donations. There are many instances in which

Facebook has played a positive role. So while we debate whether or not to delete our accounts and rightly, following the recent revelations, it will be better if the management of the website can be brought around to exercise regulation. For this, the government must actively take up talks.

V. Nagendra Kumar
Hyderabad

ONLINE SOLUTION

KARNATAKA HAS come out with an online service that allows people to check their Covid-19 test results by entering the specimen referral form ID. The portal has been developed by the state Covid-19 war room. It has been done under the aegis of IAS officer Munish Moudgil. If you are positive, don't panic, just quarantine yourself at home, he said. The government will be in touch. A similar online service is ongoing in Tamil Nadu. More online services, and crowding in hospitals will decrease. That will ensure a better outcome for all.

Sanjana Soni
Ujjain

PITCH SPECIALIST

THE DEATH OF G. Kasturirangan at the ripe old age of 89 removes from the scene a former cricketer, administrator, pitch curator and a keen student of the game. A fine fast-bowler, he developed a unique action of delivering his thunderbolts off the wrong foot and scalped 94 wickets in 36 matches. Though he was picked for the Indian team to tour the West Indies in 1952, he declined to go because of personal reasons and never played for the country. He served as the chairman of the BCCI's ground and wickets committee and had an immaculate knowledge of soils, grass and fertilisers. He has well and truly left his mark on the game.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Abhijit
Bhattacharyya



Stop Chinese 'criminals' making hay inside India

Every passing day the Chinese underworld's deep penetration of India seems to grow, and this country looks utterly incapable of doing anything about it. Whether individuals or companies, they all have the muscular backing of the Chinese Communist Party and its various secret arms and are confident that the long arm of Indian law can't touch them.

India is, of course, not the only country where they are operating. But in some places and some countries, realisation is slowly dawning that these activities by Chinese state and non-state actors can't be permitted to continue. This is so in the United States, Canada and some European countries that allowed the Chinese to penetrate their economies untrammelled for decades, but now there is a change in thinking. The hard line by Washington of late is a case in point, one we need to emulate. New Delhi's helplessness is bringing these Chinese criminals to justice only confirms the CPC's long-held view that India is intrinsically weak, timid, and scared to act against Chinese lawbreakers in India, apprehensive of Beijing's retribution.

Why else has India failed to counter

the CPC's "deep penetration strike" and "forward deployment" in India. It's equally hard to comprehend New Delhi's delayed strategic blueprint to pre-empt and deter these or launch a counter-offensive to protect its supreme national interests.

When news came on August 12 about Chinese "Charles Peng, aka Luo Sang" committing a massive hawala offence of hundreds of crores rupees in India, with the help of fellow Chinese, as well as Indian bankers and chartered accountants, through 40-plus bank accounts, it was no surprise.

A day later, August 13, it emerged Luo Sang had been arrested two years ago on serious espionage charges. Why was he still roaming free, who had come to his rescue and facilitated his release? He was caught entering India illegally via Nepal without any valid travel documents. Subsequently, he married a Manipuri woman, and in a short time managed to get documents to become an "Indian citizen". How did a man arrested for spying manage to obtain bail from the courts? He faced charges of "forgery, cheating, impersonation" and of being a "logistical support provider to the Chinese embassy". Is the Indian system so cor-

rupt that it will aid someone working directly against our national security interests?

Any number of Chinese criminals have been caught in India smuggling gold and high-value goods worth crores of rupees in the past three years. Have any of them been prosecuted or jailed under stringent laws like the Conservation of Foreign Exchange & Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (Cofeposa)? The list is almost endless: Hong Feng Wong; Luen Fat Ng; Gong Changro Ng; Wen Chi Lai; Mu Donh Vhmh; Wang Syuan; Fano Pei Chieh; Huang Shan Yu; Chui Chun Chin; Shen Yen Lin; Zhang Guigiong; Zhang Guanghua; Ye Xiuchi; Gu Meizin; Zhou Yin; Yu Sheng Huang; Xia Qianbin; Yu Shi are only some examples. We now have a high-profile gold smuggling case in Kerala, linked allegedly to its highest office. What about these state-sponsored Chinese criminals?

From money-laundering to banking, gold smuggling to fishing, it's the same story over and over again — with Hindustan repeatedly taken for a ride. As our soldiers valiantly try to confront the Chinese PLA across Ladakh, in Pangong Tso to Galwan Valley, as well as in Sikkim and Arunachal, the

Chinese Han criminals and CPC agents seem to have access to our finance, commerce, trade, banking, fishing and investment sectors. The porous India-Nepal border is an entry point for espionage. Remember, after Ottawa cracked the whip on Huawei, how four Canadians caught stranded in the People's Republic were sentenced to death for espionage? Can we draw some lessons?

In June 2019, 10 Chinese vessels were apprehended fishing illegally in Maharashtra, and sought "emergency" shelter in Ratnagiri, 131 nautical miles from the Indian Navy's western fleet headquarters. This was the Fu Yuan Yu fleet, owned by Dong-Xing-Long Ocean Fishing Co Ltd, based in Fujian. They entered India on June 7, 2019, and were caught soon afterwards, with illegal gear on the vessels, with 19 of its 37 crew members having expired passports. But what did India do, despite a clear breach of our laws? Almost nothing. Those were the days of a renewed post-Doklam "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai".

As most of the government and our armed forces have realised by now, the Chinese, having made deep incursions into our territory, are determined not to give up an inch. The CPC has

already subdued Moscow, which is scared of losing control of Siberia, it has bought over Pakistan and is continually instigating India's neighbours. It has committed long-term technology theft in America and Europe. Now the target is India, which made the cardinal blunder of allowing the Chinese entry into its economic sphere. We are on the backfoot, so much so that our ambassador in Beijing meets second and third-rung CPC functionaries and junior PLA generals, literally cajoling them to ensure a return to their pre-April 2020 position in Ladakh. Will China's ambassador in New Delhi Sun Weidong, who addresses some forum or the other almost daily, confer with low-level leaders or junior Indian Army generals? After the June 15 Galwan outrage, he wasn't even summoned by the external affairs ministry for an explanation. What are we so afraid of?

Wake up, India. De-couple our economy from China swiftly, or the Chinese will try to convert Hindustan into another semi-vassal state. India's 1.3 billion people will never accept that.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College

IN BRIEF

Iran unveils 2 new missiles

Tehran: Iran's state TV is reporting the country has unveiled two new missiles amid heightened tensions between Iran and the United States.

They are named after top Iranian Gen Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who were killed outside Baghdad's international airport in a US strike in January. The "Martyr Hajj Qassem" surface-to-air, surface ballistic missile has a 1,400-kilometre range, according to the semi-official Fars news agency. State TV said the "Martyr Abu Mahdi" naval cruise missile has a 1,000-kilometer range.

Man gets 55 yrs for UK bombing

London: The brother of the suicide bomber who set off an explosion at a 2017 Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, killing 22 people and injuring hundreds, has been sentenced to a minimum of 55 years. Hashem Abedi had denied helping plan the attack at the end of the Manchester Arena concert on May 22, 2017, but was found guilty of murder, attempted murder, and conspiring to cause explosions. His sentencing had been postponed due to travel restrictions put in place because of the Coronavirus pandemic. His elder brother Salman Abedi, who set off the bomb, died in the explosion. Sentencing Hashem on Thursday, judge Jeremy Baker said the two brothers were "equally culpable for the deaths and injuries caused by the explosion".

Chokehold: City to pay \$6.5 Mn

New Mexico: A New Mexico city has agreed to pay \$6.5 million to the family of Mexican American man who was choked to death by a police officer. A settlement agreement made public this week by Las Cruces, New Mexico, calls for the city to pay the family of Antonio Valenzuela within 30 days and promises the local government will embark on various police reforms. Financial terms of the settlement were not previously disclosed. Under the settlement, Las Cruces police agreed to ban all chokeholds and fire any officer who violates the new policy — something officials say the city already does. The city also must try to adopt a warning system involving officers who use excessive force and forge a policy so officers can undergo yearly mental health exams. Any police reforms must be approved by the city council.

ABEYWARDENA IS LANKA PARL SPEAKER

Colombo, Aug. 20: Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, who was sacked for opposing the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord in 1987, has been unanimously appointed as the Speaker of Sri Lanka's new parliament which met for the first time on Thursday following the August 5 general election. At the inaugural session of the 9th parliament, Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena proposed Abeywardena for the post.

The resolution was seconded by opposition Member of Parliament Ranjith Madduma Bandara. Soon after he was appointed, Abeywardena, 75, was congratulated by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and all other legislators.

Abeywardena, who is from the southern district of Mata-ra, was removed from his seat in 1987 after entering the House 4 years before from the then ruling United National Party (UNP). He was opposing to the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka's conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who were fighting to create a separate homeland for the Tamils in the country's north and east. His sacking from parliament came as the then President JR Jayewardene and the then Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi signed the deal which brought the Indian troops to Sri Lanka's northern and eastern battle fields. Abeywardene was against the provincial councils system introduced as part of the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord by India in its bid to make Sri Lanka grant political power to the Tamils.

The system created nine provincial councils. Abeywardene, ironically became the chief minister of one of them, the southern provincial council in 1994 until he contested the 2001 national parliamentary election.

Trump ex-adviser Bannon nabbed for fraud

New York, Aug. 20: US President Donald Trump's former top adviser Stephen Bannon was arrested on Thursday and charged for his role in defrauding thousands of donors in connection with an online crowdfunding campaign known as 'We Build the Wall' that raised more than \$25 million. Bannon, 66, was charged in an indictment along with Brian Kolfage, 38, an Air

Force veteran from Florida, Andrew Badolato, 56, a financier also from Florida and Timothy Shea, 49, of Colorado, 'Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York Audrey Strauss said on Thursday. The men were arrested on Thursday morning and Bannon will be presented in the Southern District of New York, while others will make their court appearance in their jurisdictions.

"As alleged, the defendants defrauded hundreds of thousands of donors, capitalising on their interest in funding a border wall to raise millions of dollars, under the false pretense that all of that money would be spent on construction," Strauss said. It was assured to donors that Kolfage, the founder and public face of 'We Build the Wall', would

not be paid a cent but the defendants secretly schemed to pass hundreds of thousands of dollars to him, which he used to fund his lavish lifestyle, he added. The men are each charged with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, each of which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. Inspector-in-Charge

Philip R. Bartlett said the defendants allegedly engaged in fraud when they misrepresented the true use of donated funds.

"As alleged, not only did they lie to donors, they schemed to hide their misappropriation of funds by creating sham invoices and accounts to launder donations and cover up their crimes, showing no regard for the law or the truth. This case should

serve as a warning to other fraudsters that no one is above the law, not even a disabled war veteran or a millionaire political strategist." According to the indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court, starting in approximately December 2018, Kolfage, Bannon, Badolato and Shea, and others, orchestrated a scheme to defraud hundreds of thousands of donors, including donors

in the Southern District of New York. In particular, to induce donors to donate to the campaign, Kolfage repeatedly and falsely assured the public that he would "not take a penny in salary or compensation" and that "100% of the funds raised...will be used in the execution of our mission and purpose" because, as Bannon publicly stated, "we're a volunteer organisation". —PTI

Harris slams Don for leadership failure, vows to fight for nation

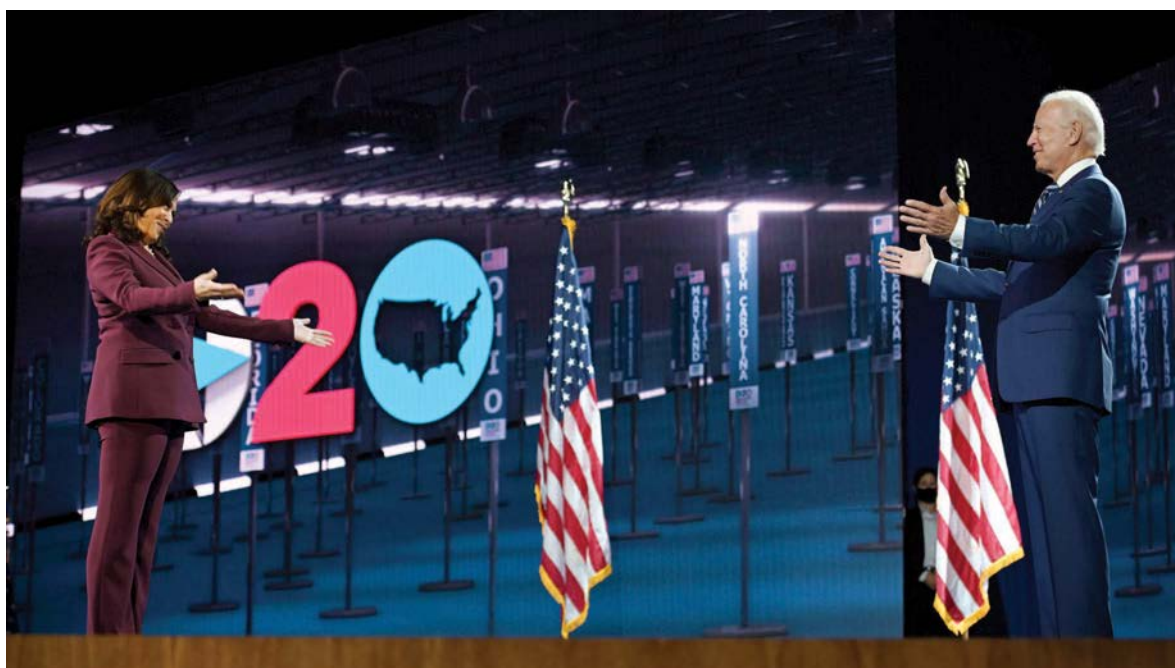
Republican leader 'turns our tragedies into political weapons': V-P nominee

Washington, Aug. 20: Senator Kamala Harris has scripted history as she became the first Indian-American and also the first PoC woman to accept the nomination for vice-president from a major political party in the US. Harris, 55, was nominated as the vice-presidential candidate on Wednesday at the virtual Democratic National Convention where she attacked President Donald Trump's for "failure of leadership" and blamed the Republican leader for the "lives and livelihoods" of the American people amidst the Coronavirus pandemic.

"I accept your nomination for vice president of the United States of America," she said while accepting the Democratic Party's nomination to be the running mate of the presidential candidate Joe Biden. In her acceptance speech, Harris paid tribute to the PoC women that came before her and she vowed to fight for the nation. "Let's fight with conviction. Let's fight with hope. Let's fight with confidence in ourselves, and a commitment to each other," she said.

In reference to her Indian heritage, Harris used a Tamil expression in speaking of "my uncles, my aunts — my chitthis". Harris said she was there standing on her mother's shoulders, a woman who "came here from India at age 19 to pursue her dream of curing cancer. At the University of California, Berkeley, she met my father, Donald Harris — who had come from Jamaica to study economics".

She assailed Trump's "failure of leadership". She said the Republican leader "turns our tragedies into political weapons". Former vice president Joe Biden and Harris will challenge Trump and his Vice-President Mike Pence in the November 3 election. "We must elect a president who will bring something different, something better, and do the



Senator from California and Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris stands on stage socially distanced from former vice president and Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden at the end of the third day of the Democratic National Convention, being held virtually amid the Coronavirus pandemic, at the Chase Center in Wilmington, Delaware on Wednesday.

— AFP

Harris: 'Oh, how I wish my mother was here'

Washington, Aug. 20: Accepting the Democratic Party's historic nomination for the US vice-president, Kamala Harris fondly remembered her Chennai-born mother who instilled in her the values like compassion and service to others which helped her to grow as a strong woman and be proud of her Indian heritage. Harris opened her vice-presidential acceptance speech on Wednesday night at the virtual

Democratic National Convention by remembering her late mother, Shyamala Gopalan Harris, lamenting the fact that she could not be there to see her daughter's achievement. "My mother taught me that service to others gives life purpose and meaning. And oh, how I wish she were here tonight but I know she's looking down on me from above," she said. Harris' mother died of cancer in 2009. "My mother instilled

in my sister, Maya, and me the values that would chart the course of our lives. She raised us to be proud, strong women. And she raised us to know and be proud of our Indian heritage," Harris said. Harris in her impressive speech said that her nomination is a testament to the dedication of generations before her. Women and men who believed so fiercely in the promise of equality, liberty, and justice for all, she said. —PTI

WORSHIP WOES FOR MUSLIMS, SIKHS: OBAMA

New York, Aug. 20: Minority communities like Sikhs and Muslims have been made to "feel suspect" for the way they worshipped, former US president Barack Obama has said as he tore into Donald Trump's presidency and warned American voters that his administration would "tear our democracy down" to get re-elected. Delivering an impassioned speech at the 2020 Democratic National Convention, Obama launched a scathing attack on Trump's policies and rhetoric, a break with the longstanding tradition of former presidents not publicly speaking out against their successors.

He urged Americans to vote in the November elections.

— PTI

important work. A president who will bring all of us together to achieve the future we collectively want," Harris said, making a passionate plea before Americans to vote them to power.

"We must elect Joe Biden. I knew Joe as Vice President. I knew Joe on the campaign trail. But I first got to know Joe as the father of my friend," she said. "And here's the thing: We can do better

and deserve so much more," she said. "Joe will bring us together to build an economy that doesn't leave anyone behind. Where a good-paying job is the floor, not the ceiling." —PTI

Belarus leader digs in as protests go on

Minsk, Aug. 20: Demonstrators again took to the streets of the Belarusian capital and other cities Thursday, keeping up their push for the nation's authoritarian leader to step down after extending his 26-year rule in a vote the opposition saw as rigged. President Alexander Lukashenko has dismissed the protesters as Western puppets and threatened opposition leaders

with criminal charges.

Following that, a leading opposition figure reported receiving threats and being threatened with arrest. The 65-year-old Belarusian leader dismissed the European Union's criticism of the Aug. 9 vote and told its leaders to mind their own business.

The EU leaders on Wednesday rejected the official results of the election that showed Lukashenko win

80 per cent of the vote and expressed solidarity with protesters. The EU said it's preparing sanctions against Belarusian officials responsible for the brutal post-election police actions. During the first four days of protests, police detained almost 7,000 people and injured hundreds with rubber bullets, stun grenades and clubs.

At least three protesters died. The crackdown fuelled outrage, forcing authorities to change tactics and stop breaking up crowds that grew to an unprecedented 200,000 on Sunday.

Police again beefed up their presence on the streets of the Belarusian capital Wednesday, blocking access to some government buildings and also deploying in numbers outside major factories where workers have been on strike since Monday. The

industrial action that has engulfed major factories across the country cast a tough challenge to Lukashenko, who had relied on blue-collar workers as his core support base. In a bid to stop the strike from spreading, On Wednesday, he warned that the participants would face dismissal and ordered law enforcement agencies to protect factory managers from the opposition pressure. —AP

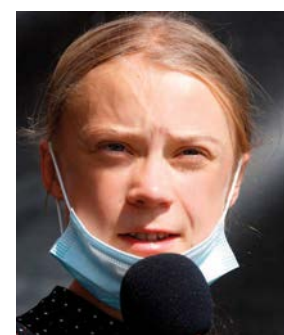
Bamako (Mali), Aug. 20: A colonel in Mali's army says he's now in charge of the West African country, declaring himself chairman of the junta that forced the democratically elected but unpopular president to resign. Col. Assimi Goita, one of the five military officers who announced this week's coup on the state broadcaster ORTM, declared himself chairman of the junta now in power. "By making this intervention (the coup), we have put Mali first," Goita said in a broadcast that showed him meeting with the top officials of government ministries and urging them to resume work Thursday.

"Mali is in a sociopolitical and security crisis," he said. "There is no more room for mistakes." Across Africa and around the world, leaders have strongly condemned this week's coup, calling for

an immediate return to civilian rule and the release of ex-President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and his prime minister, Boubou Cisse. The two leaders were detained by mutinous soldiers on Tuesday who surrounded the president's private residence in Bamako and fired shots into the air.

Under duress, Keita later announced his resignation on state television, saying he did not want any blood to be shed to keep him in power. Analysts have said there were few signs that political opposition leaders were aware of the coup plot in advance, though they now stand to benefit through an opportunity to serve in the transitional government promised by the junta.

The opposition, known as the M5-RFP, announced it would hold a rally Friday in Bamako. —AP



Greta Thunberg

Berlin, Aug. 20: German Chancellor Angela Merkel hosted Greta Thunberg and other leading Fridays for Future activists in Berlin on Thursday for talks on the EU's climate goals, with the campaigners expected to condemn "political inaction".

Merkel said Swedish 17-year-old Thunberg and her co-campaigners Luisa Neubauer from Germany and Belgium's Anuna De Wever and Adelaide Charlier had requested the meeting and she was "pleased" to welcome them to the chancellery.

The activists warned ahead of the talks that they were dismayed at the lack of progress in fighting climate change despite lofty promises by European governments.

"When it comes to action we are still in a state of denial. The climate and ecological crisis has never once been treated as a crisis," they wrote in a letter published in Germany's Der Spiegel and Britain's The Guardian.

"We will tell Merkel that she must face up to the climate emergency — especially as Germany now holds the presidency of the European Council. Europe has a responsibility to act." The meeting comes exactly two years after Thunberg, then 15, started skipping school to strike outside the Swedish parliament to dramatise the need for action against

global warming.

The strike movement has since spread across the world and Merkel has repeatedly expressed her admiration for the masses of young people demonstrating on Fridays for more climate protection.

But the activists say nothing concrete has changed. "Effectively, we have lost another two crucial years to political inaction," they wrote, calling on countries to urgently halt all fossil fuel investments. Despite its green reputation abroad, Germany is struggling to meet its own climate targets as the country remains heavily reliant on coal because of its decision to phase out nuclear energy after the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

Europe's top economy was widely expected to miss its goal of reducing climate-heating greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent this year compared with 1990 levels.

Col. Assimi Goita takes over Mali

Communications like letters and diaries used during Spanish flu of 1918 have disappeared

PEOPLE | CONNECT

Japan museum portrays pandemic life via daily things

Tokyo, Aug. 20: Takeout menus. Directions for attending a funeral. A leaflet from a local shrine, announcing the cancellation of summer festivals. These humble, everyday artifacts of life in the pandemic have found a home in the Historical Museum of Urahoro, in Hokkaido, northern Japan, a town of just 4,500 residents that lacks a McDonald's or movie theatre.

But thanks to the museum's curator, Makoto Mochida, it has a repository of the dross of the moment, stuff that may tell future generations

what it was like to live in the time of Covid-19 — how life was profoundly changed with social distancing and growing fears over the outbreak.

"I am fascinated by how things connect with people," Mochida said. Some people are surprised he's hoarding what appears to be garbage, said Mochida, who has even problems throwing away things at home, too.

"Things furnish an excellent way to accurately archive history," he said. So there are documents that show how children were taught to shift to

online schooling. And instructions, complete with diagrams, on how to make a mask from a handkerchief. Several hundred objects have been collected so far, after a call went out to residents.

In the wake of the last great pandemic — the so-called Spanish flu of 1918-19, which killed more than 50 million people globally — letters and diaries provided insight into daily life. But these days, those analog communications have all but vanished. And their digital versions, like emails and social media posts, are all

● THERE ARE documents that show how children were taught to shift to online schooling. And instructions, complete with diagrams, on how to make a mask from a handkerchief. Several hundred objects have been collected so far, after a call went out to residents.

but lost in a sea of cyberspace, Mochida said.

So it is left to Mochida to curate the flotsam and jetsam of the Coronavirus.

He is planning a big exhibition of his finds next February to follow up on the smaller display now at the museum, located in the Urahoro library, showing how masks have evolved in a short time.

At first, masks were hard to find in Japanese stores. Handmade varieties were primitive, concocted from old shirts and stockings. Then came innovations, like draping masks that allow for eating and drinking, or sheer plastic ones. They eventually became fashion statements, some with fancy embroidery. Cases of Covid-19 have

been growing in Japan, but they have not reached the levels of the hardest hit nations like the US, Brazil and several regions of Europe.

Urahoro has not yet recorded a single case. At first, the community brushed the outbreak off. Then fears began to creep in, especially toward outsiders, and households with adult children working in Tokyo or nearby cities, who could come home to visit.

Then came the adjustments. For the tiny town, takeout — including the local specialty "spa-cut",

or meat-sauce spaghetti topped with a fried meat cutlet, usually pork — has become the rule after restaurants shut to in-person dining.

Before the pandemic, it wasn't even an option. Shoko Maeda, who was born in Urahoro and works as a cook at a nursery school, feels she can almost picture people decades from now trying to remember life amid the pandemic. "They may think, 'Oh, so this was the way it was,'" she said, after visiting the museum. "Things do reveal how people think." —AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,220.39	-1.02
Nifty 50	11,312.20	-0.84
S&P 500*	3,374.95	0.00
Dollar (₹)	75.03	-0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.19	0.94
Euro (₹)	88.85	0.50
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,819	▼1.492 2.82
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.75	-0.62
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.000	-0.008
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.648	-0.027

* As of 9:30 PM IST

US jobless claims climb above 1 million

The number of laid-off workers seeking US unemployment benefits rose to 1.1 million last week after two weeks of declines, evidence that many employers are still slashing jobs as the coronavirus bedevils the US economy. The latest figures, released on Thursday by the Labor Department, suggest that more than five months after the viral outbreak erupted the economy is still weak, despite recent gains as some businesses reopen.

Fact & fiction: EPFO slashes job numbers



Net new enrolments with the EPFO rose to 6.55 lakh in June from 1.72 lakh in May, according to its latest payroll data. Its provisional payroll data last month had shown that net new enrolments stood at 3.18 lakh in May but the figure has now been revised to 1,72,174. Net new enrolments with the EPFO hover around 7 lakh every month. Latest data shows net new enrolments in April were just 20,164 against 1 lakh stated in July.

Banks sanction ₹1 lakh cr loans to KCC holders

The finance ministry said banks have sanctioned over Rs 1 lakh crore concessional loans to Kisan Credit Card (KCC) holders to help farmers meet financial requirements during the Covid-19 crisis. As on August 17, as many as 1.22 crore KCCs have been sanctioned with the credit limit of Rs 1,02,065 crore, and this will go a long way in reviving the rural economy and accelerating agricultural growth, the ministry said.

HFCs require ₹3.8-4.5 lakh cr for refinancing

Housing finance companies (HFCs) are likely to see a muted portfolio growth and would require Rs 3.8-4.5 lakh crore to meet their refinancing requirements in the current fiscal, says an Icra report. The pandemic effect is expected to lower the housing credit growth to 5-8 per cent in FY21, significantly below the last three years' CAGR of 14 per cent. The share of commercial paper borrowings came down to 4 per cent in FY20.

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■ Uptick in activity may not be as large as believed Babus fear protracted economic slowdown

SWATI BHAT & MANOJ KUMAR MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, AUG. 20

India is staring at a protracted slowdown as coronavirus cases reach its countryside, with signs of recovery in the rural economy hailed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi "at best a mitigating factor", government officials and analysts said.

The world's No.5 economy reports first-quarter GDP data on August 31 and, according to a Reuters poll, it is likely to have contracted 20 per cent over April-June. It is forecast to shrink 5.1 per cent in the year to March 2021, the weakest since 1979.

Nearly half of the country's 1.38 billion population rely on agriculture to survive, with the sector accounting for 15 per cent of the economic output.

Modi has been citing higher fertiliser demand and sowing of monsoon crops, both key signs of rural activity, to show



there are "green shoots" in the economy.

But four government officials said the uptick in activity may not be as large as believed given a spike in virus cases in rural areas that were initially isolated from the pandemic.

"The economic situation has in fact worsened since April and May, and we are likely moving towards a longer economic slowdown than earlier expected," said a finance ministry official.

The official pointed to sluggish consumer demand and a slowdown in rural lending as causes for concern.

"The situation on the economy front is very seri-

ous and the government's hands are tied on the fiscal front," a government adviser with direct knowledge of the budget plans said.

Both declined to be named. A ministry spokesman declined to comment.

New virus cases emerging outside major cities, dashing hopes the rural economy will be a buffer against shrinking exports and manufacturing.

"While a recovery in rural activity provides a glimmer of hope, it is at best a mitigating factor," said Rahul Bajoria, a Barclays economist.

Bajoria expects India's GDP to have contracted 22.2 per cent in the June

quarter.

Farmers planted nearly 14 per cent more land between June 1 and July 31 than last year given good monsoon rains, while fertiliser production rose 4.2 per cent in June.

"Even as the momentum coming from the agriculture sector...is a positive, we believe this may not sustain due to surplus labour concerns, along with an increasing proportion of active Covid-19 cases," said Upasna Bhardwaj, economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Icra believes pent-up demand contributed to some improvement in manufacturing in June and July, and that it may not continue in August due to lockdowns.

"Flattening of India's virus curve is critical for a pickup in production. Once the economy unlocks fully, we expect exports to lead recovery and domestic demand to lag," said Kapil Gupta, chief economist, Edelweiss. —Reuters

Think-tank to advise Maha govt on economy

Pune, Aug. 20: A group of economists and scientists, who recently held a meeting with Maharashtra chief minister on how to revive the economy hit by Covid-19, will submit a detailed action plan for accelerating the state's growth.

They would provide inputs on what can be done to revive growth in the short, mid and long terms, eminent

scientist Dr Raghunath Mashelkar, who is the president of Pune International Centre (PIC), a think-tank, told PTI on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and deputy CM Ajit Pawar had a detailed virtual meeting on Tuesday with economist Vijay Kelkar, HDFC chairman Deepak Parekh, former diplomats Vijay Gokhale and

Gautam Bambawale, Mashelkar and other members of the PIC.

As PIC has members with diverse expertise, it had come up with some policy papers on agriculture, industries, education and other issues during the last year's state Assembly elections. In January, those papers were shared with the CM, who liked them, Mashelkar said. —PTI

Pharma, med tech not sure of govt targets

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 20

The government expects bulk drug and medical device parks to attract cumulative investment of about Rs 77,900 crore and generation of about 2,55,000 employment. The industry, however, finds it very ambitious.

The government had announced schemes for development of three bulk drug parks and four medical device parks. Apart from increasing central assistance for development of common infrastructure facilities in the parks, the government will also extend production-linked incentive (PLI) to manufacturers of bulk drugs and medical devices in these parks.

"Government will provide an incentive at the rate of 5 per cent on incremental sales for a period of five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26 with a total outlay of Rs 3,420 crore, minister of chemicals and fertilisers D. V. Sadananda Gowda said at an event.

According to him, bulk drug and medical device parks are expected to attract cumulative invest-

ment of about Rs 77,900 crore and can generate about 2,55,000 employment. For the medical device sector alone, investment could be to the tune of Rs 40,000 crore with generation of 1,40,000 new employment opportunities.

However, the industry is not quite convinced about the government estimate. "This is the assumption of the government. We will have to wait and watch. They assume that companies will leave China and come here. But that might not happen immediately. Even among domestic companies we have not seen a huge interest to invest thousands of crores," said G.S.K. Velu, chairman and MD of Trivitron Healthcare.

According to pharma veteran S. V. Veeramani, some states like Haryana, Gujarat and Telangana have evinced interest in setting up the parks. "Pharma companies might be interested in establishing API manufacturing plants. But whether, they will bring in around Rs 38,000 crore of investment has to be seen," he said.

Gmail service restored after global outage

New Delhi, Aug. 20: Gmail service, which suffered a global outage for hours on Thursday, has now been restored, according to Google.

Some users faced issues with Gmail like being unable to log in, add attachments and receive messages since morning.

On Thursday morning, GSuite status dashboard—which provides performance information on various Google services—said the company was investigating reports of an issue with Gmail.

When contacted, a Google spokesperson confirmed that the problem has now been resolved.

In its latest update, Google said: "...We apologise for the inconvenience and thank you for your patience and continued support. System reliability is a top priority at Google. We are making continuous improvements to make our systems better". The firm provided multiple updates, stating it is investigating the issue and that there was a disruption in sending e-mails, Meet recording and creating files in Drive, among others. —PTI

SELECT MIDCAPS JUMP AS ECONOMY UNLOCKS

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 19

Unlock themes and undervalued stocks are emerging as big gainers in the broader market rally while super-large-cap stocks are showing signs of fatigue after touching five-month highs in the last one-month period.

Unlock theme gainers included stocks from tourism & hospitality, entertainment, aviation, consumer retail and power utilities, among others.

Big gainers included Indian Hotels, EIH Hotel, Interglobe Aviation, Spicejet, Future Retail, Avenue

Supermarts, Shoppers Stop, Jubilant Foodworks, GMR Infra and Inox Leisure, among others.

Some midcap stocks are also seeing value buying after languishing as their business prospects are improving and rose sharply on Thursday like NHPC (12.17 per cent), auto parts maker Varroc Engineering (17.75 per cent), water treatment specialist Va Tech Wabag (15.90 per cent) and Ashok Leyland (2.89 per cent).

The Nifty Midcap-50 has moved up 9.73 per cent in the last one-month while the Midcap-100 has moved up by 9.53 per cent.

SHARP GAINS IN UNLOCK THEMES

Company	Share price Aug. 20	July 20
Indian Hotels	102.55	81.65
EIH Hotel	88	60.2
Interglobe Aviation	1,199.30	971.35
Spicejet	51.55	48.75
Future Retail	127.75	110.75
Avenue Supermarts	2,286.35	2,018.95
Shoppers Stop	172.70	157.35
Jubilant Foodworks	1,965.60	1,751.35
Inox Leisure	307.80	227.5
Tata Power	61.50	49.05

Source: IC Research, BSE

CV-makers stare at ₹6K-cr net loss

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 20

Commercial vehicle (CV) makers will face a six-fold increase in net loss to Rs 6,000 crore this fiscal due to a 30 per cent decline in sales volume on an already weak base.

Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland, Mahindra and Mahindra and VE Commercial Vehicles together accounted for about 90 per cent of industry volumes in fiscal 2020. The net loss, combined

with a stretch in working capital owing to support extended to dealers and suppliers, could result in sizeable negative cash flows and thus ballooning debt, says a research note.

"While this may constrain credit metrics in the current fiscal, credit profiles of manufacturers will be supported by strong balance sheets and comfortable cash buffers," ratings agency Crisil said in a report on Thursday.

CV-makers were already hit by new overloading

norms and a slowing economy when the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, and sales volume had fallen 29 per cent in fiscal 2020.

In the first quarter of this fiscal, volume plunged another 85 per cent because of the pandemic-driven lockdown.

The resultant sharp slowdown in industrial activity has hard-braked sales of medium & heavy commercial vehicles, which account for two-thirds of industry revenue.

Rising steel prices hit export sectors

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 20



Rising steel prices have hit the exports of value-added products and made them less competitive in the international market. Along with increasing iron ore exports, curbs on import of steel from China, Vietnam and South Korea are also pushing up domestic steel prices.

"In the backdrop of restrictions on imports from China, Vietnam and South Korea, Indian steel makers have raised the prices across different product categories, making the raw material cost for user industries sky-high and leaving the engineering exporters non-competitive in the international market," says Engineering Export Promotion Council of India.

The export of value-added products, including automobile components, industrial machinery has been down in the past few months. Higher steel prices will further affect the competitiveness of Indian value-added products, it said.

Pig iron and steel prices had gone up by Rs 3,000 per tonne in the local market in July. Further, hot rolled coil prices have moved up by Rs 700-750 per tonne on an average, cold-rolled coil prices by Rs 500-550 per tonne, steel pellets by Rs 300-350 per tonne and iron ore fines and lumps by Rs 200-250 per tonne.

"Iron ore exports have been increasingly happening of late. Though they started exporting

when the demand was low in the domestic market, it is being continued even when demand is picking up. The lower import of steel from the international market is also making the steel producers hike the prices," said Mahesh Desai, chairman, EEPIC India.

According to him, international prices of some of the categories used by Indian steel product manufacturers are lesser than the domestic prices.

But, the government had imposed anti-dumping duty on imports of certain types of steel products from China, Vietnam and South Korea for five years. Duties ranging from \$13.07 per tonne to \$173.1 per tonne have been levied on imports of flat rolled product of steel, plated or coated with alloy of aluminium and zinc from these three countries.

MSMEs are not in a situation to use advance authorization scheme to import steel at higher duties.

"In such a scenario, the dependence of India's engineering industry on the domestic steel market is only expected to increase in the coming months," said Desai.

Property insurance premia buck trend

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 20

The increase in premium rates and higher demand post-lock-down have helped property insurance premiums grow by 36 per cent between April and July despite the overall degrowth in general insurance premiums.

The gross direct premium collected under property insurance has grown by 36.3 per cent since the beginning of the fiscal to Rs 9125 crore against Rs 6695 crore in the same period of previous fiscal. Property insurance has bucked the general trend in other segments, which have either de-grown or grown in low single digits due to the pandemic.

The growth in gross property premium is mainly due to the hike in premium rates by insurance companies this year.

In the beginning of the calendar year, reinsurer General Insurance Corporation (GIC-RE) had increased its reinsurance rates for select occupancies and later for all the occupancies it was reinsuring. "GIC-RE had been asking the general insurers to follow risk-based pricing as the premiums were lower than the burn rate derived by the Insurance Information Bureau. IIB has been collecting the data of claims and premiums for the past few years," said R Chandrasekaran, former secretary general of General Insurance Council.

Since the de-tariffing in 2007-08, general insurers have been charging lower premium rates in order to grab business. This competition among the insurers had led to unviable rates. However, after GIC-RE hiked the reinsurance rates, the premium rates too have gone up.

Further, post lock-down, several incidents of fire mishaps were reported from different parts of the country as and when the factories were opened. This has increased the demand for property insurance, said Chandrasekaran.



SHORT TAKES

Two tennis players go into quarantine

New York: Two players within the US Open bubble have been dropped from the ATP and WTA Western and Southern Open and sent into quarantine after contact with a Covid-19 positive individual. Tournament officials announced the move on Wednesday, a day after learning that a non-player within the controlled environment had tested positive for the virus. The person who tested positive is in isolation for 10 days but contract tracing showed two players, neither of whom was identified, had been in "close and prolonged contact" with the individual.

The players have not experienced any Covid-19 symptoms but after input from the US Open medical team and in consultation with the New York City Department of Health, they were removed from the Western and Southern Open and sent into quarantine. The tournament, usually in Cincinnati, was moved to New York this year to serve as a tuneup for the US Open. — *AFP*

No Bryan brothers at the US Open

New York: Bob and Mike Bryan were not on the entry list released for men's doubles at the U.S. Open on Wednesday, possibly signaling the end of the 42-year-old American twins' record-breaking careers. The Bryans won five of their 16 Grand Slam doubles titles together in New York, most recently in 2014. Mike also won the 2018 U.S. Open with Jack Sock when Bob was recovering from hip surgery.

The U.S. Tennis Association announced its women's and men's doubles fields, including wild cards. Three-time U.S. Open champion Kim Clijsters received a wildcard entry in doubles to go along with the one she got for singles as she makes her Grand Slam comeback. The tournament begins singles competition August 31, and doubles on September 2. The doubles fields are being cut from 64 to 32 teams for women and men this year to reduce the number of people on-site because of the Coronavirus pandemic. — *AP*

Tiger plans to stay out of woods

Norton, USA: Tiger Woods has been careful to manage his schedule to avoid playing too much as he tends to a lower back that has gone through four surgeries. Now the idea is to play as much as he can. "The plan is to play four out of five," Woods said on Wednesday after playing the back nine at TPC Boston. That's the plan.

It's an ambitious plan for a 44-year-old who tries to avoid playing consecutive weeks, much less the three in a row that might be required for him to reach the Tour Championship for the first time since he won at East Lake in 2018. That's also the last time Woods played three weeks in a row. Woods wasn't sure where he stood in the FedEx Cup. He thought it was number 28, his position when golf shut down on March 15 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Having played only twice since golf returned in June, he has fallen to No. 49. — *AP*

TWO PROTEAS CRICKETERS POSITIVE

Johannesburg: Two players of the South African men's cricket team have tested positive for Covid-19 and will miss a specially-arranged culture camp, the country's cricket board said on Thursday.

Cricket South Africa (CSA), though, did not disclose the names of the two players, according to *ESPNcricinfo*. CSA had conducted 50 tests on players and support staff before the team's culture camp in Skukuza from August 18 to 22. The camp, focussing on the team's "identity, environment and performance goals", features 32 players. — *AFP*



Kings XI Punjab team pose for a photograph inside a flight during their travel on Friday.

Teams dash to Dubai

IPL sides pack their bags & head to UAE for 13th edition

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, AUG. 20

As IPL teams start descending on Dubai for the much-awaited 13th edition of the league, the Bio-Secure Environment protocols have come into effect. While Rajasthan Royals and Kings XI Punjab were the first teams to leave for the UAE on Thursday, Chennai Super Kings will land in Dubai on Friday evening. CSK have booked an entire wing of Taj Dubai where they will be based throughout the tournament.

Around 55 members, including players, net bowlers, support staff, franchise officials, marketing and social media team will leave Chennai by a chartered flight on Friday.

"All our Indian players, except Harbhajan Singh, will be on the flight. Harbhajan will join the team later in Dubai. Shardul Thakur and Ravindra Jadeja who missed the camp have reached Chennai," said CEO of Chennai Super Kings, K.S. Viswanathan.

Foreign players who are not part of the Caribbean Premier League and England-Australia ODI series are on their way to join the bubble.

Viswanathan said the team will start their training session only after the mandatory six-day quarantine period. "During this phase, players and officials are not allowed to step out of the room. All their meals will be served in the room. They will be tested on Day 1, 3 and 6. All players have been



Family members of Kings XI Punjab's Karun Nair gave the batsman a farewell with a special message to win the IPL trophy this year.

briefed on safety protocols," he said.

"The biggest challenge as a franchise is to bring the players into a bio-bubble. We had a camp in Chennai for our Indian players and we had to test everyone involved in organising it. It's been a huge challenge, but it's a worthy exercise. As a franchise, we will leave no stones unturned in our bid to provide players a safe environment," added Viswanathan.

Three-time champions Chennai Super Kings will be training at the International Cricket Council's Academy, located next to the ICC head-

quarters in the heart of Dubai Sports City.

MASK EARNS MONEY FOR CSK

The most sought after branding spot on an IPL team jersey is the chest logo which is given to the prime sponsors. However, in the run-up to the tournament, teams could earn some money through a different avenue. In Covid-19 times, face masks will be a prominent branding area. Chennai Super Kings have already roped in a sponsor for their yellow masks. "Players won't be using it on match days though," said

Eng vs Pak's 3rd Test to start early

Southampton, Aug. 20: England and Pakistan will be able to make up for lost time due to bad weather in the upcoming final Test in Southampton by starting a day's play 30 minutes earlier.

The newly adopted flexible approach to starting times was announced Thursday, a day before the start of the test, after the second match of the series was blighted by rain and bad light and ended in an unsatisfactory draw.

Captains and coaches of both teams have agreed to the changes, with the England and Wales Cricket Board saying "further consideration will be given to applying these

changes at future series played in England."

England leads the series 1-0 after winning the first test in Manchester.

Cricket faced accusations of being stuck in its ways during the second test at the Rose Bowl, when each day's play was affected by inclement weather.

The tests are being played in empty stadiums for this series because of Covid-19 restrictions, so there were no concerns about spectators getting to the venues on time.

For a 10.30 a.m. start, 98 overs can be bowled in the day and the morning session would last two and a half hours.

— *AP*

Viswanathan.

SUSPENDED DOCTOR IS BACK

Meanwhile, CSK team doctor Madhu Thottappillil, who was suspended by the franchise following his tweet on the Indo-China border clash, is back and will accompany the squad to Dubai. He had tendered an unconditional apology after the controversial post was termed "inappropriate" by the franchise. "His suspension is over. His role is crucial, especially in the bio-bubble environment," said Viswanathan.

Live on TV

THIRD TEST

England vs Pakistan
from 3.30 pm on
Sony Six, HD

EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

Sevilla vs Inter Milan
from 12.30 am (Saturday) on
Sony Ten 2, HD

NBA PLAYOFFS

Philadelphia 76ers vs
Boston Celtics from 4 am
(Saturday); Dallas Mavericks
vs Los Angeles Clippers
from 6.30 am (Saturday).
All matches on Sony Six, HD

Gnabry nets brace, Bayern make final

Lisbon, Aug. 20: Serge Gnabry struck a first-half brace and Robert Lewandowski also scored as a ruthless Bayern Munich taught Lyon a harsh lesson in their Champions League semifinal in Lisbon on Wednesday, winning 3-0 to set up a tantalising final against Paris Saint-Germain.

Gnabry had blasted Bayern into an 18th-minute lead in stunning style, and the Germany winger scored again just after the half-hour mark.

Gnabry has now scored nine in nine appearances in this season's competi-

tion. Lewandowski's inevitable goal, his 55th of the season, came two minutes from time. Bayern as a team have 42 goals in 10 Champions League outings.

SEVILLA FACE INTER FOR EUROPA CROWN

What is the point of the Europa League? If Inter wins Friday's final, it would be a milestone in its bid to dethrone Juventus in Italy and re-establish itself as a Champions League heavyweight. But Sevilla has a special affection for a competition it's won five times.

— *Agencies*



Lyon's goalkeeper Anthony Lopes (left) tries to stop Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski during their Champions League semifinal at the Jose Alvalade Stadium in Lisbon, Portugal, on Wednesday. Bayern won the game 3-0.

— *AP*

NATIONAL AWARDS

Ministry to raise prize rewards

New Delhi, Aug. 20: The Sports Ministry is planning a massive hike in the prize money for the National Sports Awards, a proposal which, once approved, will lead to Khel Ratna awardees getting ₹25 lakh while leaving the Arjuna winners richer by ₹15 lakh.

Currently, the Khel Ratna comes with a cash prize of ₹7.5 lakh, while the Arjuna awardees get ₹5 lakh.

It has been learnt that the ministry is busy giving final touches to the proposal after which Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju will make a formal announcement by August 29 — the National Sports Day when the annual honours are given away every year.

"The prize money of National Sports Awards is set to be increased significantly. A proposal in this regard has already been made. The minister actively pushed for it after athletes complained that the prize money of sports awards is too less," a Sports Ministry source said.

"The proposal is still under consideration and if accepted by the government, the new cash rewards will be given from this year itself," the source added.

● **The current prize money for national sporting honours for Khel Ratna, Arjuna, Dhyanchand and Dronacharya all set to get a shot in the arm.**

However, when contacted Sports Secretary Ravi Mittal, said he was not aware of any such development.

"I am not aware. I don't know anything," Mittal said when reached for a comment.

The prize money for Dhyanchand and Dronacharya (Lifetime) awards will also be increased from ₹5 lakh to ₹15 lakh.

According to the proposal, the cash reward for the regular Dronacharya award, which is currently the same as the one for lifetime achievement, is set to be increased to ₹10 lakh.

If implemented before August 29, the government will have to shell out a hefty amount as an unprecedented 62 have been recommended by the Sports Ministry's selection committee for this year's National Sports Awards.

— *PTI*

MAINTAIN THE PRIDE OF SPORTS AWARDS: SUSHIL

New Delhi, Aug. 20: Double Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar on Thursday indicated that the selection committee runs the risk of lowering the dignity of the annual national sports awards by making too many recommendations.

An unprecedented five Khel Ratna and 29 Arjuna award recommendations have been made to the sports minister by the selection panel, raising eyebrows.

He said it is necessary to, instead, "maintain the pride" attached with these awards.

"I congratulate the ones who have been nominated but I feel people should work towards maintaining the dignity of these national sports awards. This is not even an Olympic year. I myself is an athlete, so I am happy for all, but we must maintain the pride attached with these awards," Sushil said.

In 2016, the government honoured four athletes — P. V. Sindhu, wrestler Sakshi Malik, gymnast Dipa Karmakar and shooter Jitu Rai — with the Khel Ratna after their performances at Rio Olympics.

— *PTI*

Mavericks move past Clippers

● **Luka Doncic scored 28 points as Dallas Mavericks beat Los Angeles Clippers 127-114 and even the Western Conference playoff series at one game a piece.**

New York, Aug. 20: Luka Doncic has his first NBA postseason victory, though probably not the way he expected. Instead of leading the Dallas Mavericks on the court, he was helping lead cheers from the sideline as his teammates pulled away while he sat.

Doncic scored 28 points and the Mavericks put together the pivotal run when he was out to beat the Los Angeles Clippers 127-114 on Wednesday night and even the Western Conference playoff series at a game apiece.

"This is how we're going to have to win games," Mavs coach Rick Carlisle said. "Our depth is going to be a big part of it."

Two nights after scoring 42 points in the highest-scoring debut in postseason history, Doncic played just nine minutes in the second half because of foul trouble. He finished with eight rebounds and seven assists.

The 21-year-old picked up

his fourth foul less than a minute into the third quarter, shaking his finger toward the Dallas bench that he didn't want to come out.

He stayed on then and, when he did come out toward the end of the period, Dallas put together a strong stretch of basketball. A finishing 14-4 spurt made it 98-85 entering the fourth.

And even after Doncic picked up his fifth less than a minute into the final period and had to go out again, the Mavs pushed the lead to 18 in the final 12 minutes.

— *AP*

Dhoni important illustration of new India: PM

New Delhi, Aug. 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described Mahendra Singh Dhoni as the embodiment of a new India where family name does not make one's destiny in a letter to the enigmatic former captain, who retired from international cricket last week.

A thankful Dhoni shared the letter on his *Twitter* page on Thursday, his first social media post since the "conductor me retired" note on *Instagram* that stunned the cricket fraternity on Saturday.

"You have been one of the important illustrations of the spirit of new India,

where family name does not make young people's destiny but they make their own names and their own destinies," wrote the PM in his letter to the two-time World Cup winner.

"Where we come from does not matter as long as we know where we are headed — this is the spirit that you have exuded and inspired many youngsters with," he said.

Dhoni, who is also an Honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army, thanked the PM for the appreciation.

"An Artist, Soldier and Sportsperson who they crave for is appreciation,

that their hard work and sacrifice is getting noticed and appreciated by everyone. thanks PM @narendramodi for your appreciation and good wishes," he wrote.

In the lengthy note to the celebrated cricketer, the PM also lauded the calm demeanour with which Dhoni led the Indian team.

"No matter what hairstyle you sported, your calm head remained the same in victory or defeat, which is very important for every youth," he said referring to different haircuts that Dhoni made famous after sporting an eye-catching long mane at

the beginning of his career.

Calling him one of the greatest captains and one of the best wicketkeepers the game has seen, Modi said, "Your dependability in tough situations and your style of finishing matches, particularly the 2011 World Cup final will forever be etched in the public memory for generations."

"The correct way to assess your impact is as a phenomenon."

The 39-year-old stumper-batsman is widely considered a game-changer in international cricket and earned respect for his fore-

sight on the cricket field, which made punts look like well thought out strategy. He will now be seen in action in the IPL, starting September 19 in the UAE.

"Rising from humble beginnings in a small town, you burst onto the national scene, made a name for yourself and most importantly, made India proud," Modi wrote.

The PM said Dhoni's rise and conduct after achieving that fame gives inspiration to youngsters who

tinguish themselves at the highest level."

Modi hailed Dhoni's ability to take risks and make them work, citing the 2007 T20 World Cup final in which the then skipper handed the ball to little-known medium pacer Joginder Sharma in a tense final over against arch-rivals Pakistan.

"Many of your memorable on-field moments exemplify a particular generation of Indians."

"This generation of Indians does not hesitate to take risks and back each other's abilities in even the toughest of situations — seen in the way you took

risks many times backing little known youngsters to deliver in high pressure situations," he noted.

"The 2007 World Cup final is a perfect example of this spirit."

He also mentioned Dhoni's well-documented involvement with the armed forces. During his sabbatical from cricket last year, Dhoni had spent a number of weeks training with his unit in the Territorial Army.

"You were most happy being among our army personnel. Your concern towards their welfare has always been remarkable," the PM said.

— *PTI*