

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 14 | AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 31°C  
**Min:** 23°C  
**Rainfall:** Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Aadi 30  
**Tithi:** Ekadashi  
**Star:** Mrigashirsham  
**Rahukalam:**  
10.30 pm to 12 noon  
**Yamagandam:**  
3 pm to 4.30 pm

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.41am  
**Jumma:** 12.20 pm  
**Asar:** 3.28 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.34 pm  
**Isha:** 7.49 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY** 6.31 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.57 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 1.15 AM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 2.24 PM

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+64,142)	(+1,006)
24,59,613	48,144

[covid19india.org](https://covid19india.org)

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,835)  
TN: 3,20,355 5,397

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,09,56,816

### DEATHS

7,50,082

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
213

[worldometers.info](https://worldometers.info)

## Vikram Doraiswami appointed as new envoy to Bangladesh

**New Delhi:** Seasoned diplomat Vikram Doraiswami has been appointed as India's next envoy to Bangladesh.

Doraiswami, a 1992 batch Indian Foreign Service officer, is currently serving as additional secretary in-charge of inter-national organisations and sum-mits at the headquarters of the external affairs ministry in Delhi.

## Man fatally shot himself in struggle with troopers

**Virginia Beach:** A man in Virginia fatally shot himself when he fired multiple gun-shots during a struggle with state troopers attempting to take him into custody, authori-ties said.

## COUNTER

## POINT



**Free vaccine to all the people if I am voted to power... sponsored by my dearest friend Putin!**



## STATE | 3

**Panneerselvam calls for unity in AIADMK**



## NATION | 4

**Varun to table Organ Donation Bill**

## SPORT | 8

**It was a special hundred: Sachin**



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## Independence Day rehearsal at Red Fort



Glimpses of Independence Day celebration full dress rehearsal at the historic Red Fort in New Delhi on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will unfurl the national flag on Independence Day (August 15) and address the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

## Karnataka crosses two lakh virus cases

**Chennai, Aug. 13:** Ka-rnataka on Thursday crossed the grim mile-stone of two lakh Covid-19 cases, while a contro-versy broke out in Kerala over the ruling CPI-M's decision to use citizens' Call Detail Records (CDR) for con-tact tracing in its battle against the pandemic.

All southern states con-tinued reporting high daily virus numbers, with Andhra Pradesh leading with over 9,000 cases on Thursday. The number of Covid-19 infections in Karnataka breached the two lakh mark, as 6,706 new cases of the virus pushed the cumulative tally to 2,03,200. With 103 related fatalities, the total deaths stood at 3,613. — *PTI*

## Covid fatalities remain above 100 a day in TN

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG.13**

Fatalities due to coron-avirus infection remained unabated in the State, where 119 persons suc-cumbed to the virus on Thursday that also saw 5,835 new infections, most of them in the districts.

New cases in Chennai was at 989 and deaths at 18, while the neighbouring districts had high numbers: Chengalpattu 453, Kanchipuram 243 and Thiruvallur 390. Other dis-tricts with high numbers were Coimbatore 289,

Cuddalore 258, Theni 286 and Virudhunagar 219.

Covid-19 infections had come down in Chennai and Madurai and it would be brought down in the other districts also soon, said Health Minister C Vijayabaskar after visiting the Plasma Bank at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital.

Chennai Commissioner of Police, Mahesh Kumar Agarwal, was also there at the hospital as 40 police per-sonnel who had been cured of the infection donated plasma. Agarwal said that so far 1,920 police personnel

had been infected by the Coronavirus and 1,549 of them had been cured of it.

Vijayabaskar said the plasma bank was doing well with 76 persons so far donat-ing plasma, which was used successfully on 89 patients. Plasma treatment was given to persons with mod-erate level of infection, the Minister said.

Apart from Chennai, plas-ma banks had been set up in Madurai and Nelli and six more would be established in various places soon, he said adding that people should come forward to donate plasma.

## WESTERN AIR COMMAND

## Air Chief Marshal reviews operational preparedness at frontline base

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 13**

Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria on Thursday flew fighter air-craft MiG 21 Bison on a frontline air base under Western Air Command to send a message that the air force is all prepared to take any challenge from adver-saries.

Western Air Command (WAC) looks after both the crucial borders with China in Ladakh and with Pakistan from Ladakh up to Bikaner in Rajasthan.

Indian Air Force said on Thursday that Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria visited a frontline air base in Western Air Command. He was briefed by the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) of the base on the readiness and operational status of the lodger units located at the base.

Air Force chief reviewed the operational prepared-ness of the base and inter-



Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria preparing for a sortie on MiG-21 Bison aircraft during his visit to a frontline air base in Western Air Command. — *DC*

acted with air force person-nel serving on the front-lines. He urged the air force personnel to main-tain the highest standards of readiness. He also appre-ciated their efforts in pre-serving IAF's combat potential during the on-ging Covid 19 pandemic.

The Indian Air Force has kept almost all its air bases under the Western Command at a “very high level of readiness” in view of the over three-month border row with China in eastern Ladakh.

## Smiles and handshakes as Gehlot and Pilot meet

**Jaipur, Aug. 13:** Sachin Pilot shook hands on Thursday with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, the image marking the patch-up between the two party factions in the state ahead of the assembly session where the Congress government is set to face a floor test.

The BJP said after a legis-lature party meeting that it will move a no-confi-dence motion against the Gehlot government in the session which begins on Friday.

Hours later, the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) met and announced that it would seek a confidence vote to prove its majority. With the disgruntled MLAs led by Pilot back in the party-fold following the intervention of the top leadership, the Congress is likely to pass the floor test. In a House of 200, the party has 107 MLAs and the support of indepen-dents and allies.

The BJP has 72 members.



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot along with senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot flashes victory signs during the party MLAs meeting, at CM residence in Jaipur, on Thursday. — *PTI*

When Pilot got down from his car at the chief minis-ter's residence, he was received by Govind Singh Dotasra, who has replaced him as the party's state unit president.

Pilot was also sacked as the state's deputy chief minister and Gehlot referred to him as “use-less”, using the Hindi

term “nikamma”. The fault line persisted even after the party high com-mand welcomed Pilot back, promising that a committee will look into his grievances. MLAs loyal to Gehlot, still camp-ing together at a hotel, expressed dissatisfaction with the dissidents' return.

## Boost for Gehlot govt as SC declines to interfere

**New Delhi, Aug. 13:** The Supreme Court Thursday refused to grant any inter-im relief on a plea of a BJP MLA seeking a stay on the Rajasthan Speaker's deci-sion that had allowed the six BSP MLAs to merge with the Congress.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra, in a hearing conducted through video conferencing, briefly heard the parties including the counsel for BJP MLA Madan Dilawar who said that these six Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLAs have been wrongly allowed by the assembly speaker to merge with the ruling Congress party.

On being told that the Rajasthan High Court is scheduled to hear the case on Friday, the bench, which also comprised Justices B R Gavai and Krishna Murari, said, “We are not passing any interim orders. Any transaction that takes place (in the assembly) will obviously be subject to the court's order.” — *PTI*

## Covid: State asks people to watch I-Day function on TV

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG 13:**

Members of the public and students are urged not to go over to the ramparts of Fort St George to witness the Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami hoisting the national flag on the occa-sion of Independence Day celebrations on Saturday, August 15.

An official press release on Thursday said that the Chief Minister would hoist the flag at 8.45 am and that it

will be telecast live on television and broadcast on radio to enable the public to follow the event.

Freedom fighters, who had had been asked not to come for the event, would be hon-oured at their homes by of-ficials with shawls and dis-abled children, who would normally be presented sweets during the celebra-tions, would be distributed sweets in their hostels by the social welfare minister by following social distancing norms, the release said. ■ **P2**

## No public celebration of Vinayaka Chathurthi

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 13**

The government has advised the public to celebrate Vinayaga Chathurthi at their homes in view of the curfew in force, under which installing idols in public places, taking them out in processions and immersing them in water bodies has been banned. ■ **P3**

## India to help Maldives connectivity with \$500mn

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 13**

In a major move towards cementing close bilateral Indo-Maldivian strategic ties and keeping Chinese influence in the maritime neighbourhood at bay, India on Thursday announced a “financial package consist-ing of a grant of US\$ 100 mil-lion and a new Line of Credit (LoC) of US\$ 400 mil-lion” for the ambitious Greater Malé Connectivity Project (GMCP) in India's south-western maritime neighbour Maldives.

The announced was made

by External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar after a meeting through video-conference on Thursday with Mald-ivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid.

India also decided to contin-ue quotas for supply to the Maldives of food items like potatoes, onions, rice, wheat, flour, sugar, dal (pulses) and eggs that will ensure food security to the tiny archipelago nation, besides announcing “cre-ation of an air travel bub-bble between India and Maldives” from August 18 and a direct cargo ferry service between India and

● **India also decided to continue quotas for supply to the Maldives of food items like potatoes, onions, rice, wheat, flour, sugar, dal (pulses) and eggs that will ensure food security to the tiny archipelago nation, besides announcing “creation of an air travel bubble between India and Maldives” from August 18**

Maldives that will com-mence soon. India will also extend in-principle urgent financial assistance to the Maldives by way of a soft loan arrangement amid the Covid pandemic.

The complex GMCP project will be the largest civilian infrastructure project in Maldives, con-

necting the Maldivian Capital Malé with three neighbouring islands — Villingili, Gulhifahu (where a port is being built under Indian LoC) and Thilafushi (new industrial zone) — by construction of a bridge-and-causeway link spanning 6.7 km. It is reliably learnt that the 6.7

km GMCP will dwarf in magnitude the 1.39 km Maldives-China Friends-hip bridge (connecting Malé with Hulhule and Hulhumale to its east) built earlier and render that insignificant in com-parison.

It is also reliably learnt that India's total financial commitment in the Maldives covering all loan and grant projects is now well over a whopping US\$ 2 billion since November, 2018, when the Maldivian Government under President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih assumed office.



## SHORT TAKES

## SBI donates ventilators to KMCH

**Chennai:** State Bank of India, Chennai circle, has donated four (4) ventilators to the Government Kilpauk Medical College & Hospital (GKMCH) with the contributions from SBI Foundation and STREDHAN (Ladies of SBI Family), to provide life support to patients admitted for Covid treatment. The ventilators were handed over by Shirley Thomas, General Manager, NW-1, to Medical Superintendent of GKMCH Dr. Balaraman in the presence of A.G.K.Sathya Prakash, Deputy General Manager, A O Chennai North, according to a press release.

## Nepali youth hangs himself over love failure

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

A 22-year-old Nepal native hanged himself from a tree in Perungalathur near Tambaram on Thursday, allegedly after a failure in a love affair.

The deceased, identified as Dil Bahadur (22), was found hanging from a tree on a private college campus in Alapakkam in Perungalathur, where he worked as a security guard. The body was spotted by some locals, who then called up the police.

After Peerankaranai police reached the spot and carried out the preliminary investigation, it was found that he was allegedly upset over a love failure. He was in love with a girl in Nepal and recently it came out to be a failure. He decided to hang himself due to mental stress from the break-up, said the police. The body has been sent to the Chrompet government hospital for autopsy. Police have registered an unnatural death case and an investigation is under way.

## Frontline warriors to get medals on I-Day

**From P1**

However frontline warriors in the fight against the Coronavirus would be handed over medals and certificates at the event.

In an order the government announced the names of 27 persons who would receive the Chief Minister's Special Award, which carries a gold plated medal worth ₹10,000 each and a certificate of appreciation.

Of the 27 award winners, nine are medical professionals from the health department, three from the police, three from fire services, six from municipal administration and TWAD, three from revenue and disaster management department and three from cooperatives, food and consumer safety departments.

## Gold seized at Chennai airport

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

The customs department seized gold worth Rs 22 lakh from a passenger who landed in Chennai on a repatriation flight.

According to the airport sources, a 32-year-old passenger from Tiruchy, who was stranded in Singapore was brought to Chennai along with 136 passengers in an Air India express evacuation flight.

## Multi-year e-visa holiday mooted in good faith

**T. SUDHEESH | DC**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

Enthused by the Russian government's law allowing tourists from 53 countries with an electronic visa from next year to revive the Covid-hit tourism industry there, the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (Faith) has proposed to the central government a multi-year e-visa holiday for all visa categories.

Sending a 10-point letter to the Ministry of Tourism the other day, the Faith asked the government to make e-visas free for foreign tourists for at least a couple years when inbound demand stabilises.

Ashish Gupta, chief executive officer of Faith, told DC that as travel between India and other countries increases it's important for the government to introduce a free e-visa policy to attract foreign tourists.

"The government has to forgo the revenue from visas because the free e-visa offer would draw a significant increase in the annual revenue share. The Indian tourism in the pre-pandemic period had received 1million foreign tourists with a revenue of

approximately USD 28billion. The tourism ministry is positive to our proposal as it could help to revive the tourism industry which is hit badly by the pandemic. We have asked the government to organise an Indian Tourism Mart for international tour operators to establish confidence and showcase the incredible Indian tourism products in the first or the fourth week of November. Marketing communication of tourism should also be kick-started. Social media ads with different versions of Indian and international languages will help to stimu-

late both domestic and international tourism', he said.

As many as 2.5 million foreign tourists visited India on e-visa in 2019. The facility of e-visa has been made available by the Government of India to the citizens of 161 countries, arriving at 16 international airports. The UK, the USA, Russia, China, Australia, France, Germany, South Africa, Canada and Republic of Korea are among countries availing e-tourist visa facility in the country.

## Puducherry reports six more Covid-19 deaths

**Puducherry, Aug. 13:** Six more people including three women died of COVID-19 in Puducherry while 305 fresh cases were reported in the union territory, a top Health department official said.

The total number of fatalities rose to 102 with the six deaths reported in the union territory during the last 24 hours ending 10 am today, Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release.

The 305 new cases were detected after examination of 1,082 samples, taking the overall tally to 6,680, he added. Puducherry logged 254 of the fresh cases, followed by Karaikal (42) and Yanam (9). He said the six people who died were in the age group of 49 and 85 years. While three of them died at JIPMER, two succumbed to the virus at the Indira Gandhi Government Medical College hospital and one passed away at the GH in Yanam. —PTI



A new huge national flag getting hoisted ahead of Independence Day at Egmore railway station in Chennai. — DC



Tricolour lights sparkle at Chennai airport ahead of Independence Day. — DC

## Traffic curbs on I-Day from 6 am in Chennai

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

In view of the Independence Day celebrations to be held on August 15 at St. George Fort, the following modifications in the movement of traffic will come into effect from 6 am on Saturday till the event is over.

**1.** The stretch from Kamarajar Salai via Labour Statue up to RBI Subway North on Rajaji Salai and Flag Staff Road will be closed for all vehicular traffic other than vehicles with car passes.

**2.** The vehicles coming from Kamarajar Salai and proceeding towards Parry's Corner via Rajaji Salai may take the route via Swami Sivananda Salai, Anna Salai, Muthusamy Bridge, Muthusamy Road, R.A. Mandram and NFS Road to reach Parry's Corner.

**3.** The vehicles coming from Rajaji Salai and proceeding towards Kamarajar Salai via Rajaji Salai may take the route via NFS Road, R.A. Mandram, Muthusamy Road, Muthusamy Bridge, Anna Salai and Wallajah Road to reach Kamarajar Salai.

**4.** The vehicles coming from Muthusamy Bridge/Anna Salai and proceeding towards Parry's Corner/Kamarajar Salai via Flag Staff Road may take the route via Muthusamy Bridge, Muthusamy Road, R.A. Mandram and NFS Road to reach Parry's Corner and Anna Salai and Wallajah Road to reach Kamarajar Salai.

**5.** The vehicles coming before 8.45 am with red and purple colour passes should take Rajaji Salai and alight at Secretariat gate. After alighting, the vehicles will be parked inside Secretariat. Vehicles

issued with red and purple colour passes coming after 08.45 a.m. will take the route via Flag Staff Road and enter St. George Fort through Wallajah Gate. They should follow the same instruction given to blue and pink colour pass holders.

**6.** The vehicles issued with blue and pink colour passes will take the route either via Flag Staff Road and Wallajah Gate or via Muthusamy Bridge, Muthusamy Road, NFS Road, Parry's Corner and RBI subway to reach Secretariat out gate out for disembarkation. These vehicles will be parked on the PWD parking lot (opposite to Secretariat).

**7.** Those vehicles without passes will alight near War Memorial and the vehicles will be allowed to park inside Island Ground through Anna Salai entry.

Police appealed the motorist to co-operate.

## Saving heritage



In an attempt to prevent damage to the heritage structure of Thirumalai Nayak Palace in Madurai caused by pigeon droppings, nets are laid in the palace — DC

## Man who married minor booked under Pocso Act

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

Two persons including a man who allegedly married a 16-year-old minor girl were arrested under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act in separate cases in the city.

The Sriperumbudur all-women police arrested a 24-year-old man for sexually harassing two minor sisters aged 11 and 6. The accused, Kannan of Ranipettai, is a construction worker.

The victims' parents are daily wage labourers and usually come home late after work. On Wednesday, Kannan entered the house of the victims in an inebriated condition and allegedly harassed them. When their parents came home in

Sriperumbudur all-women police arrested a 24-year-old man for sexually harassing two minor sisters aged 11 and 6. The accused, Kannan of Ranipettai, is a construction worker

the evening, the girls narrated the incident to them. The accused was beaten up and then handed over to the police. The Sriperumbudur all-women police registered a case and remanded him under Pocso Act.

The Tambaram all-women police have arrested a 23-year-old man for allegedly kidnapping and marrying a 16-year-old girl from the city over two months ago. The suspect was picked up from Chithodu in

Erode, where he was staying with the minor.

According to the police, the accused has been identified as Nivendran (23). Nivendran who hails from Erode and resides in Selaiyur near Tambaram worked in a restaurant. He befriended the minor girl. The girl got married to the accused, about two months ago and she left home without telling anyone. Based on a complaint filed by her parents at the Tambaram all-women police station, a task force was formed to track the whereabouts of the child.

They allegedly lived in Erode, from where a police special team picked them. Nivendran was slapped under Pocso Act by the police and the girl was handed over to the family. Investigation is under way.

## HC refuses to suspend life term awarded to murder accused

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

The Madras high court has declined to suspend the operation of the order of the trial court, awarding life sentence to a 30-year-old accused for murdering a woman with whom he was having living in relationship, on September 6, 2017, in Erode district.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and V.M.Velumani dismissed the petition filed by Karthi alias Manikandan, seeking to suspend the judgment of conviction and sentence dated December 13, 2019, passed by the court of sessions judge, Magalir Neeth Mandram (Fast Track Mahila Court). Erode district.

The case of the prosecution is that Karthika, who is a married lady, came to her parents house along with a female child, after



dispute with her husband. Thereafter, she developed illegal relationship with the petitioner, when she visited his cell phone shop often for recharging. Thereafter, the deceased and the petitioner were living together in a separate house. On the date of occurrence, i.e., on September 6, 2017, the deceased came and complained to the family members that the petitioner is arranging for marriage with some other lady.

Therefore, the family members along with the deceased came and questioned the petitioner and left the deceased in the shop. In the evening, when they came, the petitioner and the boy who was working in the shop ran away from the shop. When they went into the shop, they found the body of the deceased packed in a gunny bag and there were strangulation marks in the neck. Two prosecution witnesses have categorically stated that they left the deceased in the shop and thereafter, when they visited the shop in the evening, the petitioner ran away from the shop and the body of the deceased was packed in a gunny bag. The prosecution was able to prove through evidence especially two prosecution witnesses who have categorically stated that the petitioner was having illegal relationship with the deceased and was

living separately in a rented house, the bench added.

The bench said further the two prosecution witnesses deposed that they left the deceased with the petitioner and in the evening, she was found to be murdered.

The circumstantial evidence, especially two prosecution witnesses would be clinching evidence to prove that the petitioner alone was responsible for the murder, especially when the body was found in the shop and the petitioner and the boy who was working in the shop ran away from the shop.

"The timing of the FIR and arrest of the accused are the points to be argued at the time of final disposal of the appeal and therefore, there is no arguable points at present for granting suspension of sentence. Therefore, the petition stands dismissed", the bench added.

## Plasma donation



Forty city police personnel who have fully recovered from coronavirus on Thursday donated plasma blood at RGGG. Health minister Dr C.Vijaya Baskar, commissioner of police Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal and health secretary J. Radhakrishnan appreciated them and distributed certificates. — DC

## Changing shopping trends amid corona

**B. Vijayalakshmi**

## Viewpoint

With shopping habits and consumer behaviour changing rapidly amid Covid crisis, online shopping is steadily getting back on growth track.

A few days ago, it was reported that Amazon India's Prime Day sales had surpassed the daily number of its flagship sales. It also recorded a big jump in Prime membership subscriptions during the 48-hour shopping festival compared to last year.

Though malls and big stores have opened in some cities, people, scared of corona outbreak, prefer buying online as everything is delivered at their

doorstep.

The local shops within a radius of a few kilometres have gone for digital makeover. They get their customers to place orders through WhatsApp and deliver them at their homes. Most of them offer contactless delivery along with sanitisation of the products ordered.

However, manpower shortage haunts local grocery and vegetable stores which get orders on a large-

scale.

Similarly, e-retailers and online grocers, which have restored operations in larger cities, are hit by huge backlog of orders and shortage of workers. Also stretched delivery timelines will hit their business in the long run.

To stay competitive amid this changing shopping scenario, e-commerce sellers have also added sanitisers, soaps and other hygienic items to meet the demands

of the consumers.

Though most of the people are still buying essential commodities, sale of non essentials like cellphones, electronic items, small and large appliances, clothes, jewellery and footwear is picking up.

Post Covid, will people favour online shopping, which offers them discounts, safety, comfort and ease, and shun traditional in-store shopping is a million dollar question.



## SHORT Takes

## Third gender commits suicide

DC CORRESPONDENT  
PERAMBALUR, AUG. 13

A 21-year-old third gender, allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself, in another third gender's house here, on Thursday.

Police said the deceased, D Yuvan Sankar Raja alias Kajal, hailing from Theni was residing with a few other third genders in Salem. Kajal had come as a guest to the house of another third gender, Manisha, at Perambalur, 10 days back. When the occupants of Manisha house were away from home, Kajal hung herself from the ceiling fan on Thursday. Perambalur police retrieved the body and sent it to the government hospital for post-mortem, and are investigating.

## Plea to withdraw e-passes

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, AUG. 13

LS member and Congress leader S Thirunavukkarasar appealed to Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami to withdraw the current e-pass system immediately, since it was very troublesome to public. In a release here on Thursday, Thirunavukkarasar pointed out that as per the Centre's suggestion, the e-pass system has been withdrawn in all other states except Tamil Nadu. He said, since there are no hotels, people will not undertake unnecessary travel. They would travel for medical treatment, attending marriages and condolence functions only. Realising this, the chief minister should withdraw the e-pass system immediately, he added.

## 392 given funds for mushroom biz

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NAGAPATTINAM, AUG 13

As many as 392 beneficiaries in 39 village panchayat areas in the district will be given ₹2 lakh each for undertaking mushroom husbandry for their livelihood, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MRNEG) during the year 2020-2021, said Collector Praveen P Nair. After inspecting the establishment of a mushroom husbandry shed at Perungkadambanur village near here on Thursday, Nair told newsmen that under this programme, selected beneficiaries would be given adequate training and each beneficiary would have a monthly income of ₹20,000.

## Musical fete to honour corona warriors

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, AUG. 13

In its bid to celebrate the courage, commitment and unfathomable spirit of our Covid warriors, the 'Dalmia Bharat' group is organizing 'Jazbaa-e-Bharat' – an online musical extravaganza, featuring Padma Shri Kailash Kher and Grammy Award winner Ricky Kej, on August 14.

In a release here on Thursday, MD & CEO, Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd., Mahendra Singhi, said, "We are honoured to have Padma Shri Kailash Kher and Grammy Award winner Ricky Kej at Jazbaa-e-Bharat, a musical concert aimed to honour our nation's resilience in the fight against the pandemic. Words fall short in describing the unwavering dedication of our Covid warriors. Doyens in the music field like Udit Narayan, his son Aditya Narayan, prominent multilingual singer Benny Dayal, and the ever melodious Jonita Gandhi, would perform in the event, the release added. The link to the event is available on all social media platforms. Click on the link: <https://www.dblconcert.com> to join the event.

## Panneerselvam calls for unity in AIADMK

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

Quoting the operative lines of an old MGR film song from the film, 'Naalai Namade' (Tomorrow is Ours) as the prelude, O. Panneerselvam, Deputy Chief Minister and coordinator of AIADMK, put out a tweet on Thursday night, which sounded like a call to party cadre to take an united stand, perhaps on the issue of the next Chief Ministerial candidate.

In the backdrop of too much media speculation on differences within the party on the next Chief

Ministerial candidate of AIADMK, when four senior party functionaries met at the AIADMK headquarters on Thursday doubts arose if there were too many aspirants within the party.

Though deputy coordinator of AIADMK K. P. Munusami and the other three functionaries C. V. Shanmugham, Vaithilingam and Manoj Pandian, made it clear to the media that Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswamy was doing well and that the Chief Minister candidate would be announced at the right time in the right way, doubts

over differences in the party were not dispelled.

It is in this context, the Panneerselvam's tweet assumes importance as the song urges all the 'sons of the same mother to stand on the same line and take a straight path, tomorrow will be theirs.' In the tweets that follow the main one, Panneerselvam stressed on the need to achieve a third-time victory in the elections in 2021.

He invokes the name of J Jayalathaa, saying that it was her dream to win the third term and also quotes the famous slogan of C N Annadurai, 'Duty, Dignity

and Discipline' to urge the cadre to put out an united fight. The title song of the film 'Naalai Namade' has, in fact, been a sort of anthem for the party, played at conferences and meetings, particularly when the party had been out of power. The lines are meant to inspire the cadre as it gives them the promise that tomorrow is theirs. So, Panneerselvam quoting the same lines to call for unity seems to be an attempt to remind not just the cadre but also the leaders of the party that their aim should be to win the 2021 election and nothing else.

## Assembly discussion on NEP vital: CPI leader

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC  
SALEM, AUG. 13

CPI state secretary R. Mutharasan told reporters here on Thursday the the National Education Policy (NEP) is not just about bilingual or trilingual education policy. The BJP-ruled Centre which follows 'Manu Dharma', is attempting to implement such policies in the education sector. Hence the state government convene the Assembly and pass a resolution against the National Education Policy.

All leaders, including the Prime Minister, must adhere to the policy of secularism. The late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa vehemently opposed NEET and the Uday power project, but our present Chief Minister Edappadi K Palanisami is relinquishing all its rights.

"The AIADMK is like a frog caught in the mouth of a snake. The BJP has swallowed the AIADMK and the frog that was devoured by the snake is no longer likely to return," said Mutharasan.

The BJP is trying to weaken the DMK and other secular parties to gain political momentum. The secular progressive coalition is not an alliance formed for elections.

The coalition has been fighting for the state's rights for more than two years. This struggle would continue and the coalition would face the coming legislative polls and win.

Commenting on e-passes, Mutharasan said, many states including Karnataka have abolished the e-pass.

The government claims that 75 percent of workers in Tamil Nadu can come to work in government and private companies, but refuses to provide e-passes.

The chief minister should review the current situation and issue e-passes or abolish the system, he added.

## The coalition has been fighting for the state's rights for more than two years. This struggle would continue and the coalition would face the coming legislative polls and win

being reimbursed for such surgeries through the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme and immune suppressants were also provided free of cost to the patients, he said.

He also listed the various programmes the state had undertaken to create an awareness on organ donation among all kinds of people in the state.

## AIADMK functionaries in southern dt back EPS

ARULOLI M | DC  
TIRUNELVELI, AUG. 13

The AIADMK functionaries in the southern districts throw their weight behind Edappadi K. Palaniswami as the party's chief minister candidate in the 2021 assembly election.

Though no party units here have made such a proposal so far, party's organising secretary, Sudha K Paramasivan of Tirunelveli, has individually expressed his backing for Edappadi as chief minister.

Denying any race for the chief minister's post within the party, Paramasivan said, party functionaries have unanimously wanted AIADMK to face the polls



projecting Edappadi K Palanisamy as its chief minister candidate.

Deputy secretary of Thoothukudi district unit of MGR youth wing in the party, Sathya Lakshmanan, a strong supporter of Srivaikundam MLA and

former minister, Shanmugathan, Thoothukudi district, also agrees with Sudha Paramasivan. He said that it has already been established within the party that O Panneerselvam would head the party, and Edappadi K Palanisamy will head the government, as chief minister.

A district functionary in Kanyakumari district also expressed his support to Palanisamy as chief minister, and added that this was not an issue at all within the party. Some of Sasikala's supporters deliberately trigger such issues to create factional feud to make way for Sasikala in future.



Final touches given to Vinayaka idols in Coimbatore. The government on Thursday banned procession of idols this year.

— DC

## No public celebration of Vinayaka Chaturthi this yr unfair: HM leader

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

The government has advised the public to celebrate Vinayaka Chaturthi at their homes in view of the curfew in force, under which installing idols in public places, taking them out in processions and immersing them in water bodies has been banned.

An official press release gave the advisory in view of the Vinayaka Chaturthi celebrations falling on August 22, reminding the people that the government was making all efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and to protect the people.

The release also urged people to maintain social distancing at the small temples that had been allowed to be open now and also to wear facemasks when they step out of their homes to buy articles in connection with the Vinayaka Chaturthi rituals.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
COIMBATORE, AUG. 13

The Hindu Munnani has charged the AIADMK-led Edappadi K. Palaniswami government of playing with the sentiments of Hindus by banning the Vinayaka Chaturthi celebrations this year. But as planned, HM workers would install one-and-half lakh Vinayaka idols all over the state and celebrate the festival, in compliance to the pandemic norms, said state president, Hindu Munnani, Kadeswara C. Subramaniam, here on Thursday.

Addressing the media, Kadeswara C. Subramaniam, said the Vinayaka Chaturthi festival has been celebrated in the state for over 36 years in harmony and unity. Likewise, the festival was planned to be organised this year also in compliance with government and health department norms. But unfortunately, the government has foiled everything, which is unfair.

This year also, the Hindu Munnani is preparing to observe the festival in a low-key manner. He blamed the government of taking great pains to open Tasmac shops in the state, whereas it has been very reluctant to permit worship in temples. Going against Hindutva norms, the government has banned Vinayaka Chaturthi across the state.

## City cops book S Ve Shekher

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

The Cyber Crime Branch of the Chennai police have registered a case against Actor-turned-politician S.Ve Shekher for insulting the national flag.

The city police, initiated action on S.Ve Shekar after one C Rajarathnam, a resident of Nungambakkam filed a complaint online. The complaint stated that Shekher has released a video on his YouTube channel on

August 3, in which he has made certain objectionable remarks with the criminal intent of spreading misinformation against the Chief Minister and insulting the national flag. The complainant added that the saffron colour in the national flag refers to strength and courage of the country, but Shekher misinterpreted the colour, claiming it to represent Hindus.

In the video, Shekhar also criticised the Chief Minister for opposing the three-language policy of

the Central government and alleged that the CM had himself learnt Hindi, but refuses to introduce it in government schools here. The complainant has sought immediate action against the BJP leader.

The police have booked Sekhar under two sections including The prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. He also listed the various programmes the state had undertaken to create an awareness on organ donation among people.

## Transplant surgeries held amid corona

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

Tamil Nadu had created history by performing organ transplant surgeries even in the midst of the coronavirus crisis by evolving norms for it, health minister C Vijaybaskar said on Thursday.

Taking part in a function organized on the occasion of the World Organ Donation Day at the govern-

ment multi-specialty Hospital at the Omandurar Government Estates, the health minister said the state was a pioneer in organ transplant and has been on the top for five years.

Transtam, the Transplant Authority of the Tamil Nadu government, was set up on December 12, 2014, to facilitate harvesting organs from brain dead persons and it was the first such

authority in the country. One brain dead person, by donating organs, can save the lives of eight sick persons, he said, adding that so far 1382 donations had happened in the State and 8163 organs had been harvested for donation.

For the poor the organ transplant surgeries were done free of cost in government and also private hospitals, Vijaybaskar said.

Up to Rs 25 lakh was

## Indigenous AMR launched

R VALAYAPATHY | DC  
TIRUCHY, AUG. 13

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday inaugurated the launching of 'Vidhwansak' - 14.5mm / 20mm (Anti-Materiel Rifle - AMR) through video-conferencing held at the Ordnance Factory, Tiruchirappalli (OFT), as part of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' (Self-Reliant India Mission).

Works Manager / Public Relation Officer, OFT, Dr C Ariya Sakthi, said in release that the AMR is a long range or a large caliber sniper rifle with two types of caliber 14.5 mm and 20 mm. It can be used to destroy enemy bunkers, light armoured vehicles, radar systems, communication equipment, parked aircraft, fuel storage facilities and the like.

It is a 'Single Shot, Bolt Action' weapon having a detachable three round magazine, and a range of 1,800 m for 14.5 mm caliber and 1,300 m for 20 mm cal-

iber. The rifle can quickly be dismantled and carried in two portable man-packs, each weighing about 12 to 15 kgs. Indigenization of this product would lead to achieving 'Atma Nirbharta', as it will be an import substitution. Indigenization of this weapon could save foreign exchange to the tune of US\$90 million. With the existing facilities, OFT can manufacture this weapon. This is likely to give a workload for another five years. The weapon was developed by the in-house R&D team of OFT, Tiruchy, without any MoU with foreign collaborators or support from external agencies, he added.

Chief of Defence Staff, India, General Bipin Rawat, defence secretary Ajay Kumar, secretary (Defence Production), Rajkumar, Chairman DGOF, OFB, Kolkata, Hari Mohan, and General Manager, OFT, Shirish Khare, participated in the event.



Volunteers have put up a mega sized mask on Anna Salai to create awareness.

— DC



## SHORT TAKES

### CONDITION OF PRANAB CRITICAL BUT STABLE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

The condition of former President Pranab Mukherjee remained critical but stable on Thursday, and seems to be responding to treatment even as rumours about his death floated in the social media, prompting both his family and the Army R&R Hospital to issue statements.

His son Abhijit Mukherjee said his father was slowly responding to interventions and all his vital parameters were stable now.

“My father is and has always been a fighter! He is slowly responding to medical interventions & all his vital parameters are stable. I urge every well-wisher to pray for my father’s speedy recovery! We need them,” Mr Abhijit Mukherjee tweeted.

Earlier Thursday, he rubbished the rumours about Pranab Mukherjee’s death, saying: “My father Shri Pranab Mukherjee is still alive & haemodynamically stable! Speculation & fake news being circulated by reputed journalists on the social media clearly reflects that media in India has become a factory of Fake News.”

The former President’s daughter, Sharmistha Mukherjee, tweeted: “Rumours about my father are false. Request, especially to the media, not to call me as I need to keep my phone free for any updates from the hospital.”

### KERALA OPPOSITION PLANS NO TRUST MOTION

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 13

Congress-led UDF in Kerala is likely to move no trust motion against the CPM-led Left Democratic Front government on August 24 in connection with the gold smuggling case involving Chief Minister’s former principal secretary and the failure of the government in effectively dealing with Covid-19 situation.

The Kerala Assembly is meeting on the August 24, a special day-long session, for passing the Finance Bill. Though the Opposition had given notice for no confidence motion on July 27, the session was postponed in the wake of increasing cases of Covid-19 situation in Thiruvananthapuram district. With the LDF having 91 members in the 140 (effective strength 138) member Assembly and UDF 43, the fate of the motion is already decided.

Apart from the Finance Bill, the election to Rajya Sabha seat which fell vacant following the death of veteran socialist leader M.P. Veerendrakumar will also take place. His son M.V. Shreyams Kumar is all set to contest as the joint candidate of ruling LDF.

### INDIA LAUNCHES LOCALLY MADE WEAPON SYSTEMS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, AUG. 13

Within few days of the Centre’s ban on the import of 101 defence items, 15 indigenously built weapons and products including a missile platform were launched on Thursday for the Indian armed forces.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh launched them in New Delhi. One of the 15 products is Nag Missile Carrier (NAMICA), a missile launching platform for the third generation anti-tank fire, using an indigenously produced Infantry Combat Vehicle with amphibious capabilities.

Jointly developed by Ordnance Factory Medak and Defence Research Development Laboratory, the platform can fire six missiles with a gap of 20 seconds.

The NAMICA has the potential for import substitution to the tune of ₹260 cr in the first phase, which may go upto more than ₹3,000 crore. It is followed by the 14.5/20 mm Anti Material Rifle, developed by the Ordnance Factory Tiruchirappalli. It is a dual calibre single shot with bolt action sniper rifle for destroying enemy bunkers, light armoured vehicles, radar systems etc. modular, man-portable and highly accurate.

Another is the 8.6x 70mm Sniper Rifle, made by the Rifle Factory Ishapore, which is a light and durable sniper rifle with a range of 1500m.



Security personnel carry out a flag march in the riot-hit area after a mob went on a rampage on Tuesday over a social media post, allegedly posted by a Congress MLA’s relative, in Bengaluru on Thursday.

## Role of SDPI in Bengaluru violence comes to the fore

### Several SDPI office-bearers arrested; RAF contingent holds flag march

**Bengaluru, Aug. 13:** Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday said the role of the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) behind the Tuesday night violence in parts of Bengaluru, had come to light and investigation will go deep into it and their connections.

The Minister said, four people associated with SDPI have been arrested in this regard and investigation is under way.

“K G Halli and D J Halli are peaceful since Wednesday and there have been no untoward incidents...as the investigation is progressing new information is coming out. I cannot share with you everything, but in the days to come I will share before the media,” Bommai said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, as per the information gathered so far and video footage, most importantly the role of SDPI is coming to light. We are collecting more

information regarding it, we are investigating deeply in this regard.

“Already, several SDPI office-bearers have been arrested. Muzammil

Pasha, the SDPI district secretary is the main (person), also Firoz, Afraz Pasha and Shaik Adil, all of them are from SDPI. Their role is completely being investigated and they have been arrested,” he added.

Three people were killed after police opened fire to quell a mob that went on a rampage in a city locality on Tuesday night over an inflammatory social media post allegedly put out by a Congress legislator’s relative.

Pulakeshi Nagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy’s residence and a police station at D J Halli were among those targeted by the angry mob.

The house of the MLA, who was not at home at the time, was allegedly set on fire. The rioters also torched many police and

private vehicles, badly damaged the house and looted the belongings of MLA Murthy and those of his sister. An ATM was smashed into pieces.

After the arson and violence, the entire DJ Halli resembled a war zone.

Nearly 140 people have been arrested so far, in connection with the incident. Bommai said, through some video footage it has come to light that SDPI workers had come from neighbouring areas of K G Halli and D J Halli, and it is being investigated.

“The investigation will look into who are behind the incident, its links with other such incidents in the past. We will go deep into it and will not rest until we break through this conspiracy,” he said.

Officials are also gathering details on cases against the SDPI in Mysuru, Mangaluru and other places, Bommai said, adding that all angles at the local level are also

being looked into like rivalry between and within political parties.

“Everything that might have led to this incident, we will investigate.

Whoever is at fault or have supported it, we will take action even if it is an elected representative,” he added. Assuring people of security, the Home Minister said, police have worked putting their life at risk, with Covid on one side and such incidents on the other.

“I appeal to people not to fear and cooperate in maintaining peace and order,” he added.

The SDPI on Wednesday had denied its role in the violence and had blamed police inaction.

The Karnataka government on Wednesday announced that a district magistrate would conduct an inquiry into the violence. The government has also decided to recover losses caused to public property during the violence from the rioters.

Meanwhile, Muzamil Pasha and others have been named as one of the many accused in the FIR.

The police registered at least five FIRs in connection with the incident - two in Devara Jeevanahalli (DJ Halli) and three in Kadugondanahalli (KG Halli) stations.

Besides Pasha, police have named Afnan, Syed Masood, Ayaz and Allabaksh in the first FIR at DJ Halli. The second FIR has three names and ‘other 200 persons.’

The police in their FIR charged the rioters with barging into the two police stations with an intention to kill the policeman there and kill the Pulakeshinagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy’s nephew whose alleged inflammatory post in social media enraged a section of the society.

Meanwhile, a contingent of the Rapid Action Force conducted a flag march in the riot-hit areas.

## Youth form human chain to protect temple

**Bengaluru, Aug. 13:**

Youth, including those from a minority community, decided to protect a temple when a mob was going on a rampage here after being irked over a social media post on an allegedly communally sensitive issue.

A video of the youth quickly forming the human chain to protect the Hanuman temple on Shampura Main Road has gone viral, even as the mob was indulging in arson.

The human chain was

formed on Tuesday night as a result of some quick thinking while violence sent shock waves across DJ Halli, KG Halli and neighbouring areas of Pulakeshinagar.

“We saw the rioters coming in groups towards the temple and their intention seemed to damage it. Then we decided to form a human chain to protect it,” a youth who wished not to be named, said. He expressed fear that any damage to the temple could have complicated things further.

## Ram Mandir Trust head tests positive

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 13

India’s coronavirus count was close to 24 lakhs on Thursday with nearly 67,000 fresh cases detected in a day. Among the newly infected was the head of the Ram Mandir Trust, Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, 80, who was rushed to Gurgaon’s Medanta Hospital soon after testing positive.

Das, president of the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Nyas, was at Sri Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura till 1.30 am Thursday and till then he had not complained about his health.

On August 5, Das shared the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath, UP governor Anandiben Patel and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

The health ministry said Thursday morning that India’s total count was 23,96,637 while the death toll was over 47,000, with 942 fatalities in the last 24 hours. Covid19India.org said, however, that India’s total cases had crossed 24 lakhs.

India, at the same time, posted the highest-ever single day recoveries of 56,383 people, as total recoveries reached nearly 17 lakhs.

The case fatality rate further improved to 1.96 per cent, and the recovery rate was at 70.77 per cent, it said.

“The record high recoveries ensured the actual caseload of the country, the active cases, had reduced and was now only 27.27 per cent of total positive cases,” the ministry said.

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13**

Greater Hyderabad witnessed a steep fall in Covid-19 cases with the health department reporting that 298 fresh cases were found till Wednesday evening, down from 479 cases recorded on Tuesday.

In its latest bulletin on Covid-19, the department said 1,931 new cases were recorded across the state along with 11 fatalities between Tuesday and Wednesday. The total Covid-19 infected people rose to 86,475 while the number of deaths increased to 665.

**9,996 new cases in Andhra Pradesh**

**Visakhapatnam:** 13: As many as 9,996 Covid-19 positive cases were

reported in Andhra Pradesh during the past 24 hours. The virus claimed six lives while 1,427 patients were discharged during the period. High tension is prevailing in East Godavari district where 1,504 cases were reported followed by Chittoor 963, Anantapur 856 and West Godavari district with 853 cases.

**Biggest single day spike in Kerala**

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala on Thursday recorded biggest single day spike in Covid-19 cases so far with 1564 cases. Of the new cases 1380 contracted the infection through contact, 60 persons came from abroad, 100 from other states while the source of infection among 98 is yet to be ascertained.

## Bhadauria visits frontline air base

**PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 13**

Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria on Thursday flew fighter aircraft MiG 21 Bison on a frontline air base under Western Air Command to send a message that the Air Force is all prepared to take on any challenge from the adversaries.

Western Air Command looks after both the crucial borders with China in Ladakh and with Pakistan from Ladakh upto Bikaner in Rajasthan.

Indian Air Force said that Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria visited a frontline air base in Western Air Command. He was briefed by the Air Officer Commanding of the base on the readiness and operational status of the lodger units located at the base.

Air Force chief reviewed the operational preparedness of the base and interacted with air force personnel serving on the frontlines.

He urged the air force personnel to maintain the highest standards of readiness.

He also appreciated their efforts in preserving IAF’s combat potential during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Indian Air Force has kept almost all its air bases under the Western Command at a “very high level of readiness” in view of the over three-month border row with China in eastern Ladakh.

The Western Air Command has over 200 bases placed under its command and has been involved in all major operations in India since independence.

Due to its geographical location, the Command has always been the hub-centre of all operational activities during any operation including Kashmir Operations 1947-48, Sino-Indian conflict 1962, Indo-Pak war 1965, Indo-Pak war 1971, Operation Pawan 1986 (Sri Lanka) and Operation Safed Sagar 1999 (Kargil).

## ALARM | BELLS

### A lot many who contract Covid-19 go untested, says study

## Symptomatic to Asymptomatic ratio 1:30

**KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG 13**

For every three symptomatic Covid-19 patients, there are 100 asymptomatic patients in Asia, according to analysis by the Confederation of Medical Association of Asia and Oceania (CMAAO).

In India, the statistics change to 30 asymptomatic cases to every symptomatic patient test-

ed positive, and 20 go untested. This is because the Indian health system is unable to carry out contact tracing, the social stigma surrounding Covid-19 and the limited understanding of the disease among the population.

The increased spread of cases has been noted in closed environments, crowded places where there is no proper social distancing and lack of

ventilation facilities. In India, joint families have been most affected and toilets have been the source of the spread of infection, where there is only one bathroom in households.

In districts, this aspect has come to the fore, as seven to eight residents share one bathroom. According to analysis, the virus has behaved in the same manner across cities, districts and coun-

tries where the higher viral load, lack of medical intervention and inability to avail medical services in time has led to complications.

Apart from this, co-morbid conditions of heart disease, diabetes, kidney and other organ complications have caused rapid deterioration of the health of Covid-19 patients, leading to death in many cases.

Apart from the lungs,

the load of virus has also been found in the heart, liver, kidney, pancreas, and ejected through stools and tears.

Dr K.K. Aggarwal, president, CMAAO, said, “In India, we have moved from community mitigation to individual containment. Wearing of masks and following social distancing have to be followed strictly. Only this is going to ensure that there are no spurts of cases.”



## SHORT TAKES

## UN SAYS 43% OF SCHOOLS LACK WATER, SOAP

Johannesburg, Aug. 13: The United Nations estimates that 43 per cent of schools around the world don't have access to water and soap for basic hand-washing. The new report comes as countries wrestle with when and how to safely open schools amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The report by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF says more than one-third of the 818 million children around the globe who lacked basic hand-washing facilities at their schools last year are in sub-Saharan Africa. The report says authorities must balance health concerns with economic and social ones in deciding on opening schools, and it notes the negative effects that long closures have on children. The report also says one in three schools around the world have limited or no drinking water service.

## STUDY: CLIMATE CHANGE KILLED WOOLLY RHINOS

Washington, Aug. 13: A woolly brown rhinoceros that weighed two tons once roamed northeastern Siberia before mysteriously disappearing around 14,000 years ago.

Was its demise caused by humans, or the warming climate of the time?

A new study by a Swedish and Russian team of scientists who examined DNA fragments from the remains of 14 of these prehistoric mammals lets our species off the hook.

They say the population of the animal — also known by its scientific name *Coelodonta antiquitatis* — remained stable for millennia as they lived alongside humans, before dropping sharply toward the end of the last ice age. "That makes it more likely that climatic changes that happened around 14,000 years ago are the primary driver of extinction, rather than humans," Love Dalen, a geneticist said.

## Flight warning as Mt Sinabung spews ash

Rumbling volcano erupts for the 8th time in less than a week

Jakarta, Aug. 13: Indonesia's Mount Sinabung erupted again on Thursday with a string of blasts that sent plumes of ash two kilometres (1.2 miles) into the sky, triggering a flight warning and fears of lava flows.

The activity marked at least the eighth time that the rumbling volcano on Sumatra island has erupted in less than a week, although there were no injuries or major damage reported.

Authorities issued a warning to planes flying

near the volcano which last saw a deadly eruption in 2016.

"There is potential for more eruptions and airlines are asked to be on alert," said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Raditya Jati.

The crater's alert status remained at the second-highest level.

Jati said authorities had marked a five-kilometre no-go-zone around Sinabung and warned of possible lava flows.

"Locals are advised to wear face masks if they

leave their homes to guard against the health effects of volcanic ash on health," he added.

On Monday, Sinabung belched a tower of smoke and ash some five kilometres high, coating local communities in a thick layer of debris, after eruptions at the weekend.

Sinabung roared back to life in 2010 for the first time in 400 years. After another period of inactivity it erupted once more in 2013, and has remained highly active since. In 2016, seven people died in

one of Sinabung's eruptions, while a 2014 eruption killed 16.

In late 2018, a volcano in the strait between Java and Sumatra islands erupted, causing an underwater landslide and tsunami that killed more than 400 people.

Indonesia is home to about 130 active volcanoes due to its position on the "Ring of Fire", a belt of tectonic plate boundaries encircling the Pacific Ocean where frequent seismic activity occurs. — *AFP*

## VENEZUELA OPP LEADERS OPEN OIL SPILL PROBE

Caracas, Aug. 13: Venezuela's opposition-run congress has opened an investigation into an oil spill that continues to pollute palm-lined beaches along the South American nation's Caribbean coast, legislator Maria Gabriela Hernandez said on Wednesday. Authorities said last week they were cleaning up the oil slick that washed up on the coast of Falcon state, known for wetlands and nature preserves, but did not provide an estimate of how much had spilled or the cause of the incident.

The legislature's environment commission is now asking government institutions, including state oil company PDVSA, for details on what maintenance was carried out at the 1.46,000 barrel-per-day El Palito refinery, where the oil is believed to have originated.

## 3 SPANIARDS DEAD, 1 MISSING IN SWISS MISHAP

Geneva, Aug. 13: Three Spanish tourists are dead and a fourth remains missing following a canyoning accident in Switzerland, police said on Thursday. Four men were reported missing after a severe thunderstorm on Wednesday. St Gallen police said in a statement. Three were found dead during the night. The accident happened in the Parliobel gorge in Vattin, near the eastern Swiss border.

"The three dead men and the missing are Spanish tourists," the cantonal police said.

"They were together on a canyoning tour in the Parliobel gorge and must have been taken by surprise by the storm."

## Wildfire explodes near LA, prompts evacuations

Los Angeles, Aug. 13: A fast-moving brush fire north of Los Angeles prompted mandatory evacuation orders for some 500 homes on Wednesday as firefighters battled the flames that had burned 10,000 acres by early evening, authorities said.

The Lake Fire erupted at around 3:30 pm (22:30 GMT) near Lake Hughes, about a 90-minute drive from Los Angeles.

Rapidly-spreading flames had scorched some 10,000 acres (4,050 hectares) within a little more than three hours, according to the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

"Multiple agencies are battling a brush fire near the Lake Hughes area in the Angeles National Forest," the department said in a tweet.

The smoke plume from

● **RAPIDLY-SPREADING flames had scorched some 10,000 acres (4,050 hectares) within a little more than three hours, according to the Los Angeles County Fire Department.**

the flames could be seen miles away from the site of the fire. More than 300 firefighters backed by helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft were deployed to fight the blaze.

"#LASD deputies currently evacuating residents in the area," the fire department said in another tweet, referring to the LA Sheriff's Department. "Please help us help you & our loved ones get out safely." Wildfires have become more frequent and bigger in California in recent years, in part driven by climate change. — *AFP*

## China's deadly summer floods have caused \$25 bn in damage

Beijing, Aug. 13: Summer floods in China have left more than 200 people dead or missing and caused \$25 billion in direct damage, an emergency management official said on Thursday.

The floods struck major river systems across the central and southern parts of the country.

Major cities have been largely spared by the flooding but the impact compounds losses to the economy from the coronavirus outbreak that began in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Vice Minister of Emergency Management Zhou Xuewen told reporters 219 people were listed as dead or missing and 54,000 homes had been destroyed.

Economic losses of 178.9 billion yuan (\$25.7 billion) were 15.9 per

## 'Clean your plate campaign' set up to avert food crisis in China

Beijing, Aug. 13: China has officially launched a new version of "Clean Your Plate Campaign" flagged by Chinese President Xi Jinping, sparking speculation that the world's most populous country faces food crisis following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Xi earlier said that food wastage was shocking and distressing, and that it is necessary to further enhance public awareness of the issue, cultivate

thrifty habits and foster a social environment where waste is shameful and thriftiness is good. "Different from the previous campaign, which was aimed at putting an end to officials' extravagant feasts and receptions, the 2.0 version calls for the public to stop wasting food," state-run *Global Times* reported on Thursday.

"The initiative initially sparked speculation by some media over whether China is in a food crisis.

Experts say the world indeed faces a food shortage, but for China, the real threat to food security comes more from food wastage than epidemic or floods," it said. After he took over power in 2012, Xi in an image-building exercise banned luxury banquets with liquor, especially for the military which has been asked not to waste food and feed on leftovers and keep away from fancy food during official banquets. — *PTI*

cerns remain over employment and the fate of its export markets amid the continuing trade war with the United States. — *AFP*

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** A business partnership may be favourable. Strong finances are indicated. Be careful in love. You may be lucky in games of chance and speculation.



**Taurus:** Politicians will enjoy mass support but should avoid controversies. Legal matters may not be favourable. Expenses may mount but stay within control.



**Gemini:** Expected financial help may be delayed. Professionals will acquire new clientele. This is the day for business expansion and implementing new ideas.



**Cancer:** What initially seems unfavourable may be a blessing. Avoid taking up too many responsibilities. Lack of appreciation may prove frustrating.



**Leo:** Children may cause anxiety. New avenues of income will open up. Ancestral property matters will be settled. Long-term investments will be profitable.



**Virgo:** Professionals and businessmen will progress. Efforts will be recognised. Politicians will take right decisions. Those involved in creative arts will do well. A skin problem is likely.

## You share your b'day with

Johnny Lever is an Indian film actor and one of the most noted comedians in Hindi cinema. Lever is one of the first stand-up comedians in India.



**Libra:** Students will get good news. Be cautious about partnerships and foreign ventures. Regular income may be delayed. Refrain from making major financial decisions. Red tape may trouble businessmen.



**Scorpio:** Elders and siblings may help financially. Students may incur displeasure of superiors. Legal tangles may worsen. Your health needs attention.



**Sagittarius:** Finances are comfortable. Legal matters may end well. Long-delayed plans will materialize. New partnerships and ventures will be profitable.



**Capricorn:** Job-satisfaction is assured. Your spouse will be supportive. Students will be successful in competitive examinations. Transfers are likely.



**Aquarius:** Guard against plots hatched by enemies. Shyness may hamper romance. A legal battle might be decided in your favour. You may travel abroad on work. You experience pure love.



**Pisces:** Students will excel in studies. A salary hike is likely. You may need to cut your expenditure. Your inability to refuse financial favours will prove burdensome. The self-employed will open new offices.



bridge  
PHILLIP  
ALDER

TRY  
TO  
RESTRAIN  
THAT  
IMPULSE

Who said this? "Acting is the expression of a neurotic impulse. It's a bum's life. Quitting acting, that's the sign of maturity."

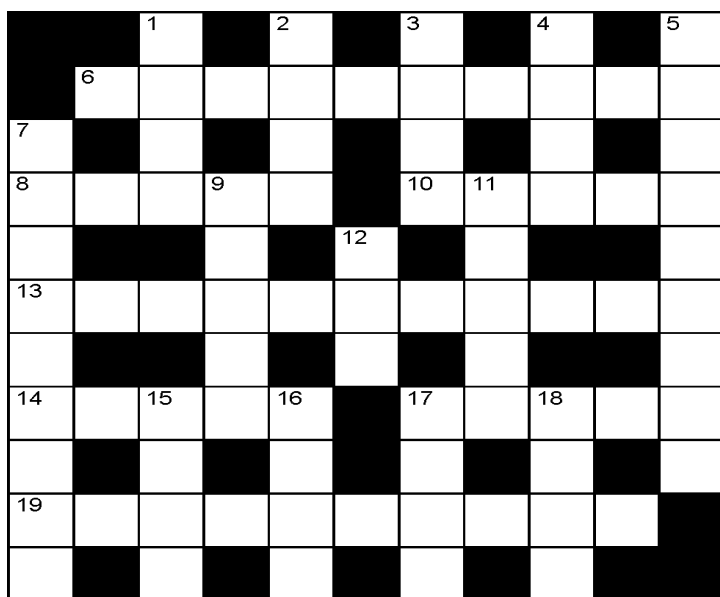
There are several signs of maturity in a bridge player. One is avoiding the impulse that befell West in this deal. Since North couldn't respond initially, South should have passed out two spades. However, when he bid a third time, North, with three trumps, a ruffing

value and an ace, was justified in jumping to game. Also, note East's one-no-trump overall. In the balancing -- or passout -- position, this showed only 11-14 high-card points.

Declarer won the first trick with dummy's heart ace, played a diamond to his queen, cashed the diamond ace and led his low diamond. Greedily, West ruffed with the spade jack -- and gave away the contract. Declarer trumped the next

North			
7	4	3	2
6	5	4	3
2	3	4	5
East			
10	9	8	7
6	5	4	3
2	3	4	5
South			
10	9	8	7
6	5	4	3
2	3	4	5
Declarer: South			
10	9	8	7
6	5	4	3
2	3	4	5
Defender: North			
10	9	8	7
6	5	4	3
2	3	4	5
Defender: East			
10	9	8	7
6	5	4	3
2	3	4	5
Opening lead: ♠ Q			

## QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

6. Make impure, doctor (10)

8. Poverty-stricken (5)

10. Male relative (5)

13. Blotted out (11)

14. Adhesive liquid (5)

17. Grey-faced (5)

19. Standardised image (10)

Down

1. Slight advantage (4)

2. Potter's material (4)

3. S. American country (4)

4. Bathroom powder (4)

5. Addicted (9)

7. Pam's scene (anag) (9)

9. Wander off course (5)

11. Comes closer (5)

12. Dampen (3)

15. Prophet (4)

16. Balanced (4)

17. Male voice (4)

18. Exaggerated publicity (4)

## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Leaves, 3. Wasp, 7. Clog, 8. Anchor, 10. Capital, 13. Singlet, 16. Beaver, 17. Boss, 18. Dupe, 19. Rivals.

Down: 1. Lace, 2. Anorak, 4. Ache, 5. Permit, 6. Enlarge, 9. Limited, 11. Forbid, 12. Senora, 14. Camp, 15. Asks.

## Word Mine

I  
R  
M  
I  
C  
I  
C  
T  
S

TODAY'S RATINGS: 3 AVERAGE: 4  
GOOD: 5 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine-letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

## jumble

VIWEA  
DLOYD  
NHYYNW  
GMOYSG

Yesterday's Jumbles: SHEEP VISOR UNTRUE CAMERA  
Answer: Two holes in one in a row! The golfers were stumped at the -- COURSE OF EVENTS

heart, ruffed a diamond in the dummy and ran the spade eight. Another trump from the dummy restricted East to his spade ace, and South lost only two spades and one club.

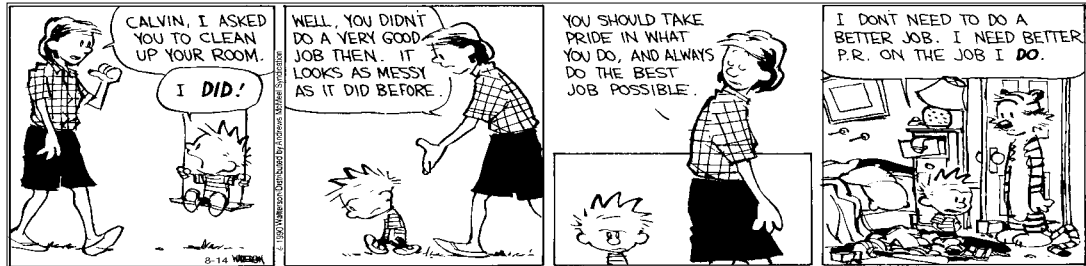
West should have discarded at trick four. Probably, declarer would have ruffed in the dummy, crossed to the club ace and led a fourth diamond. But now West could have gone in with his spade jack and continued with either a

heart or the king and another club. As South couldn't have gotten into the dummy, East would have scored two spade tricks for down one.

The original comment was made by Marlon Brando, who obviously didn't practice what he preached.

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## CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



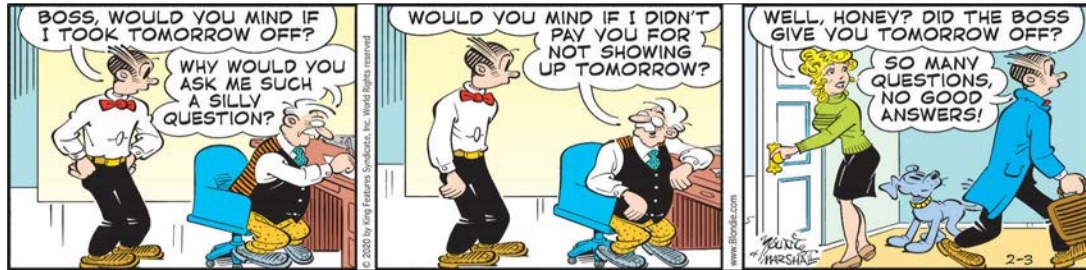
## THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



## ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



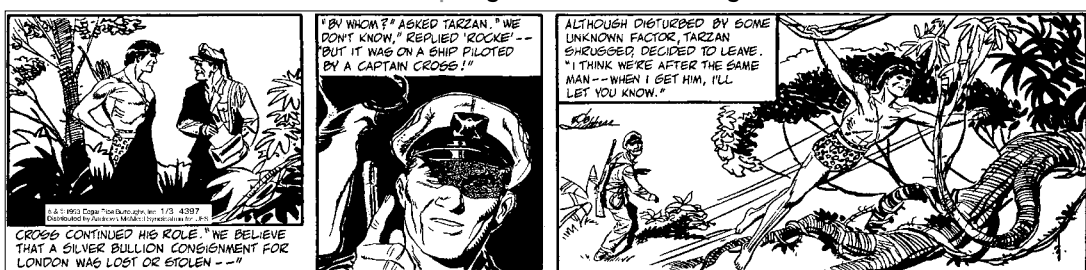
## BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



## ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



## TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs





## DECCAN Chronicle

14 AUGUST 2020

### Kamala Harris: A smart choice by US Democrats

The Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's pick of running mate in Kamala Harris is historic in more ways than one. Her selection will resonate with a large section of American voters even as it spotlights the growing importance of Black voters, more so of Black women who have fought for decades since the suffragette revolution for their voices to be heard and their ambitions given equal opportunity. Her Afro-Caribbean-Jamaican and Indian parentage brings to the centre stage once again the immigrants' American dream and middle class aspirations that have been threatened in four years of Trump and at a time when the world is in the grip of a raging pandemic.

The USA of today is far more of a racial and cultural melting pot than it was when a Chennai woman broke her Indian shackles and set forth to study in the USA back in 1958 and her daughter now represents eloquently the fight for equal opportunity and equal justice. The Democratic ticket needed this burst of energy to back the 78-year-old Joe Biden. Whether he is to be viewed as a transitional leader or not, what Democrats have right now is a Vice President candidate acceptable to a large section of the population besides the fundraising ability of a prosperous West Coast Senator who is married to a Jew. Far from damaging the handy lead pollsters are giving Biden, she may add value.

Biden's choice predictably ignited the misogynistic, sexist Donald Trump into offending nearly half the US population by bringing back affront to women's dignity in his attitude that is more suited to the Middle Ages. It is at an inflection point in contemporary history of civil strife in the time of the tragic George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement that his death inspired bringing Harris into the limelight and making her presence on the ticket a smart choice indeed. Furthermore, when the Donald Trump administration is seen to be not only ineffective in handling the Covid-19 pandemic but also deliberately and cynically contemptuous of a threat that has killed more than 1.66 lakh Americans, she brings strength with substance and not just symbolism to a Democratic ticket promising at least the much-needed empathy to a difficult situation.

The far right may have reason to believe Harris, brought up more as a Black kid singing in the church choir than a Tamil Brahmin (and yet mindful of her mother's legacy) is too far to the left while the liberals believe she is, like Biden, too much at the centre. The Chinese are already annoyed by her brave and moral stand on the discriminatory treatment of Uighur Muslims. Harris' strong views on CAA, Kashmir and other home policies may be seen as abrasive by official India. Most Indian-Americans would, however, sense a chance to be more of a mainstream community in their adopted country with their votes likely to be valuable in battleground states. An antidote to the most divisive president in modern history is bound to come with ideologies and philosophies that are principled and it is not only in her animus towards Trump that a politician such as this must be seen as a champion to fight the forces in these conflicted times.

### Show no mercy to rioters

The vandalism that followed an inflammatory Facebook post and the police firing which cost the lives of three youngsters in Bengaluru on Wednesday point to the urgent need for the authorities to be on a state of high alert against attempts to flame communal passions and throw life into disarray. Hurting religious sentiments is a punishable offence in India. So, anyone who does it knows about its implications, and as such, must be brought to book. The same logic works for believers, too, and they must know that the legal system is capable of dealing with deliberate attempts to denigrate religious figures.

The Bengaluru rioters deserve no mercy as they torched the home of a legislator, set fire to vehicles and even attacked a police station. The Social Democratic Party of India, which now stands accused of having a role in the violence, has a history of portraying themselves as the champions of the Muslim cause in India while pursuing an often-counterproductive path of violence to achieve their ends. Such forces must be made to understand that rule of law prevails in the country.

The BJP, which is ruling the state, was quick to condemn the riot and blame "appeasement" saying the Congress was silent about the vandalism though a Congress legislator, who is a dalit, was at the receiving end. The Opposition party must respond to the charge and take an unequivocal stand against communal elements in society.

Bengaluru police stopped the violence from turning into a communal riot. However, the assertions by the ministers and senior police officials that the violence was planned beg the question why the police did not take preventive action. They must do more and prevent its recurrence. This country can ill-afford more calamities, manmade or otherwise.

Subhani



## Why Ayodhya was not like battle for freedom



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

We are limping toward our 73rd Independence Day with little enthusiasm. The mood cannot but be downbeat after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's morale eroding recent Ayodhya foray.

The most narrow-minded Hindu, who (even if inadvertently) takes his cue from an outfit with a militaristic anti-democracy mindset that espouses antagonism toward particular religions, and weakens the core concepts of modern Indian nationhood rooted in our freedom movement, may have been charged up that day. But even such people have to think of their home fires, the pandemic at the door, and the push of expansionist China's army inside our borders.

Their evidently pseudo "Ram bhakti", or devotion to the exalted ideals exemplified by Lord Ram, has no basis in religion. Its fundamentals lie elsewhere — in the corrosive alleyways of politics that seek religion-based domination of society and the political space — as in Pakistan, for instance, and can without exaggeration be called non-sacred devotion to the divine.

The entire Ayodhya temple project has, in fact, been a massive enterprise in the politics of bigotry in which religion is whipped up as a mobilising tool with the aim of acquiring and retaining power on premises that are unconnected with the demands of everyday life. And this is why, eventually, it is likely to prove of little avail against such powerful counter-urges as have been noted above — those of pressing concerns of the country.

Even if an ideologically-crazed and politically greedy Prime Minister is

not ready at present to comprehend this, he is likely to be brought down to earth when ordinary Indians begin to feel the pinch and hold him and his buddies to account.

A (probably modified) Turkish proverb runs thus: "The forest was shrinking but the trees kept voting for the axe, for the axe was clever and convinced the trees that because his handle was made of wood he was one of them." In this the metaphor of our present politics (and indeed that of Turkey) becomes clear as day.

Just 10 days before India was to mark the 73rd anniversary of its freedom from colonial rule — and of attaining in that process the composite identity of a common nationhood, which is an overarching canopy across our complex identities of religion, caste, language and ethnicity — the Prime Minister struck at the fundamental precepts enshrined in the idea of Indian independence. These had even served as a model to many countries as the process of decolonisation unfolded across the world.

It was careful choreography that the temple-building trust (which seems an extension of the PMO) chose August 5 — the very date last year on which the constitutionally-ordained autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, was snatched away by the Centre by adopting illegal and irregular ways that have been challenged in the Supreme Court, and the region brought under militarised suppression with not even a semblance of democratic governance — to lay the foundation of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The Kashmir-to-Ayodhya common template was clearly intend-

ed to overtly demonstrate the suppression of Muslim aspirations in India by the Indian State under the RSS-BJP aegis, although Muslims were equal participants in the freedom movement.

The RSS-BJP cohorts had declared from the start that the temple of their dreams would be erected at the exact spot where the Babri Masjid, a 16th century mosque of no particular significance (the Supreme Court rejected the propaganda that the mosque was on built on the ruins of a temple), had stood and was violently pulled down on December 6, 1992.

This was ruthlessly ensured through an illogical and justifiably condemned decree of the Supreme Court in November last year. A judgment in favour of Ram Lalla (beloved Ram) would hardly have presented a problem since it is widely recognised now that many of democracy's characteristic institutions appear to have been all but superseded by the executive under the Narendra Modi government.

Mr Modi is known to bring communal mobs to their feet without breaking a sweat, and for full theatrical effect he seldom fails to appear in the attire of ancient Hindu sages as depicted in kitsch art. For him, it would have been quite enough to satisfy the faithful by just being around to lay the first symbolic brick for the construction of the temple in Ayodhya, no matter how constitutionally unseemly this is.

And yet, the PM thought it best to make a big deal about invoking the freedom movement, and giving the (patently false) impression that

building the temple was the second edition of the glorious struggle for independence, which is imprinted in the psyche of every Indian. Why did he do so?

The reason seems clear. He wanted to steal the emotional association every Indian has with the long-drawn freedom struggle for an act of violent bigotry at Ayodhya — arguably the most reprehensible in free India. Even if no one dared to inform him of this earlier, the Prime Minister may as well be made conscious that his August 5 speech in Ayodhya eviscerates the ideas that underlie the independence of India.

"The soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance," Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said as the midnight hour struck proclaiming the emergence of India on the world stage as a new kind of free nation, one whose very concept had mesmerised the world on account of its perplexing diversity, plurality, and its ambition for democracy. But the present PM presses the delete button on such thoughts every single day. Yet, nothing bestows legitimacy like favourable allusions to the independence movement.

So, speaking from Ayodhya, Mr Modi engaged in yet another act of misappropriation by falsely linking the temple project with the freedom movement. He sought to portray the construction of the Ram temple as an act of "liberation". But we have been a free country for over 70 years, and no one in India feels enslaved except by caste, class, gender or communal oppression. That makes Mr Modi's "liberation theology" a grand deception.

Truth to tell, the PM has already made his Independence Day address on August 5, and it had little to do with the core values of India and the immediate concerns of all Indians. From the Red Fort on August 15, he can only give us a round of rituals and some more propaganda.

**Truth to tell, the PM has already made his Independence Day address, and it had little to do with the core values of India and the immediate concerns of all Indians**

### LETTERS

#### KAMALA FOR VP

The selection of Kamla Harris as the running mate of presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has brought cheers to the people of our country because of her Indian descent. It was indeed a master stroke of Biden to ensure that the votes of Blacks and Indian-Americans come to his party. When the country has been witnessing nasty protests on account of racial discrimination spurred by the brutal police killing of George Floyd, the candidature of a non-white person who has identified herself as a black all through, will certainly channelise the anger and frustration of the group of victims into votes in her party's favour. There is also a big chunk of Indian-Americans in that country whose sentiments are touched by the feeling of a person of their origin identified to the august office of Vice-President and whose support will therefore tilt towards the party she represents.

V. Rajagopalan  
Chennai

#### PROUD MOMENT

IT IS LAUDABLE that the US Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has named Indian origin Kamala Harris, Senator from California as his Vice-Presidential running mate. He has also made history by selecting Kamala, daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, as the first coloured woman to compete on a major party's presidential ticket. The selection of Harris is indeed a proud moment for India, particularly Tamil Nadu as she has her roots in Chennai through her mother. Her selection acquires special significance in the sense that there is every possibility of her becoming the President of the US in another four or eight years as she is just 55 and age is very much on her side. We wish her success in the ensuing election.

Anna Mary Yvonne  
Chennai

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Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



This looks like a nightmarish end to federalism as we know it. Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput's tragic death has turned into deplorable political one-upmanship. The unprecedented face-off between Bihar Police and Mumbai Police on the investigation of the suicide has far reaching consequences. Many experts are of the view that sending a team of Bihar Police personnel to Mumbai after Rajput's father filed a FIR demanding a probe into the "crime" was out of step. In India, police is a state subject and crimes are investigated by the police depending on where they occurred. If states start to interfere and go after crimes committed against their citizens in another state, we have a recipe for disaster. With the further likely addition of the CBI into this pot, the stew has grown thicker.

Had some worthies shown some prudence, we wouldn't have had to see the DGPs of the two states sling-

ing at each other on the TV news. TV newsrooms or Twitter are not the place to conduct a serious investigation into the death of a popular actor.

The case has grown much bigger with the respective state governments getting into the ring. The Bihar CM has given his nod for a CBI probe, bowing to pressure from the actor's family, while Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray refusing to give in to the demand. Both chief ministers have decided to stick by their police chiefs. The Enforcement Directorate has also opened an investigation into alleged money laundering. It is pretty much a no-holds-barred affair now, teetering dangerously on the edge of turning into a farce.

None of this would have merited so much focus and energy were it not for the Assembly elections in Bihar, due in October. The Bihari "sentiment" seems to have taken the frontstage, a thinly veiled euphemism for votes. The politicisa-

tion of the police is one of those vexing issues that no amount of reform has been able to deal with. The recent Vikas Dubey encounter and the police custodial deaths in Sathankulam town near Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu are already forgotten. The Sushant case will likely drag until it is no longer convenient. Sadly, if this lack of restraint and willful flouting of procedure by the police persists, it will end badly for the country.

#### CONTROVERSIAL NITI AAYOG EXIT

The repatriation of Niti Aayog adviser Alok Kumar to his cadre state Uttar Pradesh has set tongues wagging. Barely less than two months ago, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet had given Mr Kumar a one-year extension of tenure at the think tank. He was relieved on July 31.

The government's U-turn has left many observers bemused. Some say that since the UP government had

agreed to an extension for Mr Kumar in May, it is unlikely that it would recall the 1993-batch IAS officer. This then implies that the Centre's U-turn may have been caused by some rift among the higher-ups in Delhi over the babu. The buzz is that there are some differences between the Niti Aayog and the health ministry over policy matters, and possibly Mr Kumar was in the middle of the spat. But that may not be the only reason, certainly not enough to warrant this U-turn. After all, Mr Kumar was reportedly handling the majority of the key assignments at the nation's premier think tank. We may never know.

However, some observers believe that Mr Kumar's unexpected exit from Niti Aayog will cast a cloud over the empanelment of 1983 batch IAS officers for additional secretary-level posts at the Centre.

#### ROOPA K'TAKA HOME SECY

Roopa D. Moudgil is the first woman IPS officer of Karnataka and has

now become the first woman police officer to be appointed the state's home secretary. The decision is unpalatable for IAS officers who might have been eyeing the post for themselves. It's not often that an IPS officer is appointed to a post traditionally associated with the IAS. The violence this week in Bangalore may, however, quieten naysayers.

This posting comes amid a major rejig that has been happening within the government. Thirteen senior IPS officers were given different posts, and 19 ranked officers were transferred. This 2000-batch IPS officer, however, has many firsts to her credit, having become well-known for taking up cases that involve either senior IPS officers or politicians, most recently, late AIADMK chief Jayalalitha's aide Sasikala.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@Twitter.com](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian). Let's multiply the effect.

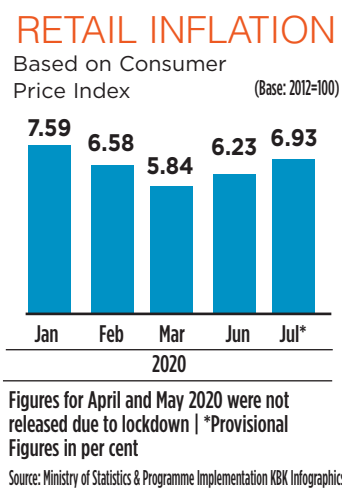
## Cops slug it out to the beat of Bihar poll drum



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,310.49	-0.15
Nifty 50	11,300.45	-0.07
S&P 500*	3,385.05	0.14
Dollar (₹)	74.84	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.87	-0.12
Euro (₹)	88.52	0.62
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,132.11	0.02
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.02	-0.41
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.895	0.011
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.685	-0.001

\* As of 9:30 PM IST



## SIP inflows hit 22-month low in July at ₹7,830 cr



Investments in mutual funds through systematic investment plans (SIPs) hit a 22-month low of Rs 7,831 crore in July amidst market volatility. This was the lowest level since September 2018, when investment through this route stood at Rs 7,727 crore. Inflows through SIP have slowed down in the past four months. Investment in June 2020 dropped below Rs 8,000 crore for the first time since November 2018.

## Cadila launches remdesivir at \$37 per vial

Zydus Cadila launched the cheapest generic version of Gilead Sciences' antiviral drug remdesivir in India to treat Covid-19 following reports of shortages at hospitals. Zydus has priced it at Rs 2,800 per 100mg vial. It will be sold under the brand name Remdac to government and private hospitals treating Covid-19 patients. Officials in some states had a few weeks ago complained of supply issues.

## Mi India pledges 2,500 phones to support students

Chinese smartphone major Xiaomi said its arm MI India will distribute 2,500 handsets worth Rs 2 crore to support online education of children. "MI India distribution and retail came up with a fantastic idea. Together they will be contributing 2,500 smartphones to enable children most impacted by the pandemic to access quality education. In this endeavour we found the right partner Teach for India," COO Muralikrishnan B. said.



# J&J ties up with Biological E for making Covid-19 vaccine in India

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13

Biological E. Limited, India's oldest biological products company, said on Thursday that it has tied up with United States-based Johnson & Johnson to manufacture the latter's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India.

"We are very pleased indeed to collaborate with an organisation like Johnson & Johnson. Given

the magnitude of the Covid-19 pandemic, our ability to mount an effective response will be predicated on the ability to supply the vaccine globally and in significant quantities. This is best achieved through collaboration," said Mahima Datla, the managing director of BE.

J&J is developing a vaccine candidate 'Ad26.COV2.S' for the coronavirus through its pharmaceutical arm Janssen

Pharmaceutica NV. The vaccine candidate is currently in phase 1/2a clinical trials.

The phase 1/2a study will involve more than 1,000 adults aged between 18 and 55. The study will also include testing the vaccine in people 65 and older. Human trials in the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Japan will follow.

Johnson & Johnson chief scientific officer Paul

**Our ability to mount an effective response (to Covid-19) will be predicated on the ability to supply the vaccine globally and in significant quantities**

— Mahima Datla  
MD, Biological E Limited

Stoffels had told a conference call last month that the company expects initial human results in September and phase 3

efficacy testing could start the same month itself. "The vaccine could be ready by early 2021," he said.

The tie-up with Biological E. would help J&J to ramp its manufacturing capabilities in India.

"We look forward to deploying our manufacturing infrastructure to support Johnson & Johnson's commitment to global access for its Covid-19 vaccine," said Narender Dev Mantena, director of BioE Holdings Inc., who heads BE's novel vaccine initiative.

According to the World Health Organisation data, people around the world are working on 42 vaccine candidates for the coronavirus, including two from India, which are at different stages of development.

"Six vaccine candidates are in phase-3 trials, two candidates in phase 2 trials. Ten vaccine candidates, including two being developed in India, are at phase 1/2," claims the WHO data as on August 10.

## ■ Investigation wing, TDS directorate to decide on surveys Curtains on I-T raids at will

New Delhi, Aug 13: The income tax surveys to collect information for scrutiny assessment will be undertaken only by the investigation wing and the tax deducted at source (TDS) directorate with effect from Thursday, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said.

In an order, the CBDT said officers in Directorate General of Income Tax (DGIT) (Investigation) and Principal Commissioner of I-T/Chief Commissioner of I-T (TDS) "only and exclusively" shall be the competent authority for approving survey actions with effect from August 13, 2020.

"The survey action u/s 133A of the Act being an intrusive action, it is expected that the same should be carried out with utmost responsibility and accountability," the CBDT said, adding that with faceless assessment the department is moving towards minimal interface with taxpayers.

### MEASURES TO EASE COMPLIANCE BURDEN: FM

New Delhi, Aug. 13: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the faceless tax scrutiny assessment and appeal would ease the compliance burden of taxpayers and increase fairness and objectivity in the tax system.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the platform 'Transparent Taxation Honoring the Honest' which provides for launch of faceless assessment and adoption of a taxpayer charter.

Also the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), which administers personal income tax and corporate tax, will launch faceless appeals beginning September 25.

"Today is a landmark day in the history of tax administration," Sitharaman said.

"The CBDT has given a framework and put in place a system in the form of this platform...It uses technology, data analytics, and also uses artificial intelligence," she said. —PTI

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Aravind Srivatsan said the previous regime allowed taxmen from inspector onwards, jurisdictional assessing officer to initiate the survey with prior approval of joint commissioner of income tax.

"In effect the powers of the assessment authorities which were exercised in the normal course will now have to be backed by credible evidence to seek such approval from now permitted higher authorities. This shows the govern-

ment intention to ensure only genuinely deserving cases would go through this procedure," he said.

In an I-T survey, tax officers visit business premises of the taxpayer to gather information by way of examination of books of accounts, data stored electronically and also access email communication.

Srivatsan said it can be inferred from the order that the faceless assessment scheme could subject the taxpayer to more rigorous audit based on his profiling and industry situation and requires a careful maintenance of supporting documentation with regard to significant tax positions.

AKM Global's tax partner Amit Maheshwari said it will increase accountability in conducting surveys.

"Surveys by nature are very intrusive and sensitive. Now, only a selected division of the tax department can conduct a survey," he said. —PTI

## States' sales tax receipts from fuel may go up by 9%

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, AUG. 13

The recovery trend in sales volumes and increase in excise duties will see sales tax receipts of states on petroleum products going up by 7 to 9 per cent this fiscal, despite the negative impact of the pandemic, finds Crisil. Firmer crude oil prices will also add to the increase in receipts.

If volumes rebound amidst increased central and state taxes and firmer crude oil prices, there could be a 7-9 per cent rise in sales tax receipts over last year to Rs 1.96 lakh crore, despite an expected 25 per cent fall in collections in the first quarter.

"The first quarter saw petrol and diesel sales volume plunging by a third because of the Covid-19 induced lockdown. But with the economy slowly unlocking and industrial and commercial activities clawing back, vehicular traffic has started to improve," said Manish Gupta, senior director of Crisil Ratings.

In April combined monthly volume of petrol and diesel sales, which account for 90 per cent of sales tax collections from petroleum products, were 43 per cent of the pre-Covid levels. This moved up to 85 per cent in June and is around 83 per cent in July. If economic activity rebounds to pre-pandemic levels by November, the annual volume decline may be restricted to 11-12 per cent this fiscal.

Further, the central excise duty and state sales tax rates of petrol and diesel were increased several times in the past few months. Between March and May weighted average diesel retail price had gone up by Rs 16 per litre. By July another Rs 2.8 per litre hike was also implemented.

An increase in excise duty increases the taxable value of petrol and diesel for the levy of state sales tax. This higher taxable value of the fuel is providing additional sales tax of Rs 3 per litre to states.

## I-T Charter: Every taxpayer to be treated as honest & with courtesy

New Delhi, Aug 13: The tax department has committed to treat every taxpayer as honest, unless proven otherwise, and provide fair, courteous and reasonable treatment, according to the taxpayers' charter adopted on Thursday. The charter also expects taxpayers to pay taxes on time and be honest and compliant.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the platform 'Transparent Taxation Honoring the Honest' which provides for adoption of a taxpayers' charter, which defines the tax department's commitment and its expectation from the taxpayers.

The tax officers will now be committed to a 14-point charter, which includes

collecting "only the (tax) amount due" as per the law, while taxpayers would have to be "responsible" and fulfill six-point expectations of the I-T Department, including being honest and compliant.

The charter mandates the I-T Department to hold its "authorities accountable for their actions" and states that the department would provide fair, courteous, prompt and reasonable treatment as well as professional assistance to all taxpayers.

The officers shall treat taxpayers as honest "unless there is a reason to believe otherwise", it said.

The charter also bars the tax officers from disclosing taxpayer information unless authorised by law

and also respect privacy of taxpayer.

The department will have to periodically publish standards for service delivery and provide a fair system to resolve tax issues in a time-bound manner.

The charter also mandates the department to allow every taxpayer to choose an authorised representative of his choice and provide mechanism for lodging a complaint, and its prompt disposal.

The charter expects the taxpayers to honestly disclose full information and "fulfill his compliance obligations". Also, the taxpayer is expected to keep accurate records and know what information and submissions are made by his authorised representative.

### PAYTM STARTS TRADING PLATFORM

FC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, AUG. 13

Fintech firm Paytm announced the launch of stock trading on its online investment & wealth management platform Paytm Money with lower brokerage charges than currently offered by traditional and discount brokers. Cash delivery trades are free and intraday trades are charged at Rs 10 only, the firm said.



fraudulent and deceitful manner and their excess OI positions created a false or misleading appearance in the market.

The SCN further said that Ruchi Global and Ruchi Soya Industries and National Steel & Agro Industries belonged to one distinct group, while Secunderabad Oils and UKS Oils belonged to another distinct group.

"In the absence of any material to show that these two distinct groups were connected to each other and traded in the castor seeds contracts in a concerted manner to manipulate the market, it is not correct to allege that the five noticees together cornered the derivative market in castor seeds contract...in violation of PFUTP Regulations, 2003 and at the expense of other clients," Sebi said. —PTI

## NBFC bond sales jump to levels before 2018 crisis

DIVYA PATIL  
AUG. 13

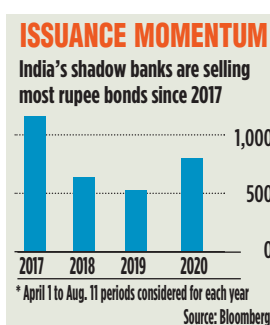
Indian shadow lenders are selling the most local-currency bonds since before a financial crisis engulfed the sector two years ago, in a sign that record stimulus is easing their fundraising burden.

The financiers have raised Rs 81,300 crore (\$10.9 billion) through rupee notes since April 1, making it the best start to a financial year since 2017. Offerings from non-bank firms had declined in 2018 and 2019 as at least three shadow lenders defaulted on their repayments, battering investor demand for the sector's debt.

More cash for shadow banks is good news for the economy, which relies on these firms to provide financing to everyone from tailors to business giants. Non-bank lending is crucial in supporting Asia's third-largest economy, which is forecast to contract for the first time in four decades this year due to fallout from the pandemic.

To help non-bank financiers counter the economic impact of the outbreak, the government in May announced a Rs 30,000 crore credit line for these financiers, and said it will fully guarantee investment-grade securities issued under this plan.

To further assist lower-rated shadow banks, the administration agreed to



also provide a partial guarantee to debt rated AA and below, injecting another Rs 45,000 crore. The central bank, meanwhile, funded banks' purchases of bonds issued by these lenders to the tune of Rs 12,850 crore.

But challenges remain, with signs investor demand for the debt is uneven. It's largely banks, which have to implement the economic stimulus steps, that are buying notes sold by shadow lenders. Other key players in the local credit market, such as mutual funds, halved their holdings of the bonds in the two-year period to June.

Moody's Investors Service warned in June that the stress among these lenders may be deeper and broader than it thought and S&P Global Ratings cut credit scores of several such firms citing liquidity risks.

The financiers are at least benefiting from lower borrowing costs as a result of the stimulus package. —Bloomberg

## BROADER MARKET OUTPERFORMS SENSEX, NIFTY

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, AUG. 13

A broader market rally led to outperformance by medium and small sized companies in the stock market while the Sensex and Nifty-50 indices closed in the red for the second day, compared to 1.5 to over 2 per cent gains registered by the mid-cap indices.

The Sensex closed 0.15 per cent or 59.14 points lower and Nifty-50 ended down 0.07 per cent, or by 7.95 points.

The Nifty Midcap-50 Index rose 2.20 per cent and the Nifty Midcap-100 gained 1.57 per cent while the BSE Midcap Index gained 1.59 per cent and the BSE Smallcap gained 0.76 per cent.

Domestic institutions remained net sellers by Rs 763.54 crore while the foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 416.28 crore.

Some big midcap gainers on NSE included Bharat Forge (15.67 per cent), Ashok Leyland (14.46 per cent), BHEL (8.18 per cent), Cholamandalam Investment & Finance (8.07 per cent), Tata Power (5.67 per cent).

Sameet Chavan of Angel Broking said, the Nifty-50 is clearly struggling to surpass the 11350-11400 hurdle.

## Maruti Alto crosses 40 L sales milestone

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, AUG 13

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, on Thursday said its entry level small car Alto has crossed the cumulative sales milestone of 40 lakh units in the fiercely competitive India market.

Launched in September 2000, Alto has been the most selling car for 16 consecutive years in the country. "Alto is the preferred

choice of Indian car buyers with 76 per cent of Alto customers choosing it as their first car," the company, which sells one car out of the two bought in the country, said.

Shashank Srivastava, executive director at Maruti Suzuki India, said Alto has been ranked as the No 1 for 16 years in a row. "We are immensely proud to announce another remarkable milestone of 40 lakh cumulative sales. This has become a record," he said.



### AMAZE CLOCKS 4 LAKH SALES

Pune, Aug. 13: Honda on Thursday said its popular family sub-compact sedan Honda Amaze has cumulatively sold 4 lakh units since its first introduction in the country in 2013.

The Amaze, now in its second generation, is currently Honda's largest selling model in India.

—Michael Gonsalves





## SHORT TAKES

## INOX to sponsor India at Olympics

**New Delhi:** The INOX group will be the official sponsor of the Indian team for the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) announced on Thursday.

The Tokyo Olympics was rescheduled to next year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be held from July 23 to August 8 in 2021. As part of the partnership the Group will also support team's promotions through its entertainment company — INOX Leisure Limited, which owns a chain of multiplexes. IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta said, "We are happy to announce this partnership with INOX Group which will be beneficial for all our athletes and the organisation. I would like to thank INOX Group and Mr. Jain for showing their support for Team India, even under the current circumstances."

INOX Group has earlier supported various sporting events, teams and leagues in table Tennis, football, badminton, running, basketball and cricket, and building awareness among masses through effective promotional initiatives. — PTI

## Archery camp from August 25

**New Delhi:** The national archery camp for Olympic hopefuls will resume at the Army Sports Institute in Pune on August 25, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Thursday. The camp was called off midway in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A total of 16 recurve archers — eight men and as many women, along with four coaches and two support staff will report for the camp on August 25 and undergo the mandatory 14-day period inside the ASI campus before starting their training sessions.

"...in view of the ensuing 2021 Olympics, the Sports Authority of India has sanctioned the National Archery Camp for Olympic-bound athletes from August 25, 2020 at the Army Sports Institute in Pune," the SAI said in a statement.

While the men's team has earned an Olympic quota, the women's team is yet to claim one. The players will strive to seal their Tokyo tickets at the Olympic qualification event in Paris next year.

— PTI

## Help for differently abled cricketers

**Mumbai:** Around 100 needy physically challenged cricketers have been provided financial aid with the help of former Australian skipper Steve Waugh's manager Harley Medcalf during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Physically Challenged Cricket Association of India (PCCAI) announced on Thursday.

PCCAI secretary Ravi Chauhan said each cricketer was provided an amount of ₹5,000.

"Each player was given ₹5,000 during the ongoing tough times," Chauhan said. "The overall aim is to support 400 physically challenged cricketers. PCCAI would like to thank Harley Medcalf, Anand Chukka and one Praveen Nalla for their unrelenting support to this cause," PCCAI said in a statement.

According to Chauhan, Medcalf and Chukka raised the funds, which were then distributed, while Nalla has been providing N-95 masks for the physically challenged cricketers.

— PTI

## PEREZ SET TO RACE AT SPANISH GP

**Montmelo, Spain:** Sergio Perez will race at the Spanish Grand Prix this week after testing negative for the coronavirus.

Governing body FIA cleared him on Thursday to return to the paddock for the race in Montmelo on the outskirts of Barcelona. The Racing Point driver missed the past two races at Silverstone in England after contracting the virus on a visit back home to Mexico.



Neymar (left) and his Paris Saint-Germain teammate Kylian Mbappe celebrate after Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting scored PSG's second goal during their UEFA Champions League quarterfinal match at the Luz Stadium in Lisbon on Thursday. PSG won 2-1. — AFP

## Billions &amp; 25 years

## Later PSG make Champions league semis

## Barca dial Messi for Bayern tie

**Lisbon, Aug. 13:** After years of failing to live up to their billing in Europe, Paris Saint-Germain are within 90 minutes of the Champions League final thanks to their dramatic win over Atalanta on Wednesday, and coach Thomas Tuchel now knows "everything is possible" for his team.

PSG were on the verge of another disappointing Champions League exit as they trailed Atalanta 0-1 into the 90th minute in Lisbon.

Mario Pasalic's 27th-minute strike for the Italians was finally cancelled out by Marquinhos, who scrambled in a last-gasp leveller.

Then, three minutes into injury time, Kylian Mbappe set up fellow substitute Eric Choupo-Moting to convert the clinching goal.

The money ploughed into the French champions by their Qatari owners has increased the pressure on PSG to deliver.

After all, Atalanta's entire wage bill is believed to be equivalent to what PSG pay Neymar per year (about 36 million euros, or \$42.5m).

This is the club's first semifinal since 1995 and the first since they were taken over by Qatari owners, who pumped in money for the elusive Champions League trophy.

— Agencies

## KXIP'S KARUN NEGATIVE, WILL TRAVEL TO UAE

**New Delhi, Aug. 13:** India and Kings XI Punjab batsman Karun Nair tested positive for COVID-19 last month but has now recovered and will travel to the UAE for the Indian Premier League (IPL) starting September 19.

Cricket website 'ESPNcricinfo' reported that Nair "went into self-isolation for more than two weeks" before testing negative for the dreaded virus.

The franchise did not comment on the report but a BCCI source said that Nair returned a negative test on August 8 at the end of his quarantine. He will now have to clear three more tests like the rest of the contingent to be able to fly out to the UAE on August 20.

"He is absolutely fine now. He was asymptomatic throughout and was feeling okay. His test came negative after two weeks and he has even resumed personal training. Now, he will be tested like all other squad members before the team leaves for UAE," the source said.

Nair, who has scored a triple hundred in Tests, last played for India in 2017. He has been a part of KXIP since 2018.

The 28-year-old will be playing alongside Karnataka teammates Mayank Agarwal and K L Rahul.

— PTI

## Live on TV

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINAL

**Barcelona vs Bayern Munich** from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## FORMULA ONE

**Spanish Grand Prix** Practice 1 from 2.25 pm; Practice 2 from 6.25 pm Star Sports Select 2, HD

Barca were favourites.

Messi also sank Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu in 2011 when his double in the first leg of the semi-final, including one of the finest goals the competition has ever seen, transcended a rivalry that had been dragged to its ugliest point.

And he was part of perhaps the tournament's greatest comeback, the 6-1 destruction of Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 after Barcelona lost 0-4 in the first leg of that last-16 tie. Yet this time threats to be different.

With Luis Suarez and Antoine Griezmann alongside him, Frenkie de Jong and Sergio Busquets behind him and Jordi Alba out wide, Messi should not be on his own. Even in defence, Gerard Pique still has a claim to be the best defender in Spain and Marc-Andre ter Stegen is among the most impressive goalkeepers in the world.

But the sense remains that Messi must perform if Barcelona are to defeat Bayern, widely seen as the favourites to lift the trophy on August 23.

It will take something very special not only to lift his own team out of the doldrums but also to neutralise an opponent that many believe are the most complete side in Europe.

— AFP

● The only surviving former winners, Spain's Barcelona and German's Bayern Munich, of European club football's greatest prize — with five titles each — meet in a heavyweight Champions League quarterfinal behind closed doors at the Estadio da Luz.

## KOSOVO LETS GO OF TIE DUE TO COVID-19

**Nyon (Switzerland), Aug. 13:** A club from Kosovo had to forfeit its Champions League qualifier because players tested positive for Covid-19, the first time UEFA had to make such a ruling during the pandemic.

UEFA said on Wednesday that KF Drita must forfeit its preliminary round game in the 2020-21 competition and awarded it as a 3-0 win for Northern Ireland's champion Linfield.

The teams could not play a scheduled game on Tuesday at an empty stadium next to UEFA's headquarters after the Drita squad was put into quarantine.

Two players had tested positive for Covid-19 in Switzerland since last Thursday. UEFA's updated Champions League rules and protocol for playing games safely hold teams responsible if they cannot fulfil qualifying fixtures.

— AP

## Sikki, physio test Covid-19 positive

## Gopi academy is shut for sanitisation as Coronavirus strikes Games camp

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 13



N. Sikki Reddy

Barley a week after probables and Olympics bound shuttlers returned to courts at the Pullula Gopichand Badminton Academy N. Sikki Reddy and physiotherapist Kiran George have tested positive for Covid-19 at the ongoing national camp in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Sikki and Kiran, who have been attending the national camp at the academy, are both asymptomatic.

They had undergone the Sports Authority of India's mandatory Covid-19 test for players, coaches and support staff before the start of training on August 7 at the facility.

With Sikki and Kiran being tested positive for the virus, the Gopichand Academy has been closed for sanitisation, SAI said on Thursday.

"SAI's mandatory Covid-19 test was given to all athletes, coaches, support staff and administrative staff at the badminton national camp, and two campers have tested positive for Covid-19," Gopi said.

"All necessary precautions as per protocol are being taken so that players can come back for training safely and as soon as possible," he added.

Both Sikki and Kiran are from Hyderabad and have

been attending the camp from their homes. All primary contacts of Sikki and Kiran are undergoing the RT-PCR test again.

The badminton camp was allowed by SAI for eight Olympic hopefuls, including Rio Games silver-medallist and world champion P. V. Sindhu, following the approval from the Telangana government on August 1.

Sikki was seen training with three Indonesian doubles coaches — Namrih Suroto, Agus Dwi Santoso and Miftah — besides two sparring partners from that country on August 7.

She was pictured on the first day of training where all of them could be seen along with another physio Johnson Solomon and the Indonesians who also trained with world champion Sindhu and world championships bronze medallist B. Sai Praneeth.



Coco Gauff returns to Aryna Sabalenka during their women's singles match at the Top Seed Open in Lexington, Kentucky (USA), on Wednesday. — AFP

## Rusty Coco roars for major victory

**Lexington (US), Aug. 13:** American teenager Coco Gauff overcame some shaky serving Wednesday to beat No.2 seed Aryna Sabalenka 7-6 (2), 4-6, 6-4 and reach the Top Seed Open quarterfinals with her third career victory over a top-15 opponent.

The 16-year-old Gauff hit 10 double-faults and was broken seven times.

It was a topsy-turvy match that lasted nearly three hours and featured a bit of confusion when Gauff and her father, Cori, got into a discussion with the chair umpire about what sort of coaching is allowed under adjusted rules the WTA put in place recently.

Of more concern to Gauff was the way she was starting off points in her service games. At one point, she implored herself: I've got to make the first serves. Come on.

Gauff's plan after dropping the second set? Just to stay calm and composed, she said in an on-court TV interview afterward, and making her play balls. That worked.

Sabalenka is ranked 11th, behind only No. 9 Serena Williams among the women entered in the hard-court tournament that is the first professional tennis event in the United States since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Gauff is No.53 but should now return inside the top 50.

Next up for her is a match against No. 8 seed Ons Jabeur, who eliminated Olga Govortsova 3-6, 6-2, 6-4. The other quarterfinal on that side of the draw will be Marie Bouzkova against Jennifer Brady, who beat Magda Linette 6-2, 6-3. In another match, Bouzkova defeated Anna Blinkova 6-4, 6-2.

— AP

## INDIANA GO PAST ROCKETS AND JAMES IN NBA GAME

**Miami, Aug. 13:** Myles Turner and Justin Holiday scored 18 points apiece as the Indiana Pacers withstood a 45-point performance from Houston star James Harden Wednesday in a 108-104 NBA victory over the Rockets.

The Pacers snapped a five-game losing streak against the Rockets — who announced before the game that star guard Russell Westbrook was nursing a quadriceps strain that could jeopardise his appearance in the playoffs.

Harden did what he could to fill the void, contributing 11 of 14 Rockets points in a late-game surge that saw Houston cut a 104-90 deficit to 106-104 with 27 seconds remaining.

Indiana held on, Holiday draining two free throws to close out the victory.

Harden barely missed an impressive triple-double with 45 points, 17 rebounds and 9 assists. It was his 21st game in the pandemic-disrupted season with 40 or more points.

— AFP



England fast bowler James Anderson celebrates taking the wicket of Pakistan's Shan Masood on the first day of their second Test at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, southwest England, on Thursday. — AFP

## Starc eyes India series

**Melbourne, Aug. 13:** Injury-ravaged Australia pace spearhead Mitchell Starc says he has worked on adding muscle to his body during the Covid-19 forced lockdown to ensure that his efforts to ramp up pace do not cause another breakdown.

During the break, the left-arm pacer trained with his New South Wales teammates, which, he says, allowed him to return to top physical shape ahead of the much-anticipated home Test series against the Virat Kohli-led India.

"At the end of summers, I've been down to 87kg at my lowest and I'm at 93kg at the moment which is where I want to be at," Starc was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"I've started summers around that 90-91kg mark so I'm in a good place now, feeling really strong.

"It's been a good amount of time in the gym and now I'm back bowling and running and have enjoyed the time at home to be able to do that. (I have also managed to) rest the aches and pains of bowling through an eleven-

month tour like the other boys..." he added.

Starc has been prone to injuries throughout his career as he looks to unsettle batsmen with extra pace. He has suffered stress fractures on his foot on multiple occasions, but the 30-year-old fast bowler believes the extra hours in the gym will aid his attempts at generating more pace.

"It would be nice but at the same time the two occasions I've been up around that (160kph) mark I've snapped my foot," he said.

— PTI

## Englishman Anderson strikes

**Southampton, Aug. 13:** James Anderson returned to form with a double strike against Pakistan on Thursday as the England great moved closer to becoming the first pacer to take 600 Test wickets.

Pakistan were 85-2 at Tea on a rain-interrupted first day of the second Test at Hampshire's Ageas Bowl.

Anderson had figures of 2-24 in 12 overs, having come into this match, having taken just six wickets in three previous Tests this season at an expensive average of over 41.

Abid Ali, dropped twice in the slips, was 49 not out.

By his own admission, Anderson had not been at his best with a match haul of 1-67 during England's three-wicket win in the first Test at his Old Trafford home ground last week.

In humid conditions conducive to Anderson's bowling, the 38-year-old needed just eight balls to strike and have Shan Masood, fresh from his Test-best 156 last week, lbw for one with an inswinger to the left-hander.

Masood was so clearly out, he did not bother to review the decision.

His exit brought in Azhar, under pressure after a run of just one fifty in 10 innings since becoming skipper in November.

— AFP

**Brief Scores (at Tea):** Pakistan 85/2 in 33.5 overs (Abid Ali 49 n.o., Babar Azam 7 n.o., J. Anderson 2/28) vs England.

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