

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | TUESDAY | 18 AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER

**Max:** 27°C  
**Min:** 21.6°C  
**RH:** 81%  
**Rainfall:** 1.6 mm  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Light to moderate rains likely  
 Max/Min temp. 28/23 °C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+54,348)	(+897)
27,00,931	51,922
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+894)	(+10)
TS: 92,255	703
(+6,780)	(+82)
AP: 2,96,609	2,732

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,19,25,867
DEATHS
7,74,963
COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
213
worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Shravana Bahula Chaturdasi till 10.36 am  
**Star:** Ashlesha till 4.06 am (Wednesday)  
**Variyam:** 5.39 pm to 7.09 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.34 am to 9.24 am; 11.11 pm to 11.57 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**HJRI CALENDAR**  
 Zulhijja 27,1441 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.56 am  
**Zohar:** 12.30 pm  
**Asar:** 4.46 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.46 pm  
**Isha:** 7.57 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.39 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.59 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 4.57 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 6.18 PM**

## COUNTER POINT



## IN BRIEF

## TS Monsoon Session Sept. 7

**Hyderabad:** Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao, after discussions with senior ministers, on Monday decided to hold the Monsoon Session of the Legislative Assembly from September 7. At a meeting at Pragathi Bhavan, Rao decided to conduct the session for 20 days to ensure comprehensive discussion on important issues. “Ministers and the officials should be prepared for the Assembly session with complete information on all issues. Several bills and resolutions will be introduced, besides announcements pertaining to policy decisions,” he said. The Chief Minister instructed legislative affairs minister Vemula Prashant Reddy and Assembly Secretary V. Narsimhacharyulu to make arrangements in the Assembly Hall to put in place physical distancing norms.

## Drushyam fame Nishikant dead

**Hyderabad:** Bollywood director Nishikant Kamat, who was hospitalised in a critical condition at Hyderabad a couple of weeks ago, passed away on Monday evening. The 50-year-old was on ventilator support and was fighting for his life during the past few days. He was diagnosed with chronic liver disease and secondary infections.

■ Full report on Page 2



## WORLD | 5

### Spotlight on Biden in US convention



## SPORTS | 8

### Wimbledon champ Halep says no to US Open

## TABLOID

### Fast fashion hit hard



# Contempt cases on naming judges: SC to set procedure

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
 NEW DELHI, AUG. 17

The Supreme Court on Monday said that it will examine the larger questions involved in contempt cases with respect to allegations of corruption against sitting or former judges and the procedure to be followed in dealing with them.

The court passed this order while hearing the 2009 contempt case against advocate Prashant Bhushan who allegedly spoke about judicial “corruption” in an interview to *Tehelka* magazine.

The court said that the issues involved in the 2009 contempt case against Mr Bhushan had “wider ramifications” and the bench, headed by Justice Mishra, spelt out three issues that need to be examined — Whether allegations of corruption against sitting or former judges can be made in public; the circumstances in which such allegations are made and the procedure to be followed in dealing with such

● **THE COURT** passed the order while hearing the 2009 contempt case against advocate Prashant Bhushan who allegedly spoke about judicial “corruption” in an interview

matters. “In case you have any grievance against any judge, what should be the process? In what circumstances can such allegations be made? When some matter is subjudice, to what extent can matter be argued through media or another mode?” Justice Mishra said.

“We are not on conviction... We want to hear (the case) because if the question is left, then it will not be better for later on... The issues involved have several ramifications and we would like senior lawyers to address them,” the bench, also comprising Justices B.R. Gavau and Krishna Murari, observed even as senior counsel Rajeev Dhavan wanted to address it on the conviction part of the 2009 contempt case against Mr

Bhushan. After Justice Mishra framed the three questions to be addressed by senior lawyers appearing in the matter — Mr Dhavan for Prashant Bhushan, Kapil Sibal for former *Tehelka* editor Tarun Tejpal and Harish Salve as amicus curiae assisting the court — Mr Dhavan told the court that he along with Mr Bhushan had framed five questions which they think should be heard by a five-judge constitution bench.

Justice Mishra permitted Mr Dhavan to circulate the questions amongst all the lawyers appearing in the case. At the outset of the hearing, Mr Dhavan pointed to the opposite positions in the August 14 judgment holding Mr Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his two tweets. He said that while its first part holds that the tweets are not contemptuous, it later holds the same tweets to be contemptuous. He said that his client intends to file a plea seeking a review of the order.

# Naidu writes to PM on phone tap

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
 VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 17

Accusing the ruling YSR Congress-led state government and “private persons” of illegally tapping phones of people from different walks of life, Telugu Desam supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to order an inquiry by the Central agency concerned into the illegal activity.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Naidu said that the ruling party in its overenthusiasm to retain power at any cost was dangerously threatening and attacking persons or institutions raising their voice against the “mal-functioning of the government.” Lawyers, journalists and social activists have not been spared along with the leaders of the Opposition parties. “It appears that the YSRCP has now even targeted judiciary as it is facing hurdles from them,” he said. Naidu said some private persons had been resorting to phone tapping using cutting edge technologies. If the activity is allowed unchecked, it may even pose a threat to the security and integrity of the nation.

They will not only violate the right to privacy of individuals, but resort to blackmail of people in high places, he added. The TD supremo said that telephone tapping as per the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 (Section 5(2)) and the Information Technology Act, 2000 (Section 69) can be done only in the case of threat to national security or in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, threat to friendly relations with foreign countries.

In the long run, such nefarious activities would result in breakdown of democratic values and freedom of speech leading to jungle raj, Naidu pointed out.



● **NAIDU ALLEGED** that the ruling party, in its overenthusiasm to retain power at any cost was dangerously threatening and attacking persons or institutions raising their voice against the “mal-functioning of the government.” Lawyers, journalists and social activists have also not been spared, he said

# 4 women feared dead crossing river Krishna

## TRS leader washed away in Musi river, friends survive

**S.A. ISHAQUI | DC**  
 HYDERABAD, AUG 17

Incessant rains lashing Telangana state claimed at least six lives on Monday, when heavy rains disrupted normal life for the fourth consecutive day. Due to continuous rains, rivers, streams and tanks are overflowing with flood-water.

Four women including a nine-year-old girl are suspected to have drowned while attempting to cross the Krishna river in a ‘putty’ (a small circular country boat). The boat capsized between Kuruvapuram village of Karnataka and Panchadevapuram village of Mahatma district of Telangana state on Monday afternoon.

According to Narayanpet revenue divisional officer, there were 13 people in the putty that was returning to Kuruvapuram when it capsized. Nine persons were rescued with the help of local fishermen but the girl and three women were swept away in swift waters. The Krishna has been in spate for the last few days with rain in the catchment area upstream, release of water from dams and rain in local areas.

The victims had come to Panchadevapuram to buy essential commodities and were returning to their village, when tragedy struck. Revenue authorities of Karnataka and Narayanpet district have reached the banks of Krishna river and are supervising the salvage operations.

Elsewhere, a 55-year-old man identified as Yedla Venkateshwarlu, 55, was killed as a portion of his house collapsed in West Fort in Khila Warangal mandal early on Monday.

One person was washed away when an SUV with four persons was swept away in a stream while they were attempting to cross a flooded causeway between Sikindapur and



An Indian Air Force helicopter lifts man to safety at the Khutaghat dam in Chhattisgarh’s Bilaspur district on Monday. The 43-year-old man was caught in water discharged from the dam and clung to a tree for over 12 hours before he was rescued.

— PTI

# CM seeks intensive efforts for rain relief

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Monday instructed the official machinery to be on high alert in view of the heavy rainfall and floods across the state for three days, and urged them to take necessary measures to prevent loss of life and property.

He wanted the officials to remain on high alert, especially in the worst-affected districts of Warangal Urban and Rural,

Karimnagar, Kumrambheem Asifabad, Mancherial, Nirmal, Peddapalli, Jayashankar Bhupalapally, Mulugu, Bhadrachalam and Khammam.

A high-level review meeting with senior officials at Pragathi Bhavan, the Chief Minister reviewed district-wise situation and suggested necessary action on rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures.

■ Page 2: Control rooms to be set up

Darpally villages in Nanganur mandal of Siddipet district around midnight on Sunday.

The victim was identified as Jangampally Srinivas, 33, a native of Tangallapally in Rajanna Sircilla district and a TRS leader.

According to Rajagopalpet sub-inspector Ashok, three of the occupants in the vehicle

jumped out and clung to a tree in the middle of the stream. Srinivas was washed away in the waters.

The sub-inspector said the trio called him over the phone. He sought the help of the sarpanches of Sikindapur and Darpally and rescued them.

■ Page 2: 2,034.56 cusecs inflow into Srisailem

# 3 cops, 1 jawan killed in terrorist attack in J&K

**YUSUF JAMEEL | DC**  
 SRINAGAR, AUG. 17

Separatist militants in a sneak attack, the second in the past four days in the Valley, killed three policemen and a jawan in the Kreeeri area of Jammu and Kashmir’s Baramulla district on Monday.

However, the J&K police’s counterinsur-

gency Special Operations Group (SOG) together with the Army’s 29 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) after laying siege to a vast area around the scene of shooting

killed all the three assailants “in a swift and meticulous” action, the police said adding that one of them was Sajad Ahmed

Mir alias Haider alias Raja, a senior Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) commander. The rifle snatched from the slain cop was recovered, the police said.

Late on Monday evening, militants attacked a CRPF camp in Nehama of Kulgam district, injuring an ASI S. Sukumar of the ‘A’ Company of its 18th Battalion, police said.

## GODAVARI RISES AT BHADRACHALAM, PEOPLE IN CAMPS

**RAVINDRA SESHU | DC**  
 BHADRACHALAM, AUG. 17

Water level in River Godavari is continuing to rise at Bhadrachalam and currently stands at 62 feet, way above the danger mark. It is expected to rise up to 65 feet with flood waters coming in from Pranahita, Indravathi, Taliperu and Kinnerasani, according to the Central Water Commission.

Flood waters have entered 52 villages along Godavari in Charla, Dummugudem, Aswapuram, Burgumpahad, Pinapaka and Manuguru mandals. It is expected another 90 habitations will be affected.

The district administration has opened 34 flood relief centres — eight in Charla, five in Dummugudem, four each in Bhadrachalam and Pinapaka, six each in Burgumpahad and Aswapuram, and one in Manuguru mandal.

■ Page 2: 4,659 persons in affected villages

## TRINAMUL CONG LOSES SECOND MLA TO COVID

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
 KOLKATA, AUG. 17

Trinamul Congress has lost its second MLA to Covid-19. The deceased, Samaresh Das, 76, was the three-time legislator of Egra in East Midnapore. Infected by the deadly virus last month, he was initially admitted to Baroma Hospital in the district from where he was later shifted to AMRI Hospital in Salt Lake. Early on Monday, Das died there. He also had complications of heart and kidney.

Meanwhile, the overall Covid tally in India rose to 26,94,614 with the addition of 48,031 cases. The toll rose to 51,807 with 782 more deaths.

There are 6,74,125 active cases in the country and the number of recoveries rose to 19,68,175 with 50,099 more people recovering from the disease.

The National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration on Monday met leading domestic vaccine manufacturers — Serum Institute, Pune; Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad; Zydus Cadila, Ahmedabad; Gennova Biopharmaceuticals, Pune; and Biological E. Hyderabad — to discuss the progress of vaccine candidates.



## IN BRIEF

**Srisaillam gets 2,034,56 cusecs**

**From Page 1**  
The rescued persons have been identified as Boddur Sridahar, Juttu Suresh and Anantharam Srinivas. A search is on to trace Srinivas. With the heavy flood inflows Godavari river flowing crossing the danger level at Bhadrachalam. On the Krishna river, project authorities are letting out 40,259 cusecs of water downstream from Srisaillam reservoir. Inflow of 2,034,56 cusecs were recorded at Srisaillam at 6 pm on Monday. The authorities at Jurala Project opened 39 spillway gates in view of the inflow of 2.96 lakh cusecs inflow into the project. The authorities are letting out 2.75 lakh cusecs to the downstream Srisaillam project.

**Young woman dies by suicide**

**Hyderabad:** A 21-year-old woman who married her boyfriend against her parents' wishes died by suicide at her house in Rampally under Keesara early on Monday. Keesara police said the victim Trinayani, 21, of ECIL, had Akshay Kumar about nine months ago. After her marriage, she did not have any contact with her parents. Trinayani, employee of a private company in Nacharam, used to work until 3 am in the bedroom. On Monday, at around 4 am, Akshay who was in the hall, knocked on the door. When he did not get any response, he alerted the neighbours and the police who broke open the door and found her body. The police said that Akshay, who is unemployed, had allegedly harassed Trinayani for various reasons including for money.

**CALL TO PROTEST DEMOLITION OF MASJIDS**

**ATHER MOIN | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

The Jamiat Ulema Hind on Monday threatened to hold a 'jail bhara' campaign for the reconstruction of two mosques at the same place where they stood before being demolished at the Secretariat. Addressing the media, Moulana Hafiz Peer Shabbir Ahmed said despite the heinous nature of the act, the Chief Minister thinks he received impunity because his government was elected with a thumping majority.

Moulana Peer Shabbir said, "our ulema will attend the programmes of ministers and TRS MLAs and present our stand over the demolition of mosques in a peaceful manner."

**CONTROL ROOMS TO BE SET UP**

**From Page 1**

In view of forecasts that heavy to very heavy rains may continue for three to four days, Rao directed officers to take up relief and rescue measures on a war-footing. He wanted control rooms set up wherever necessary and a 24x7 monitoring of the situation. He said they should not bother about availability of funds.

He instructed officials to set up relief camps in areas where there is danger from the floodwaters and arrangements for food and shelter in the camps besides an adequate supply of masks and sanitizers.

He congratulated the electricity department for efficiently maintaining the power grid though there was substantial increase in the demand and for ensuring continuous supply of power. He hailed the municipal administration department for ensuring that there was no major damage or inconvenience in Hyderabad and other cities.

The Chief Minister said that though as on date, the situation is under control, the coming three to four days were crucial. He said the government's aim was to ensure that there should not be any loss to life, irrespective of the extent of the calamity.

In view of more heavy flood in Godavari river in the coming days, he asked officers to identify the low-lying villages and areas in Eturunagaram and Mangampet mandals along with other areas and shift people to safer places.

The Chief Minister asked ministers and public representatives to stay wherever they were and monitor relief measures.

# Lakes are shrinking due to encroachments, warns HC

**Court fears Telangana may go the Rajasthan way if this continues**

**VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

Expressing concern that lakes in and around the Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy districts were disappearing, and the remaining lakes were shrinking due to rampant encroachment, the Telangana High Court expressed the fear that the state could go the Rajasthan way.

The court observed that if lakes in and around Hyderabad continue to shrink, Hyderabad would become like Bengaluru where migration has fallen off due to the scarcity of water.

A division bench com-

prising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy was hearing a PIL filed by Dr Lubna Sarwath, social activist, seeking intervention of the High Court in the issue of Peddacheruvu at Khajaguda where officials of the roads and buildings and municipal administration departments have commenced laying a concrete road within the full tank level.

The bench expressed deep anguish and discontentment as the Ranga Reddy collector had not inspected lakes in the district.

Chief Justice Chauhan instructed Advocate General B.S. Prasad to "at

● **THE COURT** observed that if lakes in and around Hyderabad continue to shrink, Hyderabad would become like Bengaluru where migration has fallen off due to the scarcity of water.

least talk to the Ranga Reddy collector on the rampant illegal encroachments of lakes. This is the fifth PIL that the High Court is dealing with on the same issue... why is the district collector so lax... why doesn't he inspect the lakes to know how the encroachments and fillings in the lakes

going on?"

Further, the CJ observed, "Until and unless we protect our lakes, there is no bright future for us." The CJ cited the example of Bengauru where illegal encroachments of lakes are rampant. Bengaluru once had 1,000 lakes but is now left with 138.

"Out of the 138 lakes there is not even a single lake which is free from pollution. Due to the industrial effluents and chemicals being dumped into these lakes, they have started emanating foam. Water from lakes cannot be used either for human consumption nor can it be used by wildlife and aquatic life," the Chief Justice noted.

Rajasthan also faced the same fate due to which the Saraswathi river in Rajasthan has disappeared. This court doesn't want Telangana state to face the same bleak future as suffered by Rajasthan for centuries, the Chief Justice said.

The court asked the government whether it had formulated guidelines or policies for protection of the lakes, or not. The court directed the government to consider including police officials, not below the rank of deputy superintendent of police, as members of the lake protection committee for better supervision, if at all such committees had been constituted.

## Testing time



A child undergoes Covid-19 test at Fever Hospital in Hyderabad on Monday. The number of Coronavirus cases is rapidly increasing in the GHMC limits. — P. SURENDRA

## COPS GET CUSTODY OF THREE ACCUSED IN RAPE CASE

**JAYENDRA CHAITANYA T. | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

The Sangareddy police on Monday took custody of the three accused who were arrested in connection with the sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl at an orphanage. The victim later died while undergoing treatment at Niloufer Hospital last week.

The police had arrested prime accused N. Venugopal Reddy, orphanage warder C. Vijaya and her brother S. Jayadeep. Earlier, a Sangareddy district court granted two days of custody of the accused to the police for further probe.

The police is investigating to find out if Venugopal had committed similar offences prior to the incident and the role of Vijaya and Jayadeep.

Sources said that the high-powered committee is said to have completed the preliminary investigation and is waiting for the autopsy report from the forensic doctors at the Osmania General Hospital, to submit a report to the government before August 20. Patancheru Deputy Superintendent of Police P. Rajeshwar Rao said the probe is underway.

## Low Covid cases as testing falls due to rains

**KANIZA GARARI | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

Testing fell to 8,794 samples on Sunday due to the rains, and 894 positive cases were reported by the state health department bulletin issued on Monday. The total number of cases stands at 92,255. The tally went up to 703 with 10 deaths on Sunday.

There are 21,420 active cases in the state, the bulletin said. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) area recorded 147 new cases, Ranga Reddy 85, Karimnagar 69, Pedapalli 62 and Warangal Urban 44 cases. Testing in the districts has been affected by floods.

Doctors state that apart from Covid 19 cases there will also be non-Covid 19 cases in districts which will see a surge in the next few days.

The government hospitals are already burdened due to increasing Covid numbers.

The floods have made it difficult and those affected will have to be screened for infections.

A senior doctor from Warangal said, "We will have to increase our surveillance after the rains as people have come together for rescue missions and that will allow infection to spread from asymptomatic carriers. Hence the tracking has to continue."

## Uttam laments loss of values in politics

**IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday expressed concern over rising commercialisation of politics, especially in Telangana state.

Addressing a meeting at Indira Bhavan, Gandhi Bhavan, to express condolences over the death of former MP Nandi Yellaiah, Uttam Kumar Reddy said that it was difficult to find leaders like Yellaiah who epitomised values, honesty and integrity in public life and sincerity and loyalty for the party.

The TPCC president said that it was highly unfortunate that people were witnessing an era where there was crass commercialisation of politics. The electoral process had become so corrupt that right from elections to the gram pan-

chayat to the MP level, everyone was only talking about money. He said character, sincerity and commitment to the people among those in public life had gone missing. Consequently, money was controlling the corridors of power in all sphere of public life, he said.

Stating that Yellaiah was one of greatest leaders of the Congress, Uttam Kumar Reddy announced that the TPCC would make all efforts to spread word of the integrity and character of the Dalit leader among the people, especially among the Congress cadre. The condolence meeting was chaired by former MP V. Hanumantha Rao and addressed by many senior leaders including CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka. Leaders also expressed condolences over the demise of other senior leaders Narendhar Yadav and Md Sirajuddin who died due to the Coronavirus.

## 4,659 persons shifted to safety

**FROM PAGE 1**

Nearly 4,659 persons from affected villages have been shifted to these relief centres.

Special measures are being taken at rehabilitation centres in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. Primary health centres in these areas have been asked to take all precautionary measures to check not only Covid-19 but other diseases like malaria, dengue and gastroenteritis.

A team led by primary health centre medical officer Dr. Balaji is looking after people shifted to six relief camps in Dummugudem. "Available medical personnel have been working in three shifts 24 X 7 at the camps. Two medical officers have been allotted to take of 50 persons each at the rehabilitation centres," Dr. Balaji pointed out.

Colonies like Subhashnagar, Ashoknagar, AMC Colony and Old Age

Home areas in Bhadrachalam have been affected by flood waters. Some of their residents have been shifted to relief centres.

Collector M. V. Reddy, who visited the relief and rehabilitation centre in the market area of Burgumpahad, pulled up the tahsildar over lack of facilities at the camp. He directed officials to issue show-cause notices to the tahsildar and MPDO for being negligent.

"We had been making plans to deal with floods for the last three months and chose the best places for locating rehabilitation centres. It is unfortunate that a couple of officials have become negligent about their duties," the collector remarked.

Nearly 21 lakh cusecs of water was flowing in River Godavari at Bhadrachalam on Monday. This means 190 TMC of water is flowing into the Bay of Bengal every 24 hours.

## Leaders clog development report

**MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

The presence of political leaders at review meetings held by municipal administration and urban development minister K.T. Rama Rao is forcing officials not to provide factual information about various development activities. Officials said that they feel extremely inconvenienced to give accurate information since most development activities were stopped by political leaders.

Rama Rao has assigned the major job pertaining to all developmental activities and set a August 21 deadline for submission of

accurate reports.

According to highly placed sources in the corporation, Rama Rao, participating in a review meeting with zonal commissioners, asked them to provide up-to-date progress reports on city lakes, sanitation, special sanitation near tourist spots, footpaths, public toilets, parks, ensuring central medians at all 100-metre wide roads, crematoriums, junction improvements, bus-bays, bus shelters, one time settlement scheme (OTS), sports complexes, road repairs and foot over bridges (FoBs).

Sources said that Rama Rao asked for factual information, in the presence of a popular city minister, about the delay in development activities and instructed them to set a deadline before August 21.

"Though we are ready to share accurate information there was a slight hesitation. If revealed, the influential leaders would alert the party workers at the zonal level and it would create unnecessary issues at the local level especially activities related to FoBs, crematoriums, footpaths and public toilets", the official said. However, he said, the zonal commissioner was ready to share the information of activities which have been stopped report-

edly on the instructions of MA&UD principal secretary Arvind Kumar and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) commissioner D.S. Lokesh Kumar in a one-on-one meeting if there is no political interference. The official further said that some authorities have been producing false progress reports on developmental activities. "We are facing an embarrassing situation during the review. Despite knowing the actual progress, they have given false information. We cannot contradict our colleagues and put them down in front of the minister", the official said.

edly on the instructions of MA&UD principal secretary Arvind Kumar and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) commissioner D.S. Lokesh Kumar in a one-on-one meeting if there is no political interference. The official further said that some authorities have been producing false progress reports on developmental activities. "We are facing an embarrassing situation during the review. Despite knowing the actual progress, they have given false information. We cannot contradict our colleagues and put them down in front of the minister", the official said.

## One arrested for sharing fake news

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

A Jagtial native, Panyala Raju, who posted a morphed picture of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Facebook and shared false news was arrested by the Hyderabad cyber-crimes police at Mumbai. The accused who was working in Saudi Arabia was detained on arrival at the Mumbai airport on a look out circular issued against him.

The cybercrime police said that on June 8, this year, a suo motu case was registered following a

Facebook post where the fake information was published.

During investigation, police found that Raju, a native of Lambadipally of Malyala mandal in Jagtial district, who posted the false content had posted the fake news from Saudi Arabia.

On August 14, Raju arrived at Mumbai international airport from Saudi Arabia, where the immigration authorities detained him.

A team from the city went to Mumbai, brought Raju to the city, and produced before a court on Monday for the judicial remand.

### HUGE | LOSS

**Bollywood director fought a long battle with liver cirrhosis**

## Drishyam maker Kamat dies at 50

**SASHIDHAR ADIVI | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 17

Bollywood director Nishikant Kamat, who was hospitalised in a critical condition at Hyderabad a couple of weeks ago, passed away on Monday evening. The 50-year-old had been on ventilator support and was fighting for his life during the past few days. He was diagnosed with chronic liver disease and secondary infections.

In a statement, AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad, said Kamat was admitted to AIG on July 31 with complaints of fever and excessive fatigue. Diagnosis revealed that he

was suffering from liver cirrhosis for the past two years.

Kamat made his directorial debut with Marathi film *Dombivali Fast* (2005). The movie won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Marathi. Kamat later directed blockbuster Marathi film *Lai Bhaari*, starring Riteish Deshmukh.

Best-known for directing the Hindi remake of Malayalam hit *Drishyam* (starring Ajay Devgn and Tabu), Nishikant made his Bollywood debut with *Mumbai Meri Jaan* (2008), apart from directing Irrfan Khan in *Madaari* and John Abraham in



Nishikant Kamat

Force and Rocky Handsome.

Kamat also enacted cameos in films like *Rocky Handsome* and *Bhaves*

● **KAMAT MADE** his directorial debut with Marathi film *Dombivali Fast* (2005). The movie won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Marathi. Kamat later directed blockbuster Marathi film *Lai Bhaari*.

*Joshi Superhero*.

Condolences pour in. No sooner the news about Nishikant Kamat's death broke out, condolences started pouring in from Bollywood personalities.

"I will miss you my friend Nishikant Kamat. Rest in peace," tweeted

actor Riteish Deshmukh, who starred in Kamat's film *Lai Bhaari*.

Ajay Devgn tweeted, "My equation with Nishikant was not just about *Drishyam*, a film which he directed with Tabu and me. It was an association that I cherished. He was bright; ever-smiling. He has gone too soon. RIP Nishikant."

Genelia Deshmukh: #NishikantKamat you were one of a kind... I found a life coach in you... I live by so much that we discussed and I live with knowing you were such an amazing soul and I'm just so glad our paths crossed... I will miss you dear Nishi... R.i.p."



## IN BRIEFS

**Flood situation being monitored**

**KHAMMAM:** Minister for transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar said that the government is monitoring the flooding of the river Godavari every hourly. People from the affected habitations have been shifted to the rehabilitation centers and medical teams have been pressed into service. The minister discussed the flood and rain situation in Khammam and Bhadrachalam districts with both the collectors. The flood situation is alarming in seven mandals and it is expected to only get worse.

**Road connectivity hit in old Adilabad**

**Adilabad:** Road connectivity to Chinthakarra, Kishannaik thanda, Tatiguda, and Loddiguda villages in Jainoor mandal are affected as rivulets and streams were overflowing on Monday. Connectivity to the villages in Gadiguda and Narnoor mandals were also affected, as floodwater was flowing over the bridge at Mahegam in Narnoor mandal. Police were seen helping people cross the low level bridges with the help of ropes at Narnoor and Utnoor. The irrigation department officials released floodwater downstream from the Kadam project by lifting two gates in Nirmal district while the officials lifted one gate of the Mattadi vagu project in Adilabad district. Adilabad collector Sikta Patnaik reviewed the flood situation and asked the people to be alert and not venture into water bodies and projects. Officials from the Yellampalli project have alerted people that they may lift the gates following increased inflows from upstream. The Dinda village in Chinthalamapalli mandal in Kumarambheem Asifabad district has been submerged in floodwater for the last three days.

**REHABILITATION CENTRES HOT BED FOR COVID-19**

**A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC KHAMMAM, AUG. 17**

Flood alert has been sounded in the many districts across the state. The administration in the respective districts have been evacuating people from low-lying areas and putting them up in rehabilitation centres.

So far, the government has opened 34 rehabilitation centres in seven mandals in the district and have shifted about 5,000 people to these centres.

However, the administration has another challenge in front, to avoid the spread of the Coronavirus among those put up in these rehabilitation centres. About 67 persons tested positive for the virus in Bhadrachalam district on Monday. Many of the new cases were of those who were exposed to the floods in the seven affected mandals. In Khammam district 91 persons tested positive. 13 cases in Wyr, seven in Chintakani, five in Tirumalayapalem and four in Nelakondapalli mandal were reported. Persons suspected to have Covid-19 symptoms are unable to go to the primary health centres due to the rains. Meanwhile, the 27 Covid-19 positive patients staying at the Maddulapalli centre are not being served proper meals.

The patients alleged that officials have cautioned their relatives not to bring food or other items as it is being provided by the state government. However, this is not being followed, they said. The also highlighted that the hygiene at the centre is not being maintained.

**FARM TROUBLE Farmers had invested large sums in seeds, agri ops****Heavy rains destroy standing crops**

**PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC ADILABAD, AUG. 17**

The heavy rains that lashed old Adilabad district has caused severe damage to the standing crops of cotton, soybean, paddy and redgram.

However, despite the loss farmers are readying to celebrate 'Polala' festival, which is thanksgiving to cattle today.

With the stagnation of floodwater in the fields, the cotton plants that had grown to a flowering stage have been destroyed as the soil has become soft due to the stagnant floodwater.

Farmers say that once the plants fall to the ground they cannot be saved and this in turn will result in the flowers dropping in the early stages.

# Rains batter TS; flood alert sounded

## Rivulets, streams overflow; districts put on high alert, gear up for rescue operations

**NARENDER PULLOOR | DC NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY, AUG. 17**

Widespread rains in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts over the last two days have caused damage to 16 houses, uprooted trees and have cut off roads. No deaths or injuries have, however, been reported.

Rivulets and streams are overflowing in both the districts. Control rooms have been set up to monitor the situation round the clock. Roads and buildings minister V. Prashanth Reddy has asked collectors of both the districts to be alert and take up rescue operations wherever necessary.

Five mandals - Velpur, Navipet, Yedapalli, Renjal and Mosra in Nizamabad district have recorded excess rainfall. Twenty-two other mandals received normal rains while two Mukkal and Balkonda are still facing a deficit. Mendora and Mukkal received the highest rainfall of 84.5 mm on Monday, followed by Yergatla 83.5 mm and Velpur 72.8 mm. The district has recorded 603.8 mm rainfall so far against the average of 1,042.2 mm.

In Kamareddy district, Gandhari mandal received the highest rainfall of 32.2 mm on Monday, followed by Machareddy 31.2 mm and Sadashivanagar 25.8 mm. Of the 17 mandals, five mandals - Jukkal, Bichkunda, Bhiknoor, Tadwai and Kamareddy received excess rainfall. Ten mandals have got normal rainfall while Gandhari has reported deficit rainfall. The district has received a total 593.5 mm rainfall against the average of 1,040.6 mm.

Various departments in the two districts are coordinating in dealing with the aftermath of heavy rains, particularly power supply and road transport. Officials have decided to shift people to nearest schools or government buildings if flood waters enter their localities. Nizamabad mayor Dandu Neethu Kiran and commissioner Jithesh V. Patil have directed officials to keep a vigil over low-lying areas in the city.

■ **16 HOUSES** damaged, trees uprooted and roads have been cut off.



**SRI RAJA RAJESHWARA**

Storage level in the Reservoir also known as the (Mid Manair Dam-MMD) present in Rajanna Sircilla is 21.312 tmcs against its full capacity of 25.87 tmcs. Inflow is 14,552 cusecs.



**SRIRAMSAGAR**

Storage level in the SRSP present in Jagtial and Nizamabad district presently is 50.23 tmcs against its full capacity of 90 tmcs. The inflow of water is about 64,563 cusecs.



**YELLAMPALLI**

Storage level of the reservoir present in Peddapalli district is 18.980 tmcs against its full capacity of 20.175 tmcs. Inflow of water is 58,524 cusecs. First flood level warning has been issued as the flood gates are likely to be opened.



**LOWER MANAIR DAM**

storage level in the LMD present in Karimnagar district presently is 17 tmcs against its full capacity of 24.034 tmcs and inflow is 15,000 cusecs.

## MINISTER ASKS OFFICIALS TO FILL ALL TANKS IN PARVATHAGIRI

**DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, AUG. 17**

Since the rain has subsided, this is the right time to fill up all the tanks in Parvathagiri.

Apart from this the proposals for the modernisation of Avakunta and Ura cheruvu tanks must be prepared without delay, minister for panchayat raj and rural water supply Errabelli Dayakar Rao told the SRSP and irrigation department officials during a review meeting with officials at Parvathagiri on Monday.

He along with Wardhanapet MLA Aroori

Ramesh and officials inspected the Parvathagiri tank and the earmarked location for the prakruthi vanam here.

The minister noted that 33 tanks under the SRSP and 64 tanks under the irrigation department are partially filled and asked officials to ensure all the tanks are filled.

The proposals for bringing in additional water by setting up a feeder channel and side wall for the Avakunta tank must be prepared, he instructed. Beautification of the Parvathagiri tank must be taken up under the urban scheme.



■ **MINISTER** K.T.Rama Rao spoke to district additional collector Anjaiah and superintendent of police, Rahul Hedge of Rajanna Sircilla district asking them to alert the people and shift those living in low-lying areas as according to the IMD there is a possibility of a heavy downpour in the coming two days.

## Transport hit, as roads washed away

**PULI SHARAT KUMAR | DC KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 17**

Heavy rains during the past few days have caused havoc in several regions and flood-like situation has developed in many parts of erstwhile Karimnagar district. Fallen trees, water-clogged roads disrupting traffic, uprooted power lines and villages plunged in darkness are a common sight in the four districts of Karimnagar, Jagtial, Peddapalli and Rajanna-Sircilla.

Some houses have totally collapsed while many have been partially damaged at several places. Tiles

and asbestos roofs of several roadside shops and houses have been blown off. In Karimnagar district, four houses have completely collapsed while 120 damaged. In Peddapalli district nine houses have totally fallen while 45 have got partially damaged.

Transport system has come to halt at many places where roads have got washed away. All roads leading to mandals of Ganneruvaram, Manakondur, Shankarpatnam and Huzurabad, and roads from Karimnagar to Ganneruvaram, Saidapur to Raikal, and Huzurabad to Molangur are water logged, severely affecting

movement of vehicles.

An old bridge over Godavari River at Raipatnam in Dharmapuri mandal of Jagtial district is submerged four metres in water due to heavy inflow of water from upstream areas. Revenue officials have blocked the bridge from both the sides. They have also cautioned devotees against taking a holy dip in Godavari.

Crops spread over thousands of acres have been damaged. Low-lying areas and colonies in municipal corporations of Karimnagar and Ramagundam and several other municipalities have got submerged in water due to heavy

rains during the past three days. Karimnagar district agriculture officer Sridhar estimated that 12,500 acres of paddy and 25,000 acres of cotton crop have got damaged due to heavy rains.

Health minister Etala Rajendar inspected low-lying areas in Veenavanka, Gangaram, Challur, Valbapur and Keshavpuram villages and check dams in Huzurabad constituency. He visited several places in Karimnagar district. Officials of irrigation, agriculture and revenue departments have been asked to inspect villages and estimate the loss farmers have suffered.

## KCR leaves favourite city Warangal 'orphaned': BJP

**ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC WARANGAL, AUG. 17**

TRS leaders leave no opportunity to blow their own trumpet and keep repeating that Warangal is Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's favourite city, where he had stayed for three days in 2016 and had magnanimously allocated ₹300 crore every year for its development.

However, when his favourite city is inundated in flood water due to heavy rains, the Chief Minister is nowhere to be seen, said BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar. He blamed the state government's incompetence in implementing the Smart City Mission for the disarray.

Mr Sanjay visited Warangal on Monday and ins-

■ **SANJAY BANDI SAID** With the corporation elections slated in the few months, Rao will come here with another gimmick. But the people must not give him power.

pected several flood affected areas. Speaking on the occasion, he observed that the condition of the historic city is deplorable.

"The local public representatives are to be blamed for this situation. They are answerable to the citizens. They have encroached tanks and nalas and filled their pockets. As a result, the city has experienced floods today. They must take responsibility for the disaster," he demanded.

The BJP state president noted that the Narendra

Modi government has chosen several Indian cities to be developed as smart cities and Warangal is one of them.

"₹196 crore was released by the Centre for Smart City development works. The DPR has been prepared for ₹2,800 crore. But the state government released only ₹42 crore and diverted the remaining amount. It was a similar manipulation with regard to AMRUT scheme," he observed.

Sanjay cautioned the people against getting carried away by the Chief Minister's claims. "With the corporation elections slated in the few months, Rao will come here with another gimmick. But the people must not give him power. "We can see what he has done to the city. He must apologise to the people," he said.

## SEETHAKKA SEEKS SPECIAL PACKAGE FOR MULUGU

**DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, AUG. 17**

The state government must consider providing Mulugu district with a special package and announce a health emergency as it is the worst affected because of heavy rains, said MLA Danasari Anasuya alias Seethakka. She has been taking part in rescue operations to shift people to higher grounds from inundated areas for the past two days.

The state government must take cognizance of the situation in several interior areas in the district that are affected.

Because of the overflowing Pakhal Lake several villages in Kothagudem mandal are facing inundation.

Similarly, because of the Laknavaram Lake villages like Ankannagudem, Ramannagudem, Jakkannagudem etc are flooded. Similar situation is being faced by the villages under the Ramappa Lake.

"I request the state government to make two helicopters available for rescue operations. The River Godavari is already in spate as it is receiving a huge inflow. A special package must be provided to repair the damaged roads and washed out bridges," she said.

She added, "Sanitation has taken a huge hit in the district. Medical facilities and sanitation works have to be increased. Health emergency should be declared, she said.

## Risking their life



Villagers of Mamidiguda in Indravelli mandal struggle to cross the overflowing rivulet in Adilabad district on Monday.



BJP state president Bandi Sanjay inspects a damaged road near Waddepalli 100-feet road on Monday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE



## SHORT TAKES

## NEPAL, INDIA HOLD TALKS AMIDST BORDER ROW

Kathmandu, Aug. 17: Senior diplomats of India and Nepal on Monday held a virtual meeting to review the progress made on various India-aided developmental projects being implemented in the Himalayan nation.

The meeting came days after Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli telephoned his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to greet him on India's 74th Independence Day, in the first high-level contact after bilateral ties came under severe strain following issuance of a new political map by Nepal in May.

Nepalese Foreign Secretary Shanker Das Bairagi and Indian Ambassador to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra are leading the delegations representing their respective countries during the oversight mechanism meeting, according to Nepal Foreign Ministry sources here.

The meeting, being held virtually due to the coronavirus outbreak, will assess the progress made on various India aided development projects being implemented in Nepal, the sources said.

No further details of the meeting were available.

The ties between India and Nepal came under strain after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated an 80-km-long strategically crucial road connecting the Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand on May 8.

## AL-HIND ACTIVIST HELD FOR B'LURU VIOLENCE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU, AUG. 17

The special team investigating last week's riots at KG Halli in the city have arrested one person, reportedly said to be a member of Al Hind, an organisation working against the Sangh Parivar.

Though the police sources said that the arrested person was also allegedly involved in murder of an RSS activist Rudresh in Shivajinagar some years ago, home minister Basavaraj Bommai said that the investigation was in preliminary stages and could give any details only after verification of facts.

The arrest comes following a raid by the CCB team of SDPI office in Frazer Town on Sunday.

In the raid the team seized a large haul of arms, including petrol bombs and daggers. The mobile phone call records revealed that he was in touch with most of the persons, who were coordinating with the people participating in riots, through WhatsApp messages.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa held a meeting with the home minister, DG&IGP, Bengaluru City Police Commissioner and chief secretary. It was decided that the government would approach the Karnataka High Court, seeking permission to appoint a Claim Commissioner to recover the loss of damaged property from the accused.

## SHARAD PAWAR IS IN HOME QUARANTINE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, AUG. 17

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar will remain in home quarantine for next few days after five persons working at his Mumbai residence tested positive for Coronavirus. Mr Pawar's test results have come out negative.

Informing about Mr Pawar's isolation at home, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said, "Mr Pawar is not showing any symptoms of the Coronavirus infection. He underwent Covid tests in Mumbai and his reports have come out negative. But we will ask him not to go on a state tour for the next few days."

As a precautionary measure, tests of nearly 100 people are being conducted, including personal assistants, secretaries and other officials working daily with Mr Pawar, who came in contact with these persons in the last couple of days.

"Five persons working at Silver Oak (Mr Pawar's residence) have tested positive for coronavirus. We have informed the state health department to communicate with health and civic officials in Pune as Mr Pawar was there on Sunday," corporation officials said.

## Festivities go on



A man carries Lord Ganesha idol covered in a plastic sheet during rain ahead of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival in Kolkata on Monday. Meanwhile, with two months to go for Bengal's biggest festival, the first Durga idol for a Kolkata-based puja organiser was delivered from Kumartuli, the clay modellers hub, bringing hope in the minds of the artisans and organisers amidst the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

## BJP SCRIPTED SHAHEEN BAGH PROTEST: AAP

New Delhi, Aug. 17: The AAP on Monday claimed the entire Shaheen Bagh protest was "scripted by the BJP" and that its leadership dictated each and every move of the agitators for electoral benefits in Delhi polls, drawing a rebuttal from the saffron party.

AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj made the claim a day after several members of the Muslim community from Shaheen Bagh area, which was the centre of the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests here, joined the BJP.

He alleged the BJP's campaign for the Delhi election centered around the Shaheen Bagh protests and it was the only party that benefited from the controversy surrounding the stir. "Delhi assembly election could have been fought on the issue of education, health, environment or other developmental narratives. But the Delhi BJP chose to fight the election on the issue of Shaheen Bagh, he said.

The whole Shaheen Bagh protest was scripted by the BJP. The top-most leadership of the BJP scripted each and every step of these protests," he alleged.

His allegations drew a rebuttal from Manoj Tiwari, the chief of Delhi BJP when these protests happened, who said his party does not discriminate on the basis of religion. -PTI

## Couple attacked for posting order on equal rights

Bengaluru, Aug. 17: Enraged over sharing in Whatsapp the recent Supreme Court order about women's rights on ancestral property, four youth allegedly attacked their uncle and aunt here, police said on Monday.

M. Shashikala lodged a complaint that the sons of her brothers Dhanaraj and Mohan attacked her and her hotelier-husband Muttu on August 12, the police said.

She stated that Muttu had in the family WhatsApp group posted the court order saying women too have equal rights on the property of their parents, they said.

On night of August 12, Dhanraj's sons Vaishak, Vaibhav and Vaishnav and Mohan's son Varun went to Muttu's hotel and attacked him with sticks and stones.

When Shashikala went to the rescue, she was also attacked and threatened.

When contacted, the police said the four have

● **THE SC** recently ruled that women will have equal coparcenary rights in joint Hindu family property even if the father died before the Hindu Succession Act, 2005.

● **THE VERDICT** makes it clear the amendment to the Act granting equal rights to daughters to inherit ancestral property would have retrospective effect.

not been arrested yet.

The Supreme Court recently ruled that women will have equal coparcenary rights in joint Hindu family property even if the father died before the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005. The verdict makes it clear the amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 granting equal rights to daughters to inherit ancestral property would have retrospective effect.

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## IN BRIEF

**Putin, Erdogan discuss conflicts**

**Moscow:** Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the conflicts in Libya and Syria with his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan in a telephone call on Monday, the Kremlin said in a statement. The Kremlin said the call's main focus was on the crisis in Libya, highlighting the need to make real steps towards a sustainable ceasefire.

**US choppers attack Syrian army post**

**Amman:** Two US helicopters on Monday attacked a Syrian Army checkpoint in northeastern Syria near the Kurdish-held city of Qamishli, killing one soldier and injuring two others, state media said. The incident happened shortly after a US patrol was prevented from passing by an Army checkpoint in the area, state media said.

**China welcomes Putin's proposal**

**Beijing:** China welcomed on Monday to Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposed summit of world leaders to avoid "confrontation" over a US threat to trigger a return of all UN sanctions on Iran. The United States lost a bid on Friday to extend a UN arms embargo on Iran. Russia and China opposed extending the weapons ban, which is due to expire in October under a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the world powers. Eleven members abstained, including France, Germany and Britain, while the United States and the Dominican Republic were the only two votes in favour.

**Japan PM leaves hosp post check-up**

**Tokyo:** Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe underwent a medical check-up in hospital on Monday, a government source said, amid concern voiced by a top official that the premier was suffering from fatigue from handling the Coronavirus pandemic. Abe, Japan's longest-serving prime minister, left hospital after the examination, *Jiji news agency* said. He had the check-up at Tokyo's Keio University Hospital, the source familiar with the situation said.

**16 killed in hotel attack in Somalia**

**Mogadishu:** At least 16 people were killed in an attack on Sunday by al Shabaab on a seaside hotel in Somalia's capital Mogadishu, a government spokesman said, as the Islamist group launched a similar assault on a Somali military base. Sunday's toll includes 11 victims and five assailants, Ismail Mukhtar Omar said in a tweet late on Sunday, adding: "Security forces lost one, 18 people were injured." Militants stormed the high-end Elite Hotel in Lido beach, detonated a car bomb and then opened fire with assault rifles, the latest attack by al Shabaab, which has been battling the country's central government since 2008. Al Shabaab wants to topple the central government and establish its own rule based on its own strict interpretation of Islamic sharia law.

**PROTESTOR CHALLENGES THAI MONARCHY**

**Bangkok, Aug. 17:** The deafening cheer for Anon Nampa at Thailand's biggest demonstration in years underlined the bookish human rights lawyer's emergence at the forefront of a youth protest movement with his taboo-breaking call for reforms to the monarchy.

"He looks quite harmless," Rangsiman Rome, a former activist who is now an opposition member of parliament, said. "But once he gets the microphone and gets on stage or starts working, he becomes a different, serious person."

Although the protest movement has no single leader, Anon's August 3 call for curbs on the power of the monarchy shook Thai politics in a way not known in living memory and made him a hero for some and a hate figure for others.

His open challenge put Anon at risk of arrest under "lese majeste" charges, which can mean 15 years in jail. "I think there is a need for everyone to be able to talk about the monarchy openly and constructively," Anon said. "I think society is becoming more open about this."

**Freedom in the air**

Women in masks to help curb the spread of the Coronavirus participate in a tug-of-war game during the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the country's independence in Medan, Indonesia, on Monday.

—AP

**Biden in spotlight as polls near****Four-day convention will be held online due to Covid-19 pandemic**

**Milwaukee, Aug. 17:** As Democrats on Monday open an unprecedented virtual convention, the party's disparate factions are projecting a united front behind Joe Biden, brought together by their common determination to oust Donald Trump in November's election.

"It is absolutely imperative that Donald Trump be defeated," Bernie Sanders, a former Biden rival and a keynote speaker on the event's opening night, said on Sunday. Adding to the drama, the four-day convention — originally planned for the Midwestern city of Milwaukee but forced online by the Covid-19 pandemic — takes place amid a furor over Trump's efforts to limit mail-in voting.

The president, insisting without proof that mail-in voting fosters fraud, has threatened to block extra funding that Democrats say is urgently needed to allow the US Postal Service to process millions of ballots.

In normal election years, nominating conventions are a raucous scene, attended by tens of thousands of party faithful and designed to inspire the party's base and lure independents and the undecided.

Democrats had picked Milwaukee for its location in the important swing state of Wisconsin. The city had spent millions in preparation.

But planners have been struggling to find virtual replacements for the usual roaring applause, circus-like atmosphere and balloon drops.

Viewers are expected to be treated to live feeds from several Democratic "watch parties," some even live-streamed from drive-in theaters or featuring erstwhile Biden rivals

**Don will get dirty: Kamala**

**Washington, Aug. 17:** Indian-American Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee Kamala Harris has said that President Donald Trump and his campaign will "engage in lies" and "dirty tactics" to distract from the real issues that are impacting the American people.

She was responding to President Trump's promotion of the conspiracy theories about her eligibility to serve as the vice president and president.

On Saturday, Trump said that he would not be "pursuing" questions about Harris' eligibility, but did not dismiss the conspiracy theories as false. Trump on Thursday said he heard on "social media" that Harris could be ineligible. "I heard today that she doesn't meet the requirements,"

Trump said, referring to John Eastman, the lawyer and Chapman University professor who raised the

like Senator Amy Klobuchar.

The experimental format will allow speakers to address American voters unfiltered — largely shorn of the usual overwrought stagecraft and screaming delegates. Or, some fear, it could make for a more boring show.

Biden enters the convention with significant but tightening poll leads over Trump and amid signs that his history-making pick of Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate — the first woman of colour on a major party's presidential ticket — is widely popular among Democrats.

—AFP

● **RESPONDING TO Trump's remarks, Harris, 55, said on Sunday that the President and his campaign will engage in deception.**

issue in a Newsweek op-ed, as "very highly qualified."

Responding to Trump's remarks, Harris, 55, said on Sunday that the president and his campaign will engage in deception. "They're going to engage in lies. They're going to engage in deception. They're going to engage in an attempt to distract from the real issues that are impacting the American people. And I expect that they will engage in dirty tactics. And this is going to be a knockdown, drag-out. And we're ready," she said.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden scripted history on Wedn-

nesday by selecting Harris, an Indian-American and an African-American, as his running mate in the election on November 3. Born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, California Senator Harris, if elected, would be the first woman Vice-President ever for the country. "What's at stake right now is that we've had over 160,000 people die in the last few months and many of them needlessly ... tens of millions of people who have lost their jobs ... we're in the midst of a hunger crisis in our country. The media isn't covering it so much," she said. "I'm prepared to fight because this is a fight that is for something, not against something. This is a fight for where we need to be ... We need to focus on what can be unburdened by what has been," Harris said. Harris is no stranger to accusations about her race.

—PTI

**FEARS RISE OVER UNFAIR U.S. PREZ ELECTION**

**Washington, Aug. 17:** With less than 80 days to go before the US presidential election, it looks like Democratic nominee Joe Biden's race to lose.

Yet, as Democrats nationwide gather online this week to nominate him as their party's choice to challenge President Donald Trump on November 3, many fear Biden may just do that — for factors almost entirely out of his control.

The former Vice-President and his allies have every reason to feel bullish. Polls show Biden has built an expansive lead in nearly every battleground state that Trump won narrowly in 2016, as the Republican's approval numbers tumble amid the Coronavirus pandemic. For the first time in a decade, retaking the Senate — and full control of Congress — is within sight.

—Agencies

**Harris picks Indo-American as her press secy for V-P rally**

**Washington, Aug. 17:** Senator Kamala Harris has roped in Indian-American Sabrina Singh, who previously was the spokeswoman of two Democratic presidential candidates, as press secretary for her Democratic Vice-

Presidential campaign.

Singh, 32, headed the press shop of New Jersey Senator Cory Booker and former New York mayor Mike Bloomberg. Last

week, Democratic presumptive presidential nominee Joe Biden, 77, picked 55-year-old Indian-origin Harris as his running mate.

Singh was earlier spokesperson of the Democratic National Committee. She is the granddaughter of Sardar J.J. Singh of the India League of America, a non-profit organisation which champions the interests of Indian-American commu-

nity in the US.

In the 1940s, J.J. Singh along with a small group of fellow Indians mounted a nationwide campaign against racial discriminatory policies of the US.

This culminated in the then president Harry Truman signing the Luce-Celler Act on July 2, 1946.

It allowed a quota of 100 Indians to immigrate to the United States per annum.

—PTI

**Pak Army chief visits Saudi to revive ties**

**Riyadh, Aug. 17:** Pakistan's Army chief arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday amid a row between the two countries that has threatened Riyadh's financial lifeline to Islamabad. General Qamar Javed Bajwa's visit was "primarily military-affairs oriented," a Pakistani Army spokesman said.

But Pakistani military

and government officials have said that Gen. Bajwa would use his good offices to try to calm the situation that if not reversed could badly hurt Pakistan's central bank foreign reserves.

A traditional ally, Saudi Arabia gave Pakistan a \$3 billion loan and \$3.2 billion oil credit facility to help its balance of payments crisis in

late 2018.

Irked by Islamabad demands for Riyadh to convene a high-level meeting to highlight archival India's alleged human rights violations in the disputed Kashmir region, Saudi Arabia has forced Pakistan to pay back \$1 billion prematurely and is demanding another \$1 billion of the loan.

feedback" until August 28. Swinburne University senior lecturer on media Belinda Barnet described the Google letter as a "cynical exercise" designed to "scare Google users."

"I see no merit in any of the arguments," she said.

"One of the most ironic arguments is that they're going to have to hand over some data to news organisations — for example which article people have read and how long they

Riyadh has also not responded to Pakistani requests to extend the oil facility, military and finance ministry officials said.

The head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), General Faiz Hameed, was accompanying Bajwa, a Pakistani military source said.

—Agencies

**EU calls for emergency summit over Belarus polls**

**Minsk, Aug. 17:** European Council President Charles Michel on Monday convened an emergency summit of EU leaders to discuss the presidential election in Belarus and the crackdown in the wake of the polls.

Noting that the video conference would take place on Wednesday at 1000 GMT, Michel tweeted that "the people of Belarus have the right to decide on their future and freely elect their leader." "Violence against protesters is unacceptable and cannot be allowed," he said.

The 27 EU foreign ministers said on Friday that the elections were neither free nor fair and that they refuse to accept the results of the polls, as announced by the Belarus electoral commission.

Several thousand factory workers took to the streets of Minsk on Monday, demanding the resignation

● **THE OFFICIAL RESULTS of the August 9 vote gave Lukashenko 80 per cent of the votes and Tsikhanouskaya only 10%, but the opposition claimed the vote was rigged.**

of authoritarian Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. It was the ninth straight day of protesting against the results of an election that extended his 26-year rule. Nearly 5,000 workers from the Minsk Tractor Works plant, which has been on strike since Monday morning, marched down the streets of Minsk, demanding that Lukashenko step down and cede his post to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the leading opposition candidate.

The official results of the August 9 vote gave Lukashenko 80 per cent of the votes and Tsikhan-

ouskaya only 10%, but the opposition claimed the vote was rigged.

"Lukashenko is a former president, he needs to go," Sergei Dylevsky, the leader of the protest at the Minsk Tractor Works plant, said on Monday.

"Sveta (Tsikhanouskaya) is our president, legitimate and elected by the people." Tsikhanouskaya, a 37-year-old former English teacher, entered the race after her husband's jailing in Belarus. She managed to galvanize nationwide support, drawing tens of thousands to her campaign rallies. Large-scale protests against the vote results continued even after she left the country for Lithuania last week, a move her campaign said was made under duress.

The protests have posed the biggest challenge yet to Lukashenko's iron-fisted rule of the ex-Soviet nation of 9.5 million.

—AP

**NZ delays election as Covid cases rise**

**Wellington, Aug. 17:** New Zealand's Prime Minister postponed the country's general election on Monday by a month to October 17 as the city of Auckland remains in lockdown due to a growing Coronavirus outbreak.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern bowed to pressure to delay the polls after parties complained they could not campaign with nearly a third of New Zealand's 5 million people under lockdown in Auckland. "Ultimately, the 17th of October... provides sufficient time for parties to plan around the range of circumstances we will be campaigning under," Ardern said at a news conference.

The election was scheduled for September 19 and New Zealand law requires it to be held by November 21. Advance voting will now start on October 3.

The Prime Minister ruled out delaying the polls any further, as her Labour Party maintains a strong lead over the conservative National Party in opinion polls. "We are all in the same boat. We are all campaigning in the same environment," Ardern said.

New Zealand on Monday recorded nine new cases of Covid-19, taking the number of active cases to 78. There have now been a total of 1,280 cases in the country, and 22 deaths.

An earlier election would have worked in Ardern's favour, as her success in stifling Covid-19 and keeping the country virus-free for 102 days until the latest outbreak had boosted her popularity.

Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, who had called for a delay, said "common sense has prevailed".

—Agencies

**S. KOREA PASTOR TESTS POSITIVE AMID VIRUS SPIKE**

**Seoul, Aug. 17:** A conservative South Korean pastor who has been a bitter critic of the country's president has tested positive for the Coronavirus, health authorities said on Monday, two days after he participated in an anti-government rally in Seoul that drew thousands.

More than 300 virus cases have been linked to the Rev. Jun Kwang-hun's huge church in northern Seoul, which has emerged as a major cluster of infections amid growing fears of a massive outbreak in the greater capital region.

—AP

**WEB ALERT Tech giant's warning in 'Open letter to Australians' after draft law to make it pay for news****Aussies could lose free search services, warns Google**

**Canberra, Aug. 17:** Google warned on Monday that the Australian government's plans to make digital giants pay for news content threatens users' free services in Australia and could hand users' data to media organisations.

The US-based company's warning, contained in what it called an "Open letter to Australians," comes a week before public consultations close on Australian draft laws that

would make both Google and Facebook pay for news siphoned from commercial media companies.

"A proposed law... would force us to provide you with a dramatically worse Google Search and YouTube, could lead to your data being handed over to big news businesses, and would put the free services you use at risk in Australia," Google Australia and New Zealand managing director Mel Silva wrote.

Google owns YouTube, a video-sharing platform.

Both Google and Facebook have condemned the proposed legislation, which was released last month and aims to succeed where other countries have failed in making them compensate media businesses for news content.

Australian competition watchdog Rod Sims, chair

of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which drafted the laws, said Google's letter "contains misinformation." "Google will not be required to charge Australians for the use of its free services such as Google Search and YouTube, unless it chooses to do so," Sims said in

a statement.

"Google will not be required to share any additional user data with Australian news businesses unless it chooses to do so," he added.

Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, the minister responsible for the consumer watchdog, said in a statement that the draft law "remains open for consultation, providing an opportunity for media companies and digital platforms to provide

feedback" until August 28. Swinburne University senior lecturer on media Belinda Barnet described the Google letter as a "cynical exercise" designed to "scare Google users."

"I see no merit in any of the arguments," she said.

may have read it for — and this coming from the world's major privacy violator and certainly the world's largest data aggregator is a bit rich," Barnet added.

Google has been battling the Australian consumer watchdog on two fronts. Last month, the watchdog launched court action against Google for allegedly misleading account holders about its use of their personal data.

—AP



## DECCAN Chronicle

18 AUGUST 2020

### Misuse of social media a threat to democracy

Democracy and the life it seeks to assure its stakeholders are under increasing threat of being undermined by the reckless use of social media by vested interests. The threat includes the issue of external forces making a charade of the electoral process. Allegations ran thick and fast about how such media undermined the 2016 United States presidential elections. There are also instances of violence breaking out based on misinformation or deliberate and provocative messages, claiming lives and disrupting normal life of unsuspecting innocent people. The recent riots in Bengaluru is the latest example.

It is against this background that the demand of the Congress party for a joint parliamentary committee to investigate the allegations that social media platform Facebook has been violating its own policy to favour the rabble-rousers and hate-mongers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gains relevance. The allegation is based on a report that appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* which alleged a "broader pattern of favouritism" towards the BJP by Facebook. The report named BJP leaders who posted hate-filled messages against Muslims on several occasions, including before the Delhi riots. The company's top public-policy executive opposed the application of the hate speech rules of the company against at least four BJP leaders and groups who were "flagged internationally for participating in violence", saying it "would damage the company's business prospects in the country". The report said the company "acknowledged that the official had raised concerns about the political fallout that would result from designating the BJP leader a dangerous individual".

The business model of social media is directly and instantly proportional to the reach of their contents. This will be best served by pandering to and often engaging extremist elements in society and polity who will ensure such stuff gets widest publicity. With little checks and balance in place, the social media has the power to break into smithereens the social fabric that has been woven for decades or even centuries.

The allegation, though denied by Facebook, is not about partisan politics; it's about the sanctity of the country's democracy and democratic processes, which should be a matter of concern for the government as well as the Opposition. The response of the government, however, has been less than forthright. Instead of addressing the issue, Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has sought to level personal allegations against former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and advance a whataboutery that the Opposition was in the dock during the Cambridge Analytica scandal. This denial is not enough. Mr Prasad and the government must understand that no mature democracy would allow outsiders to violate the law and manipulate systems. The heads of social media organisations, including Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, had been hauled up before the US congressional committee for alleged unethical business practices. India, priding itself to be a global leader, must do whatever it takes to protect the sanctity of the democratic process. Giving in to the Opposition demand would reinforce our democratic processes and enhance the national prestige.

### Covid strikes cricket

Cricketer, cricket administrator and politician Chetan Chauhan has created a distressing record as the first Test player to die of Covid-19. The death of a son of an Indian Army doctor is illustrative of the insidious power of the coronavirus to inveigle itself into the human body despite all the precautions a person of knowledge might take against it. His case is a tragic reminder that the battle against Covid-19 is far from over in India and that complications the virus creates in multiple organs in some people, especially in the most vulnerable 70-plus section of the population, are not easily fought off even with specialised medical care.

Born just a few weeks before independence was attained, Chauhan became famous as the diligent yet stodgy other half of an opening partnership with the world record breaking Sunil Gavaskar that helped erase the memories of eras symbolised by the retreating back foot in the face of hostile fast bowling, without the benefit of protective gear of course. Chauhan was the unglamorous but sincere second fiddle who was reluctant to stage the walkout in Melbourne in 1981 just because Gavaskar was given out Leg Before Wicket (LBW), perhaps wrongly. India went on to stage a remarkable comeback victory in the Melbourne Test to square the series.

Having experienced life in Australia for a few years, Chauhan felt the tug of his homeland and returned to daringly step into the politics of Delhi cricket, which is a kind of crash course before real politics of the electoral kind. With his engaging quality of having time to listen to everyone, Chauhan fared well as an MP and became a UP minister too. He may have helped overturn the belief that there is no place for a decent man in the quagmire of UP politics. To serve in public life was Chauhan's credo. As a batsman he was a cricket tragic in the sense that he never managed a Test century, 97 being his best. But he tried for India in every sense under all the hats he wore.

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Subhani



Mohan Guruswamy

The so-called Naga peace talks are now floundering. National Socialist Council of Nagaland leader Thuingaleng Muivah reiterated on August 14 from New Delhi that going by the 2015 Framework Agreement signed between his outfit, the NSCN(I-M), and the Government of India: "Nagas can co-exist with India, but will not merge with it. We are not asking (for a) Naga national flag and constitution from the Government of India. Recognise them or not, we have our own flag and constitution. Flag and constitution are ingredients of our recognised sovereign entity and the symbols of Naga nationhood."

Not long ago I had a conversation with an RSS figure conversant with the Naga issue. He was confident Narendra Modi would soon find a "creative solution" to this vexed problem. I asked him if it meant the dismemberment of Manipur, as the dominant Tangkhul faction of the NSCN (I-M) was mostly based around Ukhrul in Manipur? And the dismemberment of Arunachal Pradesh as the Konyak Nagas, who mostly owe allegiance to the NSCN's Khaplang faction, are mostly in Tirap and Changlang divisions of that state? He didn't answer, except saying wait and see - Modiji has a "creative solution".

Whatever it was, the "creative solution" is now clearly unravelling. The NSCN(I-M) has now demanded that Prime Minister Modi's longtime Naga interlocutor R.N. Ravi, now Nagaland's governor, must be removed from the talks. The severely ailing 86-year-old Isak Muivah is now in New Delhi for health reasons and is also in talks with the powers that be. What can they

now offer him after scrapping Article 370 and dismembering J&K and putting Jammu and Kashmir under Central rule as a Union territory? How far removed is Article 371 from Article 370? The Naga quest for a separate identity independent of India burst into an armed conflict in January 1956 when A.Z. Phizo assumed full control of the Naga National Council, which was championing the Naga cause. Immediately after Phizo took over, the Naga Hills was declared a disturbed area and put under the Indian Army's control.

At that time eminent Indians like Jayaprakash Narayan chastised Jawaharlal Nehru for sending the Army to "pacify" the Naga Hills. Nehru assured critics that the Army would be in the area for just a few months. The Indian Army is still deployed in the region and 3 Corps is permanently headquartered in Dimapur. From time to time news would filter out that the contours of a settlement were visible, but nothing of consequence came out. On August 3, 2015 the Narendra Modi government announced that an agreement was concluded and that its details would be kept secret. Why the details of the accord must be secret is best known to it, and what exactly it is has been the subject of much speculation.

While the details of the "historic agreement" are still shrouded in secrecy, it is believed the immediate deal only covered the territory of Nagaland. It seemed agreed that the question of the other areas of "Greater Nagalim" would be resolved consensually via dialogue with Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. It was thought the deal will pave the

The Naga quest for a separate identity independent of India burst into an armed conflict in January 1956.

way to an election where the NSCN (I-M) or a successor political party would be facilitated to secure power through polls, as done in Mizoram.

In a paper published on March 30, 2017 in a widely read blog "Indian Security Affairs" maintained by Maj. Gen. P.K. Mullick (Retd), Lt. Gen. J.R. Mukherjee (Retd), a former corps commander with extensive experience and connections in Assam and the Northeast, wrote: "Unauthenticated leaks from reliable sources indicate that points agreed are: A separate constitution? Flag for Nagaland, separate currency and passports for Nagas. Nagaland would have a UN representative, foreign affairs and defence will be a joint subject; a pan-Naga government to cover all Naga-inhabited areas." This is why Manipur is agitated, as it will leave it with just the Imphal Valley. The unabashed misuse of the office of governor following the recent elections to install a BJP-led government lends credence to a certain urgency to implement the deal, as the talks have been going on for almost two decades.

We constantly worry about the Chinese hand at play since the days when Mowu Angami went to Yunnan. But what we need to worry more about is the American hand at work. The first missionaries went there in 1836, when Rev. Miles Bronson set up a mission in Namsang, now in Arunachal Pradesh's Tirap subdivision. But the real impetus to Christianity came after the advent of an American Baptist missionary, Rev. E.W. Clarke.

The Baptists never looked back since then and now maintain over 800 churches and have a

majority of Nagas under their fold. While it must be acknowledged the missionaries played a pioneering role in establishing modern healthcare and educational facilities, we must not remain unaware of the Baptist Church's role in creating a new awareness and sense of oneness among the Naga tribes.

While the armed forces may have learnt from their experience, our political and bureaucratic leadership never seemed to have learnt anything, or worse, forgotten anything. We have since Nagaland's formation in December 1963 lurched from one compromise after another. Consequently, the Naga Hills region - Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal - have had the most uncaring and corrupt state governments with little to show on the ground despite India's highest per capita development expenditures.

India's long-term security interests, and the steady expansion of Chinese influence in Myanmar in the areas abutting our borders, equally require our military and administrative presence in the Naga Hills as it does a general stability.

The answers to these can only be found in new and innovative political and administrative arrangements that factor not just the culture of Naga tribes but the geography of the Naga Hills. Article 371A of the Constitution does offer some safeguards, but clearly these do not satisfy the Nagas.

But a separate constitution, flag, currency and UN membership might be going a bit too far. Will this not have consequences in other parts of the country like Jammu and Kashmir, where a secessionist war is raging, and even in states like Tamil Nadu where regional nationalism is extremely strong?

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

#### LETTERS

##### MJ MARKET LEAK

The government must investigate the leak at MJ Market and punish the engineer and contractor to stop corruption in government agencies (*Renovated MJ Market roof leaks in two days, DC, Aug. 17*). This is a severe setback for the government and the people.

Fatima Erum  
Hyderabad

##### GHMC ENGINEERING

It is shocking that the GHMC has spent over ₹3 crore to buy low quality dry and wet dust bins (*Contractors cite repairs, throw out wet, dry bins, DC, Aug. 17*). Anyone who examines them closely can easily make out that there cannot be a poorer design for a public utility. Within 3-4 weeks of their installation, the hinges on the lids were coming off. Bins were falling off as their screws and frames provided to empty them were useless. Someone in the GHMC must be held accountable.

Chadha V.B.  
Secunderabad

##### SALIVADIRECT

The US FDA's permission to use saliva samples as a diagnostic test for Coronavirus comes as a music to one's ears (*Yale's covid saliva test gets FDA approval, DC, Aug. 17*). The test is easy to collect, inexpensive, and has high sensitivity relative to tests using nasopharyngeal swabs. If this is the case, the test SalivaDirect if introduced in India, could benefit millions.

Ramala Kinnera  
Hyderabad

##### Russia launches Venus-7

MOSCOW, AUG. 17 The Soviet Union today launched what it called an "Automatic inter-planetary station Venus-7." Tass said the aim of the launching "is to continue the exploration of the planet Venus, which was carried out earlier by the Soviet automatic stations." Tass said the spaceship was launched at 8.38 a.m. Moscow time (1108hrs IST) and together with the final stage of the rocket carrier was

put into an interim orbit of the earth. At 1229 hrs. IST, the engine of the final stage was switched on for just over four minutes out of orbit and on its way.

Tass said at 1430 hours IST Venus-7 was more than 40,000 km. from earth. "Venus-7 was put into a trajectory close to the present one," the Soviet news agency said, "All the systems and scientific equipment on board the station are functioning normally."

Covid-19 vaccine because like many, he thinks that until there is a vaccine the problem of social distancing will trouble theatres. He had to close the long-running Phantom of the Opera (which I saw it for the first time 20 years ago), but no doubt he will rebound with something else. But even with their capacity reduced to one-third of normal, venues like Bridge Theatre and the National will open in the autumn. Bridge would show a new play by David Hare and later it will revive Talking Heads by Alan Bennett. The National will open only the Olivier Theatre with a new one-person play Death of England: Delroy. It is an unusual play about racism written by two black playwrights. Art galleries are also reopening. Tate Modern has opened as has the National Gallery. The British Museum and the British Library are back but with limited capacity. Perhaps by Christmas, life may, finally, be merry again.

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author.

##### The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh headed off to Balmoral, their castle in Scotland.

song said: "We need no education". Cheap meals is all we need! But whether this will be enough to ensure that restaurants will survive is difficult to say - as the subsidies cannot last for too long.

Each society has its own way of dealing with Covid-19. In India we have families bonding even more and the sale of noodles and pasta is shooting up as people home-cook. And many feel it is time to bring back the joint family. But in London it is difficult to keep anyone at home while the pubs continue to overflow.

Like others, the royal family too have opted for a staycation. The Queen, 94, and the Duke of Edinburgh, 99, headed off to Balmoral, their Scottish castle where the weather is, if anything, more severe than in Windsor, where they were isolating themselves. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has also chosen Scotland for his holidays

but that is more because he knows that there is yet again a rising demand in Scotland for independence. Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister (like chief minister) managed the Covid episode much better than Boris did for England and is likely to win the elections in Scotland. So we are bracing for yet another referendum on Scottish independence.

Even so the government in Scotland did not do better than England when it came to exam results of school leavers waiting to go to universities. Teaching was disrupted due to lockdowns. Schools tried teaching online but as usual the private schools did better than state funded schools. Proper examinations could not be held. So they had mock exams in many parts of the country. The students also have teachers' assessments to send forward with their university applications. With no proper exams, what would the final grades be? If anything worse than the pandemic policy can be imagined, we have had it. The Scottish Education Authority used an "algorithm" which resulted

in massive downgrading of students. There was such a furore that the minister had to apologise and rescind the results. Better decisions are awaited and students feel cheated and angry. So they will appeal. With only four weeks left before the university admissions are decided, an unhappy holiday is what students can look forward to. For young people all over the world, 2020 has brought huge uncertainty.

There are many reasons to celebrate or commemorate August 15 - which is also Victory over Japan (VJ) Day, but it gets celebrated much less than the Victory in Europe (VE) Day. In India it is rarely mentioned, though one of the most crucial land battles, that in Kohima, took place in India, which Japan lost and then retreated from Southeast Asia. It means a lot in Australia and New Zealand but not in other places which should commemorate it.

The one good news among many sad ones is that theatres are about to reopen. In a dramatic gesture, Andrew Lloyd Webber volunteered to be a test case for the



Kishwar Desai  
London Diary

### Of 'staycations' & cheap meals: Will Christmas be merry again?

Only those who were sensible enough to opt for a staycation did not get their holidays wrecked. Oh, to think that just a year ago we could fly endlessly around the globe. And now taking even a short holiday is like a complicated military manoeuvre, where every possibility has to be measured and prepared for. Just a fortnight ago, people were told to travel abroad to European countries with which the UK had "air bridges". As holidays typically end by the beginning of September, Brits rushed off to Italy, Greece, Spain and France. Now comes the ruling that France is a no-go, as is Spain, which has seen a second wave of infections. If you have been or are in France and get delayed in returning, then you face a fortnight of quarantine at home upon return.

This means kids will miss opening days of school. That is, in case the schools open at all. The Teachers Union is not sure if their members or their pupils will be safe. But not to worry. Pubs are open and restaurants have been cheered up by Rishi Sunak's scheme of meals at half-price if you eat out. As the old rock



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,050.78	0.46
Nifty 50	11,247.10	0.61
S&P 500*	3,382.57	0.29
Dollar (₹)	74.88	0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.97	-0.09
Euro (₹)	88.62	0.21
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,611.340	0.63
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.03	0.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.975	0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.688	-0.021

GDP contracted 16.5% in June quarter: Ecowrap

SBI's research report Ecowrap expects India's GDP to have contracted by 16.5 per cent during April-June (Q1). In May, it had estimated Q1 GDP contraction of over 20 per cent. It said degrowth in corporate GVA (better results of firms) has been significantly better than revenue degrowth. So far, around 1,000 firms have reported their Q1 results, which indicate over 25 per cent fall in top line and over 55 per cent fall in bottom line.

Seafood exports in FY20 pegged at 12,89,651 mt



India shipped 12,89,651 mt of seafood worth Rs 46,662.85 crore (\$6.68 billion) during 2019-20, largely cushioning the adverse impact of the pandemic, the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPE-DA) said in Kochi. Frozen shrimp remained the major export item in both quantity and value followed by frozen fish while the USA and China were the major importers. Exports improved in rupee term by 0.16 per cent.

Aarti Drugs board to consider bonus issue

Aarti Drugs said its board will meet later this week to consider a proposal to issue bonus shares. The firm, which manufactures bulk drugs and chemicals, did not divulge more details. The next meeting of "the board of directors of the company is scheduled to be held on Thursday, August 20, to consider a proposal for issue of bonus shares," Aarti Drugs said. Shares of Aarti Drugs rose 10.03 per cent on the BSE.

Muthoot, Kotak arm tie up to offer Covid cover

Muthoot Finance said it has tied up with Kotak Mahindra General Insurance to offer Covid-19 insurance cover of up to Rs 1 lakh against gold loan. Muthoot Finance Ayush Gold Loan scheme will provide complimentary cover to customers taking gold loan under the Super Loan scheme. Muthoot Finance MD George Alexander Muthoot the initiative is part of the firm's ongoing customer loyalty programme and social commitment.



Disbursements dip 90% in April-June MFIs take a hard knock in first qtr

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 17

Micro-finance disbursements dropped by 90 per cent in the June quarter to all-time low levels and the gross loan portfolios of all micro-lenders shrank by 2.42 per cent compared to the March quarter. However, collection rates, which had fallen to all-time low of 35 to 40 per cent in March, have started picking up.

All the microlenders together disbursed Rs 6,235 crore in the lockdown-hit June quarter, which was down 91 per cent from Rs 72,528 crore in the March quarter and 88 per cent below the disbursement of Rs 54,127 crore in June 2019 quarter, according to the data from Sa-Dhan.

The share of NBFC-MFIs, in quarterly disbursement, fell to a dismal 97.5 per cent to Rs 529 crore from Rs 21,927 crore in the March quarter. Though banks accounted for a major share of the disbursements at Rs 4,233 crore, it was still 88 per cent down from the March quarter disbursement of Rs 35,194 crore. Small Finance Banks too saw 88 per cent decline from Rs 10,746 crore in the March quarter to Rs 1,281 crore in the June quarter.

"During the lock-down we were not contemplating disbursements. We started disbursements only after the June first week. Our strategy has been to disburse to exist-



ing clients and not to new clients," said S. V. Raja Vaidyanathan, MD of Asirvad Microfinance.

Lower disbursements dragged down the combined gross loan portfolio of micro-lenders in end-June to Rs 2,24,595 crore from Rs 2,30,165 crore in the March quarter.

The overall collection rate in April had fallen to an all-time low of 35-40 per cent, which was lower than the repayment rate during demonetisation. By May it improved to 45-50 per cent and in July to 65-70 per cent. Sa-Dhan expects that collection rates will move up to 80-85 per cent by August-September.

"By September, when the moratorium ends, there will be a jump in collections as the 20 per cent customers who have availed of moratorium, will start repaying. By the end of the year, collection rates should return to pre-Covid levels," said

Vaidyanathan. Collections rates were 99.08 per cent in the March quarter and 98.11 per cent in June 2019.

The overall write off ratio, which stood at 0.52 per cent in the March quarter and 0.90 per cent in June 2019, shot up to 2.57 per cent in the last quarter. Uttarakhand recorded a write-off ratio of 10.31 per cent, Delhi 8.35 per cent, Maharashtra 5.88 per cent, Gujarat 5.53 per cent and Uttar Pradesh 4.72 per cent. Industry-wide portfolio at risk-30 days deteriorated to 1.89 per cent from 1.78 per cent in March.

"Nationwide lockdown and extension of moratorium led to lower repayments in April, however after relaxations and opening up of the economy, now the repayment rate is at 65-70 per cent and is expected to increase to 80-85 per cent in August and September," said P Satish, Executive Director, Sa-Dhan.

US law firm Rosen plans to sue HDFC Bank over misleading info

New Delhi, Aug. 17: US-based Rosen Law Firm on Monday said it is planning to investigate potential securities claims against HDFC Bank following allegations of sharing "materially misleading business information" with investors.

HDFC Bank said it was not aware of any lawsuit and prima facie it looked "frivolous as we believe we have been transparent in our disclosures".

"Rosen law firm is preparing a securities lawsuit on behalf of HDFC Bank shareholders," the global investor right law firm said in a statement on its website.

Citing some news reports about alleged unfair business practices and the lender missing analysts' estimates on profits for the June quarter, Rosen Law Firm said it is preparing a securities lawsuit.

The HDFC Bank American Depository Receipt share price fell by 2.83 per cent following the report, it added.

The bank's ADRs are listed on the NYSE.

The law firm said it will



investigate "potential securities claims on behalf of shareholders of HDFC Bank Ltd resulting from allegations that the bank may have issued materially misleading business information to the investing public".

Last year, Rosen Law had prepared a similar class-action suit against IT giant Infosys after a whistleblower had alleged malpractices by a few key management personnel. The suit was dismissed in May this year.

The law firm quoted media reports about allegations of improper practices and conflict of interest in HDFC Bank Ltd's

vehicle financing operations, which involved its former unit head.

"If you purchased securities of HDFC Bank please visit the firm's website...to join the securities action," Rosen Law Firm said.

The largest Indian private sector lender had posted a 22 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit at Rs 6,927 crore in April-June quarter of the current fiscal year 2020-21.

Commenting on the development, HDFC Bank said: "We were unaware of any such development (class action lawsuit) till we heard about it from the media a little earlier today. We are getting details of it. We'll examine it and respond to it as appropriate. Prima facie it does look frivolous as we believe we have been transparent in our disclosures".

The bank said it is an interim response.

The lender in July launched a probe on vehicle finance lending practices following allegations against the conduct of a key executive in the auto lending business.

—PTI

Taxpayers don't have to report big transactions

New Delhi, Aug. 17: Taxpayers will not be required to mention their high-value transactions in their income tax returns, officials in the know of the development said.

"There is no such proposal to modify income tax return forms," an official said, responding to reports of a proposal to expand reportable financial transactions to include hotel payments over Rs 20,000, life insurance premium payment over Rs 50,000 and health insurance premium payment over Rs 20,000, donations and payment of school/college fees over Rs 1 lakh a year.

Any expansion in reporting under the statement of financial transactions (SFT) will mean that such reporting of high-value transactions to the I-T department will be done by financial institutions, they said.

Only third parties would report high-value transactions to the I-T department as per the Income Tax Act. Such information would be used to identify people who are not paying up due taxes.

"There is no such proposal to modify income tax returns forms," an official said. "The taxpayer would not need to mention his/her high-value transactions in his/her return."

—PTI

Retail investors play the market in June quarter

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 17

Retail investors have entered the stock market in a big way during the lockdown period, as evidenced by a rise in their stake in more than 1,000 companies during the April-June 2020 quarter.

"Retail holding went up in 1,018 companies listed on the NSE in the last quarter. The average stock price of these companies in the same period increased by 60.28 per cent. On the other hand, retail holding went down in 545 companies. The average stock price of these companies too increased by a slightly higher 61.08 per cent," according to Prime Database.

"Unlike seen in previous quarters and years wherein retail would typically buy at the peak and sell at lows, the last quarter saw heavy buying by retail making use of the steep fall in share prices due to the coronavirus pandemic," said Pranav Haldea, managing director, Prime Database Group.

Holdings of high net worth individuals (HNIs)—individuals with more than Rs 2 lakh shareholding—in companies listed on the NSE also increased to 1.84 per cent by value as on June 30, 2020 from 1.78 per cent as on March 31, 2020.

Among the domestic institutions, holdings of insurance companies, in absolute value terms, went up by 25.28 per cent from the March quarter to Rs 7.02 lakh crore as on

- BUYING UP
- Retail holding rises in 1,018 companies in Q1
- HNI holdings in NSE firms rise to 1.84%
- Insurers holdings up 25.28% to ₹7.02 L cr
- FPI holdings fall to 21.05% from 21.17%
- In top 10 firms, FPIs have 52.29% stake, DIIs 38.64% and MFs 36.05%

June 30, 2020. Life Insurance Corporation of India's holding—across 292 companies where its holding is more than 1 per cent—stood at Rs 5.40 lakh crore in the June quarter, an increase of 26.93 per cent over the previous quarter.

The holding of private promoters in companies listed on the NSE reached an all-time high of 44.43 per cent by value, increasing from 44.25 per cent in March. Private promoter ownership has been steadily increasing for the last 11 years, having increased from 33.61 per cent in June 2009.

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

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

"Since June 2009, hold-

ing of government has been steadily declining, from 22.71 per cent as on June 30, 2009, due to the government's divestment programme, not enough new listings as also lacklustre performance of many CPSEs relative to their private peers," according to Haldea.

Holdings of domestic mutual funds in companies listed on the NSE reduced to 7.81 per cent by value in June from 7.96 per cent in March.

Holdings of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) also fell from 21.17 per cent in March to 21.05 per cent in June 2020, despite net inflows of Rs 29,516 crore during the quarter. FPI ownership stood at Rs 28.60 lakh crore as on June 30, 2020.

FPIs are the largest non-promoter shareholders in the Indian market and their investment decisions have a huge bearing on the stock prices and overall direction of markets. It is thus time that complete details of all their holdings are made mandatory to be disclosed in India, Haldea said.

"Institutional money continues to incrementally get more concentrated to the top 10 per cent companies by market cap, reflecting a heightened risk-off environment," Haldea said, adding, "The top 10 per cent companies by market capitalisation accounted for 52.29 per cent of overall FPI holding, 38.64 per cent of overall DII holding and 36.05 per cent of overall mutual fund holding."

NFRA FINDS LAPSES IN KPMG ARM'S FY18 AUDIT OF IFIN

New Delhi, Aug. 17: The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) has found various lapses in the statutory audit of IL&FS Financial Services Limited for 2017-18 done by BSR & Associates LLP.

NFRA has issued the Audit Quality Review Report (AQR) of the statutory audit for the year 2017-18 of IL&FS Financial Services Ltd (IFIN).

However, BSR said the audit quality review did not give "due consideration to all the facts and circumstances", adding that it was reviewing the report and would respond later.

"The instances of failure to comply with the requirements of the Standards of Auditing (SAs) by BSR are significant," a release issued by the corporate affairs ministry said on Monday. NFRA comes under the ministry. BSR & Associates is an affiliate of KPMG.

As per the ministry's release, BSR did not have adequate justification for issuing the audit report.

NFRA found that the IT processes/ platform used by BSR have deficiencies that are systemic and structural in nature.—PTI

RENAULT BRINGS NEW DUSTER 1.3 TURBO PETROL

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG 17

The French car maker Renault on Monday launched the all-new Duster turbo petrol variant starting at Rs 10.49 lakh. The top-end is priced Rs 13.59 lakh at pan-India showroom. The company will continue to sell the existing BS6 Duster 1.5 petrol variant.

Renault claims the new 1.3-litre turbo petrol engine to be the most powerful SUV in its segment.



S'pore gives more wage support to tourism sectors

FARIS MOKHTAR & MICHELLE JAMRISKO SINGAPORE, AUG. 17

Singapore will provide additional wage support to protect jobs in sectors hardest hit by the pandemic such as aviation and tourism till March next year, deputy prime minister Heng Swee Keat said on Monday in a televised address to the nation.

With some sectors recovering faster than others, the government will adjust support based on the projected recovery, Heng said.

The city-state will provide 50 per cent wage support for seven more months for firms in the aerospace, aviation and tourism sectors while 50 per cent wage support will be extended to the construction sector for



two more months and then lowered to 30 per cent to March 2021. Similarly, 30 per cent wage support will be provided for arts and entertainment, food services, land transport, marine and offshore and retail sectors till March 2021.

Heng promised 25 per cent wage subsidy for each new hire younger than 40 years old, and as

much as 50 per cent for those 40 or older.

For a few sectors seen as managing well, including biomedical sciences, financial services, the government plans to provide 10 per cent support for four more months, for wages paid up to December.

The latest relief measures mean that most businesses will eventually

have received wage support for more than a year as Singapore seeks to cushion the economic blow of the pandemic on jobs. The government has disbursed over \$16 billion of wage support, benefiting over two million local workers in more than 150,000 firms, Heng said.

But Heng warned that support couldn't be indefinite, saying Singapore "cannot sustain" its job support scheme at current levels as it draws heavily on reserves and "risks trapping our workers in unviable businesses."

Heng said businesses should use the extended support to retain and upskill workers, "and to transform your operations for the post-Covid-19 world" in order to "spring back faster when the recovery comes."

The wage support is part of additional support measures of S\$8 billion (\$5.8 billion) announced on Monday to cushion the blow from the coronavirus pandemic.

The new set of measures, announced almost three months after the last package, adds to Singapore's total pledged pandemic aid of almost S\$100 billion. Heng, who is also finance minister, said in the recorded speech.

Singapore's economy shrank a record 42.9 per cent on an annualised basis in the second quarter from the previous three months, data last week showed, with trade and industry minister Chan Chun Sing warning there could be "recurring waves of infection and disruption."

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

### Ronnie wraps up sixth World title

**Washington:** Ronnie O'Sullivan became world snooker champion for the sixth time and at the age of 44 by beating fellow Englishman Kyren Wilson 18-8 in the final.

O'Sullivan moved to within one of the all-time record of world titles, held by Stephen Hendry, and tied the number won by Steve Davis and Ray Reardon.

Regarded as the most talented player ever, O'Sullivan had a tough run to the final, beating Chinese star Ding Junhui in the second round, former world champion Mark Williams in the quarterfinals, and then three-time winner Mark Selby in a spectacular semifinal that went to a decider.

The best-of-35-frame match against Wilson, a first-time finalist, ended up being a procession after O'Sullivan won seven straight frames in Sunday's afternoon session from 10-8 up. Returning for the evening session at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, O'Sullivan needed just one more frame for the win and sealed it with a break of 96. — AP

### Nagal in Prague pre-quarterfinal

**Prague:** India's Sumit Nagal advanced to the pre-quarterfinals of the Prague Challenger tennis tournament after his opponent Jay Clarke of Britain retired hurt here on Monday.

Nagal, ranked 127 in the world, was leading 6-3, 5-7, 4-1, when Clarke decided to call it quits in the second round match after playing for over two hours.

The 22-year-old Indian, playing his first competitive match since his Davis Cup encounter against Croatia's Marin Cilic in March, had received a bye in the opening round.

Nagal, seeded sixth in the tournament that also features three-time Grand Slam winner Stanislas Wawrinka, will face local favourite Jiri Lehecka in the Round of 16.

Other Indians in the fray include Divij Sharan and N. Sriram Balaji, who will be competing in the doubles events with separate partners.

Sharan will partner Dutchman Robin Haase and they were seeded number one. Balaji will join hands with Belgium's Kimmer Coppejans. — PTI

### Alex grabs points at Austrian GP

**Spielberg, Austria:** A trying day at the Red Bull Ring with a red-flag interrupted race, but Alex Marquez salvaged points to continue his top 15 run in the MotoGP. Stefan Bradl's participation in next week's Styria GP is now confirmed as Marc Marquez continues his recovery.

Weather forecasts were once again proven wrong as glorious sunshine beat down on the Red Bull Ring for the fourth MotoGP race of the year. Both Repsol Honda Team RC213Vs shot off the line, Alex Marquez and Stefan Bradl immediately gaining positions and joining the group battling for the top ten. But a red flag for a dramatic crash at Turn 3 saw the race stopped, restarted and run over 20 laps.

Alex made another strong start from 13th on the grid with the restart, immediately moving into the top 10 as the field roared through the opening corners. The fighting was fierce in the first laps and the MotoGP rookie found himself shuffled down the order after his lightning start. But Alex's consistency saw him stay free of trouble afterwards and benefit from the mistakes of others, moving back into the points.

## Live on TV

### CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Trinbago Knight Riders vs Guyana Amazon Warriors from 7.30 pm; Barbados Tridents vs St Kitts & Nevis Patriots from 3 am (Wednesday). Both matches on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

### CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL

Paris-Saint Germain vs RB Leipzig from 12.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

### NBA PLAYOFFS

Milwaukee Bucks vs Orlando Magic from 11 pm; Oklahoma City Thunder vs Houston Rockets from 4 am (Wednesday); Los Angeles Lakers vs Portland Trailblazers from 6.30 am (Wednesday). All matches on Sony Six, HD.

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# United they fall again

## Manchester lose another semifinal, this time in Europe

**Cologne (Germany), Aug. 17:** Manchester United made it an unwanted hat-trick of semifinal defeats this season after losing 2-1 in the Europa League to Sevilla. After losing in the last four of the FA Cup and EFL Cup, United failed to convert a string of chances before Luuk de Jong scored the winning goal for Europa League experts Sevilla.

The Spanish club has won all five of the finals it's reached in Europe's second-level cup competition. Sevilla has the chance to win a record-extending sixth title on Friday in Cologne when its opposition will be either Inter Milan or Shakhtar Donetsk, who play Monday.

Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine Bounou kept his team in the semifinal at 1-1 with crucial saves either side of halftime, before de Jong won it.

With the game at 1-1 and heading for extra time, Sevilla substitute de Jong made the breakthrough in the 78th minute. A cross by Jesus Navas fell kindly for the tall Dutch forward to score his first European goal of the season from close range.

United had taken the lead in the ninth minute with yet another penalty in a season packed with them. Diego Carlos tangled with Marcus Rashford as the United forward had his shot saved, and then Bruno Fernandes stepped up to send the penalty into the top-left corner.

— AP



Sevilla players celebrate after Suso (second from left) scored their first goal during the Europa League semifinal against Manchester United in Cologne, Germany, on Sunday. Sevilla won 2-1. — AP

## Paris giants train guns on Leipzig

**Lisbon, Aug. 17:** The similarities between Paris Saint-Germain and Leipzig end with both clubs trying to reach the Champions League final for the first time.

The French powerhouse will head into Tuesday's semifinal match with its high-profile squad, while the German club comes with a team of mostly untested players.

At the Stadium of Light in Lisbon, it will be

Neymar, Kylian Mbapp and his teammates taking on a Leipzig squad with little Champions League experience.

Leipzig have almost nothing to lose. For PSG, anything short of the title will feel like a disappointment for a club where a priority aim has been to break through with the European title after years of dominance in France.

Leipzig reached the Bundesliga in 2016 and

the Champions League a few years later. In their second Champions League appearance, the German club eliminated Tottenham in the Round of 16 and Atletico Madrid in the quarterfinals.

PSG, managed by German coach Thomas Tuchel, got past Borussia Dortmund in the Last 16 and Atalanta in quarterfinals.

PSG enter the semifinals with the feeling that this finally could be the time

they triumph in Europe.

PSG was eliminated in the Round of 16 in the last three seasons, and in the quarterfinals four straight times before that. Its last semifinal appearance was 25 years ago, when they lost to AC Milan.

"We don't talk about history, we live at the moment. We are here because we played a great Champions League season," Tuchel said. — AP

## CHAUHAN LAST RITES WITH FULL HONOURS

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** Former India cricketer and Uttar Pradesh cabinet minister Chetan Chauhan, who died of Covid-19 related complications, was on Monday cremated with state honours in Garhmukteshwar, Hapur.

Chauhan was 73 and breathed his last at a Gurugram hospital after battling the dreaded infection for over a month. His body was first taken to his residence in Mayur Vihar before the last rites were performed in Garhmukteshwar.

Chauhan was serving as the Minister of Sainik Welfare, Home Guards, and Civil Security in the Uttar Pradesh cabinet. He is survived by his wife and son Vinayak, who lit the pyre after arriving from Melbourne on Sunday.

"He was cremated with full state honours. The funeral was attended by several bureaucrats and a sizeable crowd gathered to pay their last respects," a Delhi and Districts Cricket Association official, who attended the funeral, said.

Chauhan was the legendary Sunil Gavaskar's longest serving opening partner and together the duo scored more than 3,000 runs, including 12 century stands.

He played 40 Tests for India and was the first Test cricketer to finish his career with over 2,000 runs but without a century.

He became the second UP minister to succumb to Coronavirus. — PTI

## RAINA TOLD BCCI HE QUIT, A DAY LATE

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** Suresh Raina communicated his retirement decision to the BCCI a day after he made it public, the Board said on Monday, lauding the former India all-rounder for being a key player in the limited-overs format.

Minutes after the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni announced his international retirement on August 15, 33-year-old Raina followed his mentor in doing the same, surprising many.

"Attacking left-hand batsman Suresh Raina officially communicated to BCCI on Sunday about his decision to retire from international cricket," said the BCCI in a statement.

The usual norm is players informing the BCCI before announcing retirement.

Raina represented India in 18 Tests, 226 ODIs and 78 T20Is in an international career spanning 13 years. He also had the honour of captaining the team briefly.

"Under his captaincy, India registered a 3-2 series victory in West Indies and a 2-0 win over Bangladesh in ODIs and a 2-0 T20 International series win in Zimbabwe," the statement added.

Raina, who scored a century on debut in Tests, is also the first Indian to slam hundreds in all three formats of the game and his centuries were scored outside India. BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah paid a glowing tribute to the southpaw. — PTI



Former Indian cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni clicks a selfie with Mohammad Bashir Bozai, his Chicago-based Pakistan-born fan, in this file photo.

## Dhoni's fan from Pakistan will quit watching cricket

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** In Karachi-born Mohammad Bashir Bozai's vow to give up watching India-Pakistan play at ICC events, obsessive fandom follows Mahendra Singh Dhoni into retirement, adding to things like jersey number and disciples such as Suresh Raina.

Travelling the world to watch the arch-rivals in action doesn't make sense anymore to Bashir, aka 'Chacha Chicago', who endured abuses from Pakistani fans while cheering for Dhoni.

The well-known *chacha*, instead, plans to visit Ranchi to meet the man whose sphere of influence spreads far and wide.

"Dhoni has retired and so have I. I don't see myself travelling for cricket again with him not being around. I loved him and he loved me

**Dhoni has retired and so have I. I don't see myself travelling for cricket again with him not being around.**

— **MOHAMMAD BASHIR BOZAI**  
**M. S. Dhoni fan**

Dhoni arranged it for the 65-year-old, enough for him to "unconditionally love" the World Cup-winning captain for life.

For someone who survived three heart attacks and cris-crossed the globe to see Dhoni in flesh and blood, cricket will never be the same. Now that he is done attending live games, his next stop is Ranchi. "I will go to his house in Ranchi when things get normal (post Covid-19 pandemic). That is the least I can do to wish him all the best for the future. I will also ask Ram Babu (another super fan, from Mohali, to come with me). I would have travelled to see him in the IPL but there are travel conditions and with my heart condition, it is not safe to do so," said Bashir, whose wife hails from Hyderabad (India). — PTI

## Marksman MS may just shoot a surprise

**New Delhi, Aug. 17:** Enquiring about importing a rifle, he once sent a mail at 2 am, got it delivered at his Ranchi home, went to the range and did what he does in anything he tries his hand at.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni hit the bull's eye, fuelling an interest that would see him visit innumerable shooting ranges in the country over the next few years and display his skills in the sport.

The Walther rifle imported by Dhoni, who retired from international cricket on Saturday, is the

same model (LG300XT Walther Carabonte) which Abhinav Bindra had used to win a historic gold medal at the Olympics.

This was 10 years ago, when Indian shooters were starting to dominate on the world stage and Dhoni, who is now also a life member of National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), was bracing up for what would culminate into his second World Cup title triumph.

Recently, during an interaction with cricketer Suresh Raina, shooter Manavadiya Singh

● **A life member of National Rifle Association of India, M. S. Dhoni owns a LG300XT Walther Carabonte, the model Abhinav Bindra had used to win gold at the 2008 Olympics.**

Rathore, who is the son of Olympic silver-medallist Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, revealed that Dhoni is a pro when it comes to shooting as well. Manavadiya recalled

how impressive Dhoni was when the cricketer visited his house. "He has a lot of interest in shooting also. I think he hit the target all the time," Manavadiya had said.

Dhoni has exhibited his shooting skills in the past. In 2017, when a team training session was cancelled due to rain in Kolkata, Dhoni headed to the Kolkata Police Training School and tried his hand at pistol shooting. "His accuracy is breathtaking," Kolkata Police was quoted as saying at the time.

He had also shared a clip of him trying his hand at pistol shooting in 2018.

"He has had love for guns and shooting since a very long time. Now that he is done with cricket, shooting could be his next sport. I have seen many professional athletes shifting to shooting after retiring from their sport and go on to become Olympic champions. Unlike other sports shooting and golf can be played till a very long time," Shimon Sharif, a top importer of equipment for leading shooters, said. — PTI

## COVID | SCARE

# Simona says no to Grand Slam

**New York, Aug. 17:** Wimbledon champion Simona Halep will skip the US Open, saying she is putting her health first and prefers to stay in Europe amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

Halep, a former top-ranked player who is currently No.2, won the title in Prague on Sunday.

"After weighing up all the factors involved and with the exceptional circumstances in which we are living, I have decided that I will not travel to New York to play the (at)usopen," Halep wrote on Twitter. "I always said I would put my health at the heart of my decision and I therefore prefer to stay and train in Europe," she wrote.

Six of the top eight women in the WTA rankings won't play in New York. No.1 Ash Barty and defending champion Bianca Andreescu have also withdrawn from the tournament. Other women who won't be playing include No.5 Elina Svitolina, No.7 Kiki Bertens and No.8 Belinda Bencic.

Rafael Nadal, the men's defending champion, has also withdrawn from the tournament, but Novak Djokovic has said he will play. The US Open is scheduled to start at Flushing Meadows on Aug. 31.

Irina Khromacheva of Russia will replace Halep in the main draw, according to the United States Tennis Association. — AP

## NISHIKORI TESTS POSITIVE FOR VIRUS

**New York, Aug. 17:** Japan's Kei Nishikori, the 2014 US Open runner-up, said he has contracted Covid-19 and has withdrawn from an ATP event in New York with this year's US Open only two weeks away.

World number 31 Nishikori said he took the test and received the positive result on Sunday in Florida and will isolate himself despite few symptoms. He and his team plan more tests.

"I have some unfortunate news. This morning, while still in Florida, I got tested for Covid-19 and tested positive," Nishikori said in a statement posted on social media.

**Boxer Sarita Devi is Covid positive**

Back in India, former world champion boxer L. Sarita Devi on Monday tested positive for Covid-19 along with her husband Thoiba Singh but both of them are asymptomatic. The couple are based in Imphal. "Me and Sarita have tested positive. We are right now moving to a Covid-19 care facility in Imphal. Both of us have no symptoms at all," Thoiba said. — PTI

## FAN FRAME



Ravindra Sharma (centre) took this photo with former Indian cricket captain Gundappa Viswanath (left). Viswanath scored 6,080 runs in the 91 Tests he played between 1969 and 1983, scoring 14 centuries and 35 half-centuries in 155 innings.

## BRADY BAGS BRAGGING RIGHTS AT LEXINGTON

**Lexington (Kentucky, USA), Aug. 17:** Wearing a pandemic-appropriate mask, Jennifer Brady walked over to accept the first WTA trophy of her career, making sure to apply hand sanitiser before raising the new hardware overhead.

Brady claimed her initial tour-level title at the Top Seed Open on Sunday, overcoming some shaky serving and using a five-game run to seize control for a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Jil Teichmann in the final.

It was the first professional tennis event in the United States since the start of the Coronavirus outbreak, and no spectators were allowed. The unusual circumstances did not bother Brady at all.

She did not drop a set throughout the hard-court tournament and ceded only 24 games in all. It was a perfect way to prepare for the US Open, which begins August 31 in New York. — AP

# Bucks, Lakers in focus at playoffs

**Miami, Aug. 17:** An NBA season unlike any other shifts into high gear with the start of the playoffs in the league's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

In a season reshaped by the Coronavirus pandemic, home court advantage is just a memory.

Fans are banned from the campus where the league has so far successfully operated without a positive Covid-19 test. But the price is that players know that the deeper their teams' playoff run the longer they remain isolated from their families and friends.

"This is going to be the toughest championship you could ever win," Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo, the reigning Most Valuable Player, had said.

Antetokounmpo's Bucks arrived at the bubble virtually assured of the top seed in the Eastern Conference and own the best record in the league as they head into a first-round meeting with the Orlando Magic.

The Bucks beat the Magic in all four of their regular season games, but they've produced a lacklustre 3-5 record in the restart.

The Los Angeles Lakers have also gone an unimpressive 3-5 in seeding games. LeBron James, Anthony Davis and company will be up against battle-hardened Portland Trail Blazers, who won four straight down-to-the-wire games—including an extra play-in game against Memphis Grizzlies — to seize the final playoff berth in the West. — AFP