

IN BRIEF

Man strangulates his wife to death

New Delhi: A 25-year-old woman was allegedly strangled to death by her husband in Delhi's Narela area on Sunday morning. The police said that the accused is absconding and a man-hunt has been initiated to nab him. According to a senior police official, on Sunday morning at around 8.25 am a police control room (PCR) call regarding the murder of a woman by her husband was received. Following this, a police team was dispatched to the spot. "On reaching the spot, the police team found the woman's body lying on a bed in her house. Upon enquiry, it was found that her husband, identified as Rehmatullah, strangled her and absconded," said the senior police official. "The accused is a habitual drinker and does painting work in the city. They were married six years ago and have three children. A case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been registered at the Narela police station and further investigation is going on," said the police.

6 undertrials escape from juvenile home

Noida, Aug. 2: Six undertrials lodged at the Covid isolation ward of a juvenile home in Noida escaped from the facility, police said on Sunday. While five of them were later apprehended, one is absconding, they said. The juveniles were brought to the facility recently and had been lodged at the isolation centre in view of the Covid outbreak. They tried to escape on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday, the police said. As a precautionary measure, all new inmates brought to the juvenile home are lodged at the isolation ward, which has been set up within the campus, for some days, according to officials. The juveniles had "folded the iron sheet of a gate" to sneak out of the facility, located in Phase 2 police station area, the officials said.

Man kills 35-yr-old taxi driver, arrested

New Delhi: A man was arrested for allegedly killing a taxi driver and later dumping his body at a canal in Uttar Pradesh before fleeing with his vehicle, the police said on Sunday. The accused, Vikas Tomar, is a resident of Bamdoli village in Baghpat district of Uttar Pradesh, it said. The matter came to light two months ago after family members of a 35-year-old taxi driver, Pradeep Singhal, approached the Vijay Vihar police station alleging that Singhal was missing along with his vehicle since June 12, the police said. DCP (Rohini) P.K. Mishra said call detail record of the missing driver was analysed and later Singhal's body with apparent head injuries was recovered from an area in Gautam Buddh Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh. Tomar was arrested by the police on July 25 and was also taken to the place where he had dumped the body of the taxi driver after killing him, the DCP said.

PFWS organized 'We Care' event

New Delhi: The Police Families Welfare Society (PFWS) organized a virtual musical concert 'We Care' in the Delhi on Sunday. PFWS official said that the virtual music concert was enjoyed by a large spectrum of viewers coming from police organizations of the country including Delhi Police. The concert was displayed on digital media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. Sonal Shah, wife of Union home minister Amit Shah was chief guest on the occasion. The virtual music concert was also attended by Mala Bajjal, wife of Anil Bajjal, Delhi L-G and Aruni Doval, wife of Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor. Ms Shah appreciated varied activities undertaken by PFWS during the Covid pandemic and appreciated the focus on undertaking schemes which promoted self-reliance amongst wives of policemen. "On the occasion, the PFWS song and E-Recipe Book was released by the Chief Guest. The recipe book consists of selected and adjudged best recipes crafted by wives of policemen during the lockdown and winners of Khana Khazana competition," said PFWS official.

Delhi records 961 fresh cases, death toll reaches 4,004 ■ Total tally at 1,37,677

Lowest single-day Covid deaths in city since July 1

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

Delhi registered 15 deaths due to the novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours, the lowest number of fatalities in a single-day since July 1.

The number of coronavirus cases in Delhi rose to 1,37,677, while the death toll mounted to 4,004 on Sunday.

On July 26, there were 21 deaths due to the pathogen, the previous lowest fatality count since July 1.

The corresponding figures on successive days were — July 27 (26), July 28 (28), July 29 (25), July 30 (29) and July 31 (27) and August 1 (26).

On June 23, Delhi had recorded the highest single-day spike of 3,947 cases so far. There were 613 Covid-19 cases on July 27, the lowest in the last two months. It, however, increased to 1,056 the next day and slightly declined to 1,035 on July 29, only to rise to 1,093 and 1,195 on July 30 and 31 respectively. The Delhi government has been asserting that a multi-pronged strategy of aggressive testing, home isolation and other factors had helped keep the cases from surging, as it was happening in June.

However, chief minister

Noida: 105 new Covid cases take tally to 5,431

Noida, Aug. 2: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar recorded 105 new Covid-19 cases on Sunday taking the tally to 5,431, official data showed.

The number of active cases was 886 as 63 more patients were discharged in 24 hours since Saturday, according to the data released by the Uttar Pradesh health department.

The number of active cases in the district showed a steady rise this week. There were 846 cases on Saturday, up from 796 on Friday, 730 on Thursday and 679 on Wednesday, the data showed.

So far, 4,502 patients have recovered from Covid in Gautam Buddh Nagar, the second-highest among the districts in Uttar Pradesh after Lucknow where 4,559 patients have recuperated from the disease.

The district, adjoining Delhi, has so far recorded 43 deaths linked to the coronavirus, with a mortality rate of 0.79 per cent, according to official statistics.

The recovery rate of patients in the district dropped slightly to 82.89 per cent from 83.31 per cent on Saturday, 83.89 per cent on Friday, 84.77 per cent on Thursday and 85.48 per cent on Wednesday.

Gautam Buddh Nagar currently has 517 containment zones across Noida and Greater Noida, with 470 of those in category I (single Covid case) and 47 category II (multiple cases), according to an official statement. — PTI



Vehicles ply at Rajpath during Unlock 3 in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

Arvind Kejriwal has asked people to not be complacent and take adequate precautions.

"Deaths in Delhi come down to 15. Less than 1,000 cases. Let us all keep working hard to ensure that the downward trend continues", Mr Kejriwal tweeted. Delhi's Covid tally rose to over 1.37 lakh on Sunday with 961 new cases, authorities said.

A total of 1,23,317 patients have recovered, migrated or been discharged, while the number of active cases stood at 10,356, of which 5,663 patients are under home isolation.

Fifteen people suc-

cumbed to Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 4,004, the authorities said.

With 961 fresh cases, the infection tally has risen to 1,37,677.

A total of 4,289 RT-PCR and 8,441 rapid antigen tests were conducted in the city in the last 24 hours, the authorities said.

The number of Covid tests conducted in Delhi on Saturday was less because of Id-ul-Zuha.

So far, 10,63,669 tests have been conducted — 55,982 tests for a population of 10 lakh, according to a health bulletin.

Over the last week, the

number of new cases has grown by less than one per cent every day.

The recovery rate of Covid-19 patients has increased to over 89 per cent in Delhi. The positivity rate in the last 24 hours was 7.54 per cent, the authorities said.

Meanwhile, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal reviewed the status of containment zones in Delhi.

The number of containment zones has been scaled down from 715 on July 27 to 496 on July 31.

The move has reduced the number of people contained from 3,48,099 on July 27 to 1,06,211 on July 31.

Govt issues new SOPs for international arrivals

New Delhi, Aug. 2: The Union health ministry on Sunday issued a set of revised guidelines for international arrivals which will come into effect from August 8.

According to the guidelines, all travellers would need to give an undertaking on the online portal www.newdelhiairport.in that they would undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days, that is, seven days paid institutional quarantine at their own cost, followed by seven days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health.

"If they wish to seek such exemption, they shall apply on the online portal at least 72 hours before

boarding. The decision taken by the government as communicated on the portal will be final," it said.

The travellers can also seek exemption from institutional quarantine by submitting a negative RT-PCR test report on arrival. This test should have been conducted within 96 hours prior to undertaking the journey. The test report

should be uploaded on the portal for consideration, the guidelines stated.

"Each passenger shall also submit a declaration with respect to authenticity of the report and will be liable for criminal prosecution, if found otherwise. The test report could also be produced upon arrival at the point of entry at airport in India," it said.

Before boarding the plane or ship, the guidelines said the dos and don'ts shall be provided along with the tickets to travellers by the agencies concerned.

All passengers shall also be advised to download Arogya Setu application on their mobile devices, it

said. The guidelines also said that at the time of boarding the plane or ship, only asymptomatic travellers will be allowed to board after thermal screening. During travel, those who had not filled in self-declaration forms on the portal shall fill the same in duplicate in the flight and ship, and a copy of the same will be given to health and immigration officials present at the airport/seaport/land port, the guidelines said.

"While on board the flight or ship, required precautions such as wearing of masks, environmental hygiene, respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene are to be observed by airline/ship

staff, crew and all passengers," it said.

On arrival, the guidelines said debarking should be done ensuring social distancing.

"Thermal screening would be carried out in respect of all the passengers by the Health officials present at the airport/seaport/land port. The self-declaration form filled online shall be shown or a copy of physical self-declaration form to be submitted to the airport health staff," it said.

The passengers found to be symptomatic during screening shall be immediately isolated and taken to a medical facility as per protocol, it said. — PTI

Delhi now 12th in country in active cases category: Jain

New Delhi, Aug. 2: Delhi now stands at the 12th position among the various states and union territories in the country in terms of active cases of Covid, Health Minister Satyendra Jain said on Saturday. People still need to be very vigilant and practice social distancing and hand hygiene norms, he said.

"Delhi now stands at the 12th position in the country. It was on the second position a month-and-a-half ago. The number of active cases in Delhi now stands at 10,705 (as on Friday)," Mr Jain said.

On July 25, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that Delhi's position had improved to eighth from second in terms of active cases in the country. Mr Jain said the doubling rate of cases in Delhi is around 50 days at present, while "it is probably 32 days on an average nationally".

To a question on the effectiveness of lockdown, he said cases rose even during the lockdown, so people have to be vigilant as the economy slowly opens up.

Asked about Delhi L-G Anil Bajjal's decision to not allow reopening of hotels and weekly bazaars under Unlock 3, Jain said it should be allowed. "Nearby places where more cases are being reported, there it is being allowed. Cases in Delhi are slowly falling, but here it is not being allowed," he rued. — PTI

Vijay Dev tells agencies: Work as team to fix waterlogging

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

Delhi chief secretary Vijay Dev has directed the PWD to coordinate with agencies like NDMC, MCDs, DJB and DSIIDC to address waterlogging in the city and asked them to work as a team failing which responsibility will be fixed, officials said Sunday.

Officials have been asked to monitor waterlogging round-the-clock during rains and videograph or photograph a particular site as "proof" that water has been pumped out.

In view of the ongoing monsoon season, the chief secretary recently held a meeting with agencies and instructed them to ensure no waterlogging in the city, an official said.

"Concerned executive engineer (civil) and executive engineer (electrical) will coordinate with other agencies namely NDMC, three MCDs, DJB, DDA,



Vijay Dev

I&FC, DSIIDC, Railway etc by personally contacting with them and work as team at the local level failing which responsibility will be fixed," the PWD said in an order.

It added that non-performance may attract action against the concerned engineers.

The PWD has also asked the executive engineers looking after the work to pump out water to maintain a log book which should indicate "stagnant problem area", "step taken to pump out stagnant water" and "time taken to pump out water" among others.

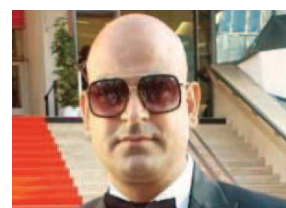
Film producer arrested for duping investors of ₹6 crore

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

The Delhi Police has arrested a film producer from Chandigarh for allegedly duping investors of crores by trapping them into his schemes on the pretext of getting them high returns, officials said on Sunday.

Chanderkant Sharma (41), who co-owns the CineMirchi Production, has produced two movies, *The Great Indian Casino*, released last year, and *Lust Wala Love*, which is yet to be released, the official said. A probe was initiated against Sharma by the economic offence wing of the police as it received at least 88 complaints against him. He was arrested from Chandigarh on Saturday night, police said.

The complainants alleged they were trapped into a collective investment scheme floated by



Chanderkant Sharma

Sharma through his company, Cinemirchi Productions Pvt. Ltd.

The approximate amount of money invested by the complainants is nearly ₹6 crore, police said, adding that the number of complainants in the case could go up and the cheated amount could go up to tens of crores.

Sharma allured them to invest in the entertainment sector and other undefined projects by the company on the pretext of high returns of more than 70 per cent, according to the police.

'Ignoring non-Covid emergency poses health risk'

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

Health experts claimed that ignoring non-Covid health emergencies have posed serious health risk, especially to people who live with non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Health experts said that while these postponements may have reduced the amount of unnecessary services used, they have likely caused a delay in treatment, which they believe will lead to later hospitalisations requiring higher levels of care, longer lengths of stay, and increased hospital readmissions, thereby further straining hospitals' inpatient capacity.

An associate professor at Centre for Dental Education and Research

HEALTH EXPERTS said that while these postponements may have reduced the amount of unnecessary services used, they have likely caused a delay in treatment, which they believe will lead to later hospitalisations requiring higher levels of care

(CDER) in AIIMS, Dr Amrita Chawla, pointed out that people must not ignore other health complications, especially oral health.

"To avoid contracting Covid-19, people also need to be vigilant about their oral health and ensure cleanliness, especially between meals because a dirty mouth might cause the proliferation of harm-

ful bacterium in the mouth.

"This is applicable to the current situation of Covid-19, where bacterial super-infections are common in patients suffering from severe case of Covid-19, with more than 50 per cent of deaths exhibiting bacterial super-infections," said Dr Chawla.

According to Dr Ramesh Sarin, a senior consultant of surgical oncology at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, a study conducted in the last two months to find out how the virus behaves found that only 15-20 per cent Covid positive patients end up needing critical care support and that the mortality rate stands at three per cent.

"Despite this, tertiary

cares have been dedicated to Covid patients while non-Covid patients suffer with the underlying fear of visiting the hospital and delaying treatments or procedures due to unavailability of beds. As health experts, we can state that treatment of patients with critical diseases like CKD and cancer remains dangerously hindered," said Dr Sarin. Experts suggested that while taking acute care of Covid-19 patients, they also proactively manage patients without Covid-19, particularly those with time-sensitive and medically complex conditions who are postponing their care.

This is important not only to sustain health and life, but to preserve future hospital capacity.



A woman gets her palms and arms decorated with 'mehndi' on the eve of Raksha Bandhan festival in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Restrictions to be eased in Arunachal

Itanagar: With the month-long lockdown in the capital complex of Arunachal Pradesh coming to an end at 5 am on August 3, the state has decided to ease restrictions in its non-containment zones, allowing shops, and other business establishments to operate for nine hours, six days a week. Addressing a virtual press meet, chief secretary Naresh Kumar said the cabinet, during a meeting headed by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, approved a new set of guidelines, which will be in force from Monday till the end of August. The government has also decided to relax curbs in the non-containment areas of the Capital Complex — comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas. — PTI

'Locust attack a national disaster'

Jaipur: Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday said he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting him to declare the locust attack a national disaster. "The locust outbreak in the state is very fierce. Barring two or three districts, all 33 locusts have been attacked by locusts. The crops are getting damaged," Mr Gehlot told reporters in Jaisalmer. He said he has requested the Prime Minister to declare the locust outbreak a national disaster. Locusts come to India via Africa and other countries including Pakistan and they are breeding at a large scale here. Mr Gehlot reached Jaisalmer from Jaipur on Sunday. — PTI

'Women-only' Covid hospital in J'khand

Dhanbad: In the wake of the increasing number of coronavirus cases, the Dhanbad district administration has converted the Sri Sri Laxmi Narayan Trust (SSLNT) Hospital into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital for treatment of infected pregnant women and other female patients. This is the first dedicated Covid-19 hospital in Jharkhand for women infected patients, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Umashanker Singh said. "Since SSLNT Hospital is situated in the middle of the city, it is accessible for pregnant women testing positive and other female patients. So it has been acquired with immediate effect," he said. — PTI

BJP leader killed in C'garh village

Korba: A local BJP leader and former sarpanch was allegedly killed by his neighbour following an argument in Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh, police said on Sunday. The accused, identified as Shivcharan Lahre (30), was arrested after he surrendered before the police after committing the crime on Saturday night, a local official said. Janjgir-Champa, a neighbouring district of Korba, is located around 250 kms away from capital Raipur. "As per the preliminary information, victim Gopichand Karsh (52) went to the Lahre's house in Virra village on Saturday night after he came to know that he was creating nuisance in an inebriated state and using foul language," he said. Karsh tried to pacify the accused, but soon an argument broke out between them. In a fit of rage, Karsh slapped Lahre in front of his family members, the police official said. — PTI

Man killed, 7 hurt in clash over a cow

Shahjahanpur: A 40-year-old man died while seven other persons, including an elderly woman, were seriously injured in a clash involving firing and stone-pelting between two groups of a village in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur district on Sunday, the police said. The clashes broke out on Sunday in Chanaura village under Nigohi police station following simmering tension between two groups of villagers over a cow of Rajpal venturing into the fields of his neighbour Balbir on Saturday. Following the tension between the two sides over the incident, the police had reached the village on Saturday and had brokered peace between them. — PTI

Govt schools will provide free breakfast to students

New Delhi, Aug. 2: The mid-day meals provided to students in government or aided schools should be supplemented by breakfast, the new National Education Policy (NEP) has proposed.

The policy which was approved by the Union Cabinet earlier this week has noted that morning hours after a nutritious breakfast can be particularly productive for the study of cognitively more demanding subjects and hence recommended expansion of the mid-day meal scheme to include provisions for breakfast in schools. "Children are

unable to learn optimally when they are undernourished or unwell. Hence, the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children will be addressed, through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors, and community involvement into the schooling system," the policy said.

"Furthermore, research shows that the morning hours after a nutritious breakfast can be particularly productive for the study of cognitively more demanding subjects and hence these hours may be

leveraged by providing a simple but energizing breakfast in addition to mid-day meals," it added.

In locations where hot meals are not possible, a simple but nutritious meal—groundnuts or chana mixed with jaggery and local fruits may be provided. "All school children shall undergo regular health check-ups especially for 100 pc immunization in schools and health cards will be issued to monitor the same," the policy said.

The revised policy has proposed that prior to the age of 5 every child will move to a "preparatory

NEP 2020

class" or "balavatika".

"The learning in the preparatory class shall be based primarily on play-based learning with a focus on developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities and early literacy and numeracy. The mid-day meal programme shall also be extended to the preparatory classes in primary schools.

"Health check-ups and growth monitoring that are available in the anganwadi system shall also be made available to prepara-

tory Class students of anganwadi as well as of primary schools," the policy document said.

The National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools, popularly known as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), is an on-going centrally-sponsored scheme which covers all school children studying in Classes 1 to 8 of government, government-aided schools, special training centres including 'Madarsas' supported under 'Samagra Shiksha'. "As per the provisions of National Food Security Act, 2013, children studying in classes 1

to 8 or within the age group of 6-14 years are entitled to one mid day meal free of charge, every day except on school holidays, in all schools run by local bodies, government and government aided schools so as to meet nutritional standards specified in the Act," a senior HRD Ministry official said. "However, some States and Union Territories provide additional items such as milk, egg and fruits to students from their own resources," the official added. At least 11.59 crore elementary school students are beneficiaries

under the mid-day meal scheme of the HRD Ministry, while nearly 26 lakh cook-cum helpers are employed for the same. The ministry also advised states during lockdown to provide mid-day meals or food security allowance to students till schools are closed due to the novel coronavirus outbreak. The NEP replaces the 34-year-old National Policy on Education framed in 1986 and is aimed at paving the way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems to make India a global knowledge superpower. — PTI

Surjewala bid to unite old guard, youth brigade

'Those commenting on Twitter should stand unitedly behind Cong leadership'

New Delhi, Aug. 2: After sparring on Twitter over the party's legacy during the UPA regime, the Congress on Sunday advised those commenting on the microblogging website to unitedly stand behind its leadership in fighting the BJP government's "weak response" to the Covid-19 pandemic and its "oppressive" policies.

Congress's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala urged both the young and the old guard in the party to stop commenting in public about each other and focus on unitedly fighting against the crisis that has gripped the country.

"I would like to suggest to all those colleagues who are making comments on Twitter to raise issues at the party platform under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, as there is democracy in the Congress and leaders are not forcibly retired," he said when asked about the public comments made by some party leaders. Mr Surjewala, however, did not reply to a question on whether the party had taken cognizance of such comments made on Twitter.

He said the country is passing through a difficult time with around 18 lakh people infected with the coronavirus.

"The Prime Minister

and health minister have left the people to fend for themselves. People are losing their livelihoods, there is an economic crisis and factories are being shut. Indian territory is being captured by China and those claiming to show red eyes to the neighbouring country are scared to even name China," the Congress leader said.

He said in such a situation, the country is looking towards the Congress, its leadership and workers.

"In such times, the responsibility of senior Congress leaders is more, as they have the experience of being both in the party and the government. It is their biggest responsibility to stand by the Congress leadership and work together with Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Manmohan Singh to fight the pandemic, the economic crisis and China, and show the mirror of truth to the government," Mr Surjewala said.

He added that it is a key responsibility of senior Congress leaders to guide their young colleagues.

"I would urge all old, middle-aged and young Congress leaders to unitedly stand against the oppressive policies of the Modi government in such trying times," Mr Surjewala added. — PTI

CISF to take over security of Leh airport from this week

New Delhi, Aug. 2: The CISF is scheduled to take over on August 4 the security of the Leh airport, the country's highest-altitude commercial aerodrome in the newly created Union Territory of Ladakh, officials said.

A contingent of about 100 CISF personnel will provide round-the-clock, armed security at the strategically important airport, located at 3,256 metres above sea level, they said.

The Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport, operated by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), will be the 64th civil airport to be brought under the cover of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). It is guarded by the local police at present.

Ladakh became a UT on October 31 last year after the central government revoked the special status given to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated it into UTs. The CISF, the 1.62 lakh personnel strong paramilitary designated as the national civil aviation security force, will take over the Leh airport security after a formal induction ceremony scheduled for August 4, officials said. CISF DG Rajesh Ranjan and senior officials will be present during the event. Air India, Vistara, GoAir and SpiceJet operate commercial passenger flights between Leh and Delhi. — PTI



Police personnel sanitise a locality near Hanuman Garhi in Ayodhya on Sunday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the "Bhoomi Pujan" ceremony of Ram Temple in Ayodhya on August 5. — PTI

Rafales to give India edge in air war over Tibet: Dhanoa

MANASH PRATIM BHUYAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

The Rafale aircraft will give India a strategic advantage in case of any aerial combat with China in the mountainous Tibet region as the fleet will be able to use the terrain to its advantage, destroy enemy air defence and incapacitate the surface-to-air missiles, former Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa (Retd) said on Sunday. Dhanoa, known as the architect of the Balakot strikes, said the Rafale jets along with S-400 missile systems will give the Indian Air Force a major combat edge in the entire region and that



B.S. Dhanoa

India's adversaries will think twice before starting a war with it.

In case of Pakistan, he said the purpose of the S-400 and Rafale is to hit Pakistani aircraft inside Pakistani air space and not when they come inside Indian territory, adding the neighbouring country would not have responded on February 27 last year to the Balakot air strikes if India had the

French-manufactured jets then.

In an interview to PTI, Dhanoa said the Rafale, with its fantastic electronic warfare suite and maneuverability, will be able to use mountainous terrain in Tibet to its advantage and blind the enemy before India's strike aircraft penetrate hostile airspace to carry out their missions.

The former Chief of Air Staff also said that the Rafales being supplied to the IAF are much more advanced than the ones being used by the French Air Force as India had asked for something "more" due to requirement to operate in unique conditions like operations from Leh. — PTI

Can Rafales help fight joblessness: Raut to PM

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, AUG. 2

Senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut has warned that people may seek Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's resignation for the failure in tackling the coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis in the country.

"Corona has created a huge question mark in every household in the country over its survival. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a friend of PM Modi. Enraged by the financial problems and corona failure, the Israeli people have started protesting on roads and demanding Netanyahu's resignation. India too could witness the same," said Mr Raut in his weekly column titled *Rokthok* (forthright) in the Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* on Sunday.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, 10 crore people have lost their livelihood and the crisis has affected 40 crore families. The trade and industry have suffered losses to the tune of about ₹4 lakh crore, Mr Raut added.

The Sena leader took a dig at the Centre asking whether Rafale jets equipped with bombs and missile carrying capacity would be able to destroy the problems of unemployment and economic challenges.

— PTI

NSCN-IM slams gov over remark

Kohima, Aug. 2: The NSCN(IM) on Sunday claimed that Nagaland governor R.N. Ravi's use of words such as "armed gangs" to identify Naga political groups and direction to state government staffers to self-declare if they have relatives with links to any such organisation has created a "huge trust deficit" on the Centre.

On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Framework Agreement between the Central government and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muiwah), the organisation alleged that the

"Ravi went beyond the call of the interlocutor to indulge himself in playing divisive games among the Nagas to dismantle the very foundation of Framework Agreement," the NSCN-IM said.

pact has been "put in cold storage".

Mr Ravi was also the Centre's interlocutor for the Naga peace talks and he had signed the Framework Agreement on August 3, 2015, in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Efforts to get the governors response on the assertions of the

NSCN(IM) proved futile.

Ravi "went beyond the call of the interlocutor to indulge himself in playing divisive games among the Nagas to dismantle the very foundation of Framework Agreement. This has, therefore, created a huge trust deficit on the Gof (Government of India)," the NSCN(IM) said in a statement.

In an indictment of the Neiphiu Rio government, the governor in a letter on June 16 said that "armed gangs" were brazenly running their own governments in the state challenging the legitimacy of its elected authority and creating a "crisis of confidence" in the system.

Ravi, a retired IPS officer who was a special director in the Intelligence Bureau, had warned that he would promulgate Article 371A(1)(b) of the Constitution, which gives the Nagaland governor special responsibility with respect to law and order, if things did not improve.

Following his instruction, the Nagaland government has directed all its employees to self-declare by August 7 whether they have family members or relatives with links to any Naga underground organisation. — PTI

ED set to question Rhea's brother Shovik next week

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), probing money laundering case in connection with the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, is preparing to question Rhea Chakraborty's brother Shovik Chakraborty.

According to sources Shovik will be examined next week. "The central probe agency wants clarifications from him regarding certain transactions related to the bank account of the company owned by him, his sister and Sushant", sources said. The ED recently registered a money laundering case in connection



Sushant Singh Rajput

with the death of Sushant Singh Rajput. The ED took cognizance of a Bihar Police FIR registered against Rhea Chakraborty and some others to slap criminal charges under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Rajput's father Krishna Kumar Singh (74) had lodged a police complaint

against Chakraborty, her family members and six others on charges of alleged abetment to suicide of his son. Singh accused Chakraborty of having befriended his son in May 2019 with the intention of furthering her own career. The ED is probing allegations of alleged mishandling of Rajput's money (around Rs. 15 crore) and his bank accounts. The agency will probe if anyone used Rajput's income for money laundering and creating illegal assets, sources said.

"Investigations have revealed that late actor was a director in two companies along with Rhea Chakraborty and her brother," sources said.



Police is deployed at Thazhanguda fishing village after clashes broke out between two groups around midnight in Cuddalore on Sunday. Reportedly, many boats, huts, cars and two-wheelers were set ablaze during the violent clash. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Unable to clear loan, farmer kills himself

Bhadrak: A farmer in Odisha's Bhadrak district ended his life by hanging himself from the ceiling fan of his room over loan burden late on Saturday night. The deceased was identified as Mahendra Das of Rajualibindha village under Bhadrak Rural police limits. According to reports, Mahendra had taken a loan of ₹50,000 from four money lenders in the locality. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, his source of income was severely affected and he became unable to repay the loan. Mahendra family members alleged that he was under stress as the private money lenders were putting pressure on him for the early repayment, due to which he took the extreme step. "He was under immense mental pressure," the family members said.

Teacher in a spot over WhatsApp post

Bhubaneswar: A high school headmaster in Odisha's Cuttack city has landed in trouble after the state education minister Samir Ranjan Dash on Sunday ordered a probe into his alleged sharing of "objectionable content" on a WhatsApp group created for students for online study. The WhatsApp group was created to provide online teaching to Class V students as a part of government's digital learning push amid Covid-19 pandemic. According to sources, the school headmaster allegedly posted the link of objectionable content on the group during an online class. The act of the school headmaster has evoked sharp reactions from the guardians as well as students.

Six aides of liquor contractor held

Indore: Six associates of a liquor contractor were arrested in MP on Sunday for allegedly thrashing a 20-year-old man, after video of the incident went viral on social media, the police said. Professional rivalry seems to be the prima facie reason behind the attack, said Rajendra Nagar police station incharge Sunil Sharma. "All the six accused work for a liquor contractor who runs outlets at different places in Indore. They attacked the victim on suspicion that he was damaging the contractor's business by selling illicit liquor in the area," he said. — PTI

Amit Shah +ve; 55,696 cases in 24 hrs, 868 die

■ Continued from Page 1 Ma, Babuji, prayers and duas of near and dear and friends, fans EF... and the excellent care and nursing at Nanavati made it possible for me to see this day." The authorities have started contact tracing of Mr Shah, who also came into contact with all his Cabinet colleagues in recent meetings. Setting aside political differences, Mr Shah and Delhi's AAP government had held a series of meetings and discussions to bring the Covid-19 situation in Delhi under control. He was also on the list of invitees of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir bhoomi puja, that is due to take place on August 5. It is reliably learnt that the home minister will now not attend the event.

India pushes China

■ Continued from Page 1 forces at Pangong Tso, including the building of permanent bunkers, installation of artillery guns and stationing of boats. These indicate that the Chinese are preparing themselves for a long haul in the area. In May 2020, Chinese troops in an aggressive move occupied the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 and prevented Indian troops from patrolling there. In the Hot Springs general area, Chinese troops have reportedly not moved back to that extent in the first phase, as was agreed in the June 6 agreement, and still has some presence. The Galwan Valley is the only friction point where the Chinese completely disengaged as per the agreement. The Indian Army is preparing for the standoff with China to continue for a long period.

Big B tests Covid -ve, discharged: Abhishek

B'wood stars son still +ve due to 'comorbidities'

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 2

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan has been discharged from Nanavati hospital after testing negative for Covid-19, announced his son and actor Abhishek Bachchan on Sunday. However, Abhishek is still Covid-19 positive owing to some 'comorbidities'.

The 77-year-old actor expressed his gratitude to well-wishers for their continued support and prayers. "I have tested Covid -ve, have been discharged. I am back home in solitary quarantine. Grace of the Almighty, blessings of Ma Babuji, prayers, duas of near and dear and friends fans EF and the excellent care and nursing at Nanavati made it possible for me to see this," Amitabh wrote on Twitter.

Minutes before Amitabh Bachchan shared his health update, Abhishek announced the news about his father's negative reports on Twitter and in a separate tweet, shared

BJP and Opp. leaders wish Amit Shah a speedy recovery

New Delhi, Aug. 2: Top political leaders, including BJP president J.P. Nadda, Rahul Gandhi of the Congress, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, wished home minister Amit Shah a speedy recovery after he tested positive for coronavirus and was hospitalised on Sunday.

Shah's tweet about him testing positive for the infection prompted politicians across the political divide to offer their prayers and wishes for his quick recovery.

"Received the news of Home Minister Amit Shah being infected with coronavirus. I pray to God for his quick recovery," Nadda tweeted. Gandhi said, "Wishing Mr Amit Shah a speedy recovery."

Trinamul Congress chairperson Banerjee also wished the senior BJP leader a speedy recovery and said her prayers are with him and his family.

Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram said it is distressing that Shah has tested positive for Covid-19 and wished him a speedy recovery and good health. — PTI

Raids at 6 places in state NIA arrests 6 more people in Kerala gold smuggling case

New Delhi, Aug. 2: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested six more people and conducted searches at six places in connection with the Kerala gold smuggling case, an official said on Sunday.

The agency has so far arrested 10 people in the case of smuggling of gold through diplomatic baggage addressed to the UAE consulate in Thiruvananthapuram.

On July 30, two accused — Jalal A.M. of Ernakulam and Said Alavi E. of Malappuram — were arrested for conspiring with the arrested accused Ramees K.T., an NIA spokesperson said.

On July 31, two more accused, Mohammed Shafi P. and Abdu P.T., both residents of Malappuram, were arrested in the case, he said.

On August 1, the NIA arrested two more persons — Ernakulam-residents Muhammad Ali Ibrahim and Muhammad Ali — after investigation revealed that they were part of the conspiracy, besides aiding and assist-

Kamal Rani, the only woman Cabinet mantri in UP, no more

Lucknow, Aug. 2: Uttar Pradesh minister Kamal Rani Varun, the only woman cabinet minister in the state, died of Covid-19 at a hospital here on Sunday. She was 62.

The technical education minister, who tested positive for Covid-19 on July 18 and is the first minister in the state to succumb to the disease, breathed her last at the Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPIMS).

She had comorbidities, including diabetes, hyper-

tension and hyperthyroidism, a senior doctor at the hospital said. Kamal Rani, who is survived by her daughter, was cremated at the Bhairo Ghat crematorium in accordance with Covid-19 protocols.

"A guard of honour was given as soon as her body reached Bhairo Ghat crematorium," District Magistrate Dr Brahmdeo Ram Tiwari said.

Kamal Rani was the MLA from Ghatampur in Kanpur and had been elected to the Lok Sabha twice. — PTI

that he has again tested positive for the virus and he will remain in the hospital till he gets recovered.

"I, unfortunately, due to some comorbidities remain Covid-19 positive and remain in hospital. Again, thank you all for your continued wishes and prayers for my family.

Very humbled and indebted. I'll beat this and come back healthier! Promise," wrote Abhishek.

The veteran Bollywood actor and his son Abhishek announced on July 11 that they had tested positive for the virus and were admitted to Nanavati Hospital.

Govt to states, UTs: Allow hospitalised to use cellphones

Move to facilitate Covid patients to interact with family & friends

New Delhi, Aug. 2: The Centre has written to all states and Union Territories stating that smartphones and tablet devices should be allowed for hospitalised Covid-19 patients so that they can interact with family and friends through video conferencing, which would provide them psychological support.

Though mobile phones are allowed in hospital wards, the missive was issued following some representation from the kin of patients alleging otherwise.

Director General of Health Services (DGHS) in the health ministry Dr Rajiv Garg in the letter to the principal secretaries of health and medical education of states and Union territories said appropriate protocols for disinfecting devices and allotting timeslots can be developed by the hospital concerned to facilitate contact between patients and their family.

He underlined that administrative and medical teams should be

► **THOUGH MOBILE** phones are allowed in hospital wards, the missive was issued following some representation from the kin of patients alleging otherwise

responsive to the psychological needs of patients admitted in Covid wards and ICUs of various hospitals.

"Social connection can calm down patients and also reinforce the psychological support given by the treating team. Please instruct all concerned that they should allow smartphones and tablet devices in patient area so that the patient can video conference with their family and friends," stated the letter issued on July 29.

"Though mobile phones are allowed in the wards to enable a patient stay in touch with his or her family, we received representations from the patient families from some states stating mobile phones are not being allowed by hospital administrations," said Dr Garg. — PTI



AAP's Punjab unit president and MP Bhagwant Mann consoles a relative whose family member died in a hooch tragedy as he speaks to the media outside Civil Hospital in Tarn Taran district on Sunday. — PTI

Punjab hooch tragedy toll now 98

Chandigarh, Aug. 2: The death toll in the Punjab hooch tragedy rose to 98 on Sunday with 12 more people reported dead in Tarn Taran district after drinking spurious liquor.

In Tarn Taran, the death toll is now 75, deputy commissioner Kulwant Singh said over the phone.

He, however, said the administration put the figure at 75 on the basis of the information received from the field as the victims' last rites have already been performed by their families in the past a couple of days.

Some of them even didn't come forward for autopsy, he said.

Apart from Tarn Taran,

Survivors troubled by low vision

Chandigarh, Aug. 2: I have not been able to see properly ever since I drank spurious liquor, says Tilak Raj, one of the survivors of the Punjab hooch tragedy that has killed 98 till Sunday.

Tilak Raj, a contractual employee of the Batala Municipal Corporation, says he felt uneasy after drinking spurious

liquor, which he had bought for Rs 60 from Triveni Chauhan and Darshana Rani, alias Faujan, outside the Hathi Gate locality in Batala.

Both accused have already been arrested by the police.

After I drank it, I was not able to see properly and felt uneasiness, says Tilak Raj. — PTI

12 deaths have been reported from Amritsar and 11 from Gurdaspur's Batala, in a tragedy unfolding since Wednesday

evening. Officials said some of the families were not even coming forward to report the death of their kin after drinking

'Ecuador, Brazil, Peru eye cheaper drugs from India'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

Looking ahead in a post-coronavirus pandemic scenario, South/Latin American nations such as Ecuador, Brazil, Peru and Costa Rica are looking for cheaper generic pharmaceutical drugs from India which is one of the largest global producers of medicines, Ecuador's ambassador Hector Cueva Jacome has said. Incidentally, the South American continent has also been badly hit by the pandemic, with south American nation Brazil currently ranking second in both the overall number of coronavirus cases as well the death toll globally due to the pandemic, after the United States.

Speaking last week at a virtual meeting organised by trade body FICCI, the Ecuador envoy Mr Jacome said, "What is sought after is the democratisation of

► **THE ECUADOREAN** envoy pointed out that generic drugs 'can cost up to 10 times more' in South/Latin America than in India and therefore called for negotiating government agreements that allow them direct access to the Indian generic market

medicines in Latin America where many people do not have access to medicines due to their high cost." Mr. Jacome said that his own country Ecuador would be economically battered by the pandemic and would need to "improve the purchasing processes" of medicines from India through government agreements.

The Ecuadorean envoy pointed out that generic drugs "can cost up to 10 times more" in South/Latin America than in India and therefore called for negotiating

government agreements that allow them direct access to the Indian generic market. He added that Ecuador and other countries in the continent are therefore looking to emulate Costa Rica which is expecting to soon ink a government-to-government agreement to buy generic medicines without going through intermediaries that is estimated to save up to half of Costa Rica's total medical costs that it has usually incurred for this.

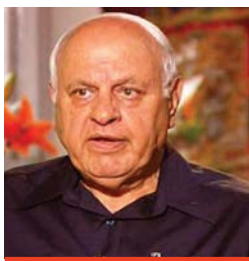
It may be recalled that amid the coronavirus pandemic, India's message to the rest of the world in the past few months has been that "India will be a reliable partner on medicines". From Latin and South America to the US, across Africa, Europe, the Gulf region, Southeast Asia, Australia and East Asia, it is a message that has resonated with India's friends in their hour of need.

Farooq seeks probe into Pandits' exodus

Jammu, Aug. 2: Former J&K chief minister Farooq Abdullah on Sunday demanded a probe by retired Supreme Court judges into the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley in early 1990s.

Replying to questions during a webinar, Mr Abdullah said he was of the firm belief that Kashmir is incomplete without Kashmiri Pandits and that he would support any mechanism to bring them back honourably.

Nearly 60,000 Kashmiri Pandit families are regis-



► **FAROOQ ABDULLAH**, a member of Lok Sabha and chief of the NC, chose to blame the then former governor Jagmohan for the exodus and said that he "took them away" on the false promise of ensuring their return within 3 months

tered as migrants after the onset of militancy in the Kashmir Valley in early 1990s.

Mr Abdullah, a member of Lok Sabha and president of the National

Conference, chose to blame the then former governor Jagmohan for the exodus and said that he "took them away" on the false promise of ensuring their return within three

months. During the webinar hosted by Jammu-based Epilogue News Network on the theme, "Discerning old order delineating new order a year after neutralization of Article 370 and abrogation of Article 35 A", Mr Abdullah was asked whether he would support a genocide bill being floated by the Panun Kashmir, a Kashmiri Pandit organisation demanding a separate homeland for the migrants.

He said he would have to go into the details of the bill first. — PTI

spurious liquor. A senior police official said they have been persuading them to report the death of their family members.

Meanwhile, the Opposition AAP held protests at several places, including Patiala, Barnala, Pathankot and Moga, against the Punjab government.

The protesters accused the government of negligence, leading to death of people, mostly belonging to poor families.

Aam Aadmi Party MP Bhagwant Mann also went to Tarn Taran and met families of the deceased.

Mr Mann sought a probe by a sitting judge into the matter. — PTI

French envoy says student visa services to begin soon

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, AUG. 2

French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain has assured Indian students planning to go to France for higher education in the near future that the French government will make sure that foreign students are able to study in France despite the Covid pandemic, adding that visa services for students would begin soon.

Speaking recently at a Virtual seminar organised by the French embassy in India on the global profile of the French language, the French envoy said, "Next year not be a blank year as we will make sure that students go to France to study even if it means a few weeks of online learning in the beginning." Mr. Lenain added, "I am confident that onsite teaching will resume soon, given the improvement in the sanitary situation of France. For now, I advise you (students) to apply and prepare everything so that once the visa services begin, and this will be soon, your visa requests can be expedited."

France has been India's close strategic partner in Europe, a fact that was once again highlighted last week when the first batch of five state-of-the-art Rafale fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF) touched down on Indian soil.

'Baghjan blowout harmed Gangetic dolphins'

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, AUG. 2

Amidst report of another fire breaking out at Baghjan on Sunday just 200 meters ahead of the oil well blowout site, a report of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), finding that the Baghjan well blowout has harmed the endangered Gangetic dolphins and the impact of the uncontrolled oil and gas emissions will have long-term impact due to contamination of groundwater, has become a major area for environ-

ment activists in Assam.

It is significant that there has been a report that another fire broke out from the condensate oil kept in the field at Baghjan oil field in eastern Assam's Tinsukia. However, Oil India Limited (OIL) has not yet confirmed the reason of the fire, it has created panic among the locals at Baghjan. Earlier an explosion occurred at the site in which three foreign experts were injured.

Meanwhile, the study of the WII on cumulative impact of the gas wells

► **REPORT OF** another fire breaking out at Baghjan on Sunday just 200 meters ahead of the oil well blowout site

has revealed that oil wells in and around the national park will be detrimental to the region's unique ecosystem and that it is also extremely vulnerable to earthquakes.

Calling for an assessment of the cumulative impact of the gas wells, the CII in its report to the Centre said that a dolphin was found dead from poi-

soning from the oil spill. The location of the blowout near Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, the Maguri-Motapung wetlands, are home to endangered hoolock gibbons and Gangetic dolphins. The Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change has sent the WII's findings to the Assam government to begin restoration work.

"Given the potential of oil blowout and oil spill disaster like this... such oil wells in the vicinity of Dibru-Saikhowa National

Park and important bird area complex... will be detrimental to the conservation value of this unique ecosystem," the report said.

The report said that richness in bird species was found to increase with an increase in distance from the site, possibly due to the oil spill and intense noise from the blowout. The decline in bird species was highest in grasslands (59 per cent) and wetlands (85 per cent) compared to areas located away from the site, it added.

THE ASIAN AGE

3 AUGUST 2020

Return to democracy only way to go for Congress

The reference in the meeting of the Rajya Sabha members of the Congress about the performance of the two editions of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the Centre seems to have further exposed the fault line within the party. While a section is blaming the governments for the party's fate, another is staunchly defending it. It is, however, a welcome development that leaders of the India's grand old party have thought it fit to ruminate on what went wrong in the past. What defies logic is that the new critics bring to the discussion table not what is happening now or what has happened in the immediate past; they focus on the distant past. They hardly realise that India went to the polling booths twice to elect a Lok Sabha in the period; India under the National Democratic Alliance government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has covered a lot of distance during the period.

The Congress is faced with one too many hard facts. The party has not been with a president for almost a year, the period in which momentous decisions were taken by the ruling dispensation which changed the course of this nation. The Congress watched in silence when a government with no majority in the Rajya Sabha hollered out Article 370 and passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill; these two moves severely undermined the idea of an inclusive India that the Congress has always stood for. Its voice has not been emphatic even as the nation has been teetering on the brink of an economic ruin and when the government's response to the pandemic Covid-19 has been disastrous. The way the party ran its campaign for the Assembly elections in

The party has not been able to conduct organisational elections doing justice to the idea for long; the last one occurred when P.V. Narasimha Rao was elected president at the Tirupati session of the All-India Congress Committee way back in 1992

Maharashtra and Haryana, as well as the developments in Madhya Pradesh where it lost its government, could force people to think that Congressmen have lost the appetite for power; the casual way it approaches threats to its government in Rajasthan could reinforce such a feeling.

If the Congress wants to assert its position in national politics, then it must do its job as the principal Opposition party and expose the chinks in the government's armour. Internal bickering and blame game will not strengthen the party to do the job but initiating the process of democracy will. The party has not been able to conduct organisational elections doing justice to the idea for long; the last one occurred when P.V. Narasimha Rao was elected president at the Tirupati session of the All-India Congress Committee way back in 1992. A return to the democratic process within the party could throw up leaders with grassroots support who can organise people's resistance to the government's attempts to smother the voices of dissent, undermine institutions of democracy and divert attention from real life issues by playing up religious and emotional topics. The Congress must also address the real issues it is facing; it cannot defeat the BJP in the diversionary tactics. The new rebels and their supporters will do well to realise that.

A snub to Advani, Joshi

The Ram Mandir whose *bhoomi puja* on Wednesday will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, among others, can trace its roots directly back to the September 1990 Toyota yatra of then BJP chief Lal Krishna Advani, which set off a chain of events that led to one of the most infamous episodes of recent Indian history — the Babri Masjid's demolition in December 1992, in blatant disregard of the Supreme Court's orders, for which Mr Advani and several others are still facing trial as accused in the Babri demolition case, and on which he recorded his final deposition only last week. Given that, it's remarkable, to say the least, that the Supreme Court-formed trust to oversee the temple's construction did not see it fit to include Mr Advani's name as one of the 50 VIPs invited to attend the groundbreaking ceremony on August 5 (which is, incidentally, the first anniversary of the government's abrogation of Article 370 and Kashmir's carving up into two Union territories). Also left out was BJP stalwart Murli Manohar Joshi, a fellow Babri accused, though two other leaders — former UP CM Kalyan Singh (under whose watch the mosque was demolished) and former Union minister Uma Bharti — did receive invitations. While, after this snub was widely reported, it is learnt Mr Advani and Mr Joshi were telephonically invited by the trust to join the ceremony via video conferencing, it's not quite the same thing.

One must not forget the political payback the BJP got after Mr Advani's rathiyatra — from 85 Lok Sabha seats in 1989 it got 120 seats in 1991, and over three years after the mosque was razed, this rose to 161 in the 1996 election. The party got 181-182 seats in the 1998/1999 elections, putting the BJP-led NDA in power for the next six years, with Mr Advani as Atal Behari Vajpayee's trusted deputy. But in 2013, with UPA-2 on its last legs, the veteran leader opposed Narendra Modi's rise to the top. Seven years later, the *margdarshak* is still being put in his place.

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Gunjan Sinha



Nepotism basis of casteism: Our ancients knew its pitfalls

Best articulated in the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*, it was not for nothing that our ancients based the varna system on *gunas*. It was to encourage us to choose a line of work centred on our own unique inclination and temperament. It was a warning against the dangers of dynasty and the nepotism it breeds. It was to create a society where worth was held in higher esteem than birth. That, despite this teaching from our most revered, our society deteriorated into *jaati*, branded "caste" by our colonial masters, tells us how much we must guard against the dangers of descending into anything like it again. Which means that if we value merit, we must seriously consider what our ancients warned us against. The current debate on nepotism is therefore welcome.

The makings of caste can be found in any group of people who inherit exclusive privileges or are perceived as distinct. Next only to our political parties, this is all too apparent in the film industry. Both nurture the institutionalisation of dynasty and the nepotism that surrounds it. While Rahul Gandhi represents privilege without calibre in politics, there are any number of representatives from

the other side, especially in the film industry. Understandably so, given its popularity quotient. So we find the highest level of calibre struggling to find its rightful place in an industry that is all too insecure in the face of it. Why? Because it is fraught with second, third, even fourth generation dynasts who prefer to favour their own.

To be fair to the film industry, it is not as if generation after generation of dynasts from the same family are bestowed with the highest chair. One could perhaps say this is because there is a high table instead. But then deserving outsiders have managed to get breaks despite the oligarchy of dynasts that sit at this table. Not to mention that if dynasts with talent have found a place all too easily in the industry, dynasts without talent have been eased out. Yes, the easing out has come only after they were given far more breaks than they deserved but should this bother us? Isn't it perfectly natural to want to pass on what ever is in one's domain to one's children? Furthermore, it would be tough to find an area where nepotism doesn't exist. From big business to seminars, it's a tendency we display despite knowing it lowers standards.

The widespread display of the ten-

dency however is no reason to give nepotism a clean chit. There is talent to consider and, unlike wealth, there's no guarantee that it be passed on to one's children. Take politics for instance. Despite the declining fortunes of the Congress under his leadership, some nine relaunches and the availability of superior talent, the party still awaits the dynast's nod to lead the party again. Until then the Italian mother keeps the chair warm for her son. The only hope for young emerging leaders is to stay a sycophant indefinitely or to leave and start anew. As for the film industry, however great the talent, the struggle is always painful for the outsider. Talent often gets shafted in awful ways thanks to an ecosystem that values pedigree over it. PR agencies, media, award functions all march to the tune of the big guns. Production houses take advantage with unfair contracts. They offer nothing but peanuts as compensation, often even tying aspirants down like bonded labour to prevent them from taking up other prestigious offers. It is this that destroys any semblance of a level playing field over and above the advantage dynasts invariably have.

The question that must be answered finally is why pick only on political

parties and the film industry if nepotism exists everywhere. Well, because given their high visibility, the influence they wield is disproportionate. In fact, we should add cricket to this list of high-power influencers as well. For those who have doubts, the number of dynastic parties, shorn of any merit that abound, offers conclusive proof. It is this humongous influence that they exert that makes it so important for all such spaces to raise the bar. Any lowering of standards to accommodate one's own eventually destroys them as well as others by creating an ecosystem that generates sub-standard output. We all know what happened to our cricket team when players from one region were given preference over others. We all know what is happening to the most dynast-ridden party of them all. Once the grand old party of the country, today, it is not even a pale shadow of itself. We all also know how easily Bollywood dishes out what Hollywood already has. Sometimes even what Pakistan has!

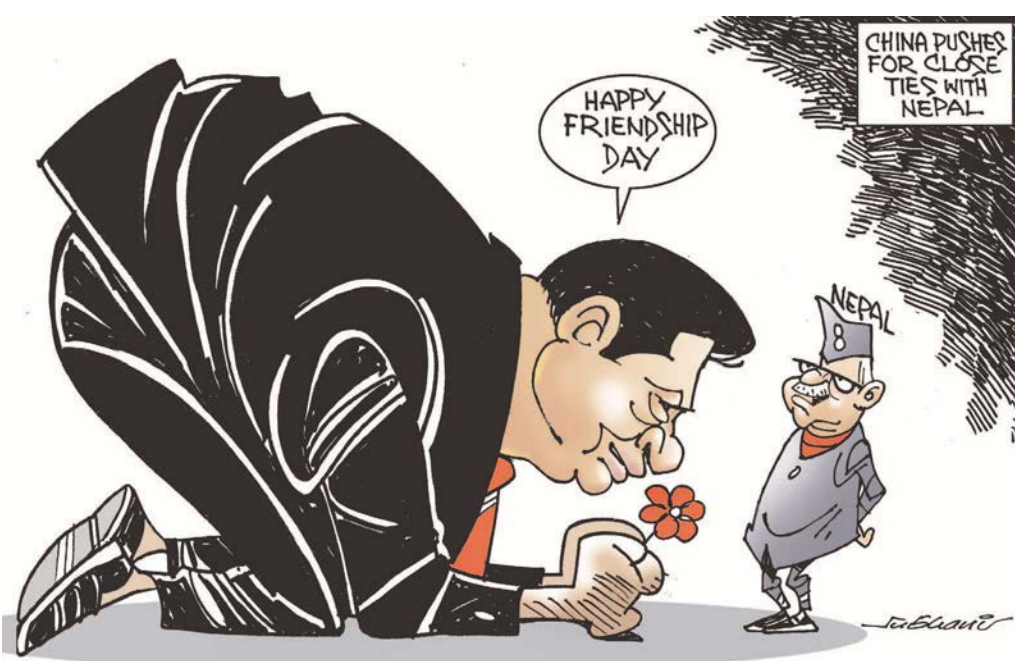
In the time when we had the varna system, it is said that based on their *gunas*, the teachers would guide the student's choice of varna: Brahmin or scholar, Vaishya or wealth creator, Kshatriya or warrior, Shudra or

worker. This suggests the prevalence of an ecosystem that favoured merit. In a country where dynasty has gone so far that even a dynast, such as the late actor Rishi Kapoor, was forced to question why everything was named after the Gandhis, we definitely can't afford to be complacent any more. We need to recognise the pitfalls of dynasty and nepotism and create a milieu for our times that will throw up talent and allow it to flourish. The difference this makes shows in the level of cricket our team plays today. Now imagine the difference if the film industry and political parties, and, by and by, the country were to create such a milieu. There would be innovation and originality instead of sorry imitation. We would lead instead of trail and follow. Become healthy role models for future generations. Serve to make a nation we would all be proud of.

As said earlier, it was not for nothing that our ancients based the varna system on *gunas*. Let us learn from their wisdom. Let us not make the same mistake twice.

Gunjan Sinha is a Bengaluru-based advertising veteran and a consultant in the strategy and positioning for consumer and industrial brands

Subhani



Year after J&K ambush, many thorny questions



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

High on the hubris of a second electoral victory, the NDA/BJP government carried out a legislative coup d'état on the state of Jammu & Kashmir. After flooding the state with the armed forces of the Union without any prior consultation with any stakeholders leave alone the Opposition, the government on 5th of August 2019 introduced the Jammu & Kashmir reorganisation bill 2019 and a resolution to repeal Article 370 of the Constitution. The bill became law despite vociferous opposition in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. I had the privilege of leading the Opposition's charge in the Lok Sabha. A state for the first time in the history of India stood bifurcated into two Union Territories as on 31st of October 2019.

That law for a variety of reasons is patently unconstitutional and is under challenge in the Supreme Court for the past one year. One aspect that perhaps has not been highlighted in the list before the apex court is that the bill flies in the face of the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy instituted by the previous UPA government on 5th February, 2014. The said policy clearly states:

"The department/ministry concerned should publish/place in public domain the draft legislation or at least the information that may inter alia include brief justification for such legislation, essential elements of the proposed legislation, its broad financial implications, and an estimated assessment of the impact of such legislation on environment, fundamental rights, lives and livelihoods of the concerned/affected peo-

ple, etc. Such details may be kept in the public domain for a minimum period of 30 days for being proactively shared with the public in such manner as may be specified by the department/ministry concerned." To the best of my knowledge the said policy was never repealed by the first or second NDA/BJP.

One year later it is now time to take stock of what India has gained through these actions. It would be a non-sequitor to say that civil liberties and fundamental freedoms were the first casualties. They have been mercilessly trampled underfoot by the jackboot of the state.

Home ministry statistics reveal 6,605 people were taken into custody following the reorganisation of the state. 255 of them continue to be in detention in various prisons across the country even one year later. The central government was compelled to detain three former chief ministers of the state namely Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and the BJP's comrade in arms chief minister Mehbooba Mufti. She still continues to be in detention. The 83-year-old former Union minister Saifuddin Soz endures illegal incarceration even a year later. On Wednesday last, the government told the Supreme Court that Mr Soz was not under any detention. Tragically, the same day, he was captured on candid camera screaming that what the government had told the Supreme Court was patently incorrect and policemen were not allowing him to move out of his home. This is even more chilling that a person can be detained without any formal legal processes and that too interminably.

What is even more disconcerting is the purport-

ed letter written by the Executive Committee of the Jammu & Kashmir Bar Association to the Chief Justice of India on June 25, 2020. The letter states that out of 600 odd habeas corpus petitions filed in the J&K high court since August 2019, "99 per cent of the habeas corpus petitions have remained pending". Even a law student understands that the jurisprudence of habeas corpus places it on a pedestal when compared to other writs since it concerns the life and liberty of an individual.

Coupled with this has been the extended periods of curfew and the non-resumption of 4G internet services in Kashmir considering that the whole world has been compelled to go virtual in the wake of the China Virus alias Covid-19.

In other words there was never and still isn't even minimalist support for the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir. Even in Jammu the reality has begun to sink in that the influx of outsiders would not be in Kashmir that continues to be volatile but in Jammu. It has remained largely peaceful over the three decade long militancy. The new domicile rules have further reinforced the perception that the NDA/BJP government wants to transform the demographic complexion of J&K.

There are some other implications that are even more portentous.

Articles 230 and 231 of the Indian Constitution empower Parliament to extend the jurisdiction of high courts to Union Territories and establish

Would the reorganisation carried out last year render the Shimla Pact dud or does it still remain valid given that Pakistan has reorganised the internal dynamics of PoK and ad-nauseam in the past 70 odd years?

ment of a common high court for two or more states, respectively, while Article 230(1) uses the phraseology "two or more high courts and a Union Territory". Can this be read to mean that two Union Territories can have one common high court? There seems to be no constitutional clarity. Though Section 75 of the J&K reorganisation bill says the high court of Jammu & Kashmir would be a common high court for the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, the constitutional status of the J&K high court would need to be examined in this light of the wording of Article 230 (1).

China reacted sharply to the reorganisation of Jammu & Kashmir and the home minister's bellicose utterances on Aksai Chin. Their foreign office spokesperson stated: "China deplores and firmly opposes that (move). This is unlawful and void and this is not effective in any way and will not change the fact that the area is under Chinese actual control." Were the government's actions the trigger for the Chinese theatre level aggressions that India is currently dealing with is a question that the NDA/BJP would need to answer itself.

Finally, what are the implications of this internal reorganisation qua the Shimla Pact of 1972? The Agreement states, "Pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation." Would the reorganisation carried out last year render the agreement dud or does it still remain valid given that Pakistan has reorganised the internal dynamics of PoK and the Northern Territories ad-nauseam in the past 70 odd years? The jury remains out on that.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

RIP AMAR SINGH

Rajya Sabha member Amar Singh was a versatile politician with bonds stretching beyond party lines. He even had businessmen and actors as his friends. He had been a key player in the cut and thrust of Indian politics till about a decade ago. He has an excellent profile. He played a crucial role in swinging the Samajwadi Party's support for the Indo-US civil nuclear deal in 2008 after the Left parties withdrew support to the government over it. Singh's resourcefulness was again seen at work in getting former US president Bill Clinton to visit Lucknow to meet Mulayam Singh. Kerry Packer once flew down to Delhi to discuss a cricket deal thanks to him. His death is an irreparable loss.

Ravi Teja Kathuripalli
Hyderabad

OLD BULLETINS

SINCE THE LOCKDOWN was first announced, bulletins began being broadcast by All India Radio asking people not to go outdoors. But even after commencement of unlock, the same bulletins are being aired. Why don't AIR stations broadcast the number of beds available in each hospital instead? Also, info on whom to contact in case of Covid symptoms, testing centres nearby and isolation facilities would be helpful.

Nagendra Vempalli
Hyderabad

LIFE OF A DUNKER

A NEW BOOK on the inspirational story of Vishesh Bhriगुवanshi, India's youngest basketball team captain, will hit the stands on August 29, the National Sports Day. During his career of over 15 years now, he has represented India at various championships several times.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Arun Malankar (Aug. 2). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

IN BRIEF

S. Korea rains leave five dead

Seoul: Torrential rain pounded most of South Korea on Sunday, leaving six people dead and seven others missing, officials said. The Ministry of the Interior and Safety said the heavy rainfall triggered landslides in dozens of places, flooded residential areas and roads, and damaged some riverside structures. Much of the damage occurred in the Seoul metropolitan area and the central region. The ministry didn't say how the six people died. South Korean media reported they were either buried by mud caused by landslides or drowned after being swept away by swollen waters.

Israel greets India on friendship day

Jerusalem: Israel on Sunday showered India with goodwill greetings on Friendship Day, peppered with a Bollywood hit number, with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin also congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the people of India on the occasion. Rivlin tweeted in English and Hindi his message tagging Modi. "Happy Friendship Day to our dear friends in India!" the Israeli President wrote. "Mitrata Divas par meri or se apko aur bharat ki janta ko bahut bahut badhai," he wrote in Hindi. The Israeli embassy in New Delhi this year again hit upon a famous Bollywood number from Amitabh Bachchan-starrer Yaarana to convey their warmth towards the Indian people sharing a montage of joint meetings and collaborations between the two sides.

Burkina Faso blast kills six

Ouagadougou: At least six people, mostly children, died when an improvised explosive device went off in northern Burkina Faso, security sources and local officials said on Sunday. The IED, which exploded as the group's cart was passing late Saturday, also injured four others, they said. Northern Burkina Faso is notorious for jihadist attacks which have killed more than 1,000 people there and displaced about a million more since 2015. The victims were "nearly all children who were returning from grazing their livestock", a local in Ouahigouya said. "The cart which carried some of them rolled over a mine."

Singapore cops arrest chief priest

Singapore: The chief priest of Singapore's oldest Hindu temple was arrested on charges of "criminal breach of trust", according to police. The Sri Mariamman Temple had lodged a police complaint after finding out that some gold ornaments, which were in the custody of the priest, had gone missing, the temple said. The temple did not mention the name of the chief priest in its statement. "Gold ornaments, which are frequently used for prayers, are kept under the custody of the chief priest in the inner sanctum of the temple. Regular audits are done to ensure that the gold ornaments are physically accounted for," it said.

N95 MASKS MOIST HEAT TREATMENT ELIMINATES COVID

Toronto, Aug. 2: Scientists have found that moist heat treatment of N95 masks eliminates the coronavirus which causes Covid-19, an advance which could allow reuse of these scarce resources in hospitals and long-term care facilities. According to the study, published in Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ), moist heat treatment of masks for 60 min at 70 degrees Celsius in a humid condition did not damage their structure or affect function. "A single heat treatment rendered SARS-CoV-2 undetectable in all mask samples," the scientists, including those from the University of Toronto in Canada, wrote in the study. "This low-cost reprocessing strategy can be applied 10 times without affecting the mask's filtration, breathing resistance, fit and comfort, and thus may help to alleviate the global shortage during the Covid-19 pandemic," said study co-author Gregory Borschel from The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada.

Media barred from Trump's poll nomination

Washington, Aug. 2: Media will be barred from the Republican National Convention in North Carolina later this month, US news outlets reported, when President Donald Trump will formally receive his party's nomination.

Soaring Coronavirus cases have already forced Trump to cancel the part of the convention planned for Florida's Jacksonville in July. "We are planning for all of the Charlotte activities to be closed press: Friday, August 21, Monday 24 given the health restrictions and limitations in place in the state," the convention spokesperson had told the Arkansas Democrat Gazette.

"We are working within the parameters set before us by state and local guidelines regarding the number of people who can attend events." "This is an ill-advised decision that the @GOP @GOPconvention should reconsider," Zeke Miller, president of the White House Correspondents' Association, said Saturday.



Donald Trump

● **TRUMP HAS** been forced to scrap his signature rallies because of the coronavirus epidemic, which is killing more than 1,000 Americans a day.

"The nomination of a major party presidential candidate is very much the business of the American people," Miller later tweeted: "An RNC official now says that the decision is not final and that they are still working through press coverage options."

Trump has been forced to scrap his signature rallies because of the Coronavirus epidemic, which is killing more than 1,000 Americans a day. — *AFP*

Biden to declare his V-P pick soon

Washington, Aug. 2: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has promised to soon reveal his running mate. And as the suspense builds over who Biden will choose to be on the ticket for November's election, this much is known — it will be a woman.

About a dozen names have been bandied about by pundits and the press but the favorite for the vice president slot appears to be California Senator Kamala Harris.

The speculation that the 55-year-old Harris would be the choice was fueled further last week when Biden appeared at an event clutching a notepad with her name on it.

Written on the pad under Harris's name were

several complimentary remarks including "Talented," "Great help to campaign" and "Great respect for her." The November 3 election is shaping up to be one of the most consequential in recent US history and comes amid a health emergency, an economic crisis and a national reckoning over racial injustice.

The choice of a running mate is always one of the most important decisions a White House hopeful makes but it has added significance this year because of Biden's age.

Biden turns 78 years old on November 20 and he would be the oldest man ever to assume the office if he defeats President Donald Trump in November. — *AFP*



Benjamin Netanyahu

BIBI RAILS AT MEDIA OVER PROTESTS

Tel Aviv, Aug. 2: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu railed on Sunday at swelling protests against his rule, saying they are egged on by a biased media that distorts facts and cheers on the demonstrators.

Netanyahu has faced a wave of protests in recent weeks, with demonstrators calling for the long-serving, indicted leader to resign and panning his handling of the coronavirus crisis.

Netanyahu has painted the protests as dens of "anarchists" and "leftists" out to topple "a strong, right-wing leader." The protests have largely been peaceful. In some cases they have ended with clashes between demonstrators and police.

In others, small gangs of Netanyahu supporters and individuals affiliated with far-right groups have assaulted demonstrators. In a six-minute rant at a meeting of his Cabinet, Netanyahu slammed the media for "inflaming" the protests and for misrepresenting incidents of violence against the protesters. "There has never been such a distorted mobilization — I wanted to say Soviet but it has already reached North Korean terms — of the media in favour of the protests," he said. — *AP*

Test of endurance

People run past the Kremlin Wall as they take part in a half-marathon in Moscow, Russia, on Sunday. Around 17,000 people took part in the race. — *AP*

Melbourne under virus curfew as cases spike

SA cases top 5,00,000, Latin America records 2 mn deaths

Melbourne, Aug. 2: Australia's second-largest city imposed an overnight curfew on Sunday to halt the spread of Coronavirus cases, as South Africa's infection count topped more than half a million.

Six months after the World Health Organisation declared a global emergency, the virus has killed more than 6,80,000 people and infected more than 17.5 million.

Fresh clusters have been reported in countries such as Australia — that had previously brought their outbreaks under control. Australia's Victoria state imposed fresh, sweeping restrictions on Sunday, including a curfew in Melbourne for the next six weeks, a ban on weddings, and schools and universities going back online in the coming days.

"Anything short of this

● **WITH INFECTIONS** and deaths soaring, the UN health agency has warned that the Coronavirus pandemic would be lengthy and could lead to "response fatigue".

will see it drag on for months and months and months," said Victoria leader Daniel Andrews.

Despite a lockdown, Melbourne has continued to report hundreds of new cases daily even as other states in Australia have reported zero or a small number of cases.

Many other parts of the world are struggling with much bigger outbreaks.

Health authorities in South Africa who had been expecting a surge in cases after the gradual loosening of a strict lockdown reported that cases had exceeded the half-mil-

lion mark.

The nation is by far the hardest-hit in Africa, accounting for more than half of diagnosed infections, although President Cyril Ramaphosa said the fatality rate is lower than the global average.

With infections and deaths soaring, the UN health agency has warned that the coronavirus pandemic would be lengthy and could lead to "response fatigue".

"WHO continues to assess the global risk level of Covid-19 to be very high," the agency said, adding that the effects of the pandemic "will be felt for decades to come".

The virus is still spreading quickly across much of Latin America, which has now recorded more than four million cases and almost 2,00,000 deaths — half of them in Brazil.

Mexico overtook Britain to become the third hardest-hit country in virus deaths — after Brazil and the US — with more than 46,600 fatal cases.

The US, the worst-hit country in the world, has now tallied more than 4.6 million cases and 1,54,319 deaths.

The pandemic has spurred a race for a vaccine with several Chinese companies at the forefront, while Russia has set a target date of September to roll out its own prophylactic.

However, US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said it was unlikely his country would use any vaccine developed in either nation.

"I do hope that the Chinese and the Russians are actually testing the vaccine before they are administering the vaccine to anyone," he said. — *AFP*

FB BOWS TO BRAZIL JUDGE, BLOCKS 12 A/C

Brasilia, Aug. 2: Facebook announced on Saturday it has obeyed a Brazilian judge's order for a worldwide block on the accounts of 12 of President Jair Bolsonaro's supporters who are under investigation for allegedly running a fake news network.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes said on Friday night that the company had failed to fully comply with a previous ruling ordering the accounts to be shut down, saying they were still online and publishing by changing their registration to locations outside Brazil.

Facebook issued a statement saying it complied due to the threat of criminal liability for an employee in Brazil. But it called the new order "extreme," saying it poses a "threat to freedom of expression outside of Brazil's jurisdiction and conflicting with laws and jurisdictions worldwide." — *AP*

Ex-UK min held on suspicion of rape

London, Aug. 2: A former UK minister and sitting Conservative Party lawmaker, who has not been named as he is yet to be charged, is out on bail after being arrested on suspicion of rape.

According to reports, the allegations of rape against the parliamentarian were made by a former employee who alleges that the lawmaker assaulted her, forced her to have sex and left her so traumatised that

she had to go to hospital. "On Friday, July 31, the Metropolitan Police Service received allegations relating to four separate incidents involving allegations of sexual offences and assault," the Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

"These offences are alleged to have occurred at addresses in Westminster, Lambeth and Hackney between July 2019 and January 2020. A man in his

50s was arrested on Saturday, August 1 on suspicion of rape. He has been released on bail to return on a date in mid-August," the statement said.

The ruling Conservative Party said it takes such allegations "extremely seriously". "We take all allegations of this nature extremely seriously. As this matter is now in the hands of the police it would be inappropriate to comment further," a party

spokesperson said.

The reports, which first appeared in the newspaper, claim that some allegations were raised with the party's chief whip Mark Spencer and with Jacob Rees-Mogg, the leader of the House of Commons some weeks ago.

It is understood that Spencer told the woman to make a formal complaint to parliamentary authorities, who would investigate. — *PTI*

Chief of US 'terrorist group' held: Iran

Tehran, Aug. 2: Iran said on Saturday it had arrested the head of a US-based "terrorist group" accused of being behind a deadly 2008 bombing in the southern city of Shiraz and planning other attacks.

"Jamshid Sharmahd, who was leading armed and sabotage operations inside Iran, is now in the powerful hands" of Iran's security forces, state television said, citing an intel-

ligence ministry statement.

It did not elaborate on where or when the alleged leader of the opposition royalist group known as the Kingdom Assembly of Iran, or Tondar (Farsi for Thunder), was detained.

Iran slammed its arch enemy the United States for hosting Sharmahd and "supporting known terrorists who have claimed responsibility for several

terrorist acts inside" the country.

"This regime must answer for its support of this terrorist group and other groups and criminals who orchestrate armed, sabotage and terrorist operations against the people of Iran from inside America and spill Iranians' blood," a foreign ministry statement said.

The intelligence ministry said Sharmahd had

orchestrated the April 12, 2008 bombing in a packed mosque in Shiraz that killed 14 people and wounded 215.

A US State Department spokesperson said "the Iranian regime has a long history of detaining Iranians and foreign nationals on spurious charges".

"We urge Iran to be fully transparent and abide by all international legal standards." — *AFP*

Five SM influencers were jailed for violating public morals on TikTok app**Egypt wrestles women's rights online**

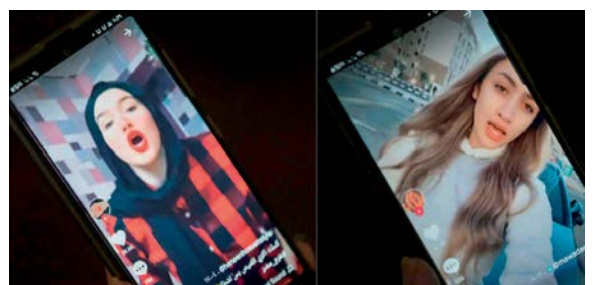
● **MANY IN** the deeply conservative country have cheered on the arrests, as traditional social values clash with online content seen as racy and sexually suggestive.

Just two days later, a court sentenced another young social media influencer, Manar Samy, to three years in prison over TikTok videos, deeming the clips in which she dances and lip-syncs to popular songs to be "inciting debauchery".

Many in the deeply conservative country have cheered on the arrests, as traditional social values clash with online content seen as racy and sexually suggestive.

"The Egyptian government is on a campaign to arrest and prosecute women influencers on... TikTok for violating the values of the Egyptian family and 'inciting debauchery and immorality,'" Access Now said in a statement.

The Egyptian authorities "not only want to control what citizens say, but also how they should dress, talk, and behave online," said Marwa Fatafta, the group's Middle East and North Africa policy manager. — *AFP*



In this file photo, a woman checks on her phone an Instagram account for reporting allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct against Ahmed Bassam Zaki, a 22-year-old student, in Cairo. — *AFP*

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,606.89	-0.34
Nifty 50	11,073.45	-0.26
S&P 500*	3,271.12	0.77
Dollar (₹)	74.8	74.8
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.14	-1.01
Euro (₹)	88.79	-0.95
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,538▲687	1.25
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.11	0.17
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.837	0.012
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.533	0.000

* As of Friday/Saturday

GST collections decline to ₹87,422 cr in July

The country's GST collections declined to Rs 87,422 crore in July from Rs 90,917 crore in the previous month. The July collections, however, are higher than Rs 62,009 crore goods and services tax (GST) mopped up in May and Rs 32,294 crore in April. In July 2019, the GST revenue was over Rs 1.02 lakh crore. During the month, GST revenues of all major states were down in the range of 15-20 per cent over July 2019.

Govt to bring all helmets under BIS regime



The government has initiated a process to bring helmets under the mandatory BIS regime as part of efforts to reduce fatal injuries involving two-wheelers, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry said. Once the process is completed only BIS-certified helmets for two-wheeler riders would be manufactured and sold in India. The ministry has issued a draft notification to bring helmets under compulsory BIS certification.

Kuwait bans flights from 31 countries

Kuwait suspended commercial flights from 31 countries, just as the Gulf state re-opened its airport to such operations. While other flights will resume, countries on the barred list include India, Iran, China, Brazil, Lebanon, Spain, Singapore, Egypt and Sri Lanka, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said. The airport resumed commercial flights on Saturday and plans to reach full capacity by mid-2021.

Nafed procures 95,000 tonnes of onion as buffer

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) said it has procured 95,000 tonnes of onion directly from farmers at prevailing rates for creating a buffer stock on behalf of the government. Last year, Nafed had purchased a total of 57,000 tonnes of onion from the 2018-19 rabi crop under the Price Stabilisation Fund. The target this time is to buy 1 lakh tonnes of onion.

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Elevated inflation levels a concern MPC may opt for pause in rates

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 2

There is a strong likelihood of the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) voting for a pause in rates on August 6, as recent data suggests that the headline inflation may likely remain near the upper end of the RBI's inflation mandate of 4 per cent plus or minus 2 till September, said economists.

The drivers impacting the persistent high food inflation such as demand side disruption and the extent of good monsoon would be keenly watched by the MPC members as these would have a significant bearing on inflation numbers softening ahead.

So far, to provide the much-needed boost to revive the Indian economy, the MPC has reduced the repo rate by 115 basis points and shifted from repo to reverse repo as the signaling rate. But given the pandemic-induced slack in the economy, a few economists expect the MPC to prioritise growth over inflation and still reduce interest rates further even as the repo rate stands at a historical low of 4 per cent.

Repo rate is the rate at which RBI lends money to commercial banks for short term needs.

The apex bank's MPC headed by governor Shaktikanta Das is scheduled to meet for three days from August 4 to August 6.



The headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) for June 2020 came higher than consensus expectations and was at 6.1 per cent year-on-year, after remaining in 7.2 per cent in April and 6.3 per cent in May. Real rates, which have been a driver of inflation in the past, are moving towards the negative terrain after six long years.

Pranjal Bhandari, chief economist at HSBC Global Research, said, "After cutting rates by 115 bps over two consecutive policy meetings, we think the RBI will pause in the upcoming August 6 meeting. It is also likely to revise up its inflation forecast for the year. Having said that, we expect it to hold on to an accommodative stance and continue to keep domestic liquidity at surplus..."

We hold on to our forecast of 50 bps further easing in the remainder of the cycle. While this remains our base case, if the sequential momentum in inflation does not decline as rapidly as

expected, we could see a more moderate easing of 25 bps."

Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser at State Bank of India, said, "We believe an August rate cut is unlikely. With the 115 bps reduction in repo beginning February, banks have already transmitted 72 bps to the customers on fresh loans in the interregnum... This has happened because of a proactive RBI using liquidity among others as a tool to serve its policy objective. We believe that the MPC could now well debate what further unconventional policy measures could be resorted to in the current circumstances to ensure financial stability is continued to be addressed."

DK Joshi, chief economist at Crisil Ltd said, "We believe that growth concerns would still outweigh those on inflation and expect the RBI to cut repo rate by 25 basis points in its August policy."

TRAI QUIZZES AIRTEL, VODA FURTHER ON PRIORITY PLANS

New Delhi, Aug. 2: Not satisfied with responses submitted by Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea on priority plans, regulator Trai has shot off additional "technical" queries to both the telcos and asked them to explain their stand on August 4, a source said.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) wants the two companies to substantiate their claims that the contentious priority offerings, which are under the regulator's lens, have neither deteriorated experience of other network users nor violated any norms.

Another source said that Bharti Airtel has been asked over two dozen questions, including if limits for data speeds have been set for platinum and non-platinum users, and about the levels of throughput for platinum users.

Trai sent out fresh sets of questions to both Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea on July 31, and the operators have been asked to respond to the questions on August 4.

Emails sent to Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea did not elicit a response.

Trai has said it is desirable that points raised in the questionnaire be covered in a presentation scheduled on the issue on the same day. The regulator has asked the companies to back their claims via data, the source said.

—PTI

LIC raises stake in heavyweights in Q1

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 2

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) raised shareholding in blue chip companies like SBI, Infosys, TCS, RIL, among others, during the April-June quarter following a sharp fall in the market in the second half of March 2020.

The shareholding pattern of the Sensex companies, as updated to the stock exchanges after the close of April-June quarter, also showed the Peoples Bank of China's stake in HDFC coming down to less than 1 per cent. In the January-March quarter the Chinese bank's stake in HDFC had gone up to 1.01 per cent, raising eyebrows.

LIC raised stake in HDFC in the April-June quarter from 4.67 per cent

Lapping up blue chips

Company	LIC shareholding (%) 2020	
	Jan-March	April-June
Infosys	6.62	7.19
HDFC Bank	3.04	3.48
SBI	9.24	9.98
HDFC	4.67	5.39
ICICI Bank	9.97	10.15
Bharti Airtel	2.73	2.78
Maruti	6.39	6.65
HCL Technologies	1.34	1.81
TCS	4.20	4.22
RIL	6.01	5.94*
Hero MotoCorp	1.46	1.70
Sun Pharma	6.37	6.56
Ultraptech Cement	3.07	3.35

*LIC received over 2.48 crore partly paid RIL shares in the rights issue but total shareholding is a tad lower. Source: BSE, IC Research

to 5.39 per cent. As almost all blue chip companies' shares nosedived to 52-week and

multi-year lows due to panic created by the Covid-19 pandemic, LIC seems to have made contrarian calls and raised stake in most coveted companies.

Among the Sensex companies where the LIC holdings have gone up included HDFC, Infosys, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank, SBI, Hindustan Unilever, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Maruti Suzuki India, Ultratech Cement, Hero Motocorp, HCL Technologies, Asian Paints and Sun Pharmaceutical Industries.

Sensex companies where LIC's stake remained unchanged may be due to already high stake, included Larsen & Toubro (15.12 per cent), ITC (16.27 per cent), Mahindra & Mahindra (11.36 per cent).

Rise in No. of first-time buyers: Maruti

New Delhi, Aug. 2: The percentage of first-time buyers and additional car buying have increased in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic as customers prefer personal mobility over public transport, according to a Maruti Suzuki India official.

The firm also believes that while vehicle sales have improved in July, the outlook for the festive season will depend on how the health crisis pans out, and the long-term vehicle demand will depend on the economic fundamentals.



Shashank Srivastava

"First-time car buying is up and replacement buying is down, which means exchange is down. However, additional car buying is also up because

of the functionality requirement," Maruti Suzuki India Ltd executive director (sales and marketing) Shashank Srivastava said.

"People are preferring personal transport over public transport. At the same time their income levels are also probably going to be suppressed for sometime. Therefore, the trend is towards what we call 'telescoping of demand downwards', that is logical and intuitive. It is also reflecting in the data which we have so far," he said. —PTI

Siemens Health enters cancer care with \$16.4 billion Varian acquisition

JÖRN POLTZ & DOUGLAS BUSVINE MUNICH/BERLIN, AUG. 2

German health group Siemens Healthineers said on Sunday it was buying Varian Medical Systems Inc of the United States for \$16.4 billion in a deal that seeks to create the global leader in cancer care solutions.

The deal is the first major growth move by Healthineers since it was spun off and floated in 2018 by Siemens, which is undertaking a broader shakeup of its conglomerate structure to create room for its business units to do their own deals.

Siemens, which will retain control over Healthineers, will provide bridge financing for the deal that will be partly refinanced by a rights issue by the medical technology unit later this year.

Under the agreed transaction, Healthineers will acquire all shares in Varian for \$177.50 each in cash. —Reuters

Start-ups queue up to deliver fuel at doorstep

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 2

After food and grocery, fuel is also on the way to doorstep delivery. Door-to-door delivery of fuel is the new segment where hundreds of start-ups are expected to come up within a few months.

After state-owned oil marketing companies—Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation—called for expression of interest, hundreds of startups have evinced interest in running mobile petrol pumps. They have to get registered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) before starting their operations. The government had come out with a policy supporting mobile delivery of fuel last year.

Within a few months, these startups will be providing doorstep delivery of fuel. "If Swiggy and Zomato can bring food at



the doorstep, why can't startups deliver fuel? However, retail customers will have to wait, as the government has allowed mobile delivery of fuel for commercial purposes only for the time being," said Prasan Surana, founder and CEO of Synergy Teletech, which provides doorstep delivery of biodiesel.

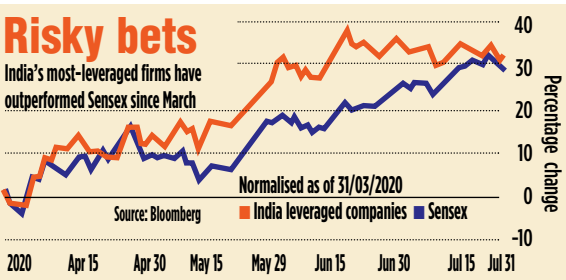
According to Chetan Walunj, CEO and co-founder of Repos Energy, almost 60 to 70 per cent of the fuel consumption happens in the commercial sector. Construction equipment, generator, agricultural equipment users who cannot come to the petrol pumps to get refilled will benefit from the mobile petrol pumps, which can carry 4,000-

6,000 litres of diesel. "In a few years, almost 30 per cent of the available market may move into doorstep delivery," said Adnan Kidwai, co-founder of Fuel Buddy, a start-up which was part of the pilot project of BPCL. Around 65,000 petrol pumps are estimated to be operating across the country. And about 35,000 pumps also may get added in the next few years, making India one of the largest in fuel networks.

The lower capital and operational expenses compared to traditional petrol pumps make the new venture attractive for fuel entrepreneurs. "Land cost and construction cost makes the capex of traditional pumps ten times higher than that of a mobile pump. Further, a mobile pump can work with just two employees," said Walunj.

"Once we start procuring diesel from the supply locations, the margins will be better than procuring fuel from the petrol pumps," said Kidwai.

Retail investors pile into beaten stocks



RONOJOY MAZUMDAR & ISHIKA MOOKERJEE AUG. 2

Companies with high levels of debt are the latest beneficiaries of a retail investor-fuelled rally in Indian stocks that's defying the worst economic outlook in four decades.

A custom Bloomberg index of the 30 most leveraged stocks out of India's top 200 companies has gained 32 per cent since the end of March, compared with a 28 per cent advance in the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex. A basket of the 30 least leveraged companies—similarly compiled using debt-to-asset ratios and excluding lenders—has gained just 18

per cent. That's a big change from earlier in the year, when pandemic fears put a premium on companies with strong balance sheets and low net debt.

"The re-emergence of unsophisticated retail traders is at least in some part responsible for capital reallocation toward the most beaten down names," said Piyush Sharma, a fund manager and co-founder at Metis Capital Management Ltd.

There's little reason to believe bets on leveraged companies have become less risky. India is still reeling from a crisis in its financial system, and business activity remains subdued.

—Bloomberg

Acreage of major kharif crops

	July 31, 2019: 774.38	July 31, 2020: 799.95
Rice	223.96	266.60
Pulses	93.84	111.91
Coarse cereals	139.26	148.34
Oilseeds	150.12	175.34
Sugarcane	51.20	51.78
Jute & mesta	7.06	6.95
Cotton	108.95	121.25
Total sown area in lakh hectares		

Source: Ministry of Agriculture/KBK Infographics

SWEETS INDUSTRY MAY SUFFER ₹5,000 CR LOSS THIS RAKSHA BANDHAN

Indore, Aug 2: The sweets industry would suffer a financial loss of Rs 5,000 crore during this Raksha Bandhan festival due to the pandemic, an industry association claimed.

The director of the Federation of Sweets and Namkeen Manufacturers, Feroz H. Naqvi, told PTI, "Sweets worth around Rs 10,000 crore were sold across the country on

Raksha Bandhan last year. This figure expected to come down to around Rs 5,000 crore this time."

"The purchasing power of the customers is already affected," he said. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Kyrgios to give US Open a miss

Sydney: Nick Kyrgios has withdrawn from the US Open because of concerns over the Coronavirus and in honor of the "hundreds and thousands of Americans" who have died from Covid-19.

Kyrgios said in an *Instagram* post on Sunday that he had no problem with the United States Tennis Association proceeding with its plans to hold the tournament from August 31 to September 13.

But he cited health and safety concerns amid the Coronavirus pandemic as he joined fellow Australian and world No. 1 Ash Barty in opting out. "I will not be playing this year at the US Open. It hurts me at my core not to be out there competing in one of the sport's greatest arenas, Arthur Ashe Stadium," Kyrgios said in the video.

"But I'm sitting out for the people, for my Aussies, for the hundreds and thousands of Americans that have lost their lives, for all of you. It's my decision," he added. — AP

Bajrang hopeful of good show in Tokyo

Mumbai: The Asian Games gold medalist Bajrang Punia is confident of Indian wrestlers performing well and winning medals at the Tokyo Olympics next year. The star grappler believes India's performances at the World Championship shows they are in good form. "I think we will win three to four medals from wrestling in the Tokyo Olympics. The World Championship is a tougher tournament than the Olympics but we performed well there. So I think Indian wrestlers are in top form which makes them strong contenders for a medal haul in Tokyo," Punia said during budding paddler Mudit Dani's online live chat show *'In The Spotlight'* on Saturday. Talking about the competition in his current weight category 65kg, Punia said: "I feel 65kg is the toughest category in the world. There is no wrestler who has successively won world championship titles or Olympic gold medals. There is always a new champion in every edition."

Daruvala fourth at Silverstone

Silverstone: India's Jehan Daruvala jumped six places in an action-packed final three laps to finish fourth in the sprint race here on Sunday, his best result so far in the FIA Formula 2 Championship. It was a much-needed result for Daruvala, who had to endure slow starts in the earlier races due to clutch issues including the feature race on Saturday, when he finished 12th after starting seventh on the grid. The Indian driver, who is a Red Bull junior, overtook the feature race winner Nikita Mazepin on the final lap to secure eight points from the weekend, taking his overall tally to 18 points after four rounds of the Championship. Dan Ticktum, who is also into his maiden Formula 2 season like Daruvala, won the race from pole position with another rookie, Christian Lundgaard, finishing second. Louis Deletraz was third. — PTI

BAIRSTOW ON SONG AS ENGLAND WIN

Southampton: Oponer Jonny Bairstow smashed 82 off 41 balls as England beat Ireland by four wickets in the second one-day international to take an unassailable 2-0 series lead. England overcame a middle-order wobble to finish on 216-6 in 32.3 overs in reply to Ireland's 212-9 at the Rose Bowl on Saturday. After Adil Rashid had taken 3-34 to reach 150 ODI wickets, Bairstow equaled the record for the fastest 50 in this format by an Englishman off 21 balls. Bairstow, Eoin Morgan and Moeen Ali were dismissed as England lurched from 131-3 to 137-6, before an unbroken 79-run stand between Sam Billings and David Willey. The pair had been the stand-out performers in Thursday's opener and came to the rescue again. — AFP

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Gunners top shots Aubameyang shines, Arsenal claim FA Cup

London, Aug. 2: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang inspired Arsenal to a record 14th FA Cup win as the Gunners captain struck twice to beat Chelsea 2-1 in the final at an empty Wembley on Saturday.

Christian Pulisic had given Chelsea the dream start, but the Blues unravelled after Aubameyang was brought down by Cesar Azpilicueta inside the area and converted the resulting penalty.

A brilliant finish from Aubameyang 23 minutes from time earned Mikel Arteta silverware in his first season as Arsenal boss before Chelsea were controversially reduced to 10 men when Mateo Kovacic was shown an extremely soft second yellow card.

Arteta said ahead of the final he hoped a taste of success would encourage Aubameyang, who only has a year left on his contract at the Emirates, to commit to a new long-term deal.

The Gabon international's double took his tally for the season to 29 and ensured the Gunners will not miss out on European football next season for the first time since 1995/96 as they qualify for the Europa League.

Emiliano Martinez flew to his left to turn Mason Mount's shot behind, but Arsenal did not heed that warning as Chelsea's front three combined perfectly for the opener on five minutes. Mount's low cross was flicked on by former Arsenal striker Olivier Giroud and Pulisic continued his scoring streak since football's return in June by showing quick feet before prodding the ball home.

Arteta has gained plenty of plaudits for his tactical nous during his first eight months in a managerial role and the Spaniard managed to reorganise the Gunners during the first-half drinks break to change the momentum of the game. — AFP



Arsenal captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (left) reacts after dropping the winners trophy as the team celebrates their 2-1 victory over Chelsea in the FA Cup final at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

Roma humble champs Juve

Milan, Aug. 2: Juventus crashed to their second consecutive defeat as the Italian league champions finished their season with a 1-3 home loss against Roma on Saturday, days before their Champions League campaign resumes.

Inter Milan took second place with a 2-0 win over Atalanta in Bergamo, who fell to their first league defeat since January.

Argentine Gonzalo Higuain spearheaded the Juventus attack and finished off an Adrián Rabiot cross after just six minutes in the Allianz Stadium.

But Diego Perotti inspired a Roma fightback



Ciro Immobile

setting up Nikola Kalinic to nod in the equaliser after 23 minutes.

Perotti gave Roma the lead from the penalty spot before the break and six minutes into the second half connected with a Nicolo Zaniolo cross for his second of the night as

Juventus fell to their third defeat in four matches.

Inter Milan finish just one point behind the champions after winning the three-team race for second spot.

IMMOBILE TOPS ITALIAN SCORING CHARTS AGAIN

Lazio forward Ciro Immobile scored his 36th goal of the season on Saturday in a 3-1 defeat against Napoli to equal the record for the most goals in a Serie A campaign.

The 30-year-old tapped in after 22 minutes to match Argentina forward Gonzalo Higuain's record of 36 goals, set while playing for Napoli in the 2015-

16 season.

Immobile also wins the European Golden Shoe for the continent's top scorer this term, having overtaken Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski's tally of 34 in midweek.

Fourteen of his goals were from the penalty spot, as Lazio finished the season in fourth place, earning a return to the Champions League.

It is the third time Immobile has won the title of best scorer in Italy after 2013-2014, when he scored 22 goals with Torino, and in 2017-2018 when his 29 goals for Lazio saw him share the honour with Inter Milan's Mauro Icardi. — AFP

MITHALI HAILS MOVE TO HAVE WOMEN'S TIES

New Delhi, Aug. 2: Indian cricketers including ODI captain Mithali Raj on Sunday welcomed BCCI President Sourav Ganguly's announcement that the Women's IPL will take place during the men's league in the UAE. "This is excellent news. Our ODI World Cup campaign to finally kick start. A big thank you to @SGanguly99 @BCCI @JayShah and thank you @BoriaMajumdar for your support to women's cricket," Mithali tweeted. Senior spinner Poonam Yadav wrote: "Good news! Thank you @SGanguly99 and the BCCI." The BCCI had received some criticism for cancelling the women team's tour of England at a time when the IPL preparations are on full swing. — PTI

BRITISH GRAND PRIX

Hamilton wins on three tyres

Silverstone, Aug. 2: Lewis Hamilton held on to win the British Grand Prix on Sunday despite a puncture on the last lap to clinch an 87th career win and move within four of Michael Schumacher's Formula One record.

The championship leader's record-extending seventh Silverstone win saw him finish six seconds ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who unexpectedly moved up a place after Hamilton's Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas sustained a puncture with three laps left.

With Hamilton so far ahead, Verstappen went in for a tire change in a bid to gain an extra point for the fastest lap but that pit stop ultimately cost him victory because Hamilton's front left shredded with half a lap to go. Verstappen swallowed up most of the 25-second gap but ran out of time. Charles Leclerc finished third for Ferrari.

When his tire melted, Bottas had to come back for a tire change and dropped out of the points altogether into 11th spot and 30 points behind Hamilton in the title race.

Sebastian Vettel, a four-time F1 champion, placed 10th and has now failed to

● **Lewis Hamilton, racing for Mercedes, overcame a flat left front tyre in the final lap of the Silverstone Grand Prix to claim an unprecedented seventh win at his home Grand Prix.**

get into the top five for his worst start to a season since 2008.

McLaren's Carlos Sainz Jr. also sustained a puncture on the last lap and fell to 13th.

There is another race at Silverstone next Sunday.

Earlier, the British Grand Prix was forced to run behind a safety car on Sunday after an opening lap crash.

Kevin Magnussen of Haas collided with Alex Albon's Red Bull at the final corner, the Danish driver spinning off into the gravel after trying to squeeze past the Thai driver.

The front left wheel of his Haas car was smashed off after the impact as he attempted to cut across Albon at the apex of the corner leading on to the straight. — Agencies



Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes punctures his left front tyre near the finish of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England, on Sunday. — AFP

Raptors humble LeBron & team

Miami, Aug. 2: Kyle Lowry scored 33 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, sparking the defending NBA champion Toronto Raptors to a 107-92 win over the Los Angeles Lakers in a showdown of title contenders Saturday.

Lakers star LeBron James scored 20 points and pulled down 10 rebounds while Anthony Davis added 14 points, but the Lakers suffered their worst shooting performance of the season, hitting 29-of-82 shots, 35.8 per cent, from the floor.

The Lakers-Raptors matchup was the feature contest on the third day of regular-season contests in a bubble quarantine atmosphere at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, as the NBA restarts after a four-month Covid-19 shutdown.

Toronto began the game with a 13-0 run as the Lakers went 4-51 before scoring their first points, their longest scoreless start in any game this season.

But after going 0-for-7 from the floor, the Lakers went on a 9-of-15 run and

● **Kyle Lowry impressed with 33 points on target and 14 rebounds as defending champions Toronto Raptors thumped Los Angeles Lakers 107-92 in their NBA match.**

had pulled within 23-21 by the end of the first quarter.

The Lakers owned a 44-41 halftime edge but Lowry's exceptional performance allowed the Raptors to seize command in the second half.

A 22-3 spurt pulled Toronto ahead 63-50 and a 7-0 run with James on the Lakers bench in the fourth quarter sealed the victory for the Canadian club.

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Clippers set a team record with 25.3-point baskets in a 126-103 romp over the New Orleans Pelicans.

Paul George scored 28 points and Kawhi Leonard added 24 to lead the Clippers. — AFP

IPL retains Chinese sponsors

New Delhi, Aug. 2: The Indian Premier League's Governing Council on Sunday decided to retain all its sponsors, including Chinese mobile company VIVO, and approved Covid-19 replacements in the event to be held in UAE this year.

The tournament will be played from September 19 to November 10, the IPL GC decided after a virtual meeting on Sunday.

"All I can say is that all our sponsors are with us. Hopefully you can read between the lines," an IPL GC member said.

Chinese sponsorship became a bone of contention after the clashes between the Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh in June. The BCCI had promised to review the deals post the showdown.

In another major decision, the IPL GC also approved the women's IPL.



Velocity's captain Mithali Raj (from left), her Supernova counterpart Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana captain of Trailblazers in this file photo.

Forced out of India due to the rising Covid-19 case count here, the IPL will allow unlimited Covid-19 replacements considering the delicate health safety situation across the globe.

"We expect the the Home and External Affairs Ministry to give us necessary approvals within another week. The final will be played on

November 10 as it enters the Diwali week making it lucrative for the broadcasters," the IPL GC member said.

It would have been difficult to get new sponsors for the Board at a short notice given.

It is expected that the squad strength in terms of playing members will be 24 the eight franchises. "Standard Operating

● **The Governing Council of the IPL has decided to retain all its sponsors, including a Chinese mobile manufacturer, approved Covid-19 replacements and host women's matches too during the IPL to be played in UAE from Sept. 19 to November 10.**

Procedure (SOP) is still being prepared but there would be any number of COVID replacements this year.

"Also the BCCI has received presentations from a DUBAI based group on creating a medical facility in the UAE. The BCCI is also in talks with the Tata Group for creating a bio-bubble," he said. — PTI

Holder & Co. lost the plot after winning first Test



Hemant Kenkre Silly Point

TWith the England, West Indies Test series over and the erstwhile Wisden Trophy, now known as the Richards-Botham Trophy, changing hands, the home squad will now be in a positive state of mind when they face off against Pakistan. The first Test match, played in the Manchester bubble, will (hopefully) see the visitors stretch the hosts who had a comparatively easy two Tests against the men from the Caribbean.

Jason Holder's squad flattered to deceive. The

expectations that most had after their decisive win in the first Test at Rose Bowl in Southampton got soaked in warm English beer when the Windies went down without a fight in the next two Tests at Old Trafford. There will be many discussions that the team management will have as they make their way back to the merry islands in a sombre mood having left the trophy they had conquered so well at home, back in England.

Any discussion on West Indies cricket is often laced with denotations

that meander towards excitement - an attribute sadly lacking in modern times. Gone is the risk taking attitude and the care-free approach that attracted so many fans, across the globe, who loved the brand of cricket they played.

What one saw, post the first Test, was a defensive approach from the visitors who put the hosts into bat in both games that they lost. The eventual result was caused not just by a better performance by England but by a negative strategy employed by the West Indies who seemed to have lost the plot on both occasions.

At this point in time, England is sitting pretty after their 2-1 series win. Looking ahead to their next Test fixture against Pakistan, which begins in two days from now, they

seem to have sorted out their batting woes after their debacle at the Rose Bowl. Ben Stokes whose first outing as England captain was a downer, rediscovered his mojo with sterling performances as a player.

After a match winning century (his longest) in the second Test, Stokes' essay saw him blast the fastest half-century by an England opener in their Test history in the third essay.

Stuart Broad's 16 wickets in two Test matches, after being omitted for the first Test, made him the seventh bowler to go past 500 wickets in the history of Test cricket. With Mr. Incredible, as skipper Root referred to Stokes and the ever dependable Broad in their ranks, the home team will be in a fabulous state

of mind before they take on Pakistan led by Azhar Ali at Manchester.

The Pakistan team, which has gone through the stipulated quarantine and intra-practice matches, will be relying mostly on youth to make their impact on the series. The spotlight will be on many players, most of whom have no experience of playing in English conditions. In Babar Azam, they have one of the most exciting batting prospects to emerge from the sub-continent in recent times. The 25-year old has played just 25 Test matches in a four-year span and averages 45.12 runs with five hundreds.

Their batting coach, the experienced Younis Khan, is aware of English conditions and is working with his team to ensure that

they adapt to difficult conditions that they will encounter in the forthcoming series.

His biggest challenge will be to get his top order in a sharp mental state to face England's bowling challenge of top-line seamers in Broad, James Anderson, Stokes and Chris Woakes as well as the pace threat that Jofra Archer is bound to present.

The Pakistan attack is well balanced with all aspects (pace, swing and spin) being accounted for. Their biggest challenge will be the relative inexperience of newcomers who have not had the experience of playing in England in the long format of the game. In Naseem Shah and Shaheen Afridi, they have two pace prospects who have the arsenal to prosper

in England with the experience of Wahab Riaz and spinner Yasir Shah to support them. The mercurial Mohammed Amir, though in England, will be on the sidelines for the Test series.

Home conditions apart, the biggest factor that will go in England's favour is that they have had the opportunity of a real-time match experience before the Pakistanis. The team will also gear up to improve their standing in the world championship of Test cricket with a series win.

Having started as favourites, they will be aware of just how unpredictable the Pakistan team can be. After all, of all Test playing teams of the sub-continent, they have the best record of wins in and against England.