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KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



SISODIA DEFENDS
USE OF RAPID
ANTIGEN TESTS

P5



CHANGE OF
GUARD IN
KASHMIR

P7



RAJAPAKSA TO
BEGIN FOURTH
TERM AS PM

P11

JUVENTUS
KNOCKED
OUT OF CL

P12



WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky. Light to moderate rain/ thundershowers. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 35 and 28 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 88% Min: 54%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 37.6°C (+3) Min: 28.1°C (+1)

SUN RISES

05:48 hrs

MOON RISES

22:37 hrs

SUN SETS

19:06 hrs

MOON SETS

11:28 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Cyclists take a trip down Rajpath in New Delhi on Saturday. DEEPAK

J&K chief secretary: Jammu and Kashmir chief Secretary BVR Subrahmaniam has triggered a political storm by stating that "not a single soul cried" over the detention of political and separatist leaders in August last year when Article 370 was abrogated. Irked over the issue, the PDP said that the top bureaucrat had given the statement with the backing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Sad state of affairs when a top bureaucrat no less than Chief Secretary takes pride in dismantling & discrediting mainstream in #Kashmir and brags about @PMOIndia @narendramodi backing". P4

PM launches campaign: Ahead of the Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a 'special' week long 'Gandagi Mukti Bharat' campaign across the country. The PM's announcement on the nationwide cleanliness drive came while inaugurating the Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra, an interactive experience centre on the Swachh Bharat Mission, at the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti at Rajghat, New Delhi. Modi had announced the setting up of Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra (RSK) on 10 April, 2017. P4

India, China hold fresh talks on Ladakh stand-off

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

India and China were holding Major General-level talks at Daulat Beg Oldie in eastern Ladakh today to discuss disengagement and de-escalation at the LAC amid heightened tensions over the PLA's reluctance to withdraw from some of the friction points.

The fresh talks come after five rounds of meetings at the Corp Commander level - the highest military dialogue - since the stand-off started between troops of the two countries in early May. The last military-level meeting had taken place on 2 August between Lt Gen Harinder Singh, the commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps, and Chinese Army's Maj Gen Liu Lin,

the commander of the South Xinjiang military region.

Maj Gen Abhijit Bapat, General Officer Commanding of the 3 Mountain Division led the Indian delegation at today's talks, sources said. The main agenda of the talks is to address the situation at Depsang plains that has seen a big mobilisation by both sides.

At today's meeting too, the Indian side insisted that Chinese troops must complete the disengagement process and restore the status quo ante which existed in eastern Ladakh in early May.

Sources said India has not been happy with China's continued reluctance to complete the disengagement process despite promising to do so at regular diplomatic and military-level talks.

Sources said it has been made clear to the Chinese side that a complete disengagement was a prerequisite for establishing peace and tranquility in the border areas between the two countries.

The Chinese army has deployed tanks, artillery guns along with a heavy presence of troops opposite Depsang. A similar deployment has been done by the Indian Army to match the Chinese mobilisation.

Till now in the military talks, the focus was on four friction points: Patrol Points 14, 15 and 17A along with Pangong Lake. While there has been a stalemate at Pangong Lake as China has come up with new fortifications between Finger 5 and 8 of the lake, there has been noticeable disengagement at other places.

India records 61.5K new Covid cases, 933 deaths

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

A single-day spike of 61,537 new novel coronavirus cases and 933 fatalities pushed the total tally to 20,88,611 cases and death toll to 42,518 as of Saturday morning, the Union health ministry said.

With 48,900 patients discharged in the last 24 hours, India's total recoveries from Covid-19 has reached 14,27,005 on the other hand. The recovery rate, on a steady upward rise, stands at 68.32 per cent, the Ministry said.

The active cases, which are the actual case load for India, standing at 6,19,088 today, account for only 29.64 per cent of total positive cases.

Nearly 200 docs succumb to Covid

NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

A total of 196 doctors in the country, majority of them being general practitioners, have succumbed to COVID-19 so far, said the Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Saturday, requesting the prime minister for his attention on the issue.

"As per the latest data collected by the IMA, our nation has lost 196 doctors, out of which 170 of them are

above the age of 50 years, with general practitioners attributing to around 40 per cent of it," the IMA said expressing concerns over the safety of doctors losing their lives in the fight against the COVID-19 crisis.

While an increasing number of doctors are getting infected and losing their lives every day, substantial number of them have been found to be general practitioners. PTI

average of 2425, the health ministry data revealed.

This was the tenth day in a row that the Covid-19 tally

LOCKDOWN BLUES



Deserted roads during Saturday's total lockdown in Kolkata. SNS

FACT FILE



Fresh virus cases on the rise again in Delhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Delhi today registered 1,404 fresh coronavirus (Covid-19) cases, which took the city's Covid caseload to more than 1.44 lakh.

The death toll from the infectious, deadly disease in the national capital mounted to 4,098, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. Sixteen Covid fatalities were recorded in the city today, the bulletin stated.

After coming down under 1,000 cases last Sunday, the number of single-day coronavirus cases in Delhi has

again shown a rise in the last few days, recording over 1,000 cases daily again now.

The number of Covid tests has also shown an increase in the last few days, with today's tests figure being 24,592, according to the bulletin.

Yesterday, the city recorded 1,192 coronavirus cases and 23 fresh Covid deaths.

The daily coronavirus cases count in Delhi was reportedly on 1 August 1,118. However, during 2-4 August, the new single-day Covid cases had gradually dipped: 2 August (961 cases), 3 August (805) and 4 August (674).

SEE PAGE 2

Kozhikode airport got notice in 2019 over safety lapses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Aviation regulator DGCA had issued a show-cause notice to the director of the Kozhikode airport on July 11 last year after it found "various critical safety lapses" in different places, including the runway and the apron, officials said.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation pointed to cracks on the runway, water stagnation and excessive rubber deposits among other lapses in its notice.

The DGCA conducted the inspection after an Air India Express flight coming from Dammam in Saudi Arabia had a "tail strike" while landing at the Calicut (Kozhikode) airport on July 2 last year, an official said.

A little over a year later, on Friday evening, an Air India Express flight from Dubai with 190 people on board overshot "runway 10" at the Calicut airport in heavy rain and went down 35 feet into a gorge before breaking into two pieces, killing at least 18 people.

"After the July 2 incident last year, the DGCA inspected the airport on July 4 and July 5 and found various critical safety lapses," said a senior DGCA official.

On July 11, Kozhikode airport director K Srinivasa Rao was issued a show-cause notice, stated another DGCA official. Asked if any action was taken against Rao after the notice, he said, "We had raised certain issues, which were duly complied with. The concerned officer



(Rao) was reprimanded."

The show-cause notice, which PTI accessed, said "cracks are observed at runway 28 TDZ (touchdown zone) and along runway C/L (center/left) marking at runway 10 TDZ". The touchdown zone (TDZ) is the part where the aircraft first contacts the surface while landing. The touchdown zone is ahead of the threshold area of the runway.

The notice also said "excessive rubber deposit" was observed in the area from runway C/L marking to three metres on both the sides of touchdown zone of runway 28. Similar excessive rubber deposits were found by the DGCA along runway C/L marking of touchdown zone of runway 10.

"Water stagnation of about 1.5 metre length was observed on the area between runway edge and intermediate turn pad on runway 28," it said.

Besides, the DGCA found several cracks in aircraft stand number 5. It also observed that a "portion of apron surface" of about 111 metres was damaged, it said. "A steep downward slope of approximately five feet depth is observed immediately after the apron behind aircraft number 1, which needs to be levelled and graded," it also noted.

Idukki landslide: More bodies found; toll at 26

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
8 AUGUST

The death toll in the massive landslide that buried a row of estate workers' quarters and a church at Pettimudi near Munnar in Kerala's Idukki, rose to 26, with more bodies being recovered on Saturday by those engaged in search and rescue operations.

The bodies of 15 people were recovered on Friday. Twelve persons were rescued on Friday and they were shifted to hospitals. More bodies are expected to be found under the mounds of rock and soil.

More Defense Security Corps, Natural Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Fire and Safety personnel reached Pettimudi on Saturday to conduct rescue operations. They faced extreme difficulty getting there as the roads and bridges in the area have been washed away in the heavy rains and resultant floods.

A 21-member family is feared buried under the debris. Many houses of plantation workers and the estate canteen were swept away in the landslide. The NDRF's south Indian chief said a 55-member team is entrusted with the search and rescue mission.

Meanwhile, the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam in Idukki reached 134 ft of the total capacity of 142 ft following heavy rains that lashed the catchment areas of the dam.

Meanwhile, the meteorological department forecast heavy rains in many parts of the state on Sunday too. Red alert warning has been issued for Idukki, Malappuram, Wayanad, Kozhikode and Kannur districts. SNS





What are the attributes to be enumerated for enlisting a language in the pantheon of classical?

ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY, CONGRESS LEADER IN LOK SABHA
URGING PM MODI TO ENLIST BENGALI AS A CLASSICAL LANGUAGE IN NEP

LOP seeks LG's intervention in clearing salaries of teachers of govt colleges



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

In view of the hardship faced by teachers and employees of colleges funded by the Delhi government due to non-payment of their salaries, Leader of the Opposition (LOP) in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Saturday condemned the Delhi government led by Arvind Kejriwal for its "dilly-dallying attitude" to pay their salaries.

Expressing serious concerns over the delay in payment of salaries to the faculties and other staff of 12 colleges funded by the Delhi government, the LOP alleged that the Kejriwal government was "deliberately avoiding" to pay their salaries.

Bidhuri demanded that the teachers and employees of all these 12 colleges should get their salaries without any delay. He has also written a letter to Lt Governor Anil Bajaj today, requesting him to address their long

standing grievances since the coronavirus lockdown came into effect.

Earlier, Bidhuri had urged CM Kejriwal and deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who handles the education portfolio, to clear the pending salaries of teachers and other staff.

Despite the Delhi government's claims that the first quarter fund has been released these teachers and other employees have not received their salaries yet, the LOP's letter charged.

The teachers are demoralised due to non-payment of salaries and it will also adversely affect the study of thousands of students studying in these colleges, the BJP leader said.

His letter also demanded that the LG should intervene in the matter and ensure the payment of salaries of teachers and other employees of these colleges.

Body of DJB employee found in water tank

It appears to be a case of suicide by jumping into the tank, the police said, adding that the post-mortem report is awaited. No suicide note was recovered, they said.

PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

The body of a 40-year-old Delhi Jal Board (DJB) employee was found inside a water tank in east Delhi's Mayur Vihar on Saturday morning, police said.

It appears to be a case of suicide by jumping into the tank, the police said, adding that the post-mortem report is awaited. No suicide note was recovered, they said. "Uday, a resident of Karawal Nagar, was working as a pump operator in DJB. His body was found on Saturday morning," a senior police officer said.

A preliminary enquiry revealed that the deceased was an alcoholic and his wife used to object to his drinking habit.

The inquest proceedings have been initiated. The deceased is survived by his wife and a daughter who is studying in Class 10.

The disinfection exercise of the tank is being carried out, a DJB official said, adding that the water in the reservoir will be flushed out and the supply will resume only after testing the water quality.

Water supply to around 600 flats in Mayur Vihar Phase 2 has been hit, he said, adding that normal supply will resume by Sunday morning.

Fresh coronavirus cases again on the rise in Delhi

The city records 1,404 new Covid cases that pushes its caseload to over 1.44 lakh; death toll climbs to 4,098

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Delhi today registered 1,404 fresh coronavirus (Covid-19) cases, which took the city's Covid caseload to more than 1.44 lakh.

The death toll from the infectious, deadly disease in the national capital mounted to 4,098, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. Sixteen Covid fatalities were recorded in the city today, the bulletin stated.

After coming under 1,000 cases last Sunday, the number of single-day coronavirus cases in Delhi has again shown a rise in the last few days, recording over 1,000 cases daily again now.

The number of Covid tests has also shown an increase in the last few days, with today's tests figure being 24,592, according to the bulletin.

Yesterday, the city recorded 1,192 coronavirus cases and 23 fresh Covid deaths.

The daily coronavirus cases count in Delhi was reported to be on 1 August 1,118. However, during 2-4 August, the new single-day Covid cases had gradually dipped: 2 August (961 cases), 3 August (805) and 4 August (674).

But, from 5 August onwards, the daily Covid cases have again showed a four-digit trend: 5 August (1,076 cases), 6 August (1,299), and 7 August (1,192).

The active coronavirus cases tally in the city today rose to 10,667 from 10,409 yesterday.

The death toll from Covid in Delhi stood at 4,082 yesterday.

On 23 June, Delhi had reported the highest single-day



People wearing face masks as a preventive measure against Covid, in the Capital on Saturday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

spike of 3,947 Covid cases so far.

Today's health bulletin stated that the total number of coronavirus cases in the city has climbed to 1,44,127 now.

The positivity rate today was said to be at 5.7 per cent while the recovery rate was 89.75 per cent.

Meanwhile, the Union health secretary reportedly held a meeting through video

conferencing with health departments of Delhi and some other states to review the measures for controlling the Covid pandemic.

The bulletin also reportedly said that of the total number of beds in Covid hospitals, 10,469 beds were vacant. It said 2,549 beds in Covid care centres were occupied by persons under quarantine, including travellers who have returned

by Vande Bharat Mission and bubble flights.

According to the bulletin, 1,29,362 Covid patients have recovered in the national capital so far. The number of patients under home isolation was 5,372.

The number of rapid antigen tests conducted today stood at 19,902 while the RT-PCR, CBNAAT and True NAAT tests figures were 5,500, there-

by adding up to altogether 24,592 Covid tests, the bulletin stated.

The cumulative number of coronavirus tests conducted in Delhi stood at 11,68,295 till date. The number of such tests done per million as on today was 61,489, the bulletin said.

The number of containment zones or coronavirus hotspots were 478 in Delhi now.

JOBS & CLASSIFIEDS QUEST



SITUATION VACANT

APPLY to Prof. Neelu Jain Gupta, Department of Zoology Chaudhary Charan Singh University (soft copies of documents and photograph) for temporary post of a Junior Research Fellow in the SERB Research Project by 21st July, 2020. Applications will be screened and intimation for interview shall be sent to suitable candidate only. Details of the qualifications, emoluments and other conditions are available on University website ccsoniversity.ac.in

REPUTED Electrical Transformer manufacturer require Sales Executive and Accounts Executive. Minimum qualification Degree / Diploma with 5/6 years experience in similar field. Apply transvacancy5@gmail.com



SITUATION WANTED

ACCOUNTS Clerk (65) fit seeks part-time work in South Kolkata. 9836342084.

COMMERCE, PGCM, experienced in Finalisation of Company Accounts, G.S.T., E-Tender, Tally, Word, Excel, correspondence, invites offer from stable organisation. M: 9874894761.

A B.COM. (Hons.), Keralite, convent-educated, PGDBA, knowing stenography with around 24 years experience as Personal Assistant / Executive Secretary, seeks change. E-mail: msunil2018@rediffmail.com

35 YEARS experienced retired computer typist and self correspondence in a multinational, seeks job. M: 9836828820.



PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY
88/1 College Street, Kolkata-700073
Presidency University invites bids through West Bengal Government e-Procurement System (<https://wb-tenders.gov.in>) for "Supply, Integration and Installation of recirculatory CO2 bubbling system" for DST Project in its Department of Life Sciences. Tender ID: 2020_PU_292311_1. Tender Reference Number: PU/DLS-SERB-DST/Equip/20-21/1/R. Dated: 07/08/2020. Bid Submission End Date: 17/08/2020, 17:00 Hrs. For any Corrigendum /addendum website (above stated) may please be pursued. Sd/- Registrar

Delhi Police chief reviews security preparedness ahead of I-Day

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Delhi Police commissioner S N Shrivastava today reviewed the preparedness of the city police with senior officers, asking them to enhance police visibility in vulnerable areas of the national capital, especially during the night, ahead of the Independence Day.

During this meeting held via video conferencing, Shrivastava also took stock of the crime and Covid-19 pandemic situation in the city, Delhi Police said in a statement.

The city police chief asked his officials to focus on increasing police visibility in Delhi.

According to an official, the cops conducted a flag march in Mandir Marg area today to ensure law and order ahead of the Independence Day.

The police chief also asked officials to maintain disposal of cases in a time-bound manner and ensure security of senior citizens with regular visit by beat cops. He emphasised on regular training of the staff on professional aspects of investigation, counselling

and stress management. Shrivastava rewarded police personnel from Rohini, west and northwest districts, special cell, traffic and railway units for their "exemplary work" during the last few days.

Last Thursday, Delhi Police held an inter-state coordination meeting with its counterparts from neighbouring states in order to beef up security in view of the upcoming Independence Day.

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Senior officers from

Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Rajasthan, Chandigarh and Jammu and Kashmir along with Delhi police officers of the rank of joint commissioners and deputy commissioners had reportedly participated in this

virtual inter-state meeting whose main objective was to share terror-related intelligence. The officers exchanged information on anti-social elements taking refuge in the National Capital Region (NCR) and the need to launch a concerted drive for tenant verification and border checking.

The meeting laid emphasis on verification of staff deployed on duties related to Independence Day arrangements. The officials were asked to keep an eye on movement of paragliders, drones and other flying objects and share information on movement of suspicious elements.

Following the death of a 71-year-old patient at a private hospital at Malviya Nagar here, his family members have alleged that the hospital's "gross negligence" led to his death.

The body of the deceased has been sent for post mortem to the AIIMS. Its post mortem will be carried out tomorrow whose report is expected to be released on Monday.

Interpret, daughter of the deceased Ramesh Chand, has said that his condition was "not serious" and that he was admitted to the hospital for a "regular check-up".

But when his condition worsened there was not any hospital attendant to take care of him or to shift him to the emergency ward, she charged.

Meanwhile, the private hospital has issued a statement, denying these charges. It said Ramesh Chand "suddenly collapsed" in the hospital this morning.

He was admitted there yesterday under Dr Rahul Trehan. He was a "known diabetic and pleural effusion" and was admitted to the hospital for "tapping of fluid and further management".

Patient's family blames private hospital's 'gross negligence' for his death; hospital denies it

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

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"I personally met him at 10.50 am, he complained of abdominal distention, and himself suggested that it could be due to pocha breakfast which doesn't suit him.

His oxygen level was normal at that time. Suddenly, at 11 AM, RMO got a call that patient is not comfortable, she rushed to attend the patient, patient was shifted to emergency, all efforts were made to revive the patient, but he could not be revived.

Hospital has full sympathy with bereaved family, but I can assure you that there was no lapse on part of the hospital in his treatment.

Aakash hospital is a NABH registered hospital, keeps all its instruments properly calibrated and maintains high standard for providing quality medical care to its patients," said Dr Nagesh Kumar Yagnik, medical superintendent of Aakash Hospital at Delhi's Malviya Nagar.

Delhi EV policy aims to electrify 50 pc 2-wheeler fleet of delivery cos by 2023

PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

The Delhi government's new electric vehicle policy envisages incentives to cut to 50 per cent by March 2023 fleet of petrol-powered two-wheelers used by delivery service providers in the city.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who launched the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy on Friday, sought the cooperation of all stakeholders in implementing it.

"I am glad Delhi's EV policy has been well received by all stakeholders. It was prepared after wide-ranging

consultations spanning over a period of more than 2 years. Now, I seek everyone's cooperation in successfully implementing it," he tweeted on Saturday.

It is expected that the incentives will encourage delivery service providers like those engaged in food delivery, e-commerce logistics and courier services to switch to using electric two-wheelers, the EV policy stated.

"To ensure the switch happens in a time-bound manner, all delivery service providers shall be expected to convert 50 per cent of their fleet operating in Delhi to

electric by March 31, 2023, and 100 per cent by March 31, 2025," it said.

The delivery service providers who commit to achieving these targets will be eligible for financial support from the Delhi Finance Corporation (DFC), according to the policy for the two-wheeler segment.

Two-thirds of new vehicle registrations in Delhi comprise two-wheelers, with the most popular segments being motorcycles between 110-125 cc and scooters between 90-125 cc.

"Any attempt at electrification of Delhi's vehicle fleet needs to address these seg-

ments to achieve significant reduction in air pollution," the policy said.

Ride-hailing service providers will be allowed to operate electric two-wheeler taxis, subject to operating within the guidelines to be issued by the Transport Department of the Delhi government, it said.

The demand generation incentives for two-wheelers offered under the policy will be based on battery capacity (energy content measured in kWh) used in vehicles.

"The incentives will be available only for the elec-

tric two-wheelers with advanced batteries and subject to a maximum incentive of Rs 30,000 per vehicle," according to the policy.

The electric two-wheelers will have to fulfil the performance and efficiency eligibility criteria, including the minimum top speed of 40 km/hour, to avail the incentive.

According to the policy, these eligibility criteria are aligned with those existing in FAME India Phase II for electric two-wheelers.

However, they will exclude other conditions such as no limit for minimum vehicle range, no mandatory

requirement of local manufacturing, and no requirement for vehicles to be fitted with suitable monitoring devices to determine the total fuel savings on a real-time basis.

A purchase incentive of Rs 5,000 per kWh of battery capacity will be provided per vehicle to the registered owner of an electric two-wheeler that will up to Rs 30,000 per vehicle, the policy said.

Registered owners of electric two-wheelers will also be eligible for an incentive for scrapping and de-registering old two-wheelers in Delhi.



Gandhi ji's slogan of 'do or die' will have to be given a new meaning on the 78th anniversary of the Quit India Movement. Fight against injustice, do not be afraid!

RAHUL GANDHI
CONGRESS LEADER

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 09 AUGUST 2020

Punjab govt withdraws state security cover from Bajwa

Days after the Cong MP sought a central agency probe into the recent hooch disaster, Amarinder govt withdraws state police security from him on the ground that he already enjoys central security

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 8 AUGUST

Days after the Congress party's Rajya Sabha member Pratap Singh Bajwa sought a central agency probe into the recent Punjab hooch tragedy, the party-led Punjab government on Saturday decided to withdraw the state police personnel deployed for his security.

A Punjab government's official spokesperson said the decision was taken after an assessment showed that Bajwa had virtually no threat perception and was in any case now getting the central security directly accorded to him by the Union home ministry.

The Punjab police security provided to Bajwa had become "redundant" since he had procured personal security directly from Union home minister Amit Shah, the spokesperson said.

A mixed security compo-



nent was in any case not considered good, especially when the Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab, by opting for central security showed that he had no faith in the state police, the spokesperson claimed.

According to the spokesperson, contrary to claims made by Bajwa, the central security he had got was not at the behest of the Congress leadership. In fact, the Union home ministry had not even consulted the state gov-

ernment to gauge the threat perception regarding him, which is usually done before providing central security to any person.

The spokesperson further said that Bajwa has actually been getting enhanced security from Punjab Police all this time, way beyond what he was entitled to as a Rajya Sabha member.

This was because the state government decided not to withdraw the greater security he had at his disposal

when he was president of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC).

His enhanced security should have been pulled out as soon as Bajwa became a member of Parliament, with "virtually zero threat perception", the official spokesperson said.

Bajwa was given "Z category security cover" by the Union home ministry on 19 March and as of date has 25 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel for

his personal security, house protection and escort, besides two escort drivers.

Till 23 March, Bajwa also had 14 Punjab Police personnel deployed with him but a few were withdrawn for Covid-19 duties. He currently has six state police personnel and an escort with driver, which are now being withdrawn, said the spokesperson.

Ever since Bajwa along with another Congress's Rajya Sabha member from the state Shamsher Singh Dullu sought a central agency probe into the production of illegal liquor in the state following the hooch tragedy - which claimed 133 lives in the state - both leaders have been under attack from within their own party, with the state Congress leaders questioning their loyalty to the party. Bajwa has been an arch rival of chief minister Capt Amarinder Singh in the Punjab Congress for a very long time.

Ex-Delhi transport dept employee held for extortion & posing as cop

PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

A 44-year-old man, sacked from the Delhi Transport Department in 2005 on corruption charges, was arrested for allegedly trying to extort money from a delivery person by impersonating a policeman, officials said on Saturday.

The accused has been identified as Subash Chander, a resident of Loni in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad district, they said.

He was previously involved in seven cases, police said.

On July 23, one Rajat Kumar, a resident of Loni, lodged a complaint, stating that he works with a food delivery app. After delivering food in Pandav Nagar, he was

returning on his bike via DDU Marg, a senior police officer said.

When he reached near the Aam Aadmi Party office, DDU Marg, he was stopped by a person, who was in police uniform and sitting in an auto. The person threatened him of issuing challan for rash and negligent driving and asked Rs 8,000 as fine, the officer said.

Kumar did not have cash, following which the accused forced him to sit in the auto and asked to withdraw money from an ATM. He also threatened that if the fine was not paid, he would be implicated in a case, police said.

"They went to Connaught Place and the accused sent Kumar to an ATM kiosk. Finding an opportunity, Kumar

escaped from the kiosk and reached DDU Marg where his bike was parked. However, his phone was taken by the accused.

"Police analysed the CCTV footage and nabbed Chander," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Sanjay Bhatia said.

Interrogation revealed that after his dismissal from the transport department, Chander did not have work and started extorting or cheating people either in the name of the Delhi Transport Department or by posing as a police official, Bhatia said.

He has committed several incidents in the area. The uniform that he was wearing at the time of incident was also recovered from his house, the DCP added.

Centre clears ₹7922 cr investment for six Himachal projects: Thakur

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 8 AUGUST

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday said that on the request of the state government the Union government has approved investment of about Rs 7922 crore for six projects of irrigation, multipurpose and flood control schemes for Himachal Pradesh.

He said that this included Renukaji dam project (national project) with an estimated cost of Rs 6947 crore and five proposals related to flood protection works/anti-erosion measures with estimated cost of Rs. 975.70 crore. The CM said this in his address after inaugurating and laying the foundation stones of developmental projects worth about Rs 130 crore in Jaisinghpur Assembly segment in Kangra district.

He said that the Covid-19 pandemic has forced the State

Government to perform inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony virtually. He said that developmental projects worth Rs. 130 crore were dedicated by him today to the people of Jaisinghpur Vidhan Sabha area.

Chief Minister urged the people of the State to ensure adequate precautions to ensure check on spread of coronavirus in the State. He said that the State was fortunate to have benevolence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that the Prime Minister has visited the state three times during the current tenure of the State Government. He said that Prime Minister was always concerned about the developmental aspirations of the people of the State. He said that Prime Minister has meticulously led the nation during the Corona pandemic. He said the deaths due to COVID-19 in India were almost lowest amongst most of the

developed countries. The Chief Minister said that it was due to the strong and able leadership of Prime Minister that the dream of crores of Indians have been realised, as the Bhumi Pujan of Lord Ram Temple at Ayodhya was performed recently by the Prime Minister and magnificent Lord Ram Temple would be constructed within two-three years.

He said that not only this, several other historic decisions, such as abrogation of Article 370, Triple Talaq etc. He said that this was possible due to the strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Local MLA Ravinder Dhiman hailed CM for dedicating developmental projects worth crores of Rupees in the area. He thanked the Chief Minister for laying foundation stones of five projects worth Rs. 57 crore under the Jai Jeewan Mission. He also detailed various developmental demands of the area.

3 feared dead as car falls into G'bad canal

PTI
GHAZIABAD, 8 AUGUST

Three people are feared dead as a car en route to Chandigarh from Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly fell into a canal near Ghaziabad's Masuri town, an official said on Saturday.

Its driver, Paramvir, swam out of the canal with the help of a police sub-inspector, the official said, adding that those feared dead have been identified as Ashish, Binny and Sanjiv.

The official said the incident took place on the National Highway-9 on Friday night around 1.30 am when the car driver lost his way and took a wrong turn.

Police called an NDRF team for the rescue operation and the car was pulled

out by a crane.

SP (Rural) Neeraj Kumar Jadaun said they are trying to locate the three youths feared drowned.

He said they could not be located till Saturday evening when the NDRF team halted its rescue operation.

The NDRF team will resume its operation on Sunday morning, he said, adding that the help of the Hapur police has also been sought as a major portion of the canal falls under their area.

According to him, all occupants of the car belonged to Bareilly and were going to the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) office in Chandigarh in connection with some contract work.

Rare red coral kukri snake rescued from a Haldwani house



A forest department personnel holding a rare red coral kukri snake with a tong in Haldwani in Uttarakhand.

SNS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 8 AUGUST

A rare red coral kukri snake was rescued from a house at Haldwani in Nainital district yesterday.

A forest department team, after receiving a complaint of a snake entering a house, rushed to Khuriakhatta near Bindukhatta. The rescue team were amazed to find the 'mysterious reptile' famous for its bright orange colour in the house.

Kavendra Singh Koragan returned from his daily work on Friday and he was surprised to find a large number of villagers at his home. The crowd had gathered to watch the red coral kukri snake which had entered his home. He too saw the odd colour snake for the first time in his life. Kavendra Koragan informed the forest department.

Divisional Forest Officer (Terai east) Niteshmuni Tripathi said, "The red coral kukri snake was first spotted way back in 1936 in Lakhimpur Kheri. After receiving information our team reached the site and found the rare species of snake. After rescuing the reptile it was released in the wild."

In 2014, a team of wildlife experts found a dead red coral kukri snake in the Surai range, near Haldwani. After that in 2015 extensive search was conducted and many snakes of the same species were found in Surai. This time the find was dramatic and villagers spotted the rare snake in their area. Red coral kukri snakes are non-venomous and feed on insects and worms. Earlier this year a red coral kukri snake was spotted at the Dudhwa National Park in Uttar Pradesh.

No entrance test for UG seats in Nauni varsity



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 8 AUGUST

Y S Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry (UHF), Nauni, in Himachal Pradesh has extended the last date for admissions for all its undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes.

The decision has been taken in view of COVID 19. The last date for online submission of application forms for admission to Undergraduate Programmes-BSc (Hons) Horticulture/Forestry/B Tech Biotechnology, for both normal and self-financing seats has been extended till 15 August, 2020. The last date for online submission of admission forms for MSc/ MBA (Agribusiness), MBA General and PhD have also been extended till 20th August.

An official release here said the varsity this time will not be conducting an entrance test to fill the normal seats of Under Graduate programmes. The basis of admission for UG normal seats shall be merit drawn on basis of marks obtained at 10+2 level examination in four subjects-English, Physics, Chemistry

and Biology/ Mathematics plus weightage of participation in sports/ NCC, NSS, scouting, co-curricular activities (if any).

The release said the candidates have been advised to download the counselling Performa from the university website and fill it as per the instructions mentioned on it. Those students who want to be considered for both normal as well as self-financing seats need to fill two separate Performas. A single page pdf file must be created, containing scanned filled counselling Performa along with legible documents mentioned in the checklist as provided in the counselling Performa.

For normal seats: the scanned pdf file must be sent through email to uhf.ugnormal20@gmail.com on or before 18th August, 2020. For self-financing seats: the scanned pdf file must be sent by email to uhf.ugselffin20@gmail.com on or before 20th August, 2020. Every candidate must submit the duly filled counselling proforma in order to be considered for the admission, the varsity release said.



West Bengal and Odisha were struck by a deadly super-cyclone on 20 May. The cyclone caused significant loss of life and massive destruction of property. While lives are limping back to normal, the reconstruction of the states, especially West Bengal, will involve considerable cost. This is a time for people to come forward with their assistance, to aid relief and rehabilitation work.

We ask readers to contribute generously to The Statesman Calamity Relief Fund, the proceeds of which will be used to aid reconstruction work. Contributions may be sent to:

THE STATESMAN CALAMITY RELIEF FUND
ACCOUNT NO: 13032020000138
BANK: HDFC BANK, CHOWRINGHEE SQUARE, KOLKATA
IFSC CODE: HDFC0001303

Contributions may also be sent by cheque/DD to The Statesman Calamity Relief Fund, Statesman House, 4 Chowringhee Square, Kolkata 700 001. Donations above Rs 201 will be acknowledged in the columns of the newspaper. In the event of electronic transfers, please send us your name, address and contribution details by e-mail to editor@thestatesman.com

You may, if you wish, also contribute to

WEST BENGAL STATE EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND
Account No. 628005501339
BANK: ICICI BANK LTD., HOWRAH
IFSC Code: ICIC0006280

Contributions are entitled to deduction u/s 80G of the Income Tax Act.



The agricultural sector is largely unaffected. The rural economy remained stable and there was a bumper harvest of the rabi crops.

UNION AGRICULTURE MINISTER NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR
STATING THAT FARM SECTOR REMAINED UNAFFECTED BY THE ECONOMIC CRISIS TRIGGERED BY COVID PANDEMIC

THUMBNAILS



A woman sits outside his house while making Lord Ganesha idols in New Delhi on Saturday. AFP

BJP leader tests COVID-19 positive in HP: BJP state spokesman Baldev Tomar also tested Covid positive. He had come in contact with minister Sukh Ram Chaudhary, who had tested positive on Thursday. Himachal recorded 92 fresh coronavirus cases on Saturday. PTI

Cong leader Nandi Yellaiah dead of Covid: Senior Congress leader Nandi Yellaiah died of Covid-19 in Hyderabad on Saturday, party sources said. Yellaiah (78) was admitted to Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences on 29 July. PTI

J&K chief secretary triggers political row

PDP alleges CS came to Kashmir with colonial mindset, is RSS' chief executioner

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 8 AUGUST

Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmaniam has triggered a political storm in Jammu and Kashmir by stating that "not a single soul cried" over the detention of political and separatist leaders in August last year when the Article 370 was abrogated.

Irked over the issue, the PDP alleged that the top bureaucrat had given the statement with the backing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Sad state of affairs when a top bureaucrat no less than Chief Secretary takes pride in dis-mantling & discrediting mainstream in #Kashmir and brags about @PMOIndia @narendramodi backing".

The controversy erupted on Saturday when news reports were published of the chief secretary telling some visiting journalists that; "Jammu and Kashmir was a broken state and there was no system in place due to years of misgovernance, corruption and unbelievable levels of fraud committed by leaders of main-

stream parties and separatist organisations. There, not a single soul cried over the detention of political and separatist leaders in August last year."

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) lashed out at Chief Secretary Subrahmaniam, terming his remarks "uncalled for and utterly flagitious". In a statement, PDP spokesman said that the Chief Secretary has come here with a "colonial mindset" and acts as chief executioner of RSS in Kashmir.

He said that it was ironical that he is finding fault with the entire population of Jammu and Kashmir while running the most corrupt administration that the state has ever witnessed, the party alleged. According to the PDP spokesman, the chief secretary is "heading a cabal of officers who are affiliated with RSS and are enforcing their agenda in Kashmir". He said that IAS has never stooped to this low. "CS should first explain to the people what happened to the multi-crore health insurance scam affecting five lakh government employees in Jammu and Kashmir? Who



was responsible for taking that scam to the administrative council? And why was that all of a sudden scrapped and what action has been taken against the involved officers? What has happened to the Chinab valley power corporation scams and why were those first approved and later cancelled? Who were the officers involved?" said the spokesman.

He added that BJP and its chosen bureaucrats in Kashmir are not only heaping insults, humiliation, and atrocities on the people of Jammu and Kashmir but they are also misleading and exploiting the so-called nationalist sentiments in rest of the country.

Peoples Conference leader Imran Reza Ansari also vented his annoyance over the issue by tweeting: "CS J&K takes pride in dismantling, dis-

crediting mainstream". "So MR CS. Now u have been here for two years. And u have been the boss. Wonder how many people will cry if u r arrested. Hope u focus on ur job rather than dabbling in politics. Please for god's sake do your job what you are best."

In a strongly worded statement, CPI(M) leader Mohamad Yousuf Tarigami described the chief secretary's statement blaming politicians for corruption "highly un-warranted". "Bureaucrats come and go and it is not the mandate of a CS to level baseless allegations against elected representatives", Tarigami said.

"If frauds have been committed by some persons who have remained in authority, what stops the administration to make those public and book the offenders? We had been demanding transparency in the functioning of each branch of the administration including J&K Bank for a long time and bringing it under the ambit of legislature and Right to Information Act (RTI). Time and again we demanded it on the floor of the Assembly as well", he said.

World has a lot riding on India and China: EAM Jaishankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

The world has a lot riding on India and China given their size and the impact, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday, suggesting that the future of ties between the two countries would depend on reaching "some kind of equilibrium or understanding".

In an online interaction at a CII summit, Jaishankar said there are "problems" between the two countries which are "well laid out". He was replying to a question on whether India and China will be able to become friends in the next 10-20 years just like the way France and Germany overcame their past to forge a new relationship.

"We are neighbours of China. China is already the second largest economy in the world. We will be one day third. You can argue when. We are demographically two very unique countries. We are the only two countries in the billion plus (population) category," he said.

"The period of our difficulties were similar which really started at least vis-a-vis the Europeans around the same timeframe," he said.

The external affairs minister said the period of re-emer-

gence of the two countries in a very strong way in international politics is also not that far apart.

"We are seeing a sort of parallel but differential rise of the two countries. But all of this is also happening when we are neighbours. To my mind what it does is, it puts a huge premium on reaching some kind of equilibrium or understanding between the two," he said. "Because not just in my interest, equally in their interests, and how to do that, I think is, one of the big challenges that we face. In their own way, somebody at their end would be saying something," he added.

India and China are currently locked in a bitter border row in eastern Ladakh.

"And I would argue that the world actually has a lot riding on us given our size and given our impact that would be the case. It is not an easy question to answer. There are problems; problems are well laid out. But certainly I feel, you know, (it) is very central to our foreign policy calculations," Jaishankar said.

Referring to evolving geopolitics, the external affairs minister also mentioned how the era of western dominance is diluting in the wake of rebalancing of global power with the

rise of countries like India and China.

About the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free trade agreement, Jaishankar said trade pacts should serve the national economic growth and suggested that it would be a key condition on India's decision whether to go for such agreements.

Talking about India's foreign policy, the external affairs minister said the country will continue to strive for a just and equitable world as not advocating for international rules and norms could lead to the "law of the jungle".

He also touched upon a range of key geo-political issues like changing character of global alliances, how technology and connectivity are becoming key parameters of global power and India's strategic autonomy in foreign policy and importance it commands for its values and ethical approach.

Highlighting centrality of India's foreign policy, Jaishankar said the country is recognised for moral leadership globally and that it strongly stands for its quest for a more just and equitable world with strong commitment for international laws and norms.

CITU to observe 'Quit India' movement day as 'Save India' on 9 August

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Ten Central Trade Union (CTU) organisations, together with sectoral Federations and Associations, will observe 9th August, the freedom struggle's Quit India day, as "Save India Day."

There will be programmes all over India to protest against the "anti workers labour law changes and against disinvestment and privatisation of public sector enterprises including 100 per cent FDI in some of the core sectors of the economy," the CTUs said.

"We treat these policies of the central government against the interests of the working people of the country. Our other

demands include lockdown wages for workers, no retrenchments of the workers and no wage cuts as promised by the government," the CTUs said.

The CTUs, which include INTUC, AITUC, CITU and Hind Mazdoor Sabha, have demanded "universal" public ration distribution to all needy citizens, cash transfer of Rs 7500 for all unorganised sector and self-employed workers, at least for six months, for their sustenance.

In Delhi, there will be a gathering at Jantar Mantar. The CTUs said "we wish to register our protest as Save India Day against anti people policies of the government, keeping physical distance as norm and wearing masks."

FIGHT FOR RIGHT



Delhi women activists protesting outside chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's house, over the safety of women, in New Delhi on Saturday. SNS

CAT seeks response from Centre, U'khand on Lokpal plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), that adjudicates service matters of government employees, has sought response from the Centre and Uttarakhand government on a plea of whistleblower bureaucrat Sanjiv Chaturvedi seeking deputation in the anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal, according to an official order.

Chaturvedi, a 2002 batch Indian Forest Service officer of Uttarakhand cadre, had approached the CAT seeking direction for secretary, Ministry of environment, forests and climate change (MoEFCC) to pass appropriate orders on a No Objection Certificate (NOC) given by Uttarakhand state government in December 2019, allowing him to join the Lokpal. He is at present posted as Chief Conservator of Forest (Research) at Haldwani, Uttarakhand.

Let counter reply on behalf of both the respondents (MoEFCC and Chief Secretary, Uttarakhand government) be filed within six weeks.

The applicant is directed to file his rejoinder within two weeks thereafter, according to the order issued on Tuesday by CAT's Allahabad Bench, as per sources. In his application filed before the tribunal in February this year, Chaturvedi had also sought interim relief as direction for the respondents to maintain status quo in respect of the NOC granted to him by the state government for joining the ombudsman till the disposal of the instant case.

Both the counsels are also

directed to file their objection separately on the request of interim relief within three weeks, said the divisional bench of Justice Bharat Bhushan (Judicial member) and Devendra Chaudhary (Administrative member).

The matter has been listed for 27 August for disposal of prayer of interim relief, the order said.

Citing his relentless fight against corruption, Chaturvedi had in November sought deputation in the Lokpal.

"I belong to a respectable family of freedom fighters and my entire career has been that of persistent struggle/resistance against corruption of high and mighty of ruling establishment, with unflinching commitment in the face of relentless persecution of all form", he had said in his letter, written via the Uttarakhand government, to the Lokpal.

Winner of the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2015 for his fight against corruption, Chaturvedi highlighted in the letter some prominent cases investigated by him during his tenure as CVO of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi and when he was posted in Haryana, and the appreciation received by him from various Constitutional authorities.

In his letter, he had said that all the requirements for the said deputation are fulfilled by him regarding completion of a cooling-off period of three years as on 29 August, 2019, and that there is vacancy in Central Deputation Reserve in his cadre (i.e., Uttarakhand).

TN relaxation: Govt allows institutional worship

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 8 AUGUST

The Tamil Nadu government on Saturday announced that small temples, mosques, dargah, churches and other religious places in the corporation areas will be opened for worship from 10 August.

The permission of worship in the respective institutions is to be obtained from the commissioner of Greater Chennai Corporation. Also, driving schools across the state shall function from 10 August adhering to the standard operating procedures (SOP) to be released by the government. Temples and other religious places of worship were closed for darshan since 24

March, when the state government enforced a total lockdown.

However, the government permitted all religious activities including daily puja in the temples by the priests.

Apparently, with the coronavirus spread under control in Chennai and parts of Tamil Nadu, CM K Palaniswami announced relaxations in the lockdown restrictions.

"Permission should be obtained from the commissioner of Greater Chennai Corporation and district collectors, concerned, for allowing public worship," Palaniswami said in a statement here.

The chief minister called upon the public to adhere to the SOP and contain the

spread of Covid-19.

The government had already issued SOP for opening places of worship, he added. However, the number of Covid-19 patients in Tamil Nadu started increasing after few days.

For the past two days, the daily tally started hovering around 6,000 mark.

On Saturday, the state recorded as many as 5,866 new Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of coronavirus infections in the state to 2,90,907.

According to the daily bulletin released by the state health department today, Chennai registered 986 new cases, taking the total number of infections in the metrop-

olis till date to 1,08,124. This is for the first time the city recorded below 1,000.

While 5,043 patients were discharged from various hospitals in Tamil Nadu today. However, the state today saw 118 deaths because of the pandemic.

The bulletin said number of active cases as on today is 53,481. While the number of samples tested today is 67,553, a whopping number of 31,55,619 samples have been tested so far.

The total number of fatalities in the state stands at 4,808. On the positive side, 2,32,618 patients have recovered from Covid-19 so far, indicating that the recovery rate is high.

Hilsa missing from Bengali menus?

TIRTHANKAR MITRA
KOLKATA, 8 AUGUST

With the advent of torrential monsoons, hilsa fish becomes the coveted delicacy of gourmets. But its sharp prices which emanated from supply deficit have spelled dismay. This has hindered the various dishes that adorn the dining tables of numerous Bengal homes.

The sight of fishing nets shimmering with a sizable catch of hilsa, gasping for breath, is paltry, owing to the vagaries of weather. It is certainly not lack of effort on part of the fishermen that has eclipsed the sight.

Just like wild salmon and sturgeon, hilsa has an elaborate cycle of migratory spawning from the Bay of Bengal to the tributaries

of Ganga. But an "ill wind" blows, diverting the river water and the shoals of hilsa towards Bangladesh, joint secretary, West Bengal United Fishermen's Association, Bijan Maity explained. This trend has set in from 15 June, Maity said, which has not been seen in the past 25 years, and is diminishing the supply to the city markets besides pushing prices up.

A large number of shoals have already entered the waters of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Fleet of trawlers have for the past several weeks sailed all over their expected fishing grounds within the Indian waters only to return with a near empty haul. The situation has been exacerbated by a hike in diesel prices that propel the trawlers.

PM launches 'Gandagi Mukht Bharat', a nation-wide cleanliness drive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Ahead of the Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a 'special' week long 'Gandagi Mukht Bharat' campaign across the country.

The Prime Minister's announcement on the nationwide cleanliness drive came while inaugurating the Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra ~ an interactive experience centre on the Swachh Bharat Mission, at the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti at Rajghat, New Delhi.

Modi had announced the setting up of Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra (RSK) on 10 April, 2017 on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha.

Addressing a gathering comprising school children from across the country, observing social distancing, Modi recalled the 'journey' of Swachh Bharat Mission launched by his government, during the first term.

The PM lauded people for making cleanliness a mass movement. He reiterated the importance of 'swachhata' in day to day lives of people amid the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. Announcing the launch of 'Gandagi Mukht Bharat' campaign, Modi said in the next seven days in the run up to the Independence Day, special cleanliness initiatives would be undertaken to reinforce the nationwide mass cleanliness campaign in the rural and urban areas in the country.

Modi had earlier undertaken a tour of the Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra and later interacted with 36 school students from Delhi representing all states and UTs.

The RSK has digital and outdoor installations tracking India's march to become an open defecation free country in 2019.

Modi visited the three sections of the RSK, experienced a 360° audio visual immersive show in Hall 1 providing an overview of the Swachh Bharat journey. At Hall 2 he saw interactive LED panels, hologram boxes etc. He also saw the installations in the lawn adjacent to RSK showcasing Mahatma Gandhi leading people to the Swachhata pledge, Rani Mistri of rural Jharkhand and children swachhagrahis who call themselves Vaanar Sena.

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the first such virtual tour of the RSK will be organised on 13 August with minister for Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. For ticket bookings, one may log on to rsk.ddws.gov.in.

Lockdown strictly observed across Bengal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 8 AUGUST

Many new containment zones have surfaced in Kolkata as per Kolkata Municipal Corporation's (KMC) data while the bi-weekly lockdown today was strictly enforced by the police who caught violators at checkpoints and subjected them to various penalties.

KMC with Kolkata Police will conduct a census on elderly citizens in high-rise buildings. As per the list compiled by KMC on 7 August, 39 containment zones have surfaced and most of which are in flats, complexes, mixed and multiple-premises. There are eight flats and seven multiple premises where these zones have come up. About 11 mixed premises were included in the list while the number of complexes is around seven. Three slums also feature in the list.

The worst affected areas include Patuli Block, Bagha-

jatin-G block, Ballygunge, Phoolbagan and Alipore apart from other areas.

The state home secretary and nodal officer of KMC for tackling Covid, Mr Alapan Bandopadhyay has said that the civic body in coordination with the police will carry out a census on senior citizens in the city. He said, "The chief minister Mamata Banerjee has instructed that we need to gain more information on elderly citizens who might be living alone in high-rise complexes in Kolkata Howrah, New-Town and other areas. We need to form a system that will enable these senior citizens to contact emergency services like ambulances, police and the civic body."

"The police and KMC jointly will conduct a census in the high-rise complexes in Kolkata and provide the senior citizens with contacts of Swastha Bhawan, police, ward coordinators etc. Presidents of the

committees in these housing complexes will have to keep a check on the elderly persons to determine whether any of them have taken ill. The contact numbers of such presidents will be with us through which we will liaison" said Mr Bandopadhyay.

It was learnt that in case of distress, the complex authorities will have to reach out to the help of these senior citizens while elderly residents must possess important devices such as oximeters and pulse meters. Call centres for the senior citizens living in high-rise complexes are being set up.

Meanwhile, most of the roads today remained empty due to the lockdown. Important and busy intersections like Hazra and Park Circus remained desolate. Police had set up several checkpoints where vehicles which ventured out without any valid reason, were stopped and subjected to inquiry.



A health official wearing a PPE suit rests in front of a Covid mobile testing van in New Delhi on Saturday. AFP

Doctor rapes minor girl: A medical practitioner from Bhiwandi of Maharashtra has been booked for allegedly raping a 14-year-old girl at his clinic on 31 July, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred after the doctor had examined all patients inside his clinic and sent away his staff, he said. PTI

Hooch tragedy in Ch' garh: Two persons died after allegedly drinking illicit country-made liquor in Korba district of Chhattisgarh, the police said on Saturday. The incident took place at Bakikhar village under Bakimongra police station area on Friday, said SP K L Sinha. PTI

SP patriarch stable: The condition of Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav who was admitted to a hospital in Lucknow a day ago is stable, the medical facility said on Saturday. Medanta Hospital director said he was admitted on Friday following infection in urinary tract. He was tested for Covid and was found negative. PTI

Blast in Pb cracker unit: An explosion took place in a cracker unit at Iban-Kala village on the outskirts of the city in Amritsar on Saturday, police said. There was no loss of life in the incident, they said, but the building housing the cracker unit was damaged and the entire stock of crackers was gutted in a fire. PTI

Palghar case: Maha CID files third charge sheet

THANE/MUMBAI, 8 AUGUST

The Maharashtra Criminal Investigation Department, which is probing the Palghar mob lynching incident, has filed a third charge sheet in the case in a local court, officials said on Saturday.

In a related development, the CID also filed a charge sheet against two minor accused in the case in a juvenile court at Bhiwandi in Thane district on Friday, they said. Last month, the CID had filed two charge sheets, one running into 4,955 pages and another of 5,921 pages, in a court in Dahanu taluka in Palghar district.

As many as 154 people have been arrested and 11 juveniles detained in connection with the incident, police have said.

In all, three FIRs related to murder, armed rioting and other charges were registered in connection with the incident, in which two seers and their driver were lynched by a mob at Gadchinchale village in Palghar on 16 April when they were travelling in a car to Surat to attend a funeral amid the lockdown.

"The CID Crime has now filed a charge sheet in the third FIR, which was registered at Kasa Police Station in Palghar. The case relates to a police officer opening fire," an official said on Saturday.

The charge sheet was submitted in a Palghar court, he said. PTI



The policy on the logistics sector is ready ... The logistics sector is very important since it creates huge employment opportunities...

WEST BENGAL FINANCE MINISTER AMIT MITRA

ADDING THAT THE GOVT WILL SOON SEEK FEEDBACK FROM THE INDUSTRY ON THE DRAFT LOGISTICS POLICY

Tabletop runways pose major threat for fliers

Five Indian airports have tabletop runways; expertssay there isn't much room for error

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Constructed on elevated terrains and mostly having little space for last minute maneuver, tabletop runways at times pose challenges for pilots while landing their aircraft. And Air India Express planes have crashed at least twice on such runways in a little over a decade.

At least five airports, including at Kozhikode where an Air India Express aircraft crashed on Friday, have tabletop runways.

Tabletop runways are constructed on hilly or elevated terrains. Also, there could be low lying areas adjacent to such runways and there could be gorges at the end of such runways. Airports Authority of India (AAI) Chairman Arvind Singh said that tabletop runways are there at four airports operated by it. They are at Kozhikode, Mangalore (Karnataka), Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) and Pakyong (Sikkim).

The Lengpui airport in Mizoram, which is with the state government, also has a tabletop runway.

State-owned AAI operates 137 aerodromes, including the ones through joint ventures. A senior Air India pilot said that automation might not help in the case of tabletop runways. There is also the issue of optical illusion, where the runway might seem to be nearer whereas it would actually be further away, he added.

The pilot also stressed that there is not much buffer zone unlike normal runways.

There are tabletop runways in different parts of the world and only when the runway length is less, there could be issues with landing of aircraft. In the case of Kozhikode airport, the runway is about 9,000 feet which is quite long, according to a senior regulatory official.

According to the official, pilots are generally told about such runways and various restrictions. In the Court of Inquiry report about the plane crash at Mangalore airport in May 2010, it was mentioned that there were three tabletop airports in the country from where scheduled flights operate at Mangalore, Kozhikode and Lengpui. "Because of the undulating terrain and constraints of space, these airfields

Shaken and stunned, survivors recall the horror that was



A man walks near the wreckage of an Air India Express jet at Calicut International Airport in Karipur on Saturday. AFP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOZHIKODE, 8 AUGUST

Several injured passengers of the ill-fated Air India Express flight from Dubai which overshot the runway and crashed at the airport here are yet to get over the horror moments that took them close to death.

"We did not realise what really happened other than the flight was shaking," said Ramshad, who was injured as the aircraft dived into the valley and broke into two portions on Friday night after landing amid rains.

Though he was injured, Ramshad's wife Sufaira and four-year-old daughter Saidasherin escaped without any serious wounds.

Similar is the experience of Ashraf, a native of Kozhikode, now under treatment at the Medical College Hospital here, who said he was yet to recover from the shock. "As soon the flight crashed, the emergency door was opened and people jumped out to safety, another survivor said.

Deceased passenger tests +ve: One of the 18 passengers, who died when an Air India Express flight from Dubai crashed landed at the airport here, has tested positive for Covid. Higher education minister KT Jaleel told the media that sample of Sudheer Varyath (45), were sent for testing and it has returned positive.

A 'back home' last selfie goes viral, but passenger

does not make it: A selfie taken by Sharufudheen Pillassery (35), along with his wife and three-year-old daughter in PPE kits inside the flight, has gone viral as reports emerged that the journey turned out to be his last trip. Before take off, Pillassery had posted the selfie, on his Facebook page with the caption "Back Home". His wife is undergoing treatment in a hospital and their daughter, who suffered minor injuries, has been handed over to her grandparents.

2 Indian expats thank God for missing flight: Noufal Moin Vettan, an Ajman resident working as an office boy in a Sharjah school, was booked to travel on the flight and had checked in as per schedule.

Recounting his miraculous escape, Vettan, whose visa was cancelled a week ago, told *Gulf News*: I was handed my boarding pass, but when I reached immigration, they told me I had to pay a fine of Rs 20,430 for overstay. I had only Rs 10,215 with me.

Afsal Parrakadan, a resident of Abu Dhabi, had a similar stroke of luck. My work visa was cancelled about a week ago. After getting my boarding pass, I was told I had to pay a fine of Dh 1,000 at the immigration counter, but I had only Dh 500 on me. But a few hours later, when I learnt of the crash, I couldn't help but feel relieved and thankful to God for saving my life,

require extra skill and caution while carrying out flight operations. "The hazard of under-shooting and overshooting, in

particular, can lead to grave situations, as was the case in this accident," the report had said.

Aviation safety expert flagged concerns about K'code airport runway in 2011

MUMBAI, 8 AUGUST

Flights landing on runway 10 in tailwind conditions in rain at the Kozhikode airport endanger the lives of people onboard those flights, a civil aviation safety expert had warned in 2011.

Captain Mohan Ranganathan had flagged concerns about the runway in a communication to then Civil Aviation Secretary Nasim Zaidi in June 2011. Ranganathan was then a member of the operations group of the Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Committee (CASAC).

The communication assumes significance against the backdrop of the Air India Express plane crash at the airport on Friday that killed at least 18 people, including two pilots.

The Boeing 737-800 plane, coming from Dubai, had overshot the runway while landing in heavy rains and broke into two pieces.

"... in spite of the danger if the crew accepted a landing in wet and tailwind conditions, their concept of ALAR (Approach and Landing Accident Reduction) is very poor," he said.

The communication had come against the backdrop of an Air India Express aircraft crash at Mangalore airport in 2010. As many as 158 people had died in the crash. "... all the flights that land on Runway 10 in the tailwind conditions in rain, are endangering the lives of all on board," Ranganathan had said.

Envoys from the US, Australia and Japan said they are deeply saddened to hear about the Air India Express accident and conveyed their thoughts and prayers to the victims and their families. US envoy Ken Juster said the US mission is deeply saddened to hear the news of the accident. Satoshi Suzuki, Japan's ambassador to India, hoped that search and rescue would conclude as quickly as possible. PTI

FISHING IN TROUBLED WATERS



Boatmen catch fish as the water level of the Ganga rises in Allahabad on Saturday. AFP

J&K: 6 members of LeT terror financing network arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMMU, 8 AUGUST

Security forces have arrested six members of an LeT terror financing network and foiled their bid to revive the outfit in Jammu region, officials said Saturday.

The network was busted on the information provided by the Army, which gave intelligence inputs about efforts to revive it in Jammu city, a senior police officer said.

On the basis of the input, security forces picked up Muddasir Farooq Bhat and seized from him Rs 1.50 lakh cash concealed in a box, which was meant for LeT cadres, he added.

During interrogation, Bhat accepted he was linked to LeT's terror financing network and disclosed information about other members.

Army and police then arrested five more members of the LeT network, the officer said. They have been identified as Moulvi Touqeer Ahmed Bhat, surrendered terrorist-turned- SPO Asif Bhat, contractor Khalid Lateef Bhat, Gazi Iqbal of Khatika Talab (Jammu) and Tariq Hussian Mir, he said.

All of them worked for Pakistan-based terrorist Mohammad Amin Bhat alias Haroon alias Ubhair, he said.

Haroon had crossed over to Pakistan in 1997 and after arms training from LeT, he returned to Doda in 2006. However, due to pressure from security forces, he was exfiltrated to Pakistan and he setup his network of terror financing and recruitment from there, he said. A case has been registered and investigation is on, he added.

BSF kills Pakistan intruder along IB

NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

A Pakistani infiltrator was killed by the Border Security Force (BSF) on Saturday along the India-Pakistan IB in Rajasthan's Barmer district, officials said.

"BSF troops observed a Pakistani intruder who crossed the IB and attempted to sneak over the fence. He was challenged but he still crossed the fence and ran towards the other side," "Troops fired upon him and he hid behind a bush, but was found dead during search of the area," the BSF said. The incident took place at 1 am at the Bakhasar area. The BSF patrol also saw "10 to 15 torch light flashes and heard shouting from the Pakistan side." PTI

Murmu assumes office as CAG

NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Girish Chandra Murmu has assumed office as the Comptroller and Auditor General of India from August 8, 2020, an official statement said on Saturday.

Earlier in the morning, the former Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor was sworn in as the Comptroller and Auditor General at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Murmu made and subscribed to the oath of office before President Ram Nath Kovind, according to a Rashtrapati Bhavan statement.

His tenure as the new CAG will be up to November 20, 2024. He succeeds Rajiv Mehrotra, who demitted office on Friday, the office of the CAG said in the statement.

As a constitutional functionary, the CAG is primarily entrusted with the responsibility of auditing the accounts of the central and state governments.

The CAG reports are laid before Parliament and legislatures of the states. While being administered the oath of office and secrecy at Rashtrapati Bhavan this morning, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, outgoing CAG Mehrotra, were among the dignitaries present.

"After the oath ceremony, Murmu came to the CAG office, where he was welcomed by the senior officers of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department," said the official statement from his new office. PTI

Cured, man dies after testing positive again

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 8 AUGUST

A resident of Siliguri, who had reportedly recovered from Covid-19 earlier, has died after testing positive for the virus again.

Family members said they were confused about the matter. The son of the deceased said the 66-year-old resident of Surjya Sen Colony under the NJP police station had been tested positive for Covid-19 on 28 July and admitted in the Desun Hospital at Kawakhali, while a test was conducted at the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital (NBMCCH) on 25 July. He had been released from hospital after testing negative on 2 August.

His wife is undergoing treatment in Dr Chhang's (Covid) Hospital at Matigara, while the son and his daughter-in-law had also tested positive, but later released from a 'safe house.'

"Back home, we found that father had been suffering from breathing problems on 4 August. So he had been admitted in the critical care unit of the NBMCCH the next day. We were shocked to know that this test report confirmed Covid-19 positive again. He was shifted to the dedicated hospital at Kawakhali again, but he could not make it and died last night," the son of the deceased said.

According to him, they failed to understand whether he had been re-infected or had there been any mistake in any of the reports. He wondered whether the coronavirus could strike the same person twice, especially in such a short span of time.

Health department officials said a few cases of recurrence of the coronavirus had been reported in North Bengal.

A senior health official said it will be too early to make any comment on the matter. "We will study the case first," he said.

Controversy over tests

Controversy cropped up after some members of a voluntary organisation were found collecting their own nasal swab samples for rapid antigen tests at Matigara today. A section of health officials said that without dedicated health technicians, one should not collect the samples by themselves.

Secretary of the Matigara Social Welfare Organisation

Malay Bagchi said health workers of the local health centre had guided the members in collecting their swab samples.

"One of our executive body members has been tested positive through rapid antigen test. Accordingly, we had requested the Matigara block medical officer of health to hold similar tests for other members since we are involved in many social activities. The technicians demonstrated that members can collect their nasal swabs by themselves. Thirty eight members have undergone such tests today," Mr Bagchi said.

Darjeeling district chief medical officer of health Dr Pralay Acharya, however, said no one could collect their own swab samples.

Six die in Siliguri

Six persons, who had tested positive for Covid-19 died in Siliguri in the past 24 hours. A 66-year-old resident of Surjya Sen Colony in Siliguri died at Desun Hospital last night, while a 52-year-old person from Malbazaar in Jalpaiguri also died there.

Resident of Ward 5 in Siliguri died at the NBMCCH today. She was eighty. A person from Islampur in North Dinajpur also died there.

Another 65-year-old resident of Rabindra Sarani area also died today.

Tension ran high over the death of a resident of Birpara in Alipurduar district in a private nursing home in Siliguri today. The 55-year-old woman had tested positive at the nursing home. However, family members demanded the test be done again as she had earlier tested negative at the NBMCCH.

Meanwhile, 23 new cases in the Siliguri Municipal Corporation--16 in Darjeeling district and seven in Jalpaiguri district--have been detected in the past 24 hours.

Darjeeling officials, meanwhile, said 59 cases were detected in the district today, including the 16 in the SMC. "Twenty cases are from Naxalbari, four from Matigara, five from Darjeeling Municipality, two in Kharibari, one in Bijanbari, 10 in Kurseong and one in Mirik," an official said, adding that 41 patients were also discharged, including those in home isolation.

Delhi dy CM Sisodia defends use of RAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday defended the use of the Rapid Antigen tests for diagnosis of Covid in the national capital, saying the false reading rate for it is almost the same as that of the RT-PCR.

Sisodia said the Rapid Antigen Test (RAT), over which the experts have expressed reservations due to high false negative rate, has its own merits, one of which is giving immediate results that can help in early isolation of a patient to contain the spread of the virus.

"I don't think there is a problem with antigen tests. The false reading rate for antigen is almost same as that of RT-PCR which is around 30 per cent," Sisodia said. He was responding to a question on why the Delhi government was not increasing the RT PCR (Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction)

Centre asks states to test grocery shop workers, vendors: Expressing concern that grocery shops, vegetable and other vendors can be potential spreaders of coronavirus infection to a large number of people, the Union Health Ministry has advised states and UTs to take up testing of such people to ensure early detection of cases which can lead to reduction in mortality rate. In a letter to states and UTs, secretary in the Health Ministry, Rajesh Bhushan, also stressed on the need for operationalising ambulance transport



Swab samples for Covid testing are seen at a hospital in New Delhi on Saturday. AFP

system with oxygen facility and quick response mechanism. He underlined that the refusal rate of ambulances must be monitored at a daily basis and brought down to zero. PTI

-- a laboratory technique widely used in the diagnosis of genetic diseases as well to measure gene expression in research and considered more reliable due to its sensitivity and--despite the High Court's observations in this regard.

Delhi started ramping up coronavirus tests since June

18, especially after RAT was introduced. The increased number of tests proved to be an important pillar, according to experts, in containing the spread of the virus in the city where fresh infections per day had touched nearly 4,000 in June.

However, the bulk of the

SC seeks explanation over plea filed by Shourie, Ram & Bhushan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

The Supreme Court administration has called for an explanation from officials concerned over the listing of a plea filed by former Union Minister Arun Shourie, veteran journalist N Ram and activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan in which they have challenged the constitutional validity of a legal provision dealing with criminal contempt, official sources said on Saturday.

According to the cause list on the apex court website on Saturday morning, the petition was scheduled to come

up for hearing through video-conferencing before a bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and KM Joseph on August 10.

Apex court sources maintained that the plea should have been listed before the bench which is already seized of similar matters, in line with the established practice.

"As per the practice and procedure in use, the said matter should have been listed before the bench which is already seized of similar matter, but it has been listed by ignoring established practice and procedure. In this regard, explanation from officials concerned has been called," a reliable source said.

The petition has challenged the validity of Sec 2(1)(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 as being vague, unconstitutional and incompatible with the basic features of the Constitution.

However, after a couple of hours the matter was dropped from the cause list on the apex court website.

In their petition, Ram, Shourie and Bhushan have

challenged the constitutional validity of a legal provision dealing with criminal contempt for "scandalizing the court", saying it was violative of freedom of speech and right to equality.

The petition has challenged the validity of Section 2(1)(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 as being vague, unconstitutional and incompatible with the basic features of the Constitution.

The provision defines what constitutes criminal contempt and says that if by way of publication of words, the dignity of the courts is lowered and if they scandalize the

courts then the offence of contempt of court is deemed to have been committed.

The petition has alleged that the provision violated the freedom of speech and expression.

The filing of the plea challenging the validity of the provision assumed significance in view of the fact that a three-judge bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra on July 22 had issued a show cause notice to Bhushan after taking note of a petition urging it to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against him for his alleged tweets against the judiciary.

Bumpy skies

While it is easy to be wise after the event, questions about the operation of flights to Kozhikode airport during monsoons must be raised in view of the hypotheses offered by aviation experts. The table top runway is said to be dangerous, and especially so during rains, and it is reported that the Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Council had issued warnings about both Mangalore ~ where a crash had killed 158 people a decade ago ~ and Kozhikode a decade ago. The aircraft, a Boeing 737-800 commissioned in 2006, was not brand new but it was also not old. While age of aircraft is determined by the number of pressurization cycles they go through, and not years, aircraft of this type are said to be good for use for about 30 years. Based at Kozhikode, the aircraft had operated to Dubai on 5 August and to Abu Dhabi on 6 August, from where it had returned at about 6 p.m. that day. It left Kozhikode for Dubai shortly after 10 a.m. on 7 August and would have been subjected to maintenance checks overnight. The commander of the flight was vastly experienced, having served both in the Air Force and in commercial aviation. In other words, there was no ostensible reason to believe that either the craft or the pilot was less than competent. While the inquiry into the crash will disclose the reasons for the crash, survivor testimonies tell us that the pilot was aware of the risks associated with landing in the rain, and had aborted twice before deciding to put down his wheels. On the face of it, therefore, the risk associated with landing on a table-top runway (one located on the top of a hill or a plateau with one or both ends adjacent to a precipice) especially in blinding rain, suggests itself as a likely reason for the crash. Until they know better, authorities must consider suspending operations at airports such as Kozhikode at least during the monsoons. Flights can be diverted to either Kochi or Coimbatore, both about 4 hours' drive from Kozhikode, an inconvenience that passengers would gladly accept.

Friday's mishap has also blighted the Government's Vande Bharat mission, touted as the largest operation ever mounted to bring back stranded Indians from overseas. Nearly one million Indians have so far returned home in the wake of the coronavirus epidemic and more than 700 such flights are scheduled this month, operated by Air India, Air India Express, Spicejet and Indigo airlines. The government must know that commercial pilots are required to undergo mandatory tests periodically. Because of the epidemic, such tests have been suspended for now, giving rise to the possibility of a pilot who is unfit to fly taking to the skies. Historically, pilot fatigue is a major reason for mishaps and the stress of flying with a virus potentially lurking behind the cockpit door must be factored in. Thirdly, with breathalyser tests having been suspended since March, the possibility of a pilot rendering himself less than fit before entering the cockpit cannot be ruled out.

Shameful neglect

Mercifully, a large section of India's army of Accredited Social Health Activists (or ASHA workers as they are known) have chosen only to resort to a two-day token strike to press their demands. A longer agitation would cripple primary healthcare at a time when it is needed the most. Fighting the battle against coronavirus from the trenches, facing abuse, harassment and even physical assault, these workers are India's unsung warriors. And yet they are paid humiliatingly low wages, made to work inordinately long hours and face untold risks as they offer the primary link to health for India's poor. ASHA workers, considered volunteers and thus beyond the pale of minimum wage restrictions, are sometimes paid as little as Rs 4,000 a month, and that too not on time. It must be a matter of abiding shame for the Government that while it has found time to occupy itself with religious extravaganzas and investigations into the death of a film star, it has not found it possible to bestir itself in the cause of these workers, all of them women. The Union government has absolved itself of responsibility by saying it has released funds, including additional allowances for being part of the fight against Covid-19 and that the problem must lie with State governments. While some states have unilaterally hiked the amounts paid to these workers ~ Kerala and Telangana now pay Rs 7,000 a month while Karnataka pays them Rs 10,000 ~ many including Uttar Pradesh, which found it possible to bedeck Ayodhya at considerable cost just the other day, West Bengal and Haryana have delayed disbursement of even regular dues.

Created under the National Health Mission of 2005, ASHA workers were expected to work two or three hours each day, establishing contacts with the country's poorest families and providing advice on basic healthcare including sanitation, menstruation and inoculation. With the outbreak of the virus, their roles expanded as they became the first responders when symptoms were reported, quarantine monitors and contact tracers. In some states, they were also given the responsibility of delivering groceries and medicine to people in containment zones. In addition, they were asked to monitor elderly persons living alone and pregnant women. Workers complain they were asked to perform these duties without even basic protective equipment being provided to them. Almost from the beginning of the virus outbreak, there have been reports of ASHA workers facing attacks. While there was nationwide outrage at attacks in Indore, Bengaluru and other places, tangible appreciation of the work they have put in has not been forthcoming. Now with the cauldron of their woes having bubbled over, it is incumbent on governments to respond quickly to their plight. That is the least India owes them.

Boon for Free Thought?

In the Indian context, does social media promote or protect liberal values? Not particularly, because democratic and constitutional values are yet to be fully integrated in the Indian psyche. For example, the police 'encounter' of Vikas Dube was welcomed by more than ninety-nine percent of social media users



The first twenty years of the twenty-first century have seen the world change beyond recognition. The world order has changed; Europe is yielding place to Asia in power and wealth. Citizens' lives in all corners of the world are now markedly different; social media has made people the world over more connected and aware of each other. The virtual world has all but overtaken the real world in importance.

However, all governments still want to have the same power over citizens' lives that they had in the nineteenth century, while citizens would like governments to confine themselves to essential tasks like defence and foreign affairs and currency management. The dissonance between what Governments believe is good for citizens and what citizens themselves think is good for them, has been the cause for bitter conflicts in all corners of the world.

In the not very distant past, we had civil resistance movements based on popular opposition to one-party rule that led to the fall of Communist regimes in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland in 1989 and succeeding years. However, the twenty-first century is unique that it had a number of citizens' movements that were almost exclusively created and nurtured by social media ~ and most of them were in democratic countries!

Very often, like-minded people form groups on social media to share information and opinions, which approximates a meeting in the real world. Social networking sites like *Twitter*, which has 55 million users, can instantaneously disseminate short messages to everyone who would care to see them. Messaging applications like *WhatsApp*, that has two billion users, provides encrypted communication across continents, enabling users to share their thoughts instantaneously through messages, pictures and videos. One can, therefore, say that digital technologies and other forms of communication ~ videos, cellular phones, blogs, photos, emails, and text messages ~ have ushered in an era of 'digital democracy'.

The ongoing Black Lives Matter protests, which has seen more than 30 deaths, has been nurtured almost exclusively by social media, in the face of Presi-

dent Trump's rants, who would like to treat the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement as a law and order problem started by troublemakers and not as a citizens' reaction to racist police. Social media recorded BLM protests, spread information, promoted donation sites, and posted memorials to George Floyd. A petition titled "Justice for George Floyd," on Change.org got 13 million signatures.

The ferment in Hong Kong for the last two years has drawn sustenance from social media and made citizens even more determined to throw off China's restrictive yoke. Social media fuelled the Paris unrest over 'heavy-handed' treatment of ethnic minorities by the French police during the coronavirus lockdown. Closer home, social media played an important part in the prolonged sit-downs over the Citizenship Amendment Act which ended only with the advent of the coronavirus pandemic.

Wary about the power of social media, the Union Government has restricted internet use in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for the past one year. It may be instructive to investigate the ultimate outcome of movements fostered by social media. The Arab Spring movement was probably the first pro-democracy movement that used social media and digital technologies to circumvent state-operated media channels, organise protests and support collective action through *Facebook* pages. Mainstream electronic media devices ~ cell phones, emails, and video clips were used to spread word about the protests to the outside world. In the first instance, governments shut down sites like *Facebook* or blocked Internet service entirely, especially before a major rally. Governments also targeted members of *Facebook* groups by charging them with unrelated crimes. However, the protesters were not deterred, more groups were created and more posts were shared.

Later on, Arab Spring demonstrators were met with violent responses from authorities, as well as from pro-government militias and counter-demonstra-

tors and militaries. The Arab Winter followed; supporters for democracy in most Muslim-majority states were overwhelmed by the religious elite. Only the uprising in Tunisia resulted in a transition to a constitutional democratic government.

However, democratic movements have not been totally defeated; multiple uprisings and protest movements continue in Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt. An unfortunate aftermath is that countries like Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Lebanon, have been plunged into devastating internecine conflicts.

Social media ensured that the world took early notice of the Arab Spring; Tawakkol Karman of Yemen was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2011, for her role in organizing peaceful protests. "The Protester" was nominated as the "Person of the Year" by the Time magazine in 2011. However, in England, protests against the police killing of a black man, Mark Duggan, which were orchestrated by social media

had a totally different outcome; the movement soon degenerated into the London Riots of 2011. The rioters used *Twitter* and *Facebook* to disseminate volatile content, while looting strategies were finalised through the highly encrypted Blackberry Messenger. Ultimately, social media proved to be the undoing of the rioters; police identified looters by their pictures and posts on social media. Currently, in India, we have a surfeit of activism on social media with *WhatsApp* being the preferred platform, but genuine public issues often take a backseat with people freely airing their prejudices and pet peeves and even discussing murder and mayhem on social media. Then, there is no authenticity to the posts on social media which are derisively described as emanating from the 'University of WhatsApp' or 'WhatsApp Gyan.' The political importance of social media can be gauged from the fact that all world leaders, including our PM, are on *Twitter* and make most of their important announcements on this platform. But, in the Indi-

an context, does social media promote or protect liberal values? Not particularly, because democratic and constitutional values are yet to be fully integrated in the Indian psyche. For example, the police 'encounter' of Vikas Dube was welcomed by more than ninety-nine percent of social media users. Instead of informed discussion, social media is mostly used to vehemently propagate views on communal and/or party lines. To muddy the discourse further, political parties operate state-of-art facilities where well-paid men and women articulate posts on social media with the aim of canvassing a particular point of view and/or defaming political opponents; misquoting historical documents, morphing photographs and distorting videos has become routine in this process. Such incendiary posts are widely shared on *Twitter*, *WhatsApp* and similar platforms by other paid workers, often convincing the average user of the veracity of such posts, by sheer repetition. We also have social media warriors or 'trolls', whose main occupation is to hound people not subscribing to their point of view. The unfortunate person who comes in the cross-hairs of 'trolls' is often bullied till he quits the platform, mostly with his reputation in tatters. Finally, love it or hate it, but no one can ignore social media, which has a life of its own, with a totally different set of priorities. From the profound to farcical, mostly the latter, everything is freely available on social media. Daniel Howell, the YouTuber with six million subscribers, put things in perspective when he said: "These days, in the world of apps and social media and ... idiot friends, it is literally impossible to avoid spoilers. If a character dies, it is gonna be the number one trending topic on *Twitter*, it is gonna be the top trending story on *Facebook* ~ and *Reddit* and *Tumblr* just turn into a completely uncensored memorial service of memes. This happens all the time with sports results, ... I once got a notification from the BBC News app saying that a character in a show I was watching had just died! I thought that news notifications are supposed to be for impending natural disasters, not for just ruining my bloody afternoon."

Probably, this is the ultimate reality of social media.

Swordsmen to do cops' work?

The Attorney General's Department has caused quite a stir; it says it can seek the assistance of the armed forces to execute arrest warrants in case the police fail to do so. Deputy Solicitor General Dileepa Peiris made a statement to that effect, at a media briefing, on Friday, as we reported yesterday. The consternation of the state prosecutor and his staff is understandable. The police, more often than not, run around like headless chickens when arrest warrants are issued while suspects are absconding. But they promptly arrest ordinary people who happen to be on the wrong side of the law. Tainted Negombo Prison Superintendent Anuruddha Sampayo, whose arrest the Negombo Magistrate's Court ordered was at large for several days before surrendering to the police. If the CID cannot arrest an ordinary suspect like a prison officer until he surrenders, how can we expect it to deal with terrorists? No wonder Zahran and his fellow terrorists prepared and executed their plans with ease. The military has already been tasked with performing police duties. The traffic police have manifestly failed to bring order out of chaos on roads. What they practise is traffic control and not traffic management, and they believe in the imposition of fines on errant motorists rather than making timely interventions to prevent transgressions that cause accidents. Their incompetence and the attendant mayhem prompted President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to order that the Military

The Island Online

Police be deployed to help the police make roads less chaotic. Now, there is the presence of both traffic police and military police on roads, but congestion is far from over.

There may be situations where the police need the assistance of the armed forces to make arrests, given the power of the netherworld of crime and narcotics. The police had their work cut out in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday bombings, last year, and the security forces moved in to raid terrorist hideouts and neutralise threats effectively. But it defies understanding why the military should be deployed when the police fail to carry out their duties and functions under normal circumstances. The CID should be ashamed of its failure to trace the absconding prison officer. It is not seldom that politicians shield offenders, preventing the police from arresting them. In March, the Colombo Fort Chief Magistrate issued warrants for the arrest of 10 suspects wanted in connection with the Treasury bond scams. The police arrested only one of them and others went into hiding. It was obvious that the CID did not want to go the whole hog to trace the rest due to political pressure. Subsequently, the suspects surrendered to court. Not even an entire army division would have been able to arrest the suspects with political connections. The Colombo Municipal Council is full of shirkers paid with public funds. They do not clean drains or maintain public spaces. The military is deployed to do their work while they are paid for doing nothing. Municipal workers are responsible for keeping cities and towns clean, but workers have to be hired to remove election posters, cutouts, etc., and the public has to foot the bill. The keenness of the AG's Dept. to have arrest warrants executed expeditiously is to be appreciated, but the solution to the problem of dereliction of duty on the part of the police is not to deploy the military to do constabulary duties.

Life jacket to MSME sector

SIR, This refers to the report "Reserve Bank hits pause button on interest rate cut" (The Statesman, August 7).

In a welcome move, RBI on Thursday threw a life jacket to the crucial Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector which is the second biggest employer in India after agriculture as Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI allowed banks to restructure stressed loans without classifying them as non-performing assets.

With Covid-19 continuing to disrupt normal functioning and cash flows, the stress in the MSME sector has got accentuated, warranting further support. With this decision, MSME borrowers will be made eligible for restructuring their debt under the existing framework, provided their

accounts with the concerned lender were classified as standard as on 1 March 2020. The announcement is in line with several steps taken by the government and RBI to improve the liquidity and viability of the MSMEs under the current scenario. The debt restruc-

turing will also provide a huge relief to lenders, as most of them were expecting huge increases in NPAs of the MSME segment after the end of the loan moratorium period on 31 August 2020. This will also contribute majorly towards preserving the health of the



banking sector.

The economic fallout on account of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to significant financial stress for a number of borrowers across the board. The resultant stress can potentially impact the long-term viability of a large number of firms, otherwise having a good track record under the existing promoters, due to their debt burden becoming dispro-

portionate, relative to their cash flow generation abilities. RBI's decision not to extend moratorium deadline for borrowers to tide over financial pain caused due to the pandemic beyond August 31 is against the interests of the borrowers but certainly favours the lenders as the shuttered economy posed a great challenge for the banking industry. It's again a matter of

relief for the individuals as well as industry that bank rates in almost all categories remain unchanged, in continuation with the accommodative stance of monetary policy as long as necessary to revive growth and mitigate the impact of Covid-19, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward. Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 7 August.

ILLEGAL HISTORY

SIR, While there are many flaws in Prafull Goradia's arguments (Places of worship, 5 August), I was intrigued by his interpretation and selective use of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate'. Adopting an overly simplistic approach to a highly complex issue, the author is on slippery ground when he cherry picks his 'legitimate' events in history. Take the conversion of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul into a mosque. While we may or may not agree with the decision, it was based on a ruling by Turkey's highest court. How is a court judgement an 'illegitimate iconoclastic action'? The Babari masjid is referred to as the 'illegitimate replacement for the Ram Lalla mandir', yet the author chooses to remain silent on what the Supreme Court had to say about the placing of idols in 1949 and the demolition in 1992 (both illegal). Would Goradia care to elaborate on Bamiyan and Palmyra? These areas were under the control of the Taliban and ISIS respectively who felt that the sites were incompatible with their traditions and beliefs. Were their actions legal or illegal? At their trials, several Nazis claimed that they had just been following orders and at the time it was not illegal to send Jews to concentration camps. Rather than even attempt to navigate an ethical minefield, I would prefer to leave the last word to Professor Noam Chomsky: The whole of history is illegal.

Yours, etc., Ritu Khanna, 7 August, New Delhi.

DEBAPRIYA MUKHERJEE

The demands posed by burgeoning population growth are placing unprecedented stresses on the world's great rivers. All large rivers are hotspots of resources, agriculture, trade, and energy production and flow through developing nations, where much of the population is vulnerable to environmental and ecological stresses.

If appropriate policies are not framed with urgent interventions, humanity will see the planet's diverse ecosystem collapse in the coming decades. Despite human-induced adverse changes with many large rivers, the current coronavirus pandemic is already influencing regulatory frameworks as observed in India, United States and also in other countries.

In India, the changes made in the draft EIA 2020 are completely contrary to the principles of environment protection and sustainable development with reference to EIA notification 2006. The US government has eased its enforcement of pollution monitoring, enabling polluters to avoid penalties.

These anthropogenic stressors function on a range of timescales, and their effects potentially amplify the risks posed by extreme climate events and thereby increase the likelihood that key resilience thresholds will be crossed. Most importantly, the strong link between ecosystem services and livelihoods acts as a severe stressor that causes major barriers towards meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Among the many major rivers in the world, the Ganges covering a distance of 2,600 km eventually becomes one of the planet's most polluted rivers, a mélange of urban sewage, animal waste, pesticides, fertilizers, industrial metals, rivulets of ashes from cremated bodies and many more. The bacterial levels are remarkably high. Despite so much pollution, its numerous watersheds in the mountains, across the Deccan Plateau and its vast delta serve 400 million people — a third of India's population — as a source of drinking water for humans and animals, essential for crop irrigation, travel and fishing.

Rivers have assimilative capacity for responding to upset of equilibrium in water quality or sediment load through self-adjusting processes of erosion and sedimentation. These responses typically involve feedbacks that impart some resilience, allowing rivers to absorb a degree of change. Climate change, as manifested through a complex global pattern of future floods and droughts, presents a background

Let's save our rivers



stress that is increasing through time and pushing this flexibility to its limits. River resilience can further be lowered by a range of other anthropogenic stressors that could present slow ongoing changes or extreme events that operate over short timescales.

For example, the severity of flood in Kerala that killed at least 370 people, displaced 780,000 and caused Rs 30,000-50,000 crore worth of damage may be attributed to the ways in which river channels are engineered. The disaster with sign?cant consequences may be attributed to poor water governance in India. Thereby reduction in resilience makes river systems more vulnerable to the increasing magnitude and frequency of such extremes, which increases the likelihood that the tipping point for system resilience will be crossed. Such changes can have immediate consequences, such as hazardous riverbank erosion, which damages infrastructure and threatens lives, but could also impose a legacy of change that persists for centuries.

Changing river flows also modulate the movement of sediment to floodplains and deltas. Timescales of effects for climate-related changes in river flows, and their extremes, range from decades to hundreds of years. In addition, land-use changes, such as deforestation or reforestation of catchment hill

slopes and floodplains, can modify the quantity of water and sediment entering rivers through soil and bank erosion over similarly wide-ranging timescales.

The construction of many large dams all the over world for hydropower, flood control, irrigation, and water supply is booming. Many of them are already constructed and many more dams are either under construction or are being planned. If all the dams are constructed, the number of free-flowing rivers would not only be drastically reduced but also these dams will trap sediment, alter flow regimes, trigger riverbed incision and bank instability, and in tropical regions, cause substantial emission of the potent greenhouse gas (GHG) methane as a result of vegetation decay. Such effects are compounded by water diversions and the interlinking of rivers within, and between, river basins. In this way the riverine ecology has been completely jeopardized.

In addition to this destruction in the name of development, sand and gravel mining are destroying riverbeds across the globe. Further, the introduction of non-native species - such as fish, invertebrates, and vegetation - can have almost immediate ecological effects and economic consequences, potentially compounded by river interlinking.

Pollution from industrial,

domestic, and agricultural sources could pose a near instant threat. The water quality deteriorates severely on account of pollution from nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment, three ingredients that in high quantities can cause numerous environmental problems in streams, rivers and bays. Water pollution is a problem that affects both rich and poor countries, however the cocktail of chemicals changes as countries develop.

In poor countries it is faecal bacteria and as GDP increases then nitrogen and phosphorous due to use of chemical fertilizer becomes the issue. Recently researchers have revealed riverine antibiotic pollution originating from human and animal waste and leaks from wastewater treatment plants and chemical factories. Such potent antibiotic pollution is present worldwide and aids the development of antimicrobial resistance. Another major stressor is sediment starvation due to declining river sediment loads caused by the changing frequency of extreme events; sediment trapping behind dams, large-scale mining of river sand. The combined impacts are so large that riverbed levels have lowered by about 2-3 m in only the last decade, destabilizing river banks and enabling saltwater incursion at high tide, posing a severe threat to agricultural production.

Anthropogenic pressures are now so great and so rapid that there is a clear danger of imminent, and

irreparable, environmental change. The environmental improvement that the world observed during lockdown is clear evidence that if effective interventions are made, cleanliness of river is possible.

A range of measures along some rivers, including dredging of plastic, relocating factories and controlling waste discharge from industries and domestic sources and banning single-use plastic goods, are having major effects in reducing pollution. At the same time, it is also true that governments and bureaucracies sometimes ignore environmental problems.

Despite so many constraints, international institutions must provide a channel for scientific advice and help support local, national and transnational river-management organizations. Further, river governance must include local stakeholders and incorporate issues of social equity, inclusivity, and gender. Creative financial instruments are also essential to deliver the investment necessary to fund restoration, protection, and management.

If we fail to do all this, in 50 years our despairing descendants will be baffled by our inaction. If governments fail to take effective measures, the environmental movement needs be energised to stop environmental damage.

The writer is former Senior Scientist, Central Pollution Control Board.

NOW AND AGAIN

A triumph of human spirit

SHOVANLAL CHAKRABORTY

Right in the middle of the lockdown, one fine morning my wife informed me that she was out of some vegetables. I desperately tried to load my cart on an online vegetable store, but was sadly unable to get a delivery slot for the day. I became quiet desperate when I heard someone shouting, "vegetables", outside my house.

Running to the parlour to get a peek, I was pleasantly surprised to see a mini-truck going past slowly. Realizing that it was loaded with vegetables, I scrambled to the door to stop the vehicle, followed by my wife.

The driver, a clean shaven, well-dressed, middle-aged man stepped out, just as excited as we were and began showing us his produce, neatly piled in cartons - fresh vegetables straight from the market. We bought to our heart's content and thanked him profusely. I complimented him on his neat vehicle and the orderly arrangement of the vegetables. He seemed pleased at my observation and went on to explain that he was a caterer by profession and had been supplying food for parties to major joints in the city for the past many years. But with the lockdown, his business had gone bust and he was left with no income. Then this idea struck him, to convert the truck that he had used for transporting cooked food into a mobile shop.

Realising that fresh vegetables were the most needed commodity of the day, he decided he would buy them from the wholesale market and ferry them around to consumers. Thus he had embarked on an altogether new career, with no previous experience or anyone else's assistance.

Impressed with his story, I voiced my appreciation at his enterprise and promised to buy my daily vegetables from him. He nodded in acknowledgement and assured that he would stop by whenever I needed replenishments. Thankful for the fresh supply of vegetables I walked in, humbled and inspired by the whole experience. I realized how Covid-19 and the lockdown that has followed has left many professionals and workers in the lurch. With no work and no earnings, the current times are indeed testing for scores of people.

Yet many are rising to the challenge, and with a dash of enterprise, are trying alternative professions to get them going during the pandemic. It impressed upon me that in the darkest of times the human spirit shines the brightest.

As Ishmael Besh, the Sierra Leonean author and human rights activist puts it in his celebrated memoir, 'A long way gone', "We all find joy and radiance and a reason to move on even in the most dire of circumstances. Even in chaos and madness, there's still a beauty that comes from just the vibrancy of another human spirit."

100 YEARS AGO

THE ARMS ACT

To The Editor Of The Statesman
SIR, - It is quite clear that those who drew up the sections of the Act were non-sportsmen. The absurdity of 50 rounds per rifle for the year for a man who is a sportsman is very clear. Because I have a breechloader my licence according to the Act does not allow me to purchase powder or caps. This latter, to say the least, is a great hardship. Before I used to purchase 100 Kynoch's brass cases as I had my gun bored for them and purchased the wads, powder, caps, etc., and loaded my cases over and over again, which was a great saving, whereas now good serviceable cases have to be thrown away after once being fired. I had to dispense with my 500 Express as I could obtain no powder or caps to reload and the price of 500 Express cartridges rose to Rs 100 per 100. The new Arms Act may be all very well for those who can afford to purchase fresh cartridges.
E. GOOD.
Kharagpur.

A "DRY" SPOT IN CALCUTTA

To The Editor Of The Statesman
SIR, - I was interested to read the extract in The Statesman on Sunday re "Pussyfoot" Johnson's prediction that England and the whole world will be "dry" in 10 years. In this connection may I mention for the information of most of your readers that there is a "dry" area of about half mile square in existence in Calcutta at the north end of the town, among the student population, for which the Calcutta Temperance Federation deserves the credit. May the time not yet come when the whole of Calcutta and perhaps the whole of India will be "dry"? What Government will not encourage the introduction of prohibition after reading the following by Sir James Hope Simpson, Director and General Manager of the Bank of Liverpool on his return from America? - "The United States has added to her efficiency by the most remarkable piece of legislation, namely the prohibition of drink. The effect has been quite remarkable."
T.A.M.
Calcutta.

THE FLOOD AND THE DRAINS

To The Editor Of The Statesman
SIR, - Those - and they are legion - who criticise and find fault with the Corporation for the drainage system of Calcutta, should this morning pause and reconsider their comments. We had the streets knee-deep, in some places I am told they were waist deep, at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon. They are as dry as a bone this morning. It is quite probable that places could be selected in Calcutta where the water has lodged, but I refer to the main thoroughfares and the city as a whole. No better proof could be found of the efficiency of our sewer system. The enormous body of water, which made a creek of each of the thoroughfares I have in view, last evening, has not only disappeared, but the streets and roads are dry and dusty this morning. Sewers which failed every day of the year to scour and keep themselves clean.
AN EX-COMMISSIONER.

POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

Change of guard in Kashmir

A year has passed since the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir. Those of us who live outside the state now know what life is after five months of lockdown. Unfortunately, that has been the life of Kashmiris for years faced with militancy and political instability. There are allegations about the heavy-handedness of the security forces stationed in the state.

On the ground, nothing much has changed since last August. The people are facing a double whammy as they suffer from militancy on the one hand and the consequences of the complete lockdown in the past five months on the other. Jobs are scarce and development work has been hit.

Manoj Sinha's appointment as the new Lieutenant-Governor has been welcomed in political circles, as Kashmir needs a politician and not a bureaucrat now. Does it mean things will become normal now? It is difficult to say. There are many outside influences at work such as Pakistan, China and the militants. Some Kashmir experts believe that dialogue with Pakistan should be resumed, as it will be dangerous if China and Pakistan work in tandem.

The challenges before Sinha are many. Politically there are three main challenges. The first is the delimitation process. This will not be completed before next October,



The second is holding Assembly elections, as the state needs a popular elected government. Since 2018, it has been under Central rule.

The third is reviving the promise of full statehood. Home Minister Amit Shah, while piloting the bifurcation bill had told Parliament that statehood could be revived in the future. There are multiple petitions before the Supreme Court to decide on the constitution-

ality of the giant move.

There is also the question whether elections come first or delimitation. The BJP hopes it will get six or seven more seats in Jammu after the delimitation. For all these you need a seasoned politician who should be accessible to people and political leaders. An iron grip over the administration would go a long way in increasing the confidence of people in the govern-

ment. Sinha has the advantage of having the ear of the Prime Minister.

It is good that Sinha has said that he will open direct dialogue with the people soon. He also said he will accelerate the development of the state. He said after taking oath, "We need to establish a dialogue with the common people of Jammu and Kashmir. We don't have any agenda in that. There will be no discrimination against anyone. Constitution will be Gita in that."

The second is dealing with the political class. There are two important things in Kashmir. The first is there is a political vacuum. This needs to be filled. The second is no one talks to the political players. The governor should talk to them. This is easier said than done. A year ago Kashmir's entire political class was arrested, some of its most prominent politicians are still in detention. Those who have been released have, for now, been largely cowed into silence. Only a few weeks ago National Conference leaders Dr Farooq Abdullah, his son Omar Abdullah and some other leaders were released. Former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti is still in detention. An attempt by Dr Farooq Abdullah to revive political activities by convening a meeting of opposition leaders was prevented last week. Sinha knows that at some time or the other political activities must resume. For now, authorities should release politicians still in detention and allow political activity to

resume.

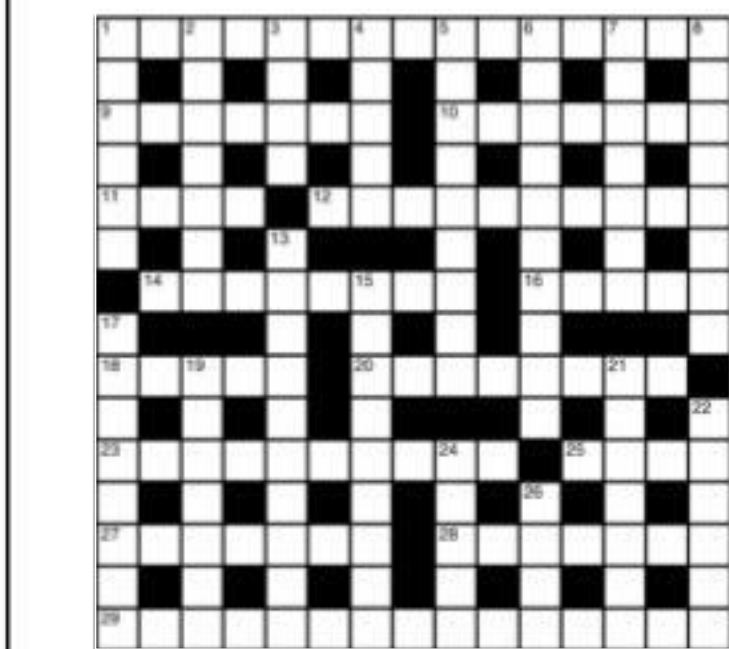
The third is restoring normalcy in the state as soon as possible. The Kashmir chamber of Commerce claims that the loss in the past one year has been about Rs 40,000 crore in the valley alone while about 500,000 jobs have been lost. Tourism was the worst hit. The number of tourists who visited the state has come down from 6,11,544 in 2017 to just 40,039 in 2019.

In January this year, Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane said that the law and order situation had improved in Jammu and Kashmir after Article 370 was scrapped last year.

According to officials, in the past one year the number of Kashmiri youth who have joined the militants has come down by almost 40 per cent. Also, the terrorist incidents have also come down. Overall, 148 terrorists have been killed since January 2020 in the Valley as of July 30. Of these, 48 terrorists were killed in June alone.

The Lt-Governor knows the difficulties ahead. "There should be peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir. The situation of uncertainty should end, terrorism should end. Achieving all this along with accelerated development will be our aim, our mission," he said of his priorities. However, it is expected that Prime Minister Modi might give some indication about the future path of Kashmir in his Independence Day speech.

CROSSWORD



SOLUTION FOR 02 AUGUST



ACROSS

- 1 Converting our assets and income into something very welcome (5,2,4,4)
- 9 List of names not considered for product launch (4-5)
- 10 Reportedly what a roofer may do that's perceptible by touch (7)
- 11 Bitter, bitter having leaked runs (4)
- 12 Bill caught sound of caller on mobile briefly, Stanley perhaps?
- 14 Concrete is child's play to mix, vacuous lad conceded (8)
- 16 Home Secretary defends weapon that causes injury (5)
- 18 Golfer reflected on sloth somewhere in church (5)
- 20 South American chap, 29, main lessee (8)
- 23 Sure sign revealing a batsman's

ambitions? (10)

- 25 Love going around over alternative to carpet (4)
- 27 Sound name adopted by fashion designer (7)
- 28 Prepare to fire male working at IKEA previously (4,3)
- 29 New oven Henry wanted periodically (5,3,3,4)

DOWN

- 1 Innumerable milk suppliers having no space, becoming upset (6)
- 2 Songsmith, essentially mischievous and egocentric (7)
- 3 Dog food (4)
- 4 Eye surgery to itch from time to time (5)
- 5 Friend supports new planet being discovered, of course (9)

Assist performer indirectly (6-4)

- 6 Pilot coming from Malaga, via Torremolinos (7)
- 8 Back head abandoning exam, it's most rigorous (8)
- 13 Influence criminal case due to begin in French city (10)
- 15 Garlic oil's cooked, producing a little smoke (9)
- 17 Happen to block line for drinks, we hear, in party (8)
- 19 America imprisoning philosopher? Conversely, it could be baloney over there (7)
- 21 Leaves hospital after cycle ride leads to accidental crash (7)
- 22 Tery knight, possibly a fraudster (3,3)
- 24 Run more than usual (5)
- 26 Slip by youngster carrying pole (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



Covid-19 pandemic has affected demand for coal. However, demand has started to pick up now

PRAMOD AGRAWAL
COAL INDIA CHAIRMAN

THUMBNAILS

NTPC achievement: State-run power giant NTPC on Saturday said it has achieved 100 billion units (BU) of cumulative power generation mark during the ongoing fiscal. NTPC Group has a total installed capacity of 62.9 GW. According to the Central Electricity Authority data, 2,600 MW NTPC Korba plant in Chhattisgarh has emerged as the top performing thermal power plant with 97.42 per cent plant load factor between April 2020 and July 2020, it said.

PTI

Abbott profit jumps: Abbott India has reported a 54.22 per cent rise in its net profit to Rs 180.35 crore for the quarter to June 2020. It had posted a net profit of Rs 116.94 crore for the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, Abbott India said in a late night BSE filing on Friday. Revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,064.27 crore for the quarter under consideration. It was Rs 998.89 crore during the same period a year ago, it added.

PTI

Moody's report on steel: Steel consumption is expected to decline at least 10 per cent for rated Indian steel-makers in the 12 months to March 2021, due to the adverse effect of coronavirus pandemic on the economy, says a report. According to Moody's Investors Service, in India, new capacity additions will take a back seat as weak steel consumption will hurt free-cash-flow generation in the current year.

PTI

Sony launch: Sony India has launched the WF-1000XM3 truly wireless headphone. Sony's industry-leading Noise Cancellation is improved further with the HD Noise Cancelling Processor QN1 chip and Dual Noise Sensor Technology which delivers exceptional Noise Cancelling performance, according to a company statement.

SNS

Ficci-OYO initiative: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry has changed the way hotel businesses function and manage their operations. To face the challenge, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (Ficci) and OYO have come together to develop and design an online training and certification course specifically for the hospitality industry, says a Press release.

SNS

Glenmark move: Glenmark Pharmaceuticals has announced that it will introduce a 400 mg version of oral antiviral Fabi-Flu, for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid-19 in India. The higher strength will improve patient compliance and experience, by effectively reducing the number of tablets that patients require per day, Glenmark said in a release.

SNS

Gadkari exhorts industry to make India self-reliant

A wide network of highways, railways and waterways was bound to bring down logistics cost

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

To boost 'self-reliant India' endeavour, Union minister Nitin Gadkari today urged the industry to identify the sectors heavily reliant on imports, particularly from China, and look for substitutes towards indigenous production to make India a super power.

Asserting that a case study is in the offing based on three years of imports and exports, Gadkari said China's 70 per cent of exports pertained to ten sectors that included electrical machinery and equipment accounting for 26.09 per cent of its exports worth \$671 billion and machinery including computers grabbing 10.70 per cent of its exports worth \$417 billion. Road transport, highways and MSME minister Gadkari while addressing a CII event "India@75 Summit - Mission 2022" urged the industry to look beyond metropolises and developed cities to lay a network of industries and ventures in rural, far-flung and

He urged CII to identify what was imported in India and how can that be replaced with indigenous production for 'self-reliance' while assuring all government support in this initiative

CII should identify sectors to boost exports and reduce imports. In some areas we will have to increase import duty to encourage Indian manufacturers

"It pains me that 90 per cent of the focus of industry bodies is on major industries in big cities and metropolises. There is seldom any focus on rural, tribal and remote areas"

NITIN GADKARI
UNION MINISTER

tribal areas which never grabbed attention.

"It pains me that 90 per cent of the focus of industry bodies is on major industries in big cities and metropolises. There is seldom any focus on rural, tribal and remote areas. There is a need to change it... Advance sector wise planning is the need of the hour to make India a super power," Gadkari said.

"China's 70 per cent of exports are from 10 sectors," Gadkari said and urged CII to identify what was imported in India and how can that be replaced with indigenous

production for 'self-reliance' while assuring all government support in this initiative.

He said of the China's exports, apart from machinery and equipment, furniture and related things accounted for exports worth \$100 billion, plastics products (\$84 billion), vehicles (\$74.40 billion) and clothings (\$66.80 billion).

"CII should identify sectors to boost exports and reduce imports. In some areas we will have to increase import duty to encourage Indian manufacturers," he said.

Assuring all possible help

to the industry for making rural and tribal areas their hub, the minister said a wide network of highways, railways and waterways was bound to bring down logistics cost.

He also said that a host of initiatives including redefining the definition of MSMEs will yield rich dividends.

The minister informed that the government is working on a scheme for inclusion of smallest units under the MSME ambit and providing for their micro-financial requirements.

He also stressed the need for upgradation of technolo-

gy by industry players and urged them to explore joint ventures to bring in foreign low cost capital.

In addition, he urged the industry to come up with the list of obsolete legislations hindering their growth so that steps could be taken to facilitate new ventures besides.

"There is an urgent need to create employment, and focussing on rural, agriculture, tribal and village areas including 115 aspirational districts could be beneficial. The target is to shift about 7-8 per cent of population from over-crowded cities to upcoming smart cities and villages," the minister said.

He exhorted the industry to explore investment opportunities on the sides of proposed 22 new expressways.

He asked the CII to draft a proposal for insurance of highway stretches, saying this will do away the requirement of bank guarantees.

"This will speed up financial closure of road projects and finance raising, facilitating faster project completions," he said.

Forex reserves up \$11.9b to all-time high of \$534.5b

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 8 AUGUST

The country's foreign exchange reserves hit an all-time high of \$534.568 billion after surging by a massive \$11.938 billion in the week ended 31 July, the RBI data showed.

While announcing the monetary policy yesterday, the Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das said the reserves at \$534.6 billion are equivalent to 13.4 months of imports.

So far in FY 2020-21 (up to 31 July), the reserves have risen by \$56.8 billion, he had said.

In the week ended 24 July, reserves had increased by \$4.993 billion to \$522.630 billion. The reserves had crossed the half-a-trillion mark for the first time in the week ended 5 June.

In the week ended 31 July, the reserves rose due to gains in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

FCAs were up by \$10.347 billion to \$490.829 billion in

In the week ended 24 July, reserves had increased by \$4.993 billion to \$522.630 billion. The reserves had crossed the half-a-trillion mark for the first time in the week ended 5 June

the reporting week, the RBI data showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves were up by \$1.525 billion in the reporting week to \$37.625 billion, the RBI data showed.

The special drawing rights with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rose by \$12 million to \$1.475 billion. The country's reserve position with the IMF also increased by \$54 million to \$4.639 billion during the reporting week, the data showed.

Domestic CV industry volumes to contract 25-28% in FY21: I cra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Domestic commercial vehicle (CV) industry volumes are expected to contract by 25-28 per cent in FY2021, ratings agency I cra said on Thursday while maintaining a negative outlook on the segment.

The contraction will bring industry volumes to lowest levels in more than a decade.

Although growth would be optically better in FY-2022 at 24-27 per cent, recovery to industry volumes of even FY-2017 levels would remain some time away, I cra said in a statement.

"I cra continues to maintain a negative outlook for the commercial vehicle (CV) segment over the near-term, with headwinds continuing from all fronts, be it financing availability, macroeconomic environment, regulatory developments or fleet -

operator health," it said.

The situation has been further aggravated by the rapid spread of novel coronavirus in India.

Demand headwinds are expected to continue over the near-term, given the macroeconomic challenges in view of the pandemic outbreak, coupled with weakening financial profile of fleet operators and significant price hikes because of transition to BS-VI emission norms, it said.

"Additionally, the lockdowns imposed in the country from end of March 2020 have added production constraints to the on-going set of challenges," I cra said. The ratings agency said the only limited green shoot visible is the uptick in rural demand, which augurs well for light CVs segment, although ability to recoup lost sales of Q1 FY-2021 remains to be seen.

"Accordingly, the domes-

tic CV industry volumes are expected to contract further by 25-28 per cent in FY2021, which would bring industry volumes to the lowest levels in more than a decade," it added.

Overall, these headwinds are expected to exert pressure on earnings and credit profile of CV original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), which have witnessed sharp earnings contraction over the past 4-5 quarters.

"In particular, the medium and heavy CV (truck) segment would continue to face significant demand contraction in FY-2021. The challenges related to freight availability and stress on fleet operators have compounded significantly over the past 3-4 months on account of the pandemic outbreak and lockdown imposed to curtail it," I cra vice-president Shamsher Dewan said.

Mall revenues likely to halve this fiscal due to Covid disruptions: Crisil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 8 AUGUST

Mall revenues are likely to halve this fiscal due to coronavirus-driven lockdowns as multiplexes, food courts, restaurants and gaming zones continued to remain closed, according to a report.

Much of the impact on mall revenue is because multiplexes, food courts, restaurants and gaming zones have not yet opened in many locations as per government orders, Crisil Ratings said in a report.

These businesses, which contribute 22 per cent to the total revenues, have borne the brunt of the impact on operations due to social distancing and are also expected to take the longest to recover, the report noted.

For the other categories, such as apparels, cosmetics, electronics, and bookstores,

which contribute 75 per cent of mall revenues, consumption is still low at 30-35 per cent of previous years' numbers in the first month of operations post reopening.

With revenues dented, and recovery expected to be slow, these businesses have started renegotiating their contracts with mall owners, like waivers in lease payments or discounts over the period of lockdown and in the medium term, therefore, impacting mall revenues.

We expect a 50-100 per cent lease waiver for the period of lockdown, followed by a 30-50 per cent concession in rentals in the current quarter and the next, which will reduce to 0-20 per cent in the quarter to March.

A gradual build-up in revenue can be expected from the current quarter, though for the fiscal overall, a revenue loss of 45-50 per cent appears to

be in order.

The loss would get bigger if the lockdowns are extended or are reimposed, Crisil Ratings senior director Sachin Gupta said.

Moreover, malls also face the risk of cannibalisation of revenue by online platforms, the Crisil report noted.

Increasingly, as customers get accustomed to online spending during the lockdown, there is a risk of some not returning to malls due to change in behaviour patterns.

This could lead to higher vacancies and pressure on rentals, it said adding that Crisil expects vacancies to inch up to over 10 per cent over the next 12-18 months compared with four per cent as of March 2020.

Mall owners, it said, might need to give deep concessions to keep their tenant profile intact and may even

need to shift to a 100 per cent revenue sharing model.

The current revenue stream includes a minimum guaranteed rental along with a portion from revenue share.

Revenue share contributed 14 per cent to income in fiscal 2020, while the bulk was from minimum guaranteed rentals.

Despite the projected steep drop in revenue and its consequent impact on profitability, Crisil said its rated mall portfolio would be able to withstand this stress in the near-term due to the availability of three-month liquidity (in the form of Debt Service Reserve Account) for most assets and ability of sponsors to bring in liquidity to ease short-term cash mismatches.

Furthermore, the RBI moratorium has also eased the pressure on cash flows for debt servicing in this fiscal.

Coal India revises FY'21 output target

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, 8 AUGUST

Mining major Coal India Ltd has revised its production target to 650-660 million tons for the 2020-21 fiscal in the wake of disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, a top company official said today. The miner had earlier set a target of 710 million tons for the fiscal.

"Covid-19 pandemic has affected demand for coal. However, it has started to pick up now as the industries have commenced operations. Given the situation, we are hopeful to end the year with 650-660 million tons of production," Coal India chairman Pramod Agrawal said.

In July-end, demand was higher by 7-8 per cent, while

in the first week of August, it saw an uptick of 13-14 per cent, officials said.

The 'Maharatna' PSU had produced 602 million tons of coal last year as against a target of 630 million tons.

On commercial mining of coal, Agrawal said it will help introduce a market-linked price mechanism and benefit the state-owned mining behemoth, contrary to speculations.

"Market-linked prices will benefit Coal India," he said during a webinar organised by Bharat Chamber of Commerce.

The company is also trying to supply high-grade coal from select subsidiaries to coastal consumers largely dependent on imports.

Divi's Labs Q1 profit up 81% at ₹492 crore

NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

Drug firm Divi's Laboratories today reported 80.61 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 492.06 crore for June quarter 2020 mainly on account of robust sales.

The company logged a profit of Rs 272.44 crore in the year-ago same period, Divi's Laboratories said in a filing to BSE.

Total income stood at Rs 1,747.80 crore during the quarter under review as against Rs 1,193.20 crore in April-June 2019-20, it added.

"The company has been able to have near normal operations during the quarter and there was minimal impact due to Covid-19 pandemic," Divi's Laboratories said.

PTI

15 proposals of stressed NBFCs, HFCs sanctioned

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

The finance ministry today said 15 proposals worth Rs 6,399 crore of stressed NBFCs and HFCs have been sanctioned under the special liquidity scheme announced as part of the Rs 20.97 lakh crore 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' package.

The scheme launched on 1 July permits both primary and secondary market purchases of debt and seeks to address the short-term liquidity issues of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs).

"The Special Liquidity Scheme (SLS) of Rs 30,000 crore was announced as a part

of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package with an aim to improve the liquidity position of NBFCs and HFCs," finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a tweet.

Sharing implementation status update of the scheme, she said, 15 proposals with a total sanctioned amount of Rs 6,399 crore have been cleared as on 7 August while 37 more applications seeking financing of up to Rs 11,037 crore are under process.

NBFCs and HFCs came under stress following a series of defaults by IL&FS group firms in September 2018.

Any NBFC including microfinance institutions registered with RBI under the

RBI Act, 1934 (excluding those registered as Core Investment Companies) and any HFC registered with the National Housing Bank under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987 which is complying with certain specified conditions, are eligible to raise funding from this facility.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has provided funds for the scheme by subscribing to government-guaranteed special securities issued by a trust set up by SBI Capital Markets Ltd (SBICAP).

The scheme is being implemented by SLS Trust, the SPV set up by SBICAP.

The special liquidity scheme is open for three months for making subscriptions by the Trust.

Need long-term policy to boost oil palm cultivation in India: OPDPA

NEW DELHI, 8 AUGUST

A long-term policy is required to encourage oil palm cultivation in India as the country is currently dependent on imports, processors' body OPDPA has said.

The Oil Palm Developers And Processors Association (OPDPA) said there is a huge scope for oil palm cultivation in North Eastern region, with Arunachal Pradesh and Assam alone having the potential to cover 2 lakh hectares under oil palm.

"A strong and robust long-term policy mechanism needs to be introduced to give this crop the required push across India," OPDPA president Sanjay Goenka said in a statement.

The industry is in need of several reforms to maintain its viability and attract further investments in various states, he said, adding that the Association has been aggressively pursuing the government to bring in structural policy changes.

Currently, oil palm cultivation in the country is very negligible as compared to the potential the crop possesses. But the crop has brought transformation in the lives of farmers in Andhra Pradesh, and the same can be emulated in north-eastern states as well, Goenka said.

Oil palm crop is a highly remunerative crop that has the potential to provide the highest return on investment per acre compared to other commercial crops. Farmers in Andhra Pradesh are a living testimony to the far-reaching benefits of this crop for their livelihoods and future, the Association said.

PTI

Amul and the immunity code to defy pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, 8 AUGUST

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic wreaking havoc on the global economy and entire industries in crisis, India's leading dairy brand Amul has declared a consolidated group turnover of Rs 52,000 crore (\$7 billion) in its latest financial statement.

In crisis resilience, Amul owner Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF) may have added a chapter or two if not rewritten the textbook on how to turn critical market disadvantages into advantages.

GCMMF chairman Ram-sinhbhai Parmar said that Amul cooperatives have converted the pandemic crisis into

an opportunity.

So they did and the crisis was critical. With hotels, restaurants, coffee chains shut during the lockdown, Amul and other dairy producers were locked out of their major consumers and source of income.

A dairy glut had farmers throwing non-purchased milk on the road and demanding local governments come to their rescue. Amul did in Gujarat. During the lockdown months, Amul unions procured an additional 35 lakh litres of milk per day and generated an additional Rs 800 crore income for rural milk producers.

Amul Group managing director RS Sodhi said India's dairy industry can provide a



TURNING DISADVANTAGES INTO ADVANTAGES

» In crisis resilience, Amul owner Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF) may have added a chapter or two if not rewritten the textbook on how to turn critical market disadvantages into advantages

» A dairy glut had farmers throwing non-purchased milk on the road and demanding local governments come to their rescue. Amul did in Gujarat. During the lockdown months, Amul unions procured an additional 35 lakh litres of milk per day and generated an additional Rs 800 crore income for rural milk producers

» Amul increased customer engagement and maintained high visibility even as major brands retreated into low profile

livelihood to 30 lakh more people, crucially in rural India, due to the Rs 15,000 crore dairy infrastructure fund announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the finance ministry.

The Amul Group declared aiming at a turnover of Rs 1 lakh crore by 2024-25, and be among the top three dairy companies globally. Amul is the world's ninth-largest dairy

company.

Dairy Farmers of America, New Zealand's Fonterra and Groupe Lactalis of France presently hold honours as the world's three topmost

dairy companies. Amul is Asia's biggest dairy industry entity.

Amul looks set to climb higher. With Chanakya-like strategies to combat the pandemic world war, it launched a series of innovative products riding on the health crisis. "Immunity-boosting" Amul Haldi Icecream was the latest.

Amul increased customer engagement and maintained high visibility even as major brands retreated into low profile.

The new turmeric-based Amul Haldi icecream joined a series of products released as part of the Amul Group promoting India's ancient health methods to boost immunity during the Covid-19 pan-

demic.

Other immunity-focussed products - Amul Haldi Doodh (turmeric milk), Tulsi Doodh (basil milk), Ginger Doodh (ginger milk) and Amul Ashwagandha Doodh (Ayurveda-based milk) - served another crucial purpose of finding a use for the unprecedented stock of milk piled up without consumers during the lockdown.

With restaurants shut and eating out a distant dream, Amul's Facebook programme (www.facebook.com/amul.co op/live) goes live for four times a day presenting chefs from leading hotels, restaurants, bakeries and catering schools sharing homemade recipes using Amul products.



If needed in the future, we will announce further lockdowns only in containment zones

ANIT THAPA, CHAIRMAN, GORKHALAND TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION
ON THE GTA'S DECISION TO NOT EXTEND THE 14-DAY LOCKDOWN THAT ENDED ON SATURDAY NIGHT

Four-fold Covid spike in Odisha in 30 days, fatality rises to 259

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 AUGUST:

In the continuing creep of COVID caseloads, Odisha has recorded a growth of 76 per cent in a month recording the 18th successive day 1000-plus spike of the disease with 1,643 positive cases on Saturday taking the tally to 42,193 cases.

The growth rate is more than four-fold since in the last 30 days, amply indicating that the State is witnessing the peak spell of the contagion.

Since 8 July till date, the infections have climbed from

10,624 to 42,193 (8 August) - the positive growth of 76 per cent.

The fatality rate also grew by 81.46% during the period (8 July-8 August). From 48 on 8 July, the toll has increased to 259.

However despite unabated surge in infections, there are certain reassuring features like the dip in COVID's positivity and growth rate as recorded today besides the ramping up of daily COVID tests.

The State conducted 17,444 COVID diagnostic tests since past 24 hours. Today the COVID positivity

stood at 9.41% today which implied that around 10 samples out of 100 are testing positive while it had remained at 11.41% yesterday.

The growth rate of the disease slipped to 3.86% from 5.02% recorded yesterday.

As many as 28,698 patients have so far recovered from the disease. The recovery rate in the State stands at 64.93%. Yesterday, the State had recorded the biggest single day recovery of 1,810 patients. The active cases undergoing treatment stand at 15,188.

The State today recorded yet another steep spike of

1,643 new cases from 28 districts.

The fatality tally also grew with 12 dying of the disease. The death toll due to the COVID infections has soared to 259.

Of the new infections, 1,018 were from quarantine centres while 625 were local contact cases.

Ganjam and Khurda districts which have emerged as the epicenters of the disease so far reported 274 infections each today. The two districts contribute over 42 per cent of the total cases in the state.

While Ganjam has a total

of 12,633 infections, Khurda accounts for 6,106 positive cases till date.

The latest spurt in infections in the districts of Rayagada, Sundargarh and Sambalpur has added to the worry of State's COVID managers.

Of the infected persons, 70.5% are men while women constitute 29.5% of total patients. 57.6% of the total patients are in the 15-40 age-group.

The vulnerable groups of patients in 60 year or above and 14 year or below age comprise 13% of the total tally of COVID-19 patients in the State.

BJP MP Suresh Pujari tests COVID positive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SAMBALPUR, 8 AUGUST:

Suresh Pujari, BJP Lok Sabha member from Bargarh parliamentary constituency, on Saturday tested positive for Covid-19, becoming the first MP from Odisha to contract the pandemic.

Pujari said that he got the Covid-19 test done on Friday though he had no symptoms. The Bargarh collector informed him on Saturday about the test result.

"I am under home isolation as per the advice of the district collectors of Sambalpur and Bargarh and I am fine", Pujari said.

Four MLAs from the State have also contracted COVID infections so far.

Odisha govt asks pvt hospitals to charge 'reasonable fees'

Allows pvt hospitals to treat COVID patients, warns against high charges

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 AUGUST:

Odisha government issued a notification for private health institutions for treatment of Covid positive cases at 'reasonable fees'.

Interested private hospitals having 30 beds or more shall designate minimum of 10 per cent of all beds to be reserved for the Covid patients.

These hospitals must provide all possible treatment as per the guidelines issued by the government. They shall regularly share all informa-



tion with the government regarding availability of facility, patient information, line of treatment, availability of beds and price charged etc stated the government.

The private hospitals shall charge reasonable fees from patients and refrain from collecting exorbitant fees, failing which strict action shall be taken against the Hospital, it warned.



Feeding monkeys at the famous Khandagiri & Udayagiri caves in Bhubaneswar. The tourist spot has remained deserted leaving the simians in distress. **SNS**

Bhubaneswar records 190 new Covid cases

Slum in Cuttack adds 56 cases including 30 women

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 AUGUST:

The state capital Bhubaneswar witnessed 190 new COVID positive cases today taking its tally to 3763.

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) officials however continue to maintain that the rise in cases is due to aggressive testing and surveillance. The city has reported 1,262 positive cases in the past 10 days.

Of the fresh 190 cases, 138 infections were detected from

quarantine centres while 52 were local contacts.

Eight positive cases were detected in four slum settlements.

Twentyone infections were detected from Kancha Sahi in Kapileswar while 7 tested positive at Beherasahi in Bara-munda. Six residents from Gayatri enclave in Bomikhal also contracted the infections.

Two health professionals at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar and three health workers of private hospitals were among others

who tested positive today.

Of the 3,763 positive cases, 1,383 are active cases while 2,360 have recovered.

The state capital has recorded 18 COVID deaths.

Meanwhile the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CM) has decided to expand the Containment Zone of Behera Sahi in Malgodown, which has emerged as the epicenter of the virus in the city.

The slum cluster which mostly houses the labourers of wholesale mandi in the Malgodown has so far registered

around 300 pandemic infections.

Of the total 76 new COVID-19 positive cases reported in Cuttack city during the last 24 hours, Behera Sahi, Malgodown Containment Zone alone accounted for 56 cases including 30 women. They are all the contacts of earlier reported positive cases inside the containment zone.

The COVID-19 positive cases in CMC now stood at 1,546 of which 763 have recovered and 773 are active patients. The death toll in Cuttack is 10.

'38% doctors' posts lying vacant at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 AUGUST:

Nearly 38% of doctor posts are lying vacant at All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS)-Bhubaneswar as per information availed by an RTI activist here.

It's pertinent to note here that the state government had earlier admitted that more than half of sanctioned doctors' posts have been lying vacant in the State amid the COVID health crisis.

Of the 8,719 sanctioned doctors' posts, there were no doctors in 4,493 positions accounting for 51.53% of vacancies.

Ganjam district, Chief

Minister Naveen Patnaik's home district accounting for the maximum number (12,080) infections, has been reeling under 61% vacancies in doctors' posts.

The AIIMS-Bhubaneswar now has a total of 191 doctors including regular, deputation, contractual and out-sourced posts, according to the institute's reply to RTI query sought by activists Akhand.

AIIMS Bhubaneswar has a total vacancy of 114 posts of doctors against the sanctioned post of 305 posts till July 1.

Similarly, there are 3,776 posts of non-faculty staff in the central government institute of which 1,912 posts

have been filled and 1,864 are still lying vacant, accounting for 49.36% vacancies, the RTI reply said.

Several medical equipments are lying dysfunctional with some of them since the time of installation said the RTI activist while referring to the list provided to him in response to his questions.

The State government did not provide any medicine under the Niramaya scheme for free distribution in 2017-18 and 2018-19 financial years, the reply to the RTI query revealed.

Commenting on the vacancies, B. Geetanjali, Director of AIIMS-

Bhubaneswar said "the process of the filling up of the vacancies in doctors' posts is being taken up from time to time. The super-specialty reserved posts are lying vacant as we are unable to get suitable candidates. The institute is intent on maintaining the quality of health service. 600 vacant posts in non-faculty positions are being filled up on promotion basis. The remaining posts are being filled up and the recruitment process is being initiated".

When asked about the defunct medical equipment, she said "it's few and far. Of the 80 ventilators installed at the institute, only one has turned dysfunctional".

Is Odisha blocking CBI probe into Black Rose ship capsizing case?

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 AUGUST:

With Odisha police allegedly dragging its feet, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is yet to begin its probe into the capsizing of the rogue Mongolian ship Black Rose at Paradip coast 11 years ago.

Paradip port authorities, had inexplicably waited for years since the capsizing of iron ore cargo vessel Black Rose to recommend a CBI probe despite the fact that it involved international level investigations and that nothing much had come out of the state crime branch probe.

On receipt of the recommendation, the Shipping Ministry had handed over the case

to the CBI more than a year ago.

Interestingly another case pertaining to allocation of petrol filling station to the family of a notorious gangster operating in and around Paradip that was handed over to the CBI has also been in cold storage.

There were several allegations that the Black Rose matter was being buried under the sea to appease the all-powerful mining lobby.

During the 2019 election campaign, top BJP stalwarts including PM Narendra Modi, Nitin Gadkari, Dharmendra Pradhan and others had promised the people of Odisha that they will get the CBI probe going in the Black Rose, mega chit fund scam and ensure

that the culprits are put behind bars. The insinuation was that ruling BJD leaders and mining lobby was involved.

But again rather strangely, the voices in the BJP were no longer heard on the sensitive cases.

Reliable sources said the state crime branch is yet to hand over the documents in the Black Rose and as many as four letters/reminders including the latest two days ago, have been sent to the seeking to expedite handing over of the case papers.

A Mongolian ship without valid maritime documents had berthed at Paradip and sailed with iron ore cargo when it capsized on 9 September 2009.

Demand for plasma bank in Balasore

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BALASORE, 8 AUGUST:

While efficacy of plasma therapy is yet to be fully established, people, patients in particular have started voicing their demand for a plasma bank in the district hoping that it will save lives of COVID 19 patients.

The overwhelming feeling here is that the plasma bank and therapy must begin in Balasore at the very earliest. COVID 19 patients cannot be rushed to Cuttack or Bhubaneswar for such treat-

ment, a similar facility in the district will save three hours of journey time, they said.

The district has a COVID 19 caseload of 1250. Culture minister, Jyotiprakash Panigrahi, who, as have other ministers, been canvassing for plasma donation. In doing this he is faced with the demand for establishment of a plasma bank in the district.

Panigrahi said he has already apprised the Chief Minister in this regard. One plasma bank for north Odisha district needs to be set up and

ideally Balasore ought to be the choice, he said.

The Chief district medical officer, Dulal Sen Jagdeo besides stating there is a requirement to establish a plasma bank in the district said the proposal is under active consideration. Deliberations are on and preparations are being made accordingly.

Some of the recovered patients agreed to donate plasma have already donated plasma in the hospitals based in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

Detained in hospital for six months over unpaid bills

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAGATSINGHPUR, 8 AUGUST:

A mother and her new born son were finally released from a private hospital in Bhubaneswar after six months due to the intervention of women activists of the National Child & Women Development Council and International Human Right Council yesterday.

Anjana Sahoo who is also working as vice-chairperson of National Child & Women Development Council said she accompanied by president

of International Human Right Council, Siba Prasad Swain met the doctors and authorities of the private hospital yesterday and persuaded them to release the woman and her new born baby girl who were held at the hospital for six months due to their inability to settle the hospital bill.

It is learnt that Ullash Pradhan, 33, of Chatra village, an auto-rickshaw driver had contacted specialists of a private hospital in Bhubaneswar as he had no issues five years after his marriage.

Pradhan's wife has under-

gone treatment in a private clinic, Bhubaneswar and she conceived with the help of the In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) technique.

She was admitted to the private hospital in February and she gave birth to a female child in March. In fact she gave birth to three babies, two of them died.

After completion of delivery and giving birth of two babies, said hospital handed over medical bills of Rs 8.30 lakh. Ullash sold his land and managed to arrange Rs 6 lakh. The shutdown had robbed

him of his daily income.

His wife Sabita said 'after few days of delivery, two male children who took birth during delivery died leaving the girl child. The hospital refused to discharge them unless the unpaid bills were settled'.

Ullash sought the intervention of president of one NGO "Tejaswini Mahila Surakhya" Jagatsinghpur Anjana Sahoo who is also working as vice-chairperson of National Child & Women Development Council to rescue his wife and new born girl child.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BOLANGIR, 8 AUGUST:

Wing Commander Nikhil

Ratha who hails from Bolangir has been shortlisted for the Gaganyaan Mission.

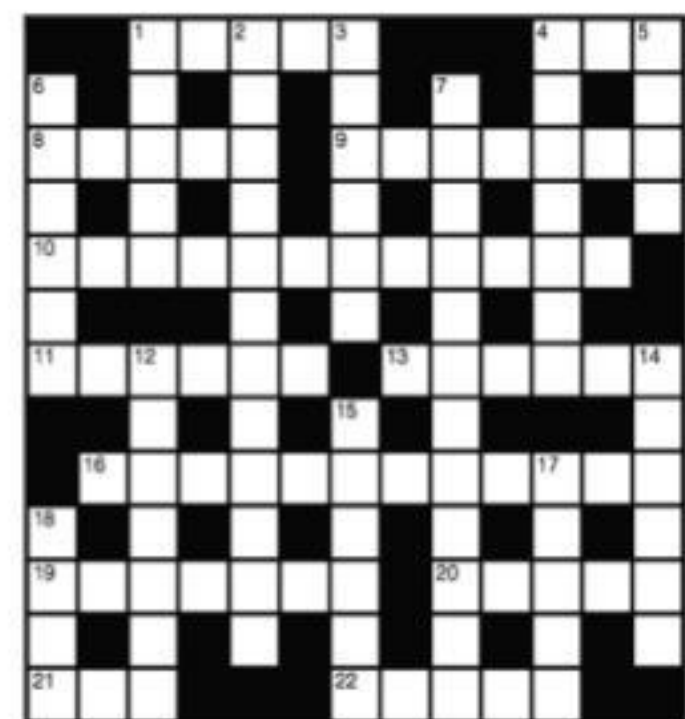
He is among four prospective candidates to be trained for one year in Russia.

Nikhil is son of Kusum Ratha and Ashok Ratha. Kusum is a member of commission for women while Ashok Ratha is an advocate.

The Gaganyaan mission is slated to take place in 2022. Odisha Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal in a tweet congratulated Nikhil.

LEISURE

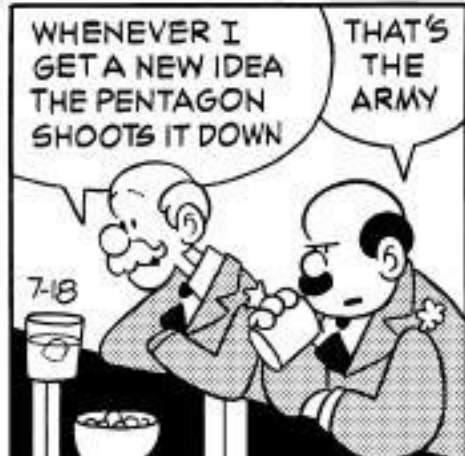
10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Tribunal (5)
 - West Country river (3)
 - Swelling (5)
 - Soft Italian cheese (7)
 - Disable (12)
 - As a body (2,4)
 - Indented area (6)
 - Wild clematis (3,4,5)
 - Aerial (7)
 - 20 Stage whisper (5)
 - Unhappy (3)
 - Armoured vehicles (5)
- DOWN**
- Spasmodic abdominal pain (5)
 - Lack of paid work (12)
 - Three times (6)
 - Quality (7)
 - Style and vigour (4)
 - Constrain (6)
 - Absent-minded person (12)
 - Overdue (7)
 - Soaking wet (6)
 - Undamaged (6)
 - Operatic songs (5)
 - Asian country (4)

- SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**
- ACROSS**
- Tay
 - Land
 - (Tail-end)
 - Vodka
 - Emperor
 - Release
 - Prose
- DOWN**
- None-theless
 - Opera
 - Abandon
 - Lap up
 - Nervous
 - Maggie
 - Level-headed
 - Reel
 - Operate
 - Liaise
 - Annexe
 - Alas
 - Dross
- By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovalski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- VidyaSagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

- Punjab Roadways 23867842, 23860626
- Rajasthan Roadways 23864470
- U.P. Roadways 23868709

FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air-

- port 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 35841111
- EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377
- Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

SCRABBLE® BRAND

WIRIER
ELEMENT
TRUSTY
TERMINAL

PAR SCORE 160-170
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

Instructions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Blank tiles used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (Merriam-Webster) and OWS Words (Chambers). Judd's solution tomorrow.

10-25-22

SUDOKU
Conceptis SudoKu By Dave Green

	4	3	6					
9				8			2	6
8			4		5			
2	9			7	4			
	1		2	6		8		
		6	1		9	3		
2				4	6		7	1
9						4	8	
						5		

Difficulty Level ★★★

answer to previous puzzle

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

THUMBNAILS



A woman holds up an umbrella during a protest against the restrictions amid the coronavirus pandemic in Stuttgart, Germany, on Sunday. **AFP**

Airstrikes in Yemen: Airstrikes in northern Yemen killed as many as nine children, a United Nations official said on Friday, making it the third such attack with significant child deaths in that rebel-controlled region this month. **AP**

Prachanda guards test positive: Six of the security personnel stationed at the residence of ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' have tested positive for coronavirus, according to a media report. **PTI**

Portland protests: More protests against racism are expected in Portland throughout the weekend following violent demonstrations this week that have brought more unrest to the Northwest city. **AP**

Nudist gives chase after brazen Berlin boar: A naked sunbather unashamedly gave chase in his birthday suit after a wild boar stole his laptop while he was relaxing by a Berlin lake in an escapade that has gone viral. The man was pictured running after the cheeky swine at the Teufelssee lake, a popular spot for nude sunbathing. **AFP**

Russia acting against Biden, China opposing Trump: Intel

US counterintelligence chief raises specific warning about threat of foreign interference in Nov polls

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 8 AUGUST

US intelligence officials believe that Russia is using a variety of measures to denigrate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden ahead of the November election and that individuals linked to the Kremlin are boosting President Donald Trump's reelection bid, the country's counterintelligence chief said in the most specific warning to date about the threat of foreign interference.

US officials also believe China does not want Trump to win a second term and has accelerated its criticism of the White House, expanding its efforts to shape public policy in America and to pressure political figures seen as opposed to Beijing's interests.

The statement on Friday from William Evanina is believed to be the most pointed declaration by the US intelligence community linking the Kremlin to efforts to get Trump reelected a sensitive subject for a president who has rejected intelligence agency assessments that Russia tried to help him in 2016.

It also connects Moscow's disapproval of Biden to his role as vice president in shaping Obama administration policies supporting Ukraine, an important US ally, and opposing Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Asked about the intelligence assessment on Friday evening in Bedminster, New Jersey, Trump appeared to dispute the idea that Russia was disparaging Biden. I think the last person Russia wants to see in office is Donald Trump because nobody has been tougher on Russia than I have ever, he said.

But the president seemed to agree with the intelligence indicating China didn't want him reelected. If Joe Biden was



president, China would own our country, he said.

Evanina's statement, three months before the election, comes amid criticism from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats that the intelligence community has been withholding from the public specific intelligence information about the threat of foreign interference in American politics.

The facts are chilling, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., wrote in an op-ed published on Friday evening in *The Washington Post*. I believe the American public needs and deserves to know them. The information should be declassified immediately.

The latest intelligence assessment reflects concerns not only about Russia but China and Iran as well, warning that hostile foreign actors may seek to compromise election infrastructure, interfere with the voting process or call into question voting results. Despite those efforts, officials see it as unlikely that anyone could manipulate voting results in any sweeping way, Evanina said.

Many foreign actors have a preference for who wins the election, which they express through a range of overt and private statements; covert influence efforts are rarer, said Evanina, director



US counter-intelligence chief William Evanina

of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. We are primarily concerned about the ongoing and potential activity by China, Russia and Iran.

Concerns about election interference are especially acute following a wide-ranging effort by Russia to meddle in the 2016 election on Trump's behalf through both hacking of Democratic emails and a covert social media campaign aimed at sowing discord among US voters.

Trump has routinely resisted the idea that the Kremlin favored him in 2016, but the intelligence assessment released Friday indicates that unnamed Kremlin-linked actors are again working to boost his candidacy on social media and Russian television.

Biden risks alienating young Black voters after race remarks

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 8 AUGUST

Joe Biden's controversial remarks about race this week risk alienating young Black voters who despise President Donald Trump but are not inspired by his Democratic rival.

When pressed by Errol Barnett of CBS News on whether he'd taken a cognitive test, Biden responded that the question was akin to asking the Black reporter if he would take a drug test to see if "you're taking cocaine or not? ... Are you a junkie?"

In a later interview with National Public Radio's Lulu

Garcia-Navarro, Biden seemed to draw distinctions between Black and Hispanic populations in the U.S.

"Unlike the African American community, with notable exceptions, the Latino community is an incredibly diverse community with incredibly different attitudes about different things," he told the Latina reporter.

He later walked back the comment.

Black voters as a whole delivered the Democratic nomination to Biden, powering his commanding win in the South Carolina primary, which rescued his floundering campaign.

The White House reacted to Friday's news with a statement saying the United States will not tolerate foreign interference in our electoral processes and will respond to malicious foreign threats that target our democratic institutions.

Tony Blinken, a senior adviser to Biden's campaign, responded that Trump has publicly and repeatedly invited, emboldened, and even tried to coerce foreign interference in American elections. ... Joe Biden, on the other hand, has led the fight against foreign interference for years.

Congressional Democrats have expressed alarm at what they have heard. They have urged the US intelligence community to make public some of their concerns in part to avoid a repeat of 2016, when Obama administration officials were seen as slow and overly deliberate in their public discussion of active Russian measures in that year's election.

Pelosi and Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, both California Democrats, said that they were pleased that Evanina heeded our call to make additional details public about Russian interference campaign.

When it comes to Russia, US officials assess that it is working to denigrate Biden and what it sees as an anti-Russia establishment among his supporters, Evanina said.

US officials believe that tracks Moscow's criticism of Biden when he was vice president for his role in Ukraine policies and his support of opposition to Putin inside Russia.

The US statement called out by name Andrii Derkach, a pro-Russia Ukrainian lawmaker who has been active in leveling unsubstantiated corruption allegations against Biden and his son Hunter, who used to sit on the board of Burisma, an Ukrainian natural gas company. That effort has included publicizing leaked phone calls.

Face coverings must in indoor settings in UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 8 AUGUST

Face coverings are now a legal requirement across most indoor settings in England and Scotland from Saturday as part of the UK government's efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Under the new rules, face masks or some form of face covering must now be worn in cinemas, museums, places of worship and aquariums besides public transport and shops and supermarkets, where it was already mandatory.

In Scotland, the rule also covers banks and beauty salons and in the devolved administration of Northern Ireland face coverings in all enclosed public spaces will become compulsory from Monday.

Those who break the law on wearing face coverings, unless exempt on certain narrow health and age grounds, could be fined up to 100 pounds, with greater police presence in place to ensure the rules were being

followed. The move comes as the government extended localised lockdowns in northern England and added the city of Preston in Lancashire within the remit of stricter measures, as the spread of the deadly coronavirus failed to show a decrease in the number of cases per 100,000 people in the region.

"I chaired a meeting of the Local Action Gold Committee, and unfortunately, the data does not yet show a decrease in the transmission of this virus, said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

"It means we must keep the current restrictions in place to allow more time for the impact of this ban on indoor gatherings to be felt, and make sure local residents and their loved ones are protected. At the request of the local area we are also extending these restrictions to Preston," he said.

The minister said the data on the prevalence of the virus in these areas will be constantly examined and a review of the localised lockdown measures will take place next week.

Virus aid talks collapse; no help for US jobless

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 8 AUGUST

A last-ditch effort by Democrats to revive Capitol Hill talks on vital Covid-19 rescue money collapsed in disappointment at week's end, making it increasingly likely that Washington gridlock will mean more hardship for millions of people who are losing enhanced jobless benefits and further damage for an economy pummeled by the still-raging coronavirus.

President Donald Trump said on Friday that he was likely to issue more limited executive orders related to Covid, perhaps in the next day or so, if he can't reach a broad agreement with Congress.

The day's negotiations at the Capitol added up to only "a disappointing meeting, declared top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer, saying the White House had rejected an offer by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to curb Democratic demands by about \$1 trillion.

He urged the White House to negotiate with Democrats and arrive at a deal. Don't say it's your way or no way.

The collapse in talks means longer and perhaps permanent expiration of a \$600 per-week bonus pandemic jobless benefit that's kept millions of people from falling into poverty

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, "Unfortunately we did not make any progress today. Republicans said Pelosi was relying on budget manoeuvres to curb costs and contended she has overplayed her hand. Often an impasse in Washington is of little consequence for the public but so this time.

It means longer and perhaps permanent expiration of a \$600 per-week bonus pandemic jobless benefit that's kept millions of people from falling into poverty. It denies more than \$100 billion to help schools reopen this fall. It blocks additional funding for virus testing as cases are surging this summer.

And it denies billions of dollars to state and local gov-

ernments considering furloughs as their revenue craters.

Ahead is uncertainty. Both the House and Senate have left Washington, with members sent home on instructions to be ready to return for a vote on an agreement. With no deal in sight, their absence raises the possibility of a prolonged stalemate that stretches well into August and even September.

Speaking from his New Jersey golf club Friday evening, Trump said if Democrats continue to hold this critical relief hostage I will act under my authority as president to get Americans the relief they need. Trump said he may issue executive orders on home evictions, student loan debt and allowing states to repurpose Covid relief funding into their unemployment insurance programs.

He also said he'll likely issue an executive order to defer collection of Social Security payroll taxes, which has less support among Republican allies.

White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said, "This is not a perfect answer. The president can do within the confines of his executive power.

N. Carolina to relax 10-person limit for GOP convention

RALEIGH (US), 8 AUGUST

North Carolina will ease gathering restrictions for the Republican National Convention in Charlotte this month after a push by the national party for the state to be more accommodating.

But the 21-24 August event culminating in President Trump's nomination will be nothing like conventions of previous years in which prominent politicians and party leaders addressed thousands of enthusiastic supporters.

The RNC has estimated it would have no more than 500 delegates per day at the Charlotte Convention Center and the Westin hotel.

The state's health director Elizabeth Cuervo Tilson, said the Department of Health understands more than 10 people may need to assemble indoors to conduct party business. **AP**

SURVIVAL INSTINCTS



Lebanese children carry a broom and dustpan, as they walk in Beirut's Gemmayzeh on Saturday, four days after a massive explosion killed more than 150 people. **AFP**

Protests in Beirut amidst public fury over massive blast

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, 8 AUGUST

Police fired tear gas and clashed with demonstrators in Lebanon's capital on Saturday at the start of a planned protest over this week's massive explosion that devastated large parts of the capital and killed more than 150 people.

Thousands of people were pouring into Beirut's main square, where they had set up symbolic nooses to hang politicians whose corruption and negligence they blame for Tuesday's explosion at the Port of Beirut.

The huge blast was caused by thousands of tons of ammonium nitrate improperly stored at the port for more than six years, apparently set off by a fire. It was the biggest in Lebanon's history and caused an estimated \$10-15 billion worth of damage, according to Beirut's governor. It also left hundreds of thousands of people homeless.

Later on Saturday the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, arrived in Beirut for a brief visit.

The protest came as senior officials from the Middle East and Europe arrived in Lebanon in a show of solidarity with the tiny country that is still in shock suffered after Tuesday's blast.

Turkey's vice president and the country's foreign minister arrived Saturday morning and met Aoun. Saturday's protest was the first significant demonstration since the explosion and organizers planned to hold a symbolic funeral for the dead. As the protest got underway however, small groups of young men began throwing stones at security forces.

Near parliament, riot police fired tear gas at protesters who hurled stones and tried to jump over barriers that close the road leading to the legislature. The protesters later set on fire a truck that was fortifying bar-

10 prior warnings of explosive chemicals at port

BEIRUT, 8 AUGUST

At least 10 times over the past six years, authorities from Lebanon's customs, military, security agencies and judiciary raised alarm that a massive stockpile of explosive chemicals was being kept with almost no safeguard at the port in the heart of Beirut, newly surfaced documents show.

Yet in a circle of negligence, nothing was done and on Tuesday, the 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate blew up, obliterating the city's main commercial hub and spreading death and wreckage for miles around.

President Michel Aoun, in office since 2016, said on Friday that he was first told of the dangerous stockpile nearly three weeks ago and immediately ordered military and security agencies to do what was needed. **AP**

riers on a road leading to parliament.

The gathering at Martyrs Square and outside the parliament building and government headquarters came amid popular anger against Lebanon's political leadership.

The country's ruling class, made up mostly of former civil war-era leaders, is blamed for widespread corruption, incompetence and mismanagement that contributed to the explosion. Lebanon is mired in its worst economic and financial crisis in decades.

The Dutch foreign ministry said on Saturday that Hedwig Waltmans-Molier, wife of the Netherlands' envoy to Lebanon, had also died of injuries sustained in the blast.

8 dead in blast outside Somali army base

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NAIROBI, 8 AUGUST

A car bomb exploded at the gates of a military base in Somalia's capital Saturday, killing at least eight soldiers and wounding 14 others, with the toll expected to rise, police said.

The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group quickly claimed responsibility via its radio arm, Anadalu. The group often targets military sites in Mogadishu and controls large parts of southern and central Somalia, with little sign of being hampered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Police Captain Mohamed Hussein shared the attack's toll with Colonel Ahmed Muse said the bomber struck the 12th April Army Brigade base near the newly reopened sports stadium in Warta-Nabadda dis-



trict. The stadium's reopening had been celebrated by Somalia's president and others as a sign of the Horn of Africa nation's attempts to rebuild from three decades of conflict and chaos - though mortar blasts outside sent fans ducking for cover.

Al-Shabab has been the target of a growing number of US military airstrikes under President Donald Trump's administration, with at least 63 strikes carried out last year alone. But the Somalia-based extremist group has been resilient, recently improving

its ability to build explosives and supporting its deadly work by taxing travelers along major routes in the country and extorting businesses.

While Somalis and returnees from the country's diaspora continue to invest in renewal, the insecurity poses a daily threat and complicates political tensions.

When the prime minister was ousted in a parliament vote of no confidence last month, lack of progress in improving security was cited - along with disagreements over the timing of a national election set for early next year.

Last month's vote came just days after the president and regional governments, which have had a tense relationship, had agreed to hold a timely election. Somalia had aimed to hold its first one-person-one-vote in 50 years.

US reports show racial disparities in kids with Covid-19

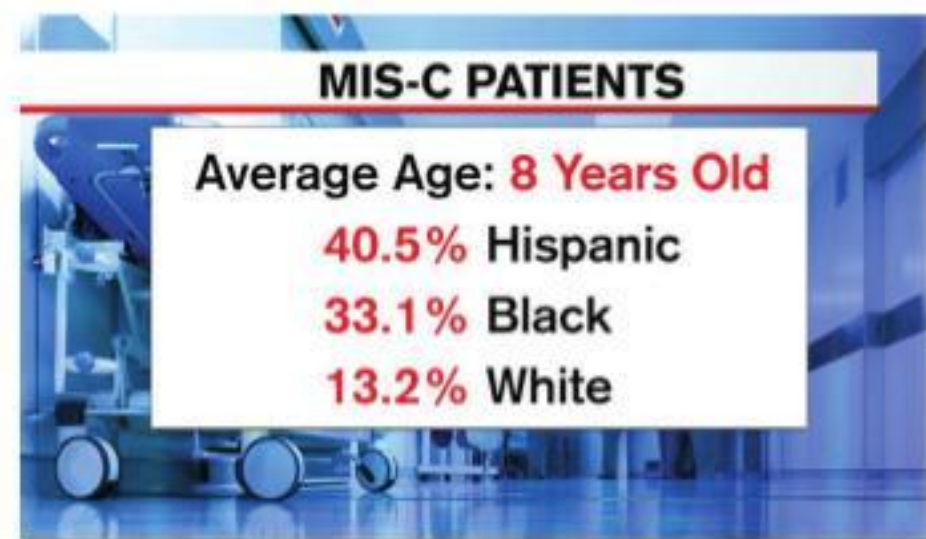
ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, 8 AUGUST

Racial disparities in the US coronavirus epidemic extend to children, according to two sobering government reports released on Friday.

One of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports looked at children with Covid-19 who needed hospitalisation.

Hispanic children were hospitalized at a rate eight times higher than white kids, and Black children were hospitalised at a rate five times higher, it found.

The second report examined cases of a rare virus-associated syndrome in kids. It found that nearly three-quarters of the children with the syndrome were either Hispanic or Black, well above



their representation in the general population.

The coronavirus has exposed racial fractures in the US health care system, as Black, Hispanic and Native Americans have been hospitalized and killed by Covid-19 at far higher rates than other groups. Meanwhile, the impact of the virus on children has

become a political issue.

President Donald Trump and some other administration officials have been pushing schools to re-open, a step that would allow more parents to return to work and the economy to pick up.

On Wednesday, Facebook deleted a post by Trump for violating its policy against

spreading misinformation about the coronavirus.

The vast majority of coronavirus cases and deaths have been in adults, and kids are considered less likely to have serious symptoms when they're infected. Of the nearly 5 million cases reported in the US as of Wednesday, about 265,000 were in children 17 and under about 5 per cent.

Of the more than 1,56,000 deaths reported at that time, 77 were children about 0.05 per cent. But Friday's CDC reports are a gut punch reminder that some children are getting seriously ill and dying, said Carrie Henning-Smith, a University of Minnesota researcher who focuses on health disparities.

It's clear from these studies, and from other emerging research, that kids are not

immune," she said.

Kids can pass along Covid, and they can also suffer the effects of it." She said studies should give community leaders pause about opening schools. We need to be really, really careful. We are potentially talking about putting children in unsafe situations, Henning-Smith said.

The hospitalisation rate for Hispanic children was about 16.4 per 100,000. The rate for Black children was 10.5 per 1,00,000, and for white kids it was 2.1 per 100,000.

Larger percentages of Hispanic and Black kids may go to hospital emergency rooms when they're sick, which could be driven by difficulty getting into or paying for doctor's office visits. That lack of access to regular health-care could lead to more severe illness.



epaper.thestatesman.com



JUVENTUS FIRES COACH

Juventus fired coach Maurizio Sarri on Saturday after his first season in charge ended with the team's Champions League exit. Despite winning the Italian title, Sarri paid the price for the round of 16 loss to Lyon.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

F1 pole: Valtteri Bottas qualified in pole position Saturday ahead of Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton for Formula One's 70th Anniversary Grand Prix. Hamilton holds a 50-point championship lead over Bottas in his quest for a record-equaling seventh world title after winning the British GP at the same Silverstone circuit last weekend which is closed to spectators due to the coronavirus pandemic.

2022 WC: New Zealand could have hosted the women's ODI World Cup next year as scheduled but it supports ICC's decision to postpone the event to 2022, country's sport minister Grant Robertson said on Saturday. The ICC on Friday deferred next year's 50-over women's World Cup in New Zealand until February-March 2022 because of the impact the pandemic has had on cricket globally.

SAI's claim: The Indian men's hockey team skipper Manpreet Singh and the four other players who have tested positive for COVID-19 were showing only "mild symptoms" and they were doing well, the doctors from Sports Authority of India said on Saturday. The SAI said in a statement that the players, housed in the National Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, are being attended to by its in-house doctor and another from the state government, who has been deputed on SAI's request. Additionally, the SAI has got on board expert doctors from Manipal Hospital, who have also attended to the players.

AGENCIES

TURIN, 8 AUGUST

A Portugal international celebrated ecstatically at the end of the Champions League match between Juventus and Lyon.

But it wasn't Cristiano Ronaldo, who could only trudge off the pitch dejected after Juventus was eliminated from the competition despite his two goals securing a 2-1 victory in the rearranged second-leg match on Friday.

Lyon goalkeeper Anthony Lopes raced to the end where the away fans should have been, jumped over the advertising hoardings and sat on top of the Perspex fence at the front of the stands, kissing the badge on his shirt and pumping his fists in the air in celebration.

Lyon had eliminated Juventus and progressed to the

quarterfinals on away goals after a 2-2 draw on aggregate.

"It's a huge joy. It was really hard", Lopes said. "The group was incredible collectively and individually. It's the victory of the whole group."

Lyon will face Manchester City in the single-elimination quarterfinals in Lisbon after the English team beat Real Madrid 2-1 on the night to progress 4-2 on aggregate.

The Juventus-Lyon match was rescheduled from March 17 after the pandemic which shut down sports around the globe. The French league did not resume while Juventus struggled after the restart of Serie A but nevertheless claimed a record-extending ninth successive title.

Lyon captain Memphis Depay would not have been able to play had the match taken place as scheduled



because he had a serious knee injury. He scored an early penalty with a cheeky chip down the middle after Houssein Aouar went down in the area under a challenge from Rodrigo Bentancur.

Depay also conceded a penalty at the end of the first half after Miralem Pjanic's free kick hit his arm.

Ronaldo converted and doubled his tally on the hour

mark when he curled a fantastic strike into the top right corner. It extended his all-time record in the competition to 131 goals.

That was Ronaldo's 37th goal in all competition for Juventus, breaking a 95-year-old club record.

Ronaldo went close to scoring the goal that would have seen Juventus through but headed a corner narrowly

over the bar from close range.

Key Juventus forward Paulo Dybala was recovering from a thigh injury and was on the bench. He was brought on in the second half but had to be substituted just 14 minutes later.

"Tonight, we played a great match... at 2-1, we created three or four chances", Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri said.

"If I weren't morally devastated by the elimination, I would be happy with tonight's performance, because we brought out so much energy and the team responded with character."

It was Juve's earliest elimination from the competition since the 2015-16 season. The club has, however, struggled to transfer its domestic domination to Europe and it hasn't won the Champions League since 1996.



Buttler, Woakes counter Pakistan charge

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

MANCHESTER, 8 AUGUST

Jos Buttler and Chris Woakes' counter-attacking partnership for England stopped the Pakistan charge in the second session on Day four as the first Test between the two sides gears up to a dramatic conclusion at Old Trafford. While England need 110 more runs to win, Pakistan need 5 more wickets.

England started the second session on 55/1 with captain Joe Root and Dom Sibley in the middle. The pair continued to hang around well into the second session and their partnership was on 64 when Sibley succumbed to Yasir Shah. Sibley went for a hard drive

across the line to a ball that Yasir delivered from over the wicket, it only took an edge and flew straight to Asad Shafiq at first slip.

Two overs later, Naseem Shah successfully set up Root who also edged the delivery to first slip and England all of a sudden lost both their set batsmen. Yasir struck again soon with the big wicket of Ben Stokes who was done in by the extra bounce the former got and gloved it to the wicket-keeper.

The umpire initially shook his head upon which Azhar Ali took the review. The replays showed a feather of a spike on ultra edge when the ball passed Stokes' gloves. Two overs later, Shaheen Afridi's unplayable delivery that bounced off a

length took Ollie Pope by surprise. It smashed into his gloves and Shadab Khan took the catch running in from gully.

With Pakistan in the driver's seat, Buttler went on the counter while Woakes also put on his batsman's hat. The pair managed to knock off 50

runs in the remaining overs of the second session and thus left the match on a knife's edge when the umpires knocked off the bats for tea.

The hosts will need the second-highest successful fourth innings run chase at the Manchester ground to snatch victory.

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN 1ST INNINGS: 326
ENGLAND 1ST INNINGS: 219
PAKISTAN 2ND INNINGS: 169
ENGLAND 2ND INNINGS (TARGET: 277 RUNS)

RJ Burns lbw b Md Abbas 10
DP Sibley c A Shafiq b Y Shah 36
J Root (c) c B Azam b N Shah 42
B Stokes c Md Rizwan b Y Shah 9
OJ Pope c S Khan b S Afridi 7
JC Buttler not out 32
CR Woakes not out 26

Extras: (lb 2, nb 3) 5
Total: 167
Fall of wickets: 1-22 (Rory Burns, 11.1 ov), 2-86 (Dom Sibley, 35.6 ov), 3-96 (Joe Root, 38.4 ov), 4-106 (Ben Stokes, 41.6 ov), 5-117 (Ollie Pope, 44.5 ov)
Bowling: Shaheen Shah Afridi 10, 1, 38, 1 Mohammad Abbas 11, 4, 23, 1 Naseem Shah 10, 4, 24, 1 Yasir Shah 20, 2, 74, 2 Shadab Khan 2, 0, 6, 0



England's Jos Buttler (left) plays a shot during the match on Saturday. AFP

Woods struggles

AGENCIES

SAN FRANCISCO, 8 AUGUST

After Friday's barrage of misreads, short misses and rim-outs on greens he could not figure out, Tiger Woods might want to go back to his old putter. And find a new sand wedge while he's at it.

Woods, who got under par on Day 1 of the PGA Championship by swapping his usual putter for one that was a little longer, ended up in a battle simply to make the cut in the second round. He shot 2-over 72 to finish at even par at the midway point at Harding Park. He is eight shots

behind leader Haotong Li. Most of the problems had to do with his putting.

Really struggled with getting the speed of the greens today, he said. They looked faster than what they were putting. They were firm coming into the greens, but they weren't putting as fast as they looked. And then as the day wore on, they got a little more fuzzy and got even slower.

On Day 1, he made 141 feet worth of putts. On Day 2, the grand total was 52 feet, and that was with the help of 12 footers on No. 16 that looked more like 50 considering the way the rest of the round had gone.

Boxing Day Test to stay in Melbourne if crowds are allowed: Cricket Australia

MELBOURNE, 8 AUGUST

The iconic MCG will not lose out on hosting India for the Boxing Day Test if crowds are allowed inside the stadium, Cricket Australia (CA) interim chief executive Nick Hockley said on Saturday.

It is being speculated that the Boxing Day Test during India's tour later this year could be shifted to Adelaide in the wake of rising number of coronavirus cases in the state of Victoria.

"It comes down to if we can get a crowd at the MCG we'll play at the MCG," Hockley was

quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"All the restrictions that are ongoing, we are just hopeful that they take very quick effect and we get back on top of the situation and people can get out and about, we can get back to crowds and get back to live events," Hockley said the CA is full steam ahead with the planning "in the anticipation that we'll be back to some level of normalcy by that point in time".

"It's one of the most iconic events on the Australian sporting calendar. Certainly at this stage we are planning full steam ahead."

Sub-jr aspirants affected seriously by shutdown

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, 8 AUGUST

Covid-19 has simply destroyed the aspirational drive of an entire generation of sub-junior talents across a broad range of disciplines in West Bengal by bringing camps and coaching centres to a grinding halt as the shutdown rules out practice, a duo of veteran sport administrators told The Statesman here today.

"There is very little chance that 2020 will see much sport at its lower but vital levels and by the time 2021 comes along, many of the boys and girls in team as well as individual disciplines will have made it to the junior level. The impetus that comes with topping the preceding stage will be a missing element. And, of course, the future is so uncertain that you don't really know how 2021 will pan out," said Kamallesh Chatterjee, former president of the Bengal Olympic Association.

Tapas Basu, once working president of the South Calcutta Sports Development Council who was badly jolted when the lockdown halted his fresh initiative, a shoe-string budget training institute named Kirirashakti, said that, as of now, there was nothing that the youngest lot in the arena could do and no one knew when they would be able to get back to the field.

"Most training centres in Kolkata are usually crowded by boys and girls from the suburbs. But train services have long remained suspend. Back home, they have very little to fall back upon. Whatever coaching they come by is in the city," Basu said.

The state government, in accordance with Central directives, has ordered sport to be stopped for the moment but a quick end to the period of inaction, as Chatterjee says, is quite unlikely.

"There are coaches calling up their pupils away from the city to make sure they don't get totally out of practice," said Chatterjee, making it clear that this was only an inadequate alternative arrangement.

"Talent calls for nurturing. That is out of the question, given the way things are right now, he said. According to him, trainees in individual disciplines might salvage something yet from the virtually irredeemable situation but team sport ambitions have been taking a nasty hit."

Operational procedure could be sub-standard

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY

It was a little like what we'd read way back in school about, well, the upper-tier scheme of things: he it was who gave it and later, he took it away and so blessed be his name, wasn't it? Arun Lal had come in as Bengal's coach when Sourav Ganguly was presiding de jure and de facto over the game in the state and now it was the cricket board helmed by the prince of Behala which could be seen to have shown him the exit less than a year after the team's appearance in a Ranji Trophy final.

Wonders never cease.

To say this is not to read sinister or villainous string-pulling in power's darkened corridors though. Nothing of the kind. The thing is that, in this land of ours, the right hand has very little presentiment of what the left is up to - or what it's already done, for that matter - and that sums up our quality of leadership. If there's a communication gap somewhere along the way, it seldom is sought honestly to be filled, never mind who - the clerk? The boss himself? - is at fault. The man at the bottom is the sacrificial lamb. The big boy up above all the rest in the set-up never feels unsettled.

So the standard operational procedure is to reign supreme for now, amid solemn avowals of loyalty by the layabouts in Dr BC Roy Clubhouse to the man who won one Ranji Trophy as a player of Bengal and might have won a second as their coach. No comparisons are attempted with Mario Zagallo, Franz Beckenbauer or Didier Deschamps, who won football's World Cup both as player and coach, but was

there any anti-60-plus coach clause laced into football's new-normal book of golden rules when the Bundesliga pushed its own reset button? Someone associated with Fifa couldn't recall one. Nor have we heard so far of any other domestic football competition which followed the lead of the German league in trying to co-exist with the coronavirus by banishing spectators from the stands trying a similar ploy, certainly not with a universal notice ladled out in advance.

Did any research, even an Indian one, precede the prohibitory orders? Sport medicine experts one spoke to knew not. Lal

SHORT POINT

has been quoted in some places as saying that Narendra Modi doesn't look particularly inconvenienced grinding through his everyday chores despite his age but there's a catch there. Even if the prime minister is a prey to lumbago, or a toothache, he'll be sung paeans to for taking things in his stride and carrying on for the purported sake of the hoi polloi.

Hewields power. A cricket coach isn't quite in the same league. The merely professional age of sport in England - which kicked off in the 1880s or thereabouts - held coaches in high esteem. And it lasted a long while. Today's hyper-commercial one worships only money, and little else. Arsene Wenger suspected Arsenal fans of "ageism" when his relationship with them soured. Gary Sobers' autobiography records his opposition to coaching appointments based on documented approvals by authorities of aspirants' eligibility.

That's another way of saying: "We know best." That's what they want us to believe as long as they rule the roost.

Man City seizes on mistakes to oust Madrid, reach CL QFs

AGENCIES

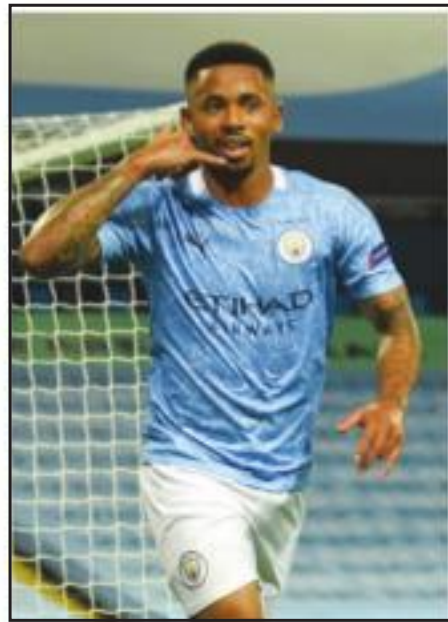
MANCHESTER, 8 AUGUST

Eliminating the record 13-time champion has Manchester City players believing they can deliver the team's first Champions League title.

Real Madrid's defensive mistakes by Raphael Varane were seized on by Raheem Sterling and Gabriel Jesus (in photo) to lead City into a quarterfinal against Lyon.

They clinched another 2-1 victory against Madrid on Friday after winning by the same score in the first leg in the Spanish capital in February before the competition was paused due to the pandemic.

"They're a top club, Real Madrid, the best club in this competition so far this is massive", Gabriel Jesus said. "It's all about believing. We



can make a mistake, so believe always. And I press, I press a lot. That is one of my powers, press all the time and help my team. I was happy I scored."

First the Brazilian set up the opener scored by Sterling in the ninth minute at an empty Etihad Stadium.

With Madrid captain Sergio Ramos banned after being sent off in the Madrid leg, Raphael Varane was without his usual central defensive partner. And the Frenchman was caught out in possession by Gabriel Jesus, who squared for Sterling to tap past goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois for his 100th City goal.

Real began to make its presence felt and equalized through Karim Benzema, who headed in powerfully from Rodrygo's cross in the 28th minute.

City went close to a second before the break after a poor clearance from Courtois went straight to Kevin De Bruyne, but Phil Foden playing as a false nine with Sergio Agüero injured struck wide.

But another blunder by Varane in the 68th minute was again capitalized on by Gabriel

Jesus.

Varane failed to cut out a long ball forward and then made an ineffective attempt to head back to Courtois. Gabriel Jesus closed in quickly and dinked the ball over Courtois.

"I want to step forward and take the blame," Varane said. "This defeat is my fault. I feel bad for my teammates. I can't explain my two mistakes, I felt comfortable on the pitch, but errors in some parts of the field can be extremely costly. This is a difficult night for me.

But the newly crowned Spanish champions were eliminated from a Champions League knockout round for the first time under Zinedine Zidane. He led Madrid to three consecutive titles from 2016 to 2018, resigned after delivering the 13th title but returned as coach in March 2019.

No set guidelines for calling off US Open amid COVID outbreak

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, 8 AUGUST

A player testing positive for COVID-19 will be dropped from the U.S. Open, but the U.S. Tennis Association has not established how many infected participants would force the Grand Slam tournament to

be called off.

According to a 10-page Player Q&A Update sent out this week by the USTA, there are no guidelines available to determine what number (of positive tests) will compel the cancellation of the U.S.

Open or the tournament that will precede it at Flushing

Meadows this month amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Western & Southern Open, usually held in Cincinnati, is slated for the hard courts at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center from 20-28 Aug, followed by the U.S. Open from 31 Aug to 13 Sept. No spectators will be



allowed at either tournament.

As the USTA moves forward, players are announcing withdrawals because of the pandemic.

No. 5 Elina Svitolina (in photo left) of Ukraine, a 2019 U.S. Open semifinalist, and No. 7 Kiki Bertens (in photo right) of Netherlands wrote on social

media Friday that they won't be in New York.

They join a growing list of absentees that already included the No. 1-ranked woman, Ash Barty, the defending men's champion, Rafael Nadal, and others such as Stan Wawrinka and Nick Kyrgios.

Bertens cited concerns

about needing to quarantine when returning to Europe for clay-court tournaments in Rome and Paris that are scheduled for after the U.S. Open.

Players have asked the USTA to provide a transit letter that would allow them to bypass a quarantine period when going from New York to Europe.

