

SHORT TAKES

Student arrested for robbing ₹1.25 Lakh

Ghaziabad: An engineering student was arrested for allegedly robbing at gun-point ₹1.25 lakh from an internet café owner in Nand Gram village of Sihani Gate area here, police said on Saturday. Police have recovered the cash and weapon used in the crime that took place on Friday. The accused was identified as Sachin, a resident of Gangoh town in Saharanpur district. He confessed to having robbed the amount from cybercafé owner Chaman. SP (city) Abhishek Verma said that a police team reached the spot upon receiving information about the robbery. Sachin was arrested with the cash and weapons in his possession while his accomplice Pankaj escaped from the spot. The duo are engineering students at a college in Saharanpur. "The accused confessed to the crime during interrogation. The duo could not clear their recent exams and had left studies. Looking to make quick money, they planned to rob the cybercafé owner. On Friday, they robbed the owner at gunpoint at the outlet and stole the cash," Verma said.

Contractor killed in car crash in G. Noida

Noida: A 25-year-old man died after his speeding SUV crashed into a divider and overturned on a highway in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida on Saturday, police said. The deceased has been identified as Yogesh Sharma, a resident of adjoining Bulandshahr district. He was a construction contractor for a private firm in Greater Noida, they said. The incident took place around 3 pm in the Kasna police station area. There was another person in the vehicle. He suffered injuries and was hospitalised, police said. "The SUV was coming from the Dabra village side to the Peripheral Road. The vehicle was at a high speed and apparently, the driver lost control over it. The SUV hit a divider and overturned, leaving Sharma dead on the spot," Kasna SHO Prabhat Dixit said. The other passenger was identified as Krishna and he suffered minor injuries, the official said. The family of the deceased has been informed and further legal proceedings are being carried out, Dixit added.

3 held for robbery by posing as cops

New Delhi: Three men have been arrested for allegedly posing as police officers and abducting and robbing two persons here. Two of the accused — Swapnil (26) and Keshav Sehgal (34) — were nabbed from a house in Ghaziabad's Loni area while their associate Ravi Sharma (23) was held in Rani Bagh. The incident took place on Tuesday when the car of the victims — Mandeep and Jagdeep — was stopped by the three accused near Najafgarh. The accused were wearing police uniform and holding walkie-talkies to appear as cops. They were also travelling in a car. Then the three accused allegedly abducted the two victims on the pretext of police checking. Later, the two victims were robbed of their car, a mobile phone and earrings and left near Singhu Border.

Brain microsurgery saves 15-year-old

New Delhi: Microsurgery in the brain saves 15-year-old Pratham Vashisht from vision loss at Artemis Hospital. Due to the enlarged size of the tumour in his brain, Pratham started losing vision in his right eye. The patient, who initially had intermittent headaches and redness in the eye, ignored the symptoms but gradually developed blurry vision that almost led to loss of vision in his right eye. The boy had initially consulted an ophthalmologist where the reports showed that the pressure inside the eye (intraocular pressure) was high enough to damage his vision permanently. "Pratham came to us with his MRI reports and detailed investigations revealed a huge tumour in the front of his skull. To save his vision, urgent microsurgery for the removal of the tumour was advised. Post operatively, the patient made a quick recovery and is doing very well," said Dr Aditya Gupta, the chief of neurosurgery at Artemis Hospital in Gurgaon.

Metro should be resumed on trial basis, says Kejri

'Requested Centre that Delhi should be treated differently'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, AUG. 23

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said that Metro train services in Delhi should be resumed on a trial basis as the coronavirus situation was improving in the city and hoped the Centre would soon take a decision on it.

Interacting with traders, entrepreneurs and businessmen in the city in a 'Digital Samvad', the chief minister also said that markets and roads in Delhi would be beautified on the lines of the Chandni Chowk redevelopment project, which is expected to be completed by November-December.

"I have requested the Centre that Delhi should be treated differently. Corona situation is

► Delhi Metro train services should be started in a phased manner on a trial basis. We have raised this issue before the Centre many times, I hope the Centre will soon take a decision in this regard

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

The chief minister highlighted various steps taken by his government to revive the pandemic-hit

economy of the city and said it would make some big announcements about the industry sector in coming days.

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

Traders and businesspersons from different markets of the city dealing in automotive parts, construction sector, garments and textile, event management, among others, shared

their problems with and extended suggestions to the chief minister during the virtual interaction.

Mr Kejriwal said that their suggestions were noted and would be considered for necessary action. Meanwhile, MD-DMRC chief Dr Mangu Singh's inspection of the Rajiv Chowk Metro station on August 20, to check effective functioning of various operational systems and maintenance activities, also hinted at the resumption of metro services.

Metro services in the national capital were suspended on March 25 as the nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of coronavirus began. The Delhi Metro started preparations for the resumption of train services and protocol for social distancing in May only.

With 1,450 cases, city records highest single-day spike in Aug.

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 23

Delhi recorded 1,450 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, the city's highest single-day spike in August, taking the tally to over 1.61 lakh while the death toll rose to 4,300, authorities said.

The national capital had recorded 1,412 fresh coronavirus cases on Saturday, the previous highest single-day spike of the month.

According to the Delhi government's health bulletin, a total of 18,731 tests — 6,261 RTPCR /CBNAAT/TrueNat tests and 12,470 rapid antigen tests — have been conducted in the last 24 hours.

So far, 14,31,094 coronavirus tests have been conducted in Delhi, while the number of tests per million population stands at 75,320 in the city.

The positivity rate stands at 7.74 per cent, while the recovery rate is

► **SO FAR, 14,31,094** Covid tests have been conducted in Delhi, while the number of tests per million population stands at 75,320 in the city.

► **ACCORDING TO** The positivity rate stands at 7.74 per cent, while the recovery rate is 90.04 per cent. Delhi has seen a fluctuation in the number of coronavirus cases since August 1.

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Delhi has seen a fluctuation in the number of coronavirus cases since August 1.

On August 1, the city recorded 1,118 fresh cases while for the next three days, the number of infections reported in a single-day stayed below the 1,000-mark.

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

Three days between August 11 and August 22 saw less than 1,000 fresh cases being reported — August 13 (956), August 16 (652), and August 17 (787). With the 1,450 new cases, the tally has now risen to 1,61,466, the Sunday's health bulletin said.

The active case count stands at 11,778, up from 11,594 the previous day, while 1,45,388 patients have either recovered from the infection, been discharged or have migrated out of the city, according to the bulletin.

The number of patients in home isolation is 5,896. Out of 14,126 total beds in hospitals, 3,617 are occupied.

As many as 3,589 beds of Covid care centres are occupied by people under quarantine, including travellers who came by Vande Bharat flights and bubble flights. The number of containment zones stands at 627 on Sunday, up from 591 the previous day.

DPCC demands Rahul Gandhi to be appointed as party chief

New Delhi, Aug. 23: The Delhi Congress, after an "emergency" meeting on Sunday, demanded Rahul Gandhi's ascension as the party's national president without further delay.

The meeting, presided by Delhi Congress chief Anil Kumar, passed a resolution demanding that Rahul Gandhi should be appointed as the party's national president without further delay, a statement said.

Ahead of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting on Monday, different voices have emerged within the party, with a section comprising MPs and former ministers demanding a collective leadership, while another group has sought the return of Rahul Gandhi to the helm.

The Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) resolution noted that some senior leaders going public with their opinion regarding a change in the leadership has given "ammunition" to the opponents to mount an attack on the party, "demoralising" its cadre. The issue should have been raised at internal fora, not outside, it said.

Battling for Rahul Gandhi, the resolution said the former party chief "should" be appointed as the president of the All India Congress Committee without any further delay to provide a dynamic and youthful leadership to the party in these trying times. Only a powerful and fearless leader like Rahul Gandhi can expose the lies and falsehood of the BJP and the Modi government.

The resolution also thanked Congress president Sonia Gandhi for her "dynamic leadership" during "testing times" due to the Covid pandemic and motivating the party cadre to work among people.

— PTI



A worker sanitises ITC Maurya Hotel after authorities gave a nod to reopen hotels in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

'AAP no longer a common man's party'

New Delhi, Aug. 23: Delhi BJP leaders on Saturday hit out at AAP, saying it was no longer a common man's party, a day after police arrested two persons for allegedly donating ₹2 crore to it through shell companies.

Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta, in a press conference, alleged that AAP has fooled the people of the city in the name of clean politics. No immediate reaction was available from the AAP.

"The Aam Aadmi Party is no longer a party of the common people but has become a party of people with black money," he



Adesh Gupta

claimed.

"The AAP has fooled the people of Delhi in the name of clean politics. The party, which made a place in the hearts of people by talking about Swaraj, Lokpal bill, the same Aam Aadmi Party is now stabbing people in the back and is no longer a common man's party," he

► **DELHI BJP chief Adesh Gupta, in a press conference, alleged that AAP has fooled the people of the city in the name of clean politics. No immediate reaction was available from the AAP**

alleged. The Delhi Police has arrested two men, including a chartered accountant, for allegedly donating ₹2 crore to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) through shell companies, according to officials.

The police received a complaint from the Registrar of Companies (RoC) where it was men-

tioned that the four companies, allegedly on April 5, 2014, donated ₹50 lakh each to AAP, a senior police officer had said on Friday.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said, "The Enforcement Directorate should immediately seize ₹2 crore received by AAP from donations and collect a 300 per cent penalty on it under the Income Tax Act." The BJP leader said action should also be taken against the AAP leaders who were involved in the donation case.

— PTI

Part of an under-construction flyover collapses in Gurgaon

Gurugram, Aug. 23: A part of an under-construction flyover collapsed in Gurgaon's Sohna Road on late Saturday night.

Deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala said that two people suffered injuries and both have been admitted to the hospital.

"Slab of elevated corridor in Sohna Road, Gurugram collapsed. There have been two injuries and both are admitted to hospital.

► **SLAB OF** elevated corridor in Sohna Road, Gurugram collapsed. Deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala said that two people suffered injuries and both have been admitted to the hospital

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) team, SDM and civil defence team are at the site," Chautala tweeted. Additional deputy

commissioner (ADC) Prashant Panwar said that area has been cordoned off and traffic has been diverted.

"We got information around 10:30 pm about the incident. When the incident took place, no construction was going on. Two people suffered minor injuries and there no casualties. The site has been cordoned off. The National Disaster Response Force team also reached," Panwar said.

— ANI



Youngsters pose with their bicycles at Raisina Hills during Unlock 3.0 in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Jeweller held for staging fake robbery to get loan waiver

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 23

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

Abhijeet Samanta, who has been in the jewellery business for the past four years, was not making much profit and it was further hit due to the coronavirus lockdown. Samanta and his associates — Farhan (38), a property dealer, and

Munna (28), who works at a garage — staged a fake robbery, officials said.

Munna executed the robbery by venturing into the office at Chandni Mahal wearing a burka and a toy gun, police said. The matter came to light after Samanta approached the police, alleging that a woman wearing a burka came inside his office on Saturday night and placed a gun on his head, according to the police.

Samanta alleged that the woman slapped him, snatched ₹50,000 from him and keys of lockers.

► **THE MATTER** came to light after Samanta approached the police, alleging that a woman wearing a burka came inside his office on Saturday night and placed a gun on his head

She forced him to open the locker and later tied his hands, legs and mouth with the cloth. Thereafter, she fled with all the jewellery and cash. During investigation, the CCTV footages of different cameras were analysed and it was noticed that the entry



SHORT TAKES

2 killed as bus stop collapses in Mathura

Mathura: Two people were killed and three others, including a woman, injured when the roof of a bus stop caved in near Neemgaon Tiraha on Barsana Road in Mathura's Govardhan on Sunday afternoon, an official said. While injured Khem Chand (60) succumbed to his injuries on the spot, 70-year-old Tursi died in the hospital, SDM Rahul Yadav said. He said the roof of the decade-old bus stop collapsed due to heavy rainfall. The SDM said while injured Aalia Khan has been admitted to the district hospital, 42-year-old Kalua was shifted to a private hospital as per the wish of his relatives. Omvati (45), who received minor injuries, was given first aid at a local hospital, the official said. Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the incident. He directed the district administration to pay ₹4 lakh to the kin of the each of the deceased besides ensuring adequate medical treatment for the injured. — PTI

Newspaper office is containment zone

Shillong: Health authorities in Meghalaya have declared the office of an English daily here as containment area, days after some of its staff tested positive for covid-19, a senior state government official said on Sunday. The move would facilitate testing, isolation and quarantine of primary and secondary contacts of the positive cases, he said. "It is necessary to declare the office building and staff quarters of The Shillong Times as a containment area so as to restrict unregulated entry and exit movement on site," East Khasi Hills District Magistrate Matsiewdor War Nongbri said. Health Services Director Aman War said a machine operator, a driver and a helper in the newspaper's office have tested positive for Covid-19. As per the latest update, Meghalaya's coronavirus tally stood at 1,917. A total of 776 people have recovered from the disease.

Man held for bid to assault US woman

Tiruvannamalai: A man allegedly attempted to sexually assault an American woman here on Sunday, following which he was arrested, police said. The man, a native of Namakkal, who was roaming around the temple town falsely claiming to be a saint "attempted to sexually assault" the woman, a senior police official said. "We are questioning him, investigation is going on and nothing more could be divulged now," he said. Reportedly, the woman was staying in a rented accommodation here in pursuit of spiritualism. — PTI

Battle rages in Congress...

Continued from Page 1
publicly revealed over the weekend, around two dozen Congressmen made some far-reaching suggestions to Mrs Sonia Gandhi to revive the organisation, sources said on Sunday. They said over-centralisation of the organisation and micro-management had always proved to be counter-productive, and that uncertainty over the leadership has "demoralised the Congress workers and further weakened the party".

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

The letter talked of forming the CWC in accordance with the Congress' constitution as well as reconstitution of the central parliamentary board and the central election committee. Under the party constitution, the CWC shall consist of the party president, its parliamentary leader and 23 and 23 other members, of whom 12 will be elected by the AICC and the rest shall be appointed by the party president. Elections to CWC have not been held since the 1990s and the Congress has taken the "consensus route" in choosing the CWC team. The details of the letter emerged just ahead of Monday's CWC meeting.



BJP national president J.P. Nadda, Union minister for law and justice Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union minister Giriraj Singh and others during the virtual Bihar BJP Karyasamiti meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Govt should defer NEET & JEE, say Cong leaders

New Delhi, Aug. 23: Top Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, on Sunday requested the government to defer the all-India medical and engineering entrance examinations taking into consideration the concerns raised by a section of students and parents amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Rahul Gandhi said the government must listen to the 'mann ki baat' of students and arrive at "an acceptable solution", while party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra sought the postponement of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) till the coronavirus situation improves in the country. Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggesting that the exams be deferred.

"GOI must listen to the #StudentsKeMannKiBa at about NEET, JEE exams and arrive at an acceptable solution," Rahul Gandhi tweeted.

In a tweet in Hindi, Priyanka Gandhi said, "The Covid-19 situation in the country is yet to normalise. In such a situation, if students who are taking NEET and JEE, and their parents have raised concerns, then these should be taken into consideration." — PTI

70K corona cases in 24 hrs, overall tally crosses 30.5L

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 23

With nearly 70,000 fresh detections, India's overall tally of novel coronavirus crossed 30.5 lakh on Sunday. According to the Union health ministry, the overall death toll in the country was 56,706 with 912 new fatalities recorded in the last 24 hours.

The Covid-19 case fatality rate has declined to 1.86 per cent while the Recovery Rate reached almost 75 per cent. The health ministry officials said there are still 7,07,668 active cases of Covid-19 infection in the country which comprise 23.24 per cent of the total caseload. With the recoveries of

57,989 patients in the last 24 hours, the total number of recoveries reached 22.80 lakh on Sunday. They added that India's total recoveries now exceed the total active cases by nearly 16 lakhs.

"The constantly increasing recoveries have ensured that the actual caseload of the country viz. the active cases, has reduced and currently comprises only 23.24% of the total positive cases. This has also resulted in a gradually falling mortality rate. Currently at 1.86%, India's Case Fatality Rate (CFR) is one of the lowest globally. The higher number of recoveries and declining mortality rate among Covid

patients have shown that India's graded and proactive strategies are delivering results on the field," officials added.

According to health economist Rijo M. John, the Covid-19 cases are growing at the rate of 2.4% and active cases are now going up (growth 1.1%).

He said such high numbers can stress the country's health infrastructure.

He added that although the country has a relatively low mortality rate (MR) at 1.9% the variation across states and high MR in some high burden states such as Maharashtra and Gujarat are worrying.

Devotees immersed idols in artificial ponds set up across the city
Quiet immersion of Ganesh idols in Mumbai

Mumbai, Aug. 23: Many Mumbaiikars on Sunday bid adieu to Lord Ganesh by immersing idols in artificial ponds in absence of access to the sea in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many households follow the tradition of immersing the idols one-and-a-half day after Ganesh Chaturthi, which marks the beginning of the annual 10-day festival.

With fanfare missing due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was a quiet send-off to Lord Ganesh.

Devotees immersed idols in artificial ponds set up in different parts of the city.



Devotees immerse idols of Lord Ganesh during Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations in Thane on Sunday. — PTI

PM Modi posts video of himself feeding peacocks at residence

New Delhi, Aug. 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday posted a video on his social media accounts in which he is seen feeding peacocks at his residence during his morning exercise routine.

The 1.47-minute video also has a few glimpses of the prime minister's daily walk from his home to his office within the Lok Kalyan Marg residence.

Peacocks are often a regular companion of the Prime Minister during his exercise, sources said, noting that he has long shared an "unbreakable bond" with the environment and has also written two books on the matter. At his residence, Modi has placed elevated structures, often found in rural

for Change', the sources noted. His other book, 'Aankh Aa Dhanya Che', has poems on nature. It was originally written in Gujarati and then translated to several other languages. When the world spoke of climate change, Modi talked about "climate justice" and linked human value systems with the fight against climate change, they said.

"The Prime Minister pioneered the launch of International Solar Alliance to harness solar energy for a better future. He appeared on the show 'Man Versus Wild' where he highlighted India's ethos of living in harmony with nature," the sources added. — PTI

India, where birds can make their nests, they said. Mr Modi also posted a Hindi poem, an ode to nature, with the video. He first put the video on his Instagram account and shared on Twitter later.

The two books written by the prime minister to highlight his vision for the environment are 'Convenient Action: Gujarat's Response to Challenges of Climate Change' and 'Convenient Action-Continuity

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■ 'Sonia should continue to lead the party'

Letter by Cong leaders is unfortunate: Gehlot

Jaipur, Aug. 23: Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday said the Gandhi family has kept the party united and the letter written by senior Congress leaders over the leadership issue is an unfortunate move.

Mr Gehlot said Sonia Gandhi should continue to lead the party and if she has made up her mind, then Rahul Gandhi should come ahead and be the Congress president as the country faces the biggest challenge to save its democracy.

He said the leaders who are said to have written the letter have worked with the party for long and this was not expected of them.

"I am not aware of any such letter but if this is true, then it is unbelievable and very unfortunate. They all have worked with the party for so long and the move of writing the letter is uncalled for," Gehlot told PTI.



Ashok Gehlot

He said Congress president Sonia Gandhi took reins of the party in 1998 and despite all challenges, she continued holding the party united.

"She became the party president in 1998 in challenging circumstances and has been the saviour of the party. She took all challenges head on. Today, despite her health issues, she is still holding the 'Congress Kunba' (party) united. Is it a small thing?" Gehlot added.

Ahead of the Congress Working Committee meeting on Monday, different voices have emerged within the party with one section comprising sitting MPs and former ministers

demanding a collective leadership, while another group has sought the return of Rahul Gandhi to the helm.

Some Congress leaders, including ex-ministers, have written to party president Sonia Gandhi for the overhaul of the organisational structure and changes to the leadership.

The letter by former ministers and some MPs was believed to have been written a few weeks ago and sets the stage for a stormy Congress Working Committee meeting on Monday.

Mr Gehlot said Sonia Gandhi declined to take up the post of Prime Minister and none of her family members became PM or minister at the Centre in three decades.

"If they had any fascination, Sonia Gandhi could have become the Prime Minister earlier, but P.V. Narasimha Rao and later Manmohan Singh were made the Prime Ministers," he said. — PTI

Maha Cong leaders back Rahul

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, AUG. 23

Former Mumbai Congress president Sanjay Nirupam on Sunday said that only Rahul Gandhi can save the party. He called the letter written by Congress leaders to Sonia Gandhi "a conspiracy hatched in closed rooms".

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Congress president Balasaheb Thorat demanded that Rahul Gandhi should be made president of Congress.

A day before the meeting of CWC, a letter surfaced in public domain with the demand of full-time and visible leadership in the party. According to a media report, the letter was signed by 23 top leaders including five former chief ministers.

Mr Nirupam alleged that factionalism in the Congress party is not new thing. It is seen in all the bodies of the Congress party. But a conspiracy against Gandhi family was never hatched before

this. "A conspiracy is being hatched continuously against Rahul Gandhi," he claimed. All the leaders, who have signed the letter, are not bad. But few of them were always against Rahul Gandhi and wanted to undermine the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, as a result, the leadership of the Congress party have become weak.

"All of us need to come together and stand behind Rahul Gandhi to strengthen the party," he said.

MP: 20,000 Cong workers quit party to join BJP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 23

Mass desertion of Congress by its workers in Gwalior-Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh, triggered by senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, has dealt a big jolt to the party ahead of by-polls to 27 assembly constituencies in the state, scheduled to be held by end of September this year. Around 20,000 Congressmen, loyalists of Mr Scindia who has switched over to BJP from Congress in March this year, have resigned from the party and joined BJP in the last two days during the three-day membership drive launched by the saffron party in Gwalior-Chambal on Saturday. At least 35,000 Congress cadres in Gwalior-Chambal region were expected to join BJP during the membership drive, BJP spokesman here Rajneesh Agrawal said.

The membership drive was launched in Gwalior by the party in the presence of chief minister Shivrath Singh Chouhan, state BJP president V D Sharma, BJP national vice president Prabhat Jha and Mr Scindia.

The membership drive has attracted non-Congress people also, Mr Agrawal said.

Covid -ve report must for Vaishno Devi trip

Jammu, Aug. 23: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam on Sunday asked officials to ensure that there is tight checking on Jammu-Srinagar national highway so that only the people with required permissions and negative Covid-19 test report are allowed to travel.

He also asked the authorities not to allow any person without a Covid-19 negative test report to perform the pilgrimage to the shrine of

Mata Vaishno Devi shrine which was opened for the devotees along with other religious places on August 16 after remaining closed for nearly five months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Reviewing the Covid-19 mitigation measures in Jammu division, the chief secretary asked the deputy commissioner, Ramban to consider random testing of truck drivers. He also stressed on ensuring a tight check at the designated check points. — PTI

‘India would get corona vaccine by yearend’

New Delhi, Aug. 23: Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has said that if everything goes well, India would get a vaccine against the novel coronavirus by the end of this year.

Three Covid-19 vaccine candidates, including two indigenous ones, are in different phases of development in India.

The phase-one human clinical trials of the two indigenous Covid-19 vaccine candidates, one developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR and the other by Zydus Cadila Ltd, have been com-

pleted and the trials have moved to phase-two. ICMR Director General Dr Balram Bhargava has said recently.

The Serum Institute of India, which has partnered with AstraZeneca for manufacturing the Covid-19 vaccine candidate developed by the University of Oxford has been permitted for conducting its phase two and three human clinical trials in India.

It is likely to start the trials next week.

In a tweet in Hindi, Union minister Vardhan said on Saturday, "I hope



I hope that if everything goes well, India will get a coronavirus vaccine by the end of this year.

— Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union minister

that if everything goes well, India will get a coronavirus vaccine by the end of this year." Meanwhile, the apex

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

The aim of creating the website is to provide all information and updates relating to the Covid-19 vaccine development on one platform as all the information in this regard is scattered as of now, Samiran Panda, Head of Epidemiology and

Communicable Diseases at ICMR, told PTI on Saturday.

The idea behind making the updates available in regional languages is to make sure that every citizen is able to access the information. The portal is likely to be functional by next week, Panda said.

With a single-day spike of 69,239 infections, India's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 30,44,940 on Sunday, while the death toll climbed to 56,706 with 912 fatalities being reported in 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Woman arrested for beating mom-in-law

Chandigarh: A woman in Haryana's Sonipat was arrested on Sunday after a video in which she is seen beating her 82-year-old mother-in-law went viral on social media, a police official said. Along with the woman, her mother has also been arrested for abuse, SHO of Sonipat City police station Sandeep Retauli said over the phone. He said the 82-year-old woman's son had lodged a police complaint that his mother was beaten up. The elderly woman's grandchildren had captured the alleged abuse on a mobile phone, Retauli said. In the video, her daughter-in-law is seen hitting her with a dustpan. The elderly woman's daughter-in-law was allegedly forcing her to do household chores, the SHO said. Asked who had circulated the video on social media, he said further investigations into the matter were underway. — PTI

Couple kills minor daughter in UP

Bareilly: In a gruesome incident, a man with the help of his second wife allegedly killed his seven-year-old daughter and buried her in his house, police said here on Sunday. Izzatnagar police station SHO K.K. Verma said Ravi Babu, a resident of Aalok Nagar, had married Ritv after the death of his first wife almost two years ago. On Thursday, they killed Kajal (7) and buried her in the house. On Friday, the girl's cousin Suraj lodged a police complaint alleging that his sister has been murdered. On Sunday, following orders by the district magistrate, the body of the girl was exhumed, police said, adding that Kajal's elder sister is still missing. Ravi and his wife have been detained and the matter is being investigated, police said. — PTI

5 of family found hanging at home

Tikamgarh, MP: A retired government employee, his wife and three other family members, including a four-year-old child, were found hanging at their home in Madhya Pradesh's Tikamgarh district on Sunday. Police said initial investigation suggested the family members committed suicide, but no note was recovered from the spot. Some neighbours of the victims, who lived in Khargapur town, about 35 km from the district headquarters, alerted the police after they did not see anyone coming out of the house in the morning, superintendent of police Prashant Khare said. A detailed investigation was on in the case, he added. On getting information about the incident, Collector Subhash Dwivedi and Khare reached the spot. — PTI

Police jawan hacked to death

Bijapur, Chhattisgarh: A police jawan was hacked to death with an axe by two unidentified men at a village market in the Naxal-hit Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday, an official said. Police suspect the involvement of Maoists, but a probe is being carried out to know if the murder was a fallout of a personal enmity. The incident took place when the deceased, Assistant Constable Suresh Komra (42), had gone to the weekly market in Kutru village to buy essentials, a senior police official said. Two assailants, who were dressed as civilians, repeatedly attacked him with an axe, leaving him dead on the spot following which they escaped, he said. After being alerted about it, a police team rushed to the spot and sent the body for post-mortem, the official said. — PTI

Minor dyslexic girl molested, 1 held

Panaji: A 30-year-old son of a Panaji-based hotelier has been arrested for allegedly molesting a minor girl with special needs, police said on Sunday. The accused is identified as Varun Nayyar, an official said. The accused allegedly took the 13-year-old dyslexic girl to an isolated place in his car near Panaji on August 17 and molested and sexually abused her, the official said quoting the FIR lodged by parents of the girl. Nayyar has been booked under section 8 of the Goa Children's Act and arrested, he said. Further investigation is underway. — PTI



NDRF personnel assist people to shift from flood-affected Pamula Lanka and Thodella Dibba villages by a boat, following the release of excess water from the Prakasam Barrage near Vijayawada on Sunday. — PTI

Vande Bharat train tenders cancelled

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, AUG. 23

Railways has said that it had to cancel the tender to manufacture 44 Vande Bharat Express trains since some bidders had revealed the prices offered by them during the technical qualifications stage. The Railways has said that a fresh tender for manufacturing of 44 semi high speed train sets of Vande Bharat will be floated within a week as per Revised Public Procurement order while giving preference to Make

■ **THE RAILWAYS** has said that a fresh tender for manufacturing of 44 semi-high speed train sets of Vande Bharat will be floated within a week as per Revised Public Procurement order

in India.

The tender for manufacturing 44 rakes of the semi-high-speed Vande Bharat Express trains was floated by Integral Coach Factory (ICF) Chennai in July. The tender had invited two packet bids — First Packet Technical Bids and

Second Packet Financial Bids. First the technical bids are opened and evaluated, after which the financial bids of only those bidders are opened who qualify in the technical bids, the Railways said.

“For transparency in evaluation, while evaluating the technical bids, the financial bids are not available to the Tender Evaluation Committee. While evaluating the technical bids of the train set tenders, the committee noticed that some details of the financial offers have been revealed in the

first packet, that is technical bids. “To maintain complete transparency, the committee recommended to cancel the tender and invite fresh tenders. The Tender Accepting Authority, the ICF general manager, accepted the recommendation.

Fresh tenders will be invited within a week,” Railway Board Chairman V.K. Yadav said. He said three companies had made the error of mentioning the price of the products they were to supply and explanations have been sought from them.

Spot probe done in presense of forensic team

CBI team visits Sushant's Bandra residence again

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 23

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday revisited the Bandra residence of deceased actor Sushant Singh Rajput to probe his suicide and recreated the incident at the spot in presence of the former's cook Neeraj Singh, house help Deepesh Sawant and flatmate Siddharth Pithani.

The trio was first grilled for hours at the CBI team's base at the DRDO guesthouse before being whisked to Bandra for confirming with the sequence of incidents quoted by them in their statement, some of which allegedly showed discrepancies in comparison to the ones they stated to the Mumbai police.

The officials are tight-lipped about the detailed given in their respective

■ **MULTIPLE TEAMS** of the CBI are probing separate angles involved in the alleged suicide. The DRDO and Indian Air Force guesthouses in Santacruz is where the visiting team has set up the base. The CBI will grill Rhea Chakraborty and her family soon in connection with the suicide.

statements that has the alleged loopholes. The spot probe was carried out in the presence of the forensic team of the CBI. As the investigation has been handed over to them late, the officials are relying on the forensic and technical analysis for a breakthrough to ascertain if there is any foul play in the actor's death.

“Others will be questioned in connection with the incident soon after the

spot probe gathers requisite clarity,” said an officer privy to the probe.

The investigators also communicated with the doctors and the staffers of Cooper Hospital, where Rajput's body was taken after his demise for conducting autopsy. The statement of those who conducted autopsy on the actor will be recorded soon.

Multiple teams of the CBI are probing separate angles involved in the alleged suicide. The DRDO and Indian Air Force guesthouses in Santacruz is where the visiting team has set up the base. The CBI will grill Rhea Chakraborty and her family soon in connection with the suicide. They have been named as main accused in the case filed by the Bihar police, the probe of which has been taken over by the CBI.

Cops, villagers clash over sand mining

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 23

Odisha police on Sunday lathicharged at Kolidaspur village to disperse locals who were staging a demonstration in front of Hinjili police station seeking immediate release of at least six villagers who were detained in connection with torching of vehicles engaged in illegal sand mining. According to villagers, over a dozen residents were injured, some of them seriously, in the brutal lathi-charge.

The police, however,



Police lathicharge to disperse the crowd at Kolidaspur village in Ganjam district of Odisha on Sunday.

denied the charge of any injury of villagers. Sources said the conflict between the police and the locals started when a team

of local administrative officials accompanied by police personnel reached the village on Saturday after receiving informa-

Another row over Hindi erupts in TN

‘Ayush secy asked non-Hindi participants to leave meet’

Chennai, Aug. 23: Another row over Hindi has erupted in Tamil Nadu with the DMK alleging yoga and naturopathy practitioners from the state were asked to leave a virtual meet held by the AYUSH department if they did not understand the language and seeking action against officials concerned.

The episode “exposed” the BJP-led government's agenda of imposing Hindi through its officials, the Dravidian party chief M K Stalin alleged while party MP Kanimozhi wrote to AYUSH Minister Shripad Yesso Naik seeking an inquiry.

It comes close on the heels of Kanimozhi's recent claim that a Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Personnel had asked her if she was an Indian as she could not speak Hindi, which brought back the debate on “Hindi imposition”.

Stalin, in a statement, alleged Ayush secretary Rajesh Kotecha with “arrogance and a chauvinism for Hindi intimidating 37 yoga and naturopathy physicians to leave an online training session



Kanimozhi



M.K. Stalin

if they did not know Hindi” and condemned it. “It is shameful that a senior government official in the rank of secretary has behaved in such an uncivilised fashion prompted by linguistic chauvinism,” Stalin said on Saturday.

He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure that such an incident did not recur and asked Chief Minister K Palaniswami to exert pressure on Modi to conduct the Central government's training programmes and meetings only in English.

“The BJP government at the Centre is continuously working by thrusting Hindi as its first agenda, and slighting other languages, particularly the classical Tamil, he alleged.

The AYUSH official would not have behaved in such a manner if prompt action had been taken against the CISF official for ‘questioning’ his sister and MP Kanimozhi for not knowing Hindi at the airport, he said.

Kanimozhi had alleged a woman CISF official who interacted with her on August 9 at the airport here asked her if she was an Indian as she did not speak in Hindi.

The CISF officials later maintained the woman officer “had not uttered” the words as alleged by the DMK MP but just said “Hindi is also an Indian or official language”.

They also had said the force would take “enhanced efforts” to deploy more personnel who know the local language. — PTI

‘Law & order situation alarming’

Police, admin in Bengal politically committed: Guv

Kolkata, Aug. 23: Firing a fresh salvo at the Mamata Banerjee government, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday alleged that the police and administration in the state are “politically committed”, sounding the “death knell” of democracy.

Dhankhar, in a series of tweets, also described the law and order situation in West Bengal as alarming, with reports of “free run to illegal bomb making”. “Urge CM to unshackle political caging/chaining of police and administration... This menacing stance of police and administration would generate consequences,” the governor said.

Dhankhar, who has had regular run-ins with Banerjee and her dispensation, said public servants are not political workers. “Politically committed police and administration - death knell of democracy,” he said, adding, it is unfortunate that they are always at the door of the ruling party, or are in readiness to knock the door of the opposition. “Never thought IAS/IPS



Jagdeep Dhankhar

■ **EARLIER THIS week,** the governor had dubbed purchases of coronavirus-related medical equipment a “multi-crore scam”, and said he was appalled by the financial irregularities

could so capitulate and be in ‘crawl’ unlawful mode - blatantly unmindful of conduct rules... Time to respond to call of duty,” Dhankhar said.

Earlier this week, the governor had dubbed purchases of coronavirus-related medical equipment a “multi-crore scam”, and said he was appalled by the financial irregularities and dimensions of culpable gain to chosen people. — PTI

Venugopal refuses consent in contempt against Swara

New Delhi, Aug. 23: Attorney General K.K. Venugopal has refused his consent for initiating criminal contempt of court proceedings against Bollywood actor Swara Bhaskar for her alleged “derogatory and scandalous” statements against the Supreme Court over the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case verdict.

The consent of either the Attorney General or the Solicitor General is necessary, under section 15 of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, for initiating contempt proceedings

against a person. Lawyer Anuj Saxena had sought consent of the Attorney General for initiating contempt action against the actor. Venugopal, in a letter to Saxena on August 21, said the actor's statement, appears to be a factual one and is a perception of the speaker.

“I do not think this is a case where the offence of scandalising the court or lowering the authority of the court would arise. I, therefore, decline consent to initiate contempt proceedings against Swara Bhaskar,” Venugopal said. — PTI

Mumbai dabbawalas seek help from Centre

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, AUG. 23

BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Subramanian Swamy on Sunday urged Maharashtra government to save Mumbai's dabbawalas, who have been severely affected by the lockdown imposed in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. In response, the Mumbai Dabbawalas Association asked Mr Swamy to take up their issue with the Centre as all the BJP lawmakers and



Subramanian Swamy

corporators have donated their funds to PM Cares Fund.

In a tweet, Mr Swamy said: “Mumbai dabbawalas are the most unique Indian

enterprise that has caused wonder in the developed countries. Dabbawalas have serviced Mumbai commuter office goers to get home cooked lunch every working day. Maharashtra Government & BJP must save them from starvation today (sic).”

Close to 5,000 Dabbawalas deliver lakhs of office goers in Mumbai hot home-cooked food. Although Mumbai is slowly opening up and private offices functioning with lot less manpower, dabbawalas cannot resume their work in the

absence of the local train service, which is currently open only for the government employees and people working for essential services.

Subhash Talekar, president of Mumbai Dabbawalas Association, said that Mr Swamy made the demand only to target the chief minister of Maharashtra, Uddhav Thackeray. “If the BJP leader really wanted to help dabbawalas, he would have appealed the Central government to help us,” he said.



Caretaker Suresh Meena feeds hippopotamus (Rani) and her one-month-old baby (Rajkumari) at Nahargarh Biological Park in Jaipur on Sunday. — PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

24 AUGUST 2020

J&K’s riposte shows failure of repression

The August 22 resolution of the entire collectivity of non-separatist political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, bar the BJP, to strive for the restoration of the former state with the constitutionally mandated guarantee of built-in autonomy that had prevailed since Independence, is a politically formidable sign of a peaceful fight-back by the people of J&K. It is noteworthy that two national parties — the Congress and the CPI(M) — are a part of this resolve. This makes it a supra-regional aspiration and confers a wider recognition on the resolve.

On August 4 last year, a day before the Centre cracked down on J&K by denuding it of its constitutionally-mandated autonomy without discussion in a coup like manoeuvre, and laid siege to Kashmir valley with troops as though there was a war on, the valley politicians showed acuity in passing what has come to be known as the Gupkar Declaration.

Perhaps they had their suspicions looking at the goings-on, and did not take at face value the false assurance given their key leaders by Prime Minister Narendra Modi just days earlier in New Delhi that no new moves were being contemplated in respect of J&K. At the residence of former CM and Srinagar MP Farooq Abdullah, the traditional mainstream parties gathered to underline that they would remain united in upholding Kashmir’s identity and its constitutional status. Regional parties that were rivals for power came together on a common platform, most notably Mehbooba Mufti of the PDP, also a former CM.

Two national parties — the Congress and the CPI(M) — are a part of this resolve. This makes it a supra-regional aspiration and confers a wider recognition on the resolve.

It is these very parties that re-assembled once again at Dr Abdullah’s residence on Srinagar’s Gupkar Road last Saturday to re-affirm their allegiance to the Gupkar Declaration and to underline that their politics henceforth would be “subservient” to the cause of restoration of J&K’s autonomy and its statehood, in effect the undoing the dilution of Article 370 and jettisoning of Article 35A. Ms Mufti is still in detention and could not be present but is thought to endorse this step.

The unity of the J&K parties to endeavour to turn the clock back has come at a time when the separatist camp is in disarray after the evidently voluntary withdrawal from the political space of the nonagenarian Syed Ali Shah Geelani. The people of Kashmir went into a state of shock and acute depression after the dismantling of Kashmir’s special status on August 5, 2019. It is in that state that they were given a stiff dose of military-style repression by the Centre, with thousands, including the entire mainline political leadership put in jail. The Centre appeared determined to create a new politics in Kashmir through the artificially devised Apni Party, which seems to have vanished into the blue. The new turn in events suggests that the obituary of mainstream politics (since they too had been jailed, like the separatists, under the RSS-BJP dispensation) was premature.

It is evident that repression has not worked as a tactic in J&K. Kashmir’s riposte has come through a show of peace and unity. If that resolve is sustained, New Delhi has a problem on its hands unless it can show wisdom in the changed situation.

Rebuke for media, govt

The order of the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay high court quashing the first information reports against 36 members of Tablighi Jamaat, an Islamic organisation, in connection with its meet in Delhi in March this year offers serious food for thought for both the government and the media of all hues. While 29 of the foreigners were charged with violating provisions in the Foreigners Act and Epidemic Act, the six Indians were booked for sheltering them.

As pandemic Covid-19 started spreading all over India immediately after the meet, a vilification campaign targeting its attendees, and the larger Muslim community, gained currency. Campaigns that the virus spread was part of a plan to destabilise India were carried not only on social media but the mass media as well. “Corana Jihad” was the worst form of such campaigns.

Turning the tables, the court said the government made scapegoats of the Tablighis during the pandemic and an attempt was made by others to create such an atmosphere against them. The court chastised the media, too, for its big, unwarranted propaganda, calling it an attempt to create a picture that the foreigners were responsible for spreading the virus in India.

More than exonerating the Muslim community from the stigma, the court went on to offer its explanation why the idea of secularism and religious harmony are in the interest of all. Social and religious tolerance is a practical necessity for unity and integrity of India, the court pointed out and reminded the state that all the stakeholders of the republic that it is made compulsory by the Indian Constitution.

This celebration of India’s plurality and affirmation of the constitutional principles through a judicial pronouncement happen at a time when even lip service to them is hard to find, especially by those in the seats of power. A timely reminder, indeed.

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Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup

Scindia, pick your loyalties; what’s holding up BJP work

When the Bharatiya Janata Party named Lok Sabha MPs C.R. Patil and Jamyang Tsering Namgyal as presidents of its Gujarat and Ladakh units last month, it was viewed as the first step towards the appointment of party president J.P. Nadda’s team of office bearers. In fact, it was said that the names had been finalised and it was only a matter of issuing a formal communique. However, there is no sign of it so far. BJP insiders maintain the announcement was put on hold after the leadership was advised against it because it was an inauspicious period. It appears that the uncertainty over the new office bearers may be further prolonged as Union home minister Amit Shah is undergoing treatment for coronavirus. Though Mr Shah handed over the party’s presidency to Mr Nadda in January, it is an acknowledged fact that he retains his hold over the party organisation and will necessarily have a major say in the new appointments.

Former Union minister Ajay Maken’s return to the Congress organisation as general secre-

tary has clearly not gone down with a large section of party leaders. Those unhappy with his appointment constantly point out that Mr Maken, a two-time MP from New Delhi constituency, had refused to contest the recent Delhi Assembly elections because of health reasons even though Congress president Sonia Gandhi had personally asked senior leaders to pitch in. While the other leaders agreed, Mr Maken declined. After failing to revive the party in the capital, Mr Maken had stepped down as Delhi Congress chief also on health grounds. In fact, Mr Maken was virtually off the radar till he was picked up by the Congress leadership (read Rahul Gandhi) to head to Jaipur along with other party colleagues to handle the crisis in Rajasthan. He was further rewarded last week when he replaced Avinash Pande as general secretary in charge of Rajasthan. Mr Maken’s quick rehabilitation has raised questions about Rahul Gandhi’s lament about the lack of accountability in the party.

Meanwhile, Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda has created a bit of a

stir in his home state. The Congress party’s Haryana unit is abuzz with reports about how Mr Hooda has been cozying up to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. This has made it difficult for the Congress to mount an effective offensive against the Khattar regime, which is frustrating the local leaders. But Mr Hooda is unfazed. According to the grapevine, when confronted about reports about his proximity to the BJP leaders, Mr Hooda admitted to the fact that he enjoyed a good rapport with them and even proclaimed proudly that he had met Mr Modi recently. It’s the same story with the Haryana chief minister and Mr Hooda as the latter is in constant touch with Mr Khattar. It must be remembered that Mr Hooda is facing multiple CBI inquiries into land deals undertaken during his regime. So it makes sense to befriend those who are in power.

Now that he has joined the Bharatiya Janata Party, Jyotiraditya Scindia has been forced to rework his relations with leaders in his new party. For

instance, Mr Scindia has to now befriend BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, an important leader from Indore, even though the two have been mutually antagonistic to each other for years. Their animosity scaled fresh heights when Mr Scindia defeated Mr Vijayvargiya in a high-voltage election to the prestigious Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association a decade ago. The fact that Mr Scindia has a warm relationship with senior BJP leader and former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan also made him a suspect in the eyes of Mr Vijayvargiya. For the record, Mr Mahajan and Mr Vijayvargiya are bitter political rivals. When Mr Scindia visited Indore recently, he had no choice but to meet Mr Vijayvargiya as the two have to work together for the coming bye-elections in Madhya Pradesh. But Mr Vijayvargiya’s camp followers are not happy because Mr Scindia also called on Mr Mahajan. They are insisting the new recruit to the BJP decide where his loyalties lie. This balancing act will not do, they say.

In an unusual gesture, Prime Minister Narendra Modi penned a two-page letter to cricketing hero Mahendra Singh Dhoni who recently announced his retirement on Instagram. This immediately sparked off speculation in the cricketer’s hometown Ranchi that Dhoni could be joining the ranks of his colleagues like Navjot Singh Sidhu and Gautam Gambhir, who switched to politics after retirement. Mr Modi’s letter, heaping praise on the cricketer, was viewed as an invitation to Dhoni to join public life. After all, the Bihar Assembly polls are round the corner. Apparently, BJP leaders had sent feelers to Dhoni before last year’s Jharkhand elections for an endorsement for their party but it did not materialise. Since the BJP has a special preference for drafting sportspersons, the people of Jharkhand can hardly be blamed for thinking their “local hero” could be heading to the saffron camp.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

Subhani



Contempt, sedition: We need a more open mind



Pavan K. Varma
Chanakya’s View

At the end of this month, Ashok Lavasa, one of India’s election commissioners, will prepare to depart for the sunny shores of Manila to join the Asian Development Bank. His term at the Election Commission was not over. In fact, he would have become, by virtue of seniority, the chief election commissioner, and overseen the conduct of the 2024 parliamentary elections. Why is he then leaving one of the most responsible and prestigious assignments in his own country, and the prospect of eventually heading the EC, for the nondescript anonymity of a job in a multinational organisation outside India?

Perhaps he wanted a change. Perhaps, the heat and dust of New Delhi was not to his liking. Perhaps he wanted a bigger pay package, and the opportunity to save some money. But, perhaps, this unprecedented easing out of a serving election commissioner had also something to do with his having made the cardinal “mistake” of being critical of the conduct of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah during the last general election in 2019. Reportedly, ever since then, government agencies began a series of investigations into his finances and those of his wife and other members of his family. Perhaps something was “discovered” that could embarrass him. Either way, a convenient modus vivendi was found. He was offered an “attractive” exit route, which apparently he had no objections in accepting. Perhaps, the EC will now be a more “well

behaved” institution.

On another front, the honourable Supreme Court has convicted lawyer-activist Prashant Bhushan, holding him guilty of criminal contempt, for two tweets that he had sent which raised questions on the functioning and integrity of the highest court of the land. Perhaps, the honourable judges were genuinely “scandalised” by what he had said. The law of contempt in our country says, inter alia, that “words, written or spoken, signs and actions that scandalise or tend to scandalise” the court are tantamount to contempt. The word “scandalise” is a curious one. It implies a subjectivity of interpretation that rests entirely with the person claiming to be scandalised. The Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech as a fundamental right. Democracy by definition means that an ordinary citizen has the right to express his views, dissent, critique, and interrogate. But, where the Supreme Court is concerned, there is the real worry that anything that questions its functioning may “scandalise” the honourable judges. What is the dividing line between well-intentioned criticism, and the interpretation that it could “scan-

One must give it to Macaulay for a remarkable act of drafting in insulating the colonial government against any attack. But we are a sovereign, democratic republic. Surely, laws like this... erode the very democracy...

Yes, there should certainly be, to strengthen the perception of impartiality, a law that prevents Supreme Court judges from being given fresh assignments by the government or the party in power after they retire

dalise” the judiciary, and thus be treated as contempt. Incidentally, the contempt law has been inherited by us from the British. However, although the judiciary there has often come under relentless attack, the last conviction for contempt in the United Kingdom took place as far back as 1931.

It is also rather confusing what amounts to contempt. When, on a sunny morning in January 2018, the four then seniormost judges of the Supreme Court — Kurian Joseph, J. Chameshwar, Ranjan Gogoi and Madan B. Lokur — took the unprecedented step for the first time in our history of publicly holding a press conference, in which they said that the “administration of the court is not in order” and “many things which are less than desirable have happened in the last few months... that have raised questions and further doubts about the integrity of the nation”, were they not “scandalising” the Chief Justice of India? I think the Supreme Court needs to take a more generous and democratic view of comments about itself. And, yes, there should certainly be, to strengthen the perception of impartiality, a law that prevents Supreme Court judges from being given fresh assignments by the government or the party in power after they retire.

A third area that is worrying is the misuse of the law of sedition. Thomas Babington Macaulay, who drafted this law in 1870, may not have known where

Kumarsain is. It is a hamlet outside Shimla. It is here that the Himachal Pradesh police filed a case for sedition against senior journalist Vinod Dua. The case was filed in April this year against a YouTube show Dua did on March 30. In his show Vinod Dua questioned the preparedness of the Central government in handling the coronavirus pandemic. On June 12, a posse of policemen arrived at Dua’s home in New Delhi to take him for questioning to Himachal Pradesh. It is then that he sought the protection of the judiciary. The case is still going on.

Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code is a colonial relic, meant to still disaffection of an enslaved people. It says that “whosoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt or excites disaffection towards the government established by law in India, shall be punished with imprisonment for life...”. One must give it to Macaulay for a remarkable act of drafting in insulating the colonial government against any attack. But we are a sovereign, democratic republic. Surely, laws like this, which are acted upon indiscriminately by oversensitive governments, erode the very democracy that we uphold with such pride?

Our republic is still young. Many of its institutions are still evolving. Precedents are being tested. Democratic functioning is still taking roots. The intent and the spirit of the Constitution is being evaluated in actual practice. A thin skin to criticism often leads to the thick rod of authoritarianism. It is the duty of every public-spirited citizen to resist such a tendency.

The writer, an author, is a former diplomat and in politics

LETTERS

MARCH OF BIGOTS

In a second instance of its kind in the last few months, another place of Christian worship in Turkey has been forcibly converted into a mosque by the bigots of Ankara. The first one was Hagia Sophia and the latest is Chora church. What is most disgusting is the total silence helplessly observed by the world, which preferred to remain mute spectators to what can only be described as open acts of state-sponsored religious terrorism. A few years ago, the Buddhist world watched with similar helplessness the pulverisation of the Bamiyan Buddhas by Islamic fanatics known as the Taliban.

Arun Malankar
Mumbai

MISS HIM ALREADY

A BUSINESSMAN in the traditional mould, Donald Trump set about delisting US Inc to make it a proprietorship. Trusting none, his inner cabinet was his family and his own instincts the state policy. He has sadly mixed up personal loyalties with that to the nation’s constitution. Learning on a job, next only to learning from mistakes, is a way of accumulating experience but without hard homework and reflection an invitation to jeopardy. There is never a dull moment with Mr Trump around. We may all despise him but should he retain the Oval Office I will miss him more.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

DASHING TRIO

THREE RETIRED greats of the game were inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame. They are Former South African gritty all-rounder Jacques Kallis, former Australian women’s captain Lisa Shalekar and former Pakistan batsman Zaheer Abbas. Of them, the first and the third are well-known. Shalekar, now a commentator at 41, is Pune-born and became a World Cup winner in 2005 and 2013. She also won the T20 World Cup with Australia in 2010 and 2012. Shalekar is the first woman to take 100 wickets and hit 1000 runs in international cricket. Well-played, Kallis, Abbas and Shalekar.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Subhashini Ramasamy (Aug. 20). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

IN BRIEF

Navalny visited by wife, aide

Berlin: Alexi Navalny's wife and a top aide visited him Sunday in a Berlin hospital where the comatose Russian dissident is being treated by German doctors after a suspected poisoning. Navalny was flown to Germany on Saturday from Siberia after doctors determined he was stable enough to be brought to the capital's Charité hospital for treatment. After his arrival, hospital spokeswoman Manuela Zingl said the 44-year-old would be undergoing extensive diagnostic tests and that doctors wouldn't comment on his illness or treatment until they were able to evaluate the results. On Sunday, Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, and aide Leonid Volkov visited the Russian opposition leader in the hospital, making no comments to reporters. Navalny was admitted to an intensive care unit in the Siberian city of Omsk on Thursday.

Bomb kills 7 in Afghanistan

Kabul: A roadside bombing on Sunday in eastern Afghanistan killed seven civilians, a provincial official said, the latest in relentless deadly violence in the country amid new uncertainties over the start of talks between the Taliban and the Kabul government. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing in Ghazni province's Jaghatu district. Three women, two children and two men died when their vehicle struck the roadside bomb, said Wahidullah Jumazada, a spokesman for the provincial governor. Afghan civilians continue to bear the brunt of the war across their country despite efforts to launch peace talks and find a road map for post-war Afghanistan. According to a United Nations report released in July, 1,282 people were killed in violence in the first six months of 2020 and hundreds were wounded. Women and children continue to be affected by the armed conflict.

13 suffocate in Peru party

Lima: At least 13 people suffocated in a crush during a raid on a nightclub in Peru's capital where a party was being held despite a Coronavirus ban on such gatherings, police said. Latin America has been badly hit by the pandemic, and this month Peru reimposed stricter restrictions on movement. The illegal birthday party on Saturday was organised on social media and drew a crowd of around 120 at the Thomas Restobar, the interior ministry said in a statement confirming the 13 deaths. "Faced with the police operation, which did not use any type of weapon or tear gas, those attending the party tried to escape through the single exit, trampling each other and getting trapped in the stairway," the ministry said. Some who were at the party and others living near the nightclub in Lima's Los Olivos district disputed the ministry's version. "It appears that police entered and threw tear gas canisters at them, and boxed them in," a local said.

MEMORIAL: U.S. ENVOY JOINS TAIWAN PREZ

Kinmen (Taiwan), Aug. 23: The US envoy to Taiwan joined President Tsai Ing-wen at a military memorial service Sunday in a fresh show of warming relations that threatened to add to irritants in Washington's relations with Beijing. Neither the director of the American Institute in Taiwan, William Brent Christensen, nor Tsai spoke at the annual event for soldiers killed by Chinese bombing in 1958 on Kinmen, a Taiwanese-controlled island near the mainland coast.

Attendees, wearing masks as a precaution against the Coronavirus, observed one minute of silence. Military personnel lit incense at soldiers' graves. Washington has no official relations with Taiwan, which split with the Communist-ruled mainland in 1949 following a civil war. The Trump administration has made gestures toward Taiwan as relations with Beijing soured.

This month, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar became the highest-ranking US official to visit, prompting a Chinese protest. Despite that lack of official ties, the United States is Taiwan's most important ally and weapons supplier. The AIT is a non-profit corporation instead of an embassy.

Protests rage on in Belarus



Protesters unveil historical flag of Belarus as thousands of people gather for a protest at the Independence square in Minsk, Belarus, on Sunday. More than 100,00 protesters demanding the resignation of authoritarian president Alexander Lukashenko rallied in a vast square in the capital, keeping up the massive outburst of dissent that has shaken the country since a disputed presidential election two weeks ago. Dozens of police prisoner transport vehicles were parked on the fringes, but police made no immediate efforts to break up the gathering. Earlier this month, some 7,000 people were arrested, many of them beaten with clubs or wounded by rubber bullets, in the protests after the August 9 election that officials say handed Lukashenko a sixth term in office.

Report: Trump's sister calls him 'cruel', 'liar' in secret recordings

Washington, Aug. 23: President Donald Trump's older sister, a former federal judge, is heard sharply criticising her brother in a series of recordings released Saturday, at one point saying of the president, "He has no principles." Maryanne Trump Barry was secretly recorded by her niece, Mary Trump, who recently released a book denouncing the president, "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man."

Mary Trump said Saturday she made the recordings in 2018 and 2019. In one recording, Barry, 83, says she had heard a 2018 interview with her brother on Fox News in which he suggested that he would put her on the border to oversee cases of immigrant children separated from their parents. "His base, I mean my God, if you were a religious person, you want to help people. Not do this," Barry says. At another point she says: "His goddamned tweet and lying, oh my God." She adds: "I'm talking too freely, but you know. The change of stories. The lack of preparation. The lying. Holy shit." Barry can also be heard saying that she guesses that her brother has never read her opinions on immigration cases. "What has he read?" Mary Trump asks her aunt. Barry responds: "No. He doesn't read." The recordings were first reported by *The Washington Post*. *The Associated Press* then obtained the recordings. The recordings came to light just a day after the late Robert Trump, brother to Maryanne and the president, was memorialised in a service at the White House. Later, the president was dismissive of the recordings. "Every day it's something else, who cares. I miss my brother, and I'll continue to work hard for the American people," Trump said in a statement.

—AP

NaMo in Don campaign ad for Indo-Americans

Washington, Aug. 23: Aiming to woo the influential Indian-American voters numbering over 2 million, the Trump campaign has released its first video commercial that has short clips from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches and US President Donald Trump's historic address in Ahmedabad.

Modi and Trump addressed a huge crowd in Ahmedabad during the US president's visit to India in February this year. Trump

was also accompanied by his wife Melania, daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and top brass of his administration on his trip to India.

"America enjoys a great relationship with India and our campaign enjoys great support from Indian-Americans," Kimberly Guilfoyle, national chair of Trump Victory Finance Committee said in a tweet releasing the video commercial. The president's son Donald Trump Jr, who

is leading the campaign and is well connected with the Indian-American community, also retweeted it as the commercial soon became viral on social media with over 66,000 views on Twitter in the first few hours.

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

—PTI

MESSAGING BAN: WECHAT USERS SUE PRESIDENT

Los Angeles, Aug. 23: Some US-based users of WeChat are suing President Donald Trump in a bid to block an executive order that they say would effectively bar access in the US to the hugely popular Chinese messaging app. The complaint, filed Friday in San Francisco, is being brought by the nonprofit US WeChat Users Alliance and several people who say they rely on the app for work, worship and staying in touch with relatives in China. The plaintiffs said they are not affiliated with WeChat, nor its parent company, Tencent Holdings.

In the lawsuit, they asked a federal court judge to stop Trump's executive order from being enforced, claiming it would violate its US users' freedom of speech, free exercise of religion and other constitutional rights. Trump on Aug. 6 ordered sweeping but vague bans on transactions with the Chinese owners of WeChat and another popular consumer app, TikTok, saying they are a threat.

—AP

Protesters target Portland building

Police say officers hit with rocks, bottles

Portland, Aug. 23: Police forced protesters away from a law enforcement building in Oregon's biggest city early Sunday, as efforts to stop the demonstrators from gathering at the building seemingly fell apart.

The protesters apparently had plans Saturday night to march from a park to the Penumbra Kelly public safety building, news outlets reported. But, a standoff between marchers and officers took place on a bridge along the way — and the demonstrators retreated. Protesters appear to have returned to the park, and then taken cars to the building, according to a reporter for

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

The gathering was later declared a riot. Officers had been hit with rocks, bottles and other objects, police said. Images posted online showed officers using smoke to clear the area. Several people were seen being detained, but it's unclear whether any arrests were made. Similar protests have previously occurred at the Penumbra Kelly building, including last weekend.

—AP

PoC shot by cops: Probe demanded

Lafayette, Aug. 23: The mother of a man fatally shot by Louisiana police said her son was intelligent, shy and had sought therapy for social anxiety. Her lawyers said they plan to sue over the death of Trayford Pellerin, who police said had a knife and was trying to enter a convenience store.

The shooting Friday night was captured on video, and the state ACLU condemned what it described as a "horrific and deadly incident of police violence

against a PoC person."

Both the ACLU and the Southern Poverty Law Center quickly called for an investigation.

Pellerin's death prompted a crowd of protesters to gather Saturday and demonstrate against the latest fatal police shooting. Officers in riot gear fired smoke canisters on Saturday night to get the crowd to disperse, Trooper Derek Senegal said.

No tear gas was deployed, he said.

—AP

GOP CONVENTION: DEMONSTRATION ON

Charlotte, Aug. 23: Protesters returned to the streets of Charlotte, North Carolina, to demonstrate for a second night as GOP officials gathered in the city for the Republican National Convention.

Police used bicycles to block protesters Saturday night from gathering close to the Charlotte Convention Center, the site of the convention. The Secret Service set up a perimeter, news outlets reported.

Several people were arrested Friday, and at least one person was arrested Saturday.

—AP

DENVER UNREST: 9 HELD, OFFICER HURT

Denver, Aug. 23: Demonstrators donning helmets and shields clashed with police late Saturday in Denver, prompting officers to arrest at least nine people.

Fireworks were shot at officers, an American flag and a tree outside a courthouse were set ablaze, windows were shattered and fast-food restaurant was broken into. Reasons for protest: Efforts to defund the police department, to displeasure over the police response to a homeless camp last week, to the death of Elijah McClain, according to news outlets.

—AP

UK approached for extradition of absconder Nawaz: PM aide

Lahore, Aug. 23: The Pakistan government has declared former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, currently in London for treatment, an "absconder" and approached the UK government for his extradition. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior Shahzad Akbar said that Sharif's four-week bail on med-

ical grounds expired in December last year.

"The government is treating him (Sharif) as an absconder and has already sent a request to the British government to extradite him," Akbar was quoted as saying by the *Dawn News* on Saturday. Sharif, who was sentenced in a graft case by an accountability court, informed

a court in Lahore last month that he is unable to return to the country as his doctors have told him not to go out due to the Coronavirus as he has low platelet counts, diabetes, heart, kidney and blood pressure related problems. Sharif submitted his medical report to the Lahore High Court through his counsel.

—PTI

Iran retrieves data from downed Ukraine plane

Tehran, Aug. 23: Iran has retrieved some data, including a portion of cockpit conversations, from the Ukrainian jetliner accidentally downed by the Revolutionary Guard forces in January, killing all 176 people on board, an Iranian official said Sunday.

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

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

shootdown happened the same night Iran launched a ballistic missile attack targeting US soldiers in Iraq, its response to the American drone strike that killed Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on Jan. 3.

At the time, Iranian troops were bracing for a US counterstrike and appear to have mistaken the plane for a missile. Iran, however, has not acknowledged that, only saying that after the ballistic missile attack, its air defence was sufficiently alert and had allowed previously scheduled air traffic to resume — a reference to the Ukrainian plane being allowed to take off from Tehran. The Ukrainian plane was apparently targeted by two missiles.

The plane had just taken off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International

Airport when the first missile exploded, possibly damaging its radio equipment. The second missile likely directly struck the aircraft, as videos from that night show the plane exploding into a ball of fire before crashing into a playground and farmland on the outskirts of Tehran. For days after the crash, Iranian investigators combed the site, sifting through the debris of the plane.

The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation, Capt. Touraj Dehghani Zangeneh, said on Sunday that the Ukrainian passenger plane's black boxes have only 19 seconds of conversation following the first explosion, though the second missile reached the plane 25 seconds later. The report quoting him did not elaborate.

—AP

NEW | STUDY

Scientists say marine mammals like gray whales and bottlenose dolphins risk catching virus

Many animal species may be vulnerable to Covid-19

Los Angeles, Aug. 23: Humans are not the only species facing a potential threat from the Coronavirus, according to a new study which says several critically endangered primates such as the Western lowland gorilla, Sumatran orangutan, and Northern white-cheeked gibbon may be susceptible to infection with the virus.

Scientists, including those from the University of California (UC) — Davis in the US, used genomic analysis to compare the structure of the ACE2 receptor protein which the Coronavirus uses to enter

cells across 410 different species of vertebrates, including birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals. According to the study, published in the journal *PNAS*, ACE2 is normally found in many different types of cells and tissues, including the cells lining the outer layer of the nose, mouth, and lungs. Of the amino acid building blocks which make up ACE2, the scientists said 25 of these molecules in the protein are important for the Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, to bind and gain entry into human cells.

In the study, they used

the sequence of these 25 amino acid molecules, assessed how they interact with each other, and modelled its predicted protein structure. Using this model, the researchers evaluated how many of the 25 amino acids are found in the ACE2 protein of the different species.

"Animals with all 25 amino acid residues matching the human protein are predicted to be at the highest risk for contracting SARS-CoV-2 via ACE2," said Joana Damas, a co-author of the study from UC Davis.

"The risk is predicted to

● 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.

decrease the more the species' ACE2 binding residues differ from humans," Damas said. According to the researchers, about 40

per cent of the species potentially susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 are classified as "threatened" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and may be especially vulnerable to human-to-animal transmission.

"The data provide an important starting point for identifying vulnerable and threatened animal populations at risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection," said Harris Lewin, lead author of the study from UC Davis. "We hope it inspires practices that protect both animal and human health during the pandemic," Le-

win said.

The study noted that several critically endangered primate species, such as the Western lowland gorilla, Sumatran orangutan, and Northern white-cheeked gibbon, are predicted to be at very high risk of infection by the Coronavirus. It said marine mammals such as gray whales and bottlenose dolphins, as well as Chinese hamsters are also at high risk of catching the virus. Among domestic animals, the scientists said cats, cattle, and sheep were found to have a medium risk, while dogs, hors-

es, and pigs have low risk for the virus binding to their ACE2 receptors.

"These species represent an opportunity for spillover of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to other susceptible animals. Given the limited infectivity data for the species studied, we urge caution not to over-interpret the predictions of the present study," the scientists wrote. They cautioned that it is yet to be determined how this relates to infection and disease risk, but said for the species with known infectivity data, this correlation is high.

—PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,434.72	0.56
Nifty 50	11,371.60	0.53
S&P 500*	3,397.16	0.34
Dollar (₹)	74.83	-1.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.77	-0.68
Euro (₹)	88.45	0.22
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,990▼94	0.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.35	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.140	0.140
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.636	0.00

* As of Friday/Saturday

SBI, PNB, BoB may go for share sale this fiscal

Five large banks, including SBI, PNB, BoB and UBI, are likely to sell shares to institutional investors in the second half of this fiscal as they look to shore up their capital base. QIP would be the preferred way and the banks are likely to take a call on this with their second quarter results, merchant bankers said. The banks would get a better picture about their NPAs, one-time loan restructuring and consequent ratings by end-October.

FPIs invest over ₹40,200 crore in equities in Aug.



Overseas investors have put in Rs 41,330 crore in Indian markets on a net basis in August. According to the depositories data, foreign portfolio investors (FPI) pumped in Rs 40,262 crore into equities and Rs 1,068 crore in the debt segment during August 3-21. Prior to this, FPIs were net buyers for two consecutive months. They invested Rs 3,301 crore in July and Rs 24,053 crore in June on a net basis.

Balmer Lawrie to close down packaging unit

Diversified PSU Balmer Lawrie and Company Ltd will be closing down its industrial packaging unit in Kolkata, which was making losses for years from low demand, from September 1. All the 40 permanent employees of the unit opted for a separation scheme, Balmer Lawrie CMD Prabal Basu said. The demand for industrial barrels, the main product of the unit, was low and it could not be revived, Basu said. Its main clients were PSUs.

Diageo sold off India wine business at a loss

World's leading spirits maker Diageo incurred a loss of 2 million pounds on sale of its Indian wine business last year. Diageo-owned United Spirits Ltd had sold its entire stake in Four Seasons Wines as well as associated brands to Grover Zampa Vineyards and Quintela Assets for Rs 31.86 crore. "The disposal of the Indian wine business has resulted in an exceptional loss of 2 million pounds," Diageo said in its annual report.

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No major cut in employee expenses

Blue chips keep tight leash on spend in Q1

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 23

Most Sensex companies' first quarter employee benefit expenses saw minor deviation compared to fourth quarter of FY19-20, indicating far less salary cut and job losses than what is being talked about in the wider universe. But their other operational expenses, like advertising and promotion, travel, freight & forwarding, were down sharply, helping them post healthy profit and beat muted expectations.

A Financial Chronicle analysis of April-June 2020 consolidated results of top Sensex companies representing various sectors show employee benefit expenses were down sharply for Hindustan Unilever (Rs 1,434 crore), Infosys (Rs 688 crore), Reliance Industries (Rs 545 crore), SBI (Rs 276.95 crore), Tata Steel (Rs 189.44).

But for HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hero MotoCorp, Mahindra and Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, Ultratech Cement, Titan Company, Nestle, Asian Paints and Bajaj Finance



employee benefit expenses were down by less than Rs 100 crore. The same was a tad higher for Tata Consultancy Services (Rs 42 crore), HDFC (Rs 6.48 crore), ITC (Rs 25.88 crore) while Bharti Airtel's employee expenses were higher by Rs 125 crore and Sun Pharma's by Rs 107.15 crore.

Bharti Airtel announced a one-time bonus for all its employees as a token of appreciation for helping the company navigate in these turbulent times. Other operational expenses were down significantly for State Bank of India (by Rs 6,816.17 crore), ICICI Bank (Rs 6,179.24 crore), Tata Steel (Rs 3,800.98 crore), Maruti Suzuki (Rs 1,750.5 crore), ITC (Rs 1,378.4 crore) and

Sun Pharma (Rs 630.9 crore).

For Hero MotoCorp other expenses were down by Rs 483.35 crore.

For Hindustan Unilever advertising and promotion expenses were down by Rs 3,538 crore, for Bharti Airtel by Rs 205.4 crore, for Titan Company by Rs 76 crore.

For software major Infosys travel expenses were down by Rs 551 crore to just Rs 116 crore compared to Rs 667 crore during the previous quarter.

For bulk goods mover Ultratech Cement freight and forwarding expenses were lower by Rs 1,072.72 crore at Rs 1,605.85 crore compared to Rs 2,678.57 crore in the previous quarter.

CHINA SAYS ECONOMY CAN GROW IF JOBS TARGET MET

Aug. 23: China's economy can grow this year if the nation achieves its target of adding 9 million jobs, premier Li Keqiang said in a visit to the western city of Chongqing.

Li called on the nation to step up its efforts and prepare for uncertainties after the economy achieved positive results in recent months, according to a statement posted

on the government website on Sunday. China also estimates that smaller companies and business operators could survive this year from the virus outbreak. —Bloomberg

Miner finds 442-carat diamond worth \$18m



THOMAS BIESHEUVEL AUG. 23

A small diamond miner that has dug some of the world's most valuable gems from a mountainous African kingdom has found another huge stone.

Gem Diamonds Ltd said it had an unearthed a 442-carat diamond at its Letseng mine in Lesotho. While it's hard to establish a price for such stones before cutters can evaluate them, it could sell for as much as \$18 million, Edward Sterck, analyst at BMO Capital Markets, wrote in a note.

Given the rarity of such large stones, demand for big diamonds has traditionally been resilient.

The Letseng mine is famous for the size and quality of the diamonds it produces and has the highest average selling price in the world. Two years ago Gem Diamonds found a 910-carat stone, the size of two golf balls, that sold for \$40 million.

The find comes as the global diamond industry has been brought to its knees by the pandemic. Jewellery stores have closed and India's cutting industry, which handles almost all of the world's stones, has come to a halt. The miners that dominate the industry, De Beers and Russian rival Alrosa PJSC, have seen their rough diamond sales collapse.

"The recovery of this remarkable 442 carat diamond, one of the world's largest gem quality diamonds to be recovered this year, is further confirmation of the calibre of the Letseng mine and its ability to consistently produce large, high quality diamonds," Clifford Elphick, Gem's chief executive officer, said in the statement.

—Bloomberg

Don't go by green shoots: Subbarao

BIJAY KUMAR SINGH NEW DELHI, AUG. 23

Calling 'green shoots' of economic revival as a mechanical rebound, former RBI governor D Subbarao says India's short- and medium-term growth prospects to remain grim and the government should not read too much into the economic activity coming back from the depressed base of lockdown.

Before the Covid-19 crisis, the economy was in a slowdown—its real GDP growth had moderated from 7 per cent in 2017-18 to 6.1 per cent in 2018-19 and to 4.2 per cent in 2019-20.

"I don't believe we should read too much into the green shoots that you refer to. What we've been seeing is just a mechanical rebound from the depressed base of the lockdown; it will be misleading to see it as a signal of a durable recovery," Subbarao told PTI in an interview.

He said the "short-term as well as medium-term prospects (for the economy) continue to be grim".

"The pandemic is still spiralling, the number of daily cases is rising and it is spreading to newer regions," he added.

On India's medium-term growth prospect, the former RBI governor said that the economy was in a troubled state when the Covid-19 crisis hit India.

"When the crisis is behind us, and I hope that is soon enough, these problems are going to be much bigger. Fiscal deficit is going to be much higher, the debt burden much larger and the financial sector in a worse shape," he said.

The World Bank last week projected India's fiscal deficit to rise to 6.6 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 and remain elevated at 5.5 per cent in the following year. This compares to the 3.5 per cent target set by the government. "Our medium-term prospects will depend on how effectively we resolve these challenges," Subbarao said.

When asked for a positive sign, he noted that the rural economy has recovered better than the urban economy. —PTI

RINL, Posco to form jt. group to speed up Vizag project

New Delhi, Aug 23: The Ministry of Steel has asked RINL and South Korean player Posco to form a joint working group to oversee their plans of setting a green-field project in Andhra Pradesh.

The South Korean steel major and state-owned RINL have been in talks for quite some time over their plans to set up a joint venture (JV) for manufacturing value-added special grade of steel.

An MoU between the two players for setting up the plant was signed towards the end of last year, an official said, adding the group would now work on the aspects of the "final agreement as to what will be the share of the players (in the JV), amount of the investment, among others."

In July 2019, senior Posco officials had met the then steel secretary Binoy Kumar and submitted an investment proposal.

Posco's interest in India is not new. Earlier, the company had proposed to set up a 12 MTPA plant at Jagat-singhpur in Odisha at an estimated cost of Rs 52,000 crore.

RINL's 7.3 million tonnes plant in Visakhapatnam is a shore-based integrated steel plant. It has a land of over 22,000 acre of its own and enjoys access to Gangavaram Port. —PTI

Second consolidation wave starts in insurance sector

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 23

The \$100-billion Indian insurance sector, comprising life and non-life segments, is showing a second wave of consolidation, with several promoters unable to infuse more capital to grow.

According to industry sources, several small sized players at the bottom, in both life and the non-life segments, are eager to consolidate and the sector would see another two to three mergers in the next one year while some medium-sized players would look at listing.

Many reasons are driving the promoter appetite for divestment. One is that many promoters are in need for capital to fund their other businesses.

On Saturday, the largest private non-life insurer, ICICI Lombard General Insurance, said it would acquire Bharti Axa General Insurance Company's business in a share swap deal. Post the deal, ICICI Lombard will become the third-largest non-life insurer and the combined entity shall have a market share of around 8.7 per cent on a pro-forma basis.

Shareholders of Bharti Axa will receive two shares of ICICI Lombard for every 115 shares of Bharti Axa, as per the share exchange ratio recommended by independent valuers.

The companies did not disclose the deal value. "There is a second round of consolidation



BIRLA SUN LIFE OPEN TO BUYOUT

New Delhi, Aug. 23: Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance on Sunday said it is open to opportunities for consolidation as the sector is expected to undergo a churn from Covid-19-related business disruptions. In an e-mail interview, the firm's MD & CEO Kamlesh Rao said data suggests that in times of socio-economic crisis like this, around 30-35 per cent companies find it difficult to survive, while close to 15-20 per cent firms outshine their peers. "We hope to be in the list of 15-20 per cent companies that outshine their peers. If there are opportunities of consolidation in the market which are worth evaluating, we will explore the same," he said. —PTI

happening in the insurance space and you will see two to three more

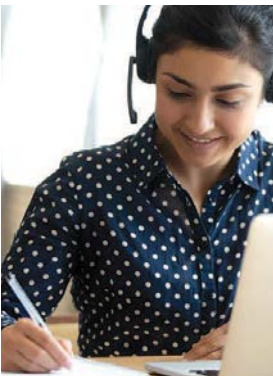
Online higher education is a \$5-bn opportunity

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 23

Online higher education has an opportunity to grow 10-fold by FY25, benefiting from tailwinds caused by Covid-19 and regulatory developments, including the new education policy. The online higher education space can become a \$5 billion market by then, finds RedSeer Consulting.

Post-Covid, Indian institutions will be allowed to offer up to 40 per cent of their coursework online, up from 20 per cent earlier. Unbundling of courses and democratisation of access will boost demand for online education.

Moreover, the economic uncertainty will increase the need for continuous learning. While several skills will get redundant, high unemployment and an increasing skills gap will bring in a new urgency to the need for continuous learning in order to stay relevant in the job market. Mismatch between industry requirements and education curriculum in colleges also



will see online education bridging the gap.

The government has set an ambitious target to double the enrolment in higher education to 50 per cent under the National Education Policy 2020. The policy aims for 50 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio, from 26.3, in higher education, taking total enrolments to 92 million by 2035. Online offerings will play a critical role in enabling supply, innovation and democratising access to education.

The overall online higher education market will benefit from the new reforms, including the increase in public spending. The recent regulatory developments mark a major shift in higher education and will enable accelerated growth in online higher education. The top 100 universities are permitted to offer online degree courses and ed-tech platforms can now partner with universities to offer online degrees against diplomas earlier. Top Indian institutes are encouraged to build/advance their global presence and vice versa. Better exposure to foreign universities will be enabled by integration with online platforms. "The new education policy is creating a system of knowledge that is well-rounded and versatile. Students who learn under this new pedagogy will be ready to face the challenges presented by an increasingly complex world. Technology will play a very important role in this new phase of Indian education," said Vipul Sobti, business head, Unthinkable Solutions.

Road infra will be on par with US, UK in two years: Gadkari

NAMITA TEWARI NEW DELHI, AUG. 23

Focus on critical infrastructure building through an integrated approach, right from a number of strategic tunnels and bridges to 22 green expressways, is bound to place India in the league of advanced nations like the US, UK and Australia in the coming two years, Union minister Nitin Gadkari has said.

Apart from a number of strategic tunnels and bridges being built across the length and breadth of the country, 22 green expressways at an estimated cost of Rs 3.10 lakh crore comprising 7,500 km are planned to be executed in the next couple of years, the road transport minister said.

He said talks are in advanced stage for building Rs 8,250 crore Chandra Expressway in Madhya Pradesh, a first of its kind in collaboration of the state government.

"To take India's infrastructure to the next level it has been decided to work on it in an integrated manner as per Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. Plans are afoot to tap full potential while building newer highways by laying optic fibre, transmission line and gas pipe lines," Gadkari told PTI in an interview.

The power ministry will come up with plans for transmission line while the IT ministry will give nod for optical fibre cable network, the minister said adding that similarly gas pipeline can be laid along the big roads being built.

"Given the pace of work on critical infrastructure including strategic tunnels, bridges and highways, I am confident that whatever work we are doing... (in) coming next two years you will see a changed India. Roads, tunnel and bridges which we see in the US, UK, Germany and Australia, the same kind of work will be seen in our country," the senior minister said.

—PTI



SHORT TAKES

India beat China in Chess Olympiad

Chennai: R. Praggnanandhaa and Divya Deshmukh starred with crucial wins as India stunned a formidable China 4-2 in the ninth and final round of the Top Division Pool A in the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad on Sunday. India will play the quarterfinals on August 28. Four draws and two wins on Under-20 boards helped India pull off the victory. Praggnanandhaa appeared to be on the ropes, but managed to turn the tables on Liu Yan and finished with a perfect 6/6 score. Divya, a former world under-10 and 12 champion, put it across Jiner Zhu to underline her potential. Vidit Gujrathi, the Indian captain, held world No.3 Ding Liren to a creditable draw on the top board while P. Harikrishna also shared honours with Yangyi Yu. Indian ace Koneru Humpy signed peace with the women's world No.1 Yifan Hou as did D. Harika against the current world champ Wenjun Ju. India claimed the top spot in Pool A with 17 points and became the first team to qualify for the quarterfinals. — PTI

Players demand Ratna for Chand

New Delhi: Former and current hockey players came together to demand Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award, for the legendary Major Dhyan Chand, a week ahead of his 115th birth anniversary. With National Sports Day approaching, greats such as Gurbux Singh, Harbinder Singh, Ashok Kumar and current player Yuvraj Walimiki took part in a virtual discussion on Saturday to celebrate the life and career of the iconic player. National Sports Day is celebrated on August 29, on the birth anniversary of Dhyan Chand. The discussion was part of a digital campaign which was launched by former India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly, actors Babushaan Mohanty and Rachel White last year to demand 'Bharat Ratna' for Major Dhyan Chand. "For us Dhyan Chand was God. We were lucky to travel with him to East Africa and Europe for a month-long tour. It is difficult to find such a nice man and a great player. He was the most complete player ever born," said Gurbux Singh. — PTI

Johnson takes five-shot lead

Norton: Dustin Johnson arrived at the TPC Boston golf this week, headed to the practice range and then looked at his swing coach. "He said, 'Bro, what am I supposed to be working on again?'" Claude Harmon said on Saturday as he watched his pupil set another personal record in The Northern Trust. Johnson isn't doing much wrong at the moment, a daunting prospect to the guys trying to chase him. His birdie-eagle finish gave Johnson a 7-under 64 and stretched his lead to five shots over Harris English and Scottie Scheffler. The finish would have come in handy the day before. Johnson was an astounding 11-under par through 11 holes Friday and had the golf world curious if he would go as low as 57 to set the PGA Tour record. Instead, he finished with seven straight pars for a 60, his best ever but not what it could have been. Johnson put that behind him and looked just as good. — AP

JAMES, DAVIS DOMINATE TRAIL BLAZERS

Miami: LeBron James finished with 38 points as the Los Angeles Lakers outplayed the Portland Trail Blazers at both ends of the floor on Saturday for a 116-108 win in game three of their Western Conference playoff series. James also had 12 rebounds and eight assists while Anthony Davis scored 23 of his 29 points in the second half as the Lakers grabbed a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven first round series in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 13 points and Alex Caruso added 10 points and seven assists for the Lakers. — AFP

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All set for desert safari

Delhi Capitals, SRH last teams to land in UAE for IPL

Dubai, Aug. 23: Wearing masks and face shields, Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad's Indian players and support staff arrived on Sunday in hot and dry Dubai for the upcoming IPL.

Moved out of India due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 13th edition of the world's biggest T20 league will be played across the three venues of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah in the UAE from September 19 to November 10.

The Hyderabad-based franchise landed in the city first, and was soon followed by the team from the Indian capital, which flew into the UAE via Mumbai.

The players will be undergoing a mandatory six-day quarantine which is in line with the Standard Operating Procedure issued by the BCCI.

RT-PCR tests will be performed on everyone on Day 1, 3 and 6 of the quarantine, after which all the players who return negative for all the three tests will be entering the tournament bio-bubble.

Delhi Capitals chief executive officer Dhiraj Malhotra and assistant coach Mohammad Kaif shared their thoughts, having met their players after a long time.

"We are all really excited that cricket is back, and that the team is together again. It is like meeting your own family, meeting your long lost friends. So it is just a really overwhelming phase for all of us," Malhotra was quoted as saying. Kaif added, "We will be undergoing three more tests, and hopefully everyone's reports will come out negative, and then we can get back on to the field to start practicing."

Both the franchises shared a number of their players' departure and arrival photos.

Posting a touchdown tweet, Sunrisers' Shreevats Goswami wrote, "Just landed in Dubai and been wel-



Delhi Capitals captain Shreyas Iyer at the team hotel in Dubai on Sunday.



Shikhar Dhawan of Delhi Capitals gets himself tested for Coronavirus before his team's departure for the Indian Premier League, in Mumbai on Saturday.

comed by heat wave!"

"The players will not be allowed to venture out of their rooms during the six-day isolation period."

All the Indian players from the star-studded Chennai Super Kings, Royal Challengers Bangalore, Kings XI Punjab, Kolkata Knight

Riders and Mumbai Indians landed in the UAE on Friday for the world's biggest T20 league. The players were already tested multiple times before departure. The players and support staff will be tested every fifth day of the tournament. — PTI

Azhar frustrates England on Day 3

Southampton, Aug. 23: Pakistan captain Azhar Ali kept England at bay with an unbeaten 82 in the third Test here on Sunday. At tea on the third day, Pakistan were 158-5 — still a huge 425 runs behind England's mammoth first innings 583-8 declared.

But Azhar, who had only managed 38 runs in three previous innings this series, was in sight of a hundred, having become just the fifth Pakistan batsman to have scored 6,000 Test runs. Together with wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan (22 not out) he had shared an unbroken stand of 83 after Pakistan had collapsed to 75-5.

ANDERSON EYES 600 WICKETS

The duo also halted England great James

Anderson's charge towards becoming the first pacer to take 600 Test wickets. It looked like the 38-year-old was well on his way with superb lunch figures of 4-21 from 11 overs taking him to 597 Test wickets and leaving Pakistan in the dire position of 41-4.

But Pakistan fought back by scoring 117 runs for the loss of just Fawad Alam in Sunday's second session.

Azhar, in his 81st match at this level, joined an elite Pakistan group featuring Yousif Khan, Javed Miandad, Inzamam-ul-Haq and Mohammad Yousuf to have reached the milestone of 6,000 Test runs. — AFP

Brief scores (at Tea): Pakistan 158/5 in 60 overs (Azhar Ali 82 n.o., M. Rizwan 22 n.o., J. Anderson 4/42) vs England.

Spanish club claim record 6th title

Sevilla's Europa affair continues

Cologne (Germany), Aug. 23: Not even the Coronavirus could stop Sevilla's love affair with the Europa League.

Never mind that the final was three months late and without fans, the Spanish club secured a record sixth title in the competition on Friday, beating Inter Milan 3-2 in Cologne.

It's a competition made to measure for Sevilla. The club's big enough to have qualified for Europe for the last seven seasons. However, it hasn't come close in that time to breaking Real Madrid and Barcelona's hold on La Liga, let alone challenging for the Champions League.

"It's incredible. We had such tough games, I think, the whole tournament but we played so well as a team, and you could see it during the tournament. We were really a team, like a family," Sevilla forward Luuk de Jong said after scoring with two headers.

"We worked together and it didn't matter who played, who came on the pitch, everyone was working for each other."

Defeating Inter made it six titles from six finals for Sevilla, which has won every time it's reached the last eight. The opponents it's beaten in finals along the way range from storied European clubs like Liverpool, Inter and

Benfica to the more obscure likes of Middlesbrough and Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk.

Sevilla love the Europa League "more than anyone else," sporting director Ramón "Monchi" Rodríguez said ahead of the final. That was underlined throughout the game as club staff and officials sang and cheered from the upper tier, creating the semblance of a crowd in an almost empty stadium.

"I'm very pleased as coach," Sevilla's Julen Lopetegui said through a translator. "We've been working hard all season to achieve our targets."

Acknowledging the restrictions still in place around Europe because of the coronavirus, he urged fans "to be cautious in their celebrations, to be aware of the circumstances."

Sevilla won't be in next season's Europa League, at least not at first. Their fourth-place finish in La Liga was good enough to qualify for a Champions League group-stage place, even without the spot on offer for the Europa League winner.

It was the 238th and last Sevilla game for midfielder Ever Banega, who won his third Europa League title and now heads to Saudi Arabia next season. — AP



Sevilla players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Europa League final against Inter Milan in Cologne, Germany, on Friday. — AP

CONTE HINTS FUTURE AT INTER UNCERTAIN

Cologne (Germany), Aug. 23: Antonio Conte hinted on Friday that his future at Inter Milan remains uncertain after losing to Sevilla in the final of the Europa League. Conte said he needed time to reflect after the 2-3 loss in the final left his Inter team the runners-up for the second time this season after finishing a point behind Juventus in Serie A.

"It's only right that I start to reflect and to think about things. I also have a private life and I need to understand what's going on," he said through a translator. Taking the Inter job was worth it, "regardless of what will ultimately come to pass in the coming days," he said.

Conte added: "I've had an incredible experience at this club, regardless of what will go on in the future. But I have no regrets whatsoever." After the last Serie A game of the season against Atalanta on Aug. 1, Conte said the club could have done more to protect the team from criticism and "attacks." — AP

Test team under Kohli best: Sunny

New Delhi, Aug. 23: Legendary batsman Sunil Gavaskar has described the current Indian Test side under Virat Kohli as the best ever, saying that the lethal bowling attack makes it more balanced than the teams of earlier eras.

Under Kohli, India reached the top of ICC Test rankings and the team is currently at number one spot in the World Test Championship standings. The highlight of the team's success is the first Test series win in Australia in 2018-19 tour.

"I believe this team is the best ever Indian Test team in terms of balance, in terms of ability, in terms of

skills, in terms of temperament. Can't think of a better Indian Test team," Gavaskar said during the India Today's e-Conclave Inspiration series.

Gavaskar said what stands out in the current team is the "varied bowling attack" which can win matches on any surface, irrespective of the conditions.

"This team has the attack to win on any surface. It doesn't need any help in conditions... they can win on any surface. Batting-wise there were teams in 1980s that were pretty similar. But they didn't have the bowlers that Virat has," the former captain said. — PTI

Smith missing fans as Oz ready for England sojourn

Sydney, Aug. 23: The Australian cricket team departed on Sunday for a tour to England like no other in the long history between the two nations.

The teams will meet in three One-day and three Twenty20 internationals in stadiums without fans, played under strict biosecurity protocols.

Between matches the Australians will be locked in a hermetic bubble to ward off the threat of the Coronavirus.

They are the first Australian national sports team to leave the country since the global pandemic began.

Australia hasn't played a match since March 13, when a scheduled one-day series against New Zealand

was abandoned. As captain Steve Smith left Sydney on Sunday for Perth, from which the Australian team's char-

tered flight was to leave for London, he said he is eager to play again, whatever the surrounding circumstances.

Smith was also sad that stadiums won't be full of the England fans who have always jeered him in the past, moreso since his suspension for ball tampering. "I do like batting there," Smith said at Sydney Airport.

"But unfortunately there's no crowd there to egg me on and give me a bit more motivation. Still, there is going to be plenty of eyes on the TV and it is going to be great to be back out there playing."

Smith said he isn't concerned by Australia's three months absence from international cricket. — AP

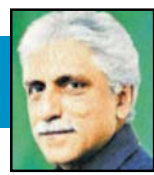
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Dhoni had 'hatke' persona on and off the field



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

The past week has been dominated by Mahendra Singh Dhoni's retirement from international cricket. From the time his post announcing this went up on Instagram on Independence Day, there has been a deluge of tributes and encomiums in mainstream and social media, in drawing and virtual chat rooms, all over the cricket world.

Dhoni started and finished his international career being run out, but in the 15 years in between,

notched up so many stupendous performances, won so many matches off his own bat, or because of his leadership, that he stands on a pedestal.

He has scored more runs and claimed more victims behind the wickets than any other Indian wicket-keeper batsman. In fact, there are very few in the world to match the stats that attach themselves to name in all three formats.

Getting the captaincy fortuitously in 2007, he made a monumental impact winning all major ICC tourna-

ments (T20 World Cup, ODI World Cup, Champions Trophy), taking India to the number 1 ranking in Tests (2009-10), apart from a clutch of titles in the IPL and Champions League.

There have been several outstanding Indian cricketers. In my opinion, however, Dhoni's is among the three most compelling stories of players who had long and substantial careers, not cameos. The other two are Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi and Sachin Tendulkar.

Pataudi remarkably played all his international cricket, stretching to almost 15 years, with just one eye. At his peak, he was a handsome stroke-player, capable of destroying attacks, and through his career remained a brilliant fielder which earned

him the sobriquet 'Tiger'. Pataudi became captain at 21, made his first task to unite a dressing room riven with politics. He made spin the thrust of the Indian attack, put a premium on fielding, led India to their first overseas victory.

Neither before nor after Pataudi has any cricketer excelled with such a serious handicap. In fact, it is impossible today to think that a player with virtually no vision in one eye would even play club cricket, leave aside Tests. He was unique.

Tendulkar was a child prodigy who went on to become one of the greatest batsmen in the history of cricket. Most prodigies fail to acutalise their potential. Tendulkar's career played out to a near-perfect script,

as if he was to the manner born.

He sustained his form with an extraordinary degree of consistency for almost a quarter of a century and retired with the highest number of Test runs and centuries, 100 centuries overall in international cricket and almost every possible batting record.

Perhaps the greater aspect of Tendulkar's long career was how he carried the onerous burden of expectation of a billion-plus Indians unflinchingly. No other player in history has had to endure so much pressure for so long — not even Bradman.

Dhoni's career trajectory is as colourful as it is amazing. He came from Bihar (before the state got bifurcated), considered

among the boondocks in Indian cricket.

He wasn't a prodigy, nor did he have a sporting legacy to inspire him, like Pataudi's did.

Dhoni wrestled between football and cricket in his formative years, and for a long while growing up, the priority was to find a secure job. He got that when he joined the Railways as a ticket collector. But his gnawing ambition made him chuck up the job and deep dive into cricket.

These circumstances, and the fact that he represented a weak cricket association, made Dhoni's situation highly vulnerable. Failure would have meant a less fulfilling career, if not a futile one — and with no job in hand. What he achieved from thereafter

and the magnificent legacy he leaves behind makes him iconic.

His unorthodox technique and tactics were always the subject of debate, often skepticism and sometimes ridicule. However, as people were to soon realise, this unorthodoxy was not restricted to cricket. His persona even off the field was 'hatke'.

He has played and lived as he sees fit, more importantly without rancor against criticism, egotism when in power, or gloating in the huge success he has enjoyed.

Over a period of time the 'Mahi way', like Frank Sinatra's immortal ballad *I Did It My Way*, became a universal refrain in cricket, turning him into a cult figure.