

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 7 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 32.0°C
Min: 25°C
RH: 54%
Rainfall: 23.7 mm
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
32/25°C

BJP SARPANCH SHOT, CADRE QUITTING PARTY

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, AUG. 6

The killing of a village head associated with the BJP in southern Kulgam by suspected militants on Thursday triggered a new wave of resignations by party activists across the Kashmir Valley.

Over half a dozen BJP workers took to social media platforms to say they were dissociating from the party. Some even sought forgiveness from the militants.

The police said at about 9.30 am militants shot and critically wounded BJP sarpanch Sajad Ahmad Khanday in Vesoo village of Qazigund area in Kulgam.

“He was evacuated to Anantnag’s Government Medical College Hospital, but succumbed,” the police said.

The hospital’s medical superintendent, Dr Muhammad Iqbal Sofi, said Khanday was brought dead to the hospital.

MANOJ SINHA IS J&K’S NEW LT. GOVERNOR

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, AUG. 6

The Centre appointed former minister of state for railways Manoj Sinha as Jammu and Kashmir’s new lieutenant-governor, replacing G.C. Murmu.

This is believed to have been done to send a clear signal that it wants to restart the J&K political process.

Mr. Sinha reached Srinagar on Thursday by a state plane and is likely to be administered the oath of office on Friday.

NATION | 4

CBI registers case to probe Sushant’s death



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

WORLD | 5

Don’s FB post of kids immune to Covid deleted



CORONA COUNT
CASES (+64,680)
20,24,502
DEATHS (+899)
41,631
covid19india.org

STATE GOVT BULLETINS
TELANGANA (+2,092)
70,958
(+13)
589

ANDHRA PRADESH (+10,328)
1,96,789
(+72)
1,753

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES
1,91,15,415
DEATHS
7,13,893
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213

Vol. 36 No. 53 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹6.00

Defence ministry pulls out Chinese incursion report

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

The defence ministry on Thursday pulled down a document from its website which had for the first time officially acknowledged that Chinese troops had “transgressed” in at least three places in Ladakh and that the situation in the area due to “aggression by China” is “sensitive” with the stand-off likely to be “prolonged”.

There was no official word on why the document, which was uploaded on Tuesday, was removed after two days.

This comes when the fourth and fifth round of Corps Commanders talks between India and China seem to have been unable to achieve a breakthrough on further disengagement in Pangong Tso and other friction areas. The government is yet to come out with a formal statement on the outcome of the fifth meeting. China has refused to move its troops out of the Fingers area in Pangong Tso and the Depsang-Daulat Beg Oldi

● **CHINA REFUSED** to move its troops out of the Fingers area in Pangong Tso and the Depsang-Daulat Beg Oldi sector.

sector. The defence ministry document had said that Chinese aggression had been increasing along the Line of Actual Control and more particularly in Galwan Valley since May 5. “The Chinese side transgressed in the areas of Kugrang Nala, Gogra and north bank of Pangong Tso lake on 17-18 May, 2020,” it said.

While engagement and dialogue at the military and diplomatic level is continuing, “the present standoff is likely to be prolonged,” it said. “The situation in Eastern Ladakh arising from unilateral aggression by China continues to be sensitive and requires close monitoring and prompt action based on evolving situation,” it added.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi continued with his attack on Modi government over its handling of

situation with China in Ladakh sector. “Denying China is in our territory and removing documents from websites won’t change the facts,” tweeted Mr Gandhi.

According to sources, China has built up its forces not only in Ladakh but all along the LAC.

Army Chief Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane is on a two day visit to Tezpur-based 4 Corps to review the security situation along the China border in North-East.

The Chinese are occupying the Finger 5 area in the Pangong Tso and are still continuing to hold the ridges in the Finger 4 area. During the initial phase of disengagement, Chinese troops had vacated the banks of the lake in Finger 4 on July 9 and returned to Finger 5. Chinese troops still have to vacate the area between Finger 5 and Finger 8, which India claims is its territory. Satellite images have shown huge build-up by Chinese at Pangong Tso with permanent structures.

8 Covid patients die in hospital fire

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, AUG. 6

The killing of a village head associated with the BJP in southern Kulgam by suspected militants on Thursday triggered a new wave of resignations by party activists across the Kashmir Valley.

Over half a dozen BJP workers took to social media platforms to say they were dissociating

from the party. Some even sought forgiveness from the militants. The police said at about 9.30 am militants shot and critically wounded BJP sarpanch Sajad Ahmad Khanday in Vesoo village of Qazigund area in Kulgam.

“He was evacuated to Anantnag’s Government Medical College Hospital, but succumbed,” the police said.

—PTI

Now, you can restructure loan

FALAKNAAZ SYED | DC MUMBAI, AUG. 6

Even as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) disappointed borrowers by not extending the loan moratorium, it has announced a one-time restructuring of loans taken by individuals, corporates and small businesses.

In his Monetary Policy statement on Thursday, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said, “The disruptions caused by Covid-19

have led to heightened financial stress for borrowers across the board... Accordingly, it has been decided to provide a window to enable lenders to implement a resolution plan with respect to eligible corporate exposures as well as personal loans.”

According to RBI, personal loans mean credit facility extended to individuals, which include consumer credit, education loan, loans given for

creation or enhancement of immovable assets (housing loans) and loans given for investment in financial assets such as shares, debentures.

The resolution of personal loans will be available only to those borrowers who were repaying their loans regularly as on March 1.

Eligible borrowers’ accounts will continue to be classified as standard till the date of invocation of resolution under this

framework.

The borrowers should choose this option before December 31, 2020 and the resolution must be implemented within 90 days.

“The resolution plans may inter alia include rescheduling of payments, conversion of any interest accrued, or to be accrued, into another credit facility, or, granting of moratorium, based on an assessment of income of the borrower, subject to a maximum of two years.”

India adds 10L cases in 20 days; tally rises to 20 lakh

Reports highest ever caseload of 64,680 in 24 hrs

1,557 cases recorded outside GHMC area

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

The spread of Covid-19 in the rural areas continued with the non-GHMC areas registering 1,557 cases on Wednesday, of the state’s 2,092 cases, according to the health department bulletin of Thursday.

On Tuesday, the districts had reported 1,480 cases. The GHMC area had 535 cases. Thirteen persons died on Wednesday, taking the toll to 589.

A total of 21,346 samples were tested and results of 1,550 are awaited. A senior

the hinterland after guest workers moved back to their villages or hometowns. India had regis-

government doctor in a district blamed the trend on poor sanitation. “People have only understood that they must wear masks. There is no social distancing. They have no idea about sanitation. The concept of isolation has not been understood at all.”

There are allegations that RMPs are treating patients at home. Oximeter, oxygen cylinders and basic medicines are being supplied to manage patients in Warangal Urban and Karimnagar districts, alleged sources.

tered one lakh cases on May 18, 108 days after the first case was reported on January 30, with a daily

COVID FAST RISING

1 to 1 lakh	: 108 days
1L to 2 lakh	: 15 days
2 to 4 lakh	: 18 days
4 to 8 lakh	: 22 days
8 to 10 lakh	: 6 days
10 lakh to 20 lakh:	20 days

average of 925 cases. It took just 15 days for the infections to double to 2,07,082 on June 2, registering an average 7,139 cases or posting an average of 7.13 per cent growth a day.

The cases doubled in another 18 days from two to four lakh on June 20, adding an average 11,111 cases or 5.55 per cent growth each day. The number further increased by 100 per cent to eight lakh cases from the four-lakh figure in 22 days on July 11, showing an average rise of 4.5 per cent a day.

■ **Page 3: Cases doubled globally in 41 days**

COLLEGES IN AP SET TO REOPEN ON OCTOBER 15

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 6

Colleges across Andhra Pradesh will reopen on October 15. Announcing this, AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy also stated that all Common Entrance Tests (CETs) would be conducted in September.

The Chief Minister said, “It has been decided to reopen colleges on October 15.”

A TATA PRODUCT

TANISHQ

A A R A M B H

Up to **25%** off
on diamond jewellery value.

Up to **₹300** off
per gram on gold jewellery.

For buying online, appointments through video calling, store locator and offer details check tanishq.co.in • Offer and dates may vary across cities • *Conditions apply.

Hyderabad: We have a brand new showroom at Jubilee Hills Road 36. Near Peddamma Temple Metro Station. Phone - 040-68178888

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Bahula Chaturthi till 2.07 am (Saturday)
Star: Purvabhadra till 1.34 pm
Variyam: 12.14 am to 2 am (Saturday)
Durmuhurtam: 8.33 am to 9.23 am; 12.47 pm to 1.38 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
 Zuhijja 16,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.52 am
Zohar: 12.32 pm
Asar: 4.49 pm
Maghrib: 6.53 pm
Isha: 8.05 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.46 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.57 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.28 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.53 AM

COUNTER POINT



Not medical reports, we have to check their bank statements before starting treatment!

OTHER STORIES

56-YEAR-OLD SUB-INSPECTOR DIES OF COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

Bachupally sub-inspector Md Yousuf, 56, succumbed to Covid-19 early on Thursday. Yousuf had tested positive on July 21 and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital. Yousuf was working with the Bachupally police from 2018. He had joined the police as a civil constable in 1987 at Sangareddy and later worked in Medak. He had received 25 cash rewards for his exemplary work. After testing positive, Yousuf was admitted to a private hospital in Madhapur for two days and shifted to another hospital at Suraram until July 25. He was then admitted to another private hospital at KPHB, where he died.

COVID-19 CASES DOUBLED GLOBALLY IN 41 DAYS

From page 1

Compared to India, the Coronavirus cases have doubled globally in 41 days — from 95 lakh cases on June 26 to 1.9 crore on August 6. The number of Covid-19 patients increased at the rate of 2.43 per cent in this period. On Wednesday, 2,71,325 cases were recorded globally. Of this, India's contribution was 56,626 or 20 per cent.

The spread of infection, however, appears to have slowed down in most parts of the world. The top three countries in terms of caseload — the United States, Brazil and India — are contributing 61 per cent of new cases, while the rest of 210 countries or territories reporting the rest.

The saving grace is the falling death rate. Data available on worldometers.info shows that the death rate is gradually declining in spite of a steady rise in infections.

In the first phase when the Covid-19 disease hit China, the death rate was at 41 per cent. The recoveries improved and death rate declined after China imposed a strict lockdown and controlled the spread.

The global death rate rose to 21 per cent when the Covid-19 pandemic reached the shores of an unprepared Europe. Relatively better understanding of the disease and treatment protocols brought down the death rate to 5.52 per cent. The global recovery rate is over 94 per cent.

As per official numbers, the death rate in India is one of the lowest at 2.09 per cent — occupying 108th place in a list that ranks countries for Coronavirus cases in descending order. Countries like Yemen, France, the UK, Italy, Belgium, Hungary, the Netherlands, Mexico, which bore brunt of the deadly disease in the initial days had reported over 10 per cent death rate.

● **THE GLOBAL** death rate rose to 21 per cent when the Covid-19 pandemic reached the shores of an unprepared Europe. Relatively better understanding of the disease and treatment protocols brought down the death rate to 5.52 per cent.

Govt puts out advisory on Covid and viral fevers

Symptoms of both the diseases are completely different

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
 NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY,
 AUG. 6

Medical and health department in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts issued an advisory on Thursday asking people not to panic over viral fevers and Covid-19 symptoms. The symptoms of both these diseases are different. Only if people experience Covid-19 symptoms, they should approach government authorities for counselling and treatment, officials say.

According to the medical advisory, Covid-19 patients will suffer from severe fever, whereas viral fevers will not be severe.

Viral fever will get cured within three days. But in Covid-19 cases, the fever will continue after three days.

Covid-19 patients suffer from dry cough, but viral fever patients may suffer from cough with phlegm.

Covid-19 patients will experience difficulty in

● **IT HAS** been suggested that Covid-19 patients must drink warm water regularly, apart from milk with turmeric powder.

● **HOT FOOD** must be consumed. Patients must also have immunity boosting fruits like orange and guava.

breathing, whereas those with viral fever will not.

Covid-19 patients will not experience taste and smell. They will also feel chest pain and their oxygen saturation will decrease. They could also suffer from motions and vomiting.

Patients with viral fevers will suffer only from motions. Body pains and headache will be severe in Covid-19 patients, but normal in viral fever patients.

It has been suggested that Covid-19 patients

must drink warm water regularly, apart from milk with turmeric powder. Hot food must be consumed. Patients must also have immunity boosting fruits like orange and guava. Wearing of masks, observing physical distancing, frequent hand wash, and using sanitisers is mandatory. If victims suffer from fever, cough, body pains, difficulty in breathing and running nose, they should immediately visit the nearest hospital.

Meanwhile, Nizamabad district collector C. Narayana Reddy participated in a video conference with health minister Etala Rajender and chief secretary Somesh Kumar on Thursday.

He informed them that a 100-bed isolation centre has been started in the district. Hospitals in Bodhan and Armoor have also been readied for dealing with Covid-19 cases. Of the 270 beds in Government General Hospital (GGH), 176 beds have oxy-

gen facility and the remaining beds will get the facility soon, he explained.

The collector said that the medical college hospital has an ICU facility with 60 beds. The bed strength will be increased to 450 soon. Around 59 Covid-19 patients have been admitted in two private hospitals in Nizamabad, he said. Nizamabad in-charge DM&HO Ramesh and GGH superintendent Prathima Raj were present in the conference with the health minister and chief secretary.

In Kamareddy, district collector A. Sharath on Thursday released pamphlets on symptoms of Covid-19 and seasonal fevers. He directed medical and health officials to carry out widespread campaigning on both the diseases in the district. He said people of Kamareddy district can also contact the Corona control room on helpline numbers 73829 28649 and 73829 29350.

TRS MLA S. Ramalinga Reddy dies, former journo fought for statehood

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy, 57, TRS MLA from Dubbaka in Siddipet district, died of a cardiac arrest after prolonged illness at a private hospital here early of Thursday. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

The four-time MLA, who was Assembly Estimates Committee chairman, played an active role in the separate Telangana movement after he joined the TRS in 2001. A journalist before he joined politics, Ramalinga Reddy was soft-spoken and was known for his simplicity.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao expressed shock over the sudden demise of the legislator and went to Chittapur, the native village of Ramalinga Reddy, to offer his condolences to the ber-



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao pays floral tributes of TRS Dubbaka MLA Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy at Chittapur village, Siddipet district.

eaved family. Rao recalled his association with the legislator during the

Telangana agitation. TRS working president and IT minister K.T. Rama

Rao said he was deeply disturbed by Ramalinga Reddy's death and conveyed his condolences to the family members.

Finance minister T. Harish Rao said Ramalinga Reddy was a people's man, who played a key role in the statehood movement as a journalist and then as a political leader.

Ministers Singireddy Niranjan Reddy, E. Rajendar, E. Dayakar Rao, T. Srinivas Yadav, A. Indra Karan Reddy, Satyavathi Rathod, Sabitha Indraredy, Koppula Eswar, V. Srinivas Goud, State Planning Board vice chairman B. Vinod Kumar, MP J. Santosh Kumar and several others expressed condolences.

TRS leaders said that Ramalinga Reddy's death was a big loss to the TRS and the people. The last rites of the MLA were performed at Chittapur.

CONGRESS, TRS SPAR OVER COVID MANAGEMENT IN TS

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
 KHAMMAM, AUG. 6

Congress and Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) leaders are at each other's throats over tracing, testing and treating of Covid-19 patients in the state.

Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka lambasted the TRS government and minister for transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar over dereliction in testing of virus suspects and treating patients.

He visited the isolation ward in the district headquarters hospital and noticed various flaws there.

"Glaring example of Mr Ajay's failure is placing social worker Annam Srinivasa Rao in Maddulapalli Covid-19 centre. He exposed several faults like lack of proper facilities and cleanliness.

TS student tops VIT BTech admission exam

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

Telangana state's Chagari Koushal Kumar Reddy from Sri Chaitanya Junior Kalasala topped the B.Tech admissions list announced by the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) on Wednesday. Out of a total of 1,83,059 students from around the country and 12 countries (West Asia, Indonesia, Nepal, Nigeria, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, the UK and Singapore) that had applied for admission.

Two more students from the state, Thrinesh Reddy D. from Narayana Junior College and Neeraj Gunda of Sri Chaitanya Junior College, bagged the sixth and seventh positions, respectively.

VIT Chancellor Dr G. Viswanathan, said that admissions would be on

● **CANDIDATES CAN** view their results at the institute's official website www.vit.ac.in.

● **THEY CAN** register for online counselling process which will begin on August 10.

merit, based on the normalised PCM/ PCB marks, JEE/ SAT scores obtained by the candidates. The ranks were declared for admission to 36 B.Tech. and BDes. programmes offered by VIT at its Vellore, Chennai, AP and Bhopal campuses. Under the GV School Development Programme (GVSDP), Central and state board exam toppers would be given 100 per cent fee waiver. Candidates with ranks up to 50 would be given 75 per cent tuition fee waiver, those with ranks 51 to 100 50 per cent

and candidates in ranks 101 to 1,000 would be given 25 per cent tuition fee waiver.

The district toppers (one boy and one girl) in all the districts of Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh who are studying in government schools in rural areas will be given 100 per cent fee waiver and exemption from hostel and mess fees under the STARS (Support The Advancement of Rural Students) scheme.

Candidates can view their results at the institute's official website www.vit.ac.in. They can register for online counselling process which will begin on August 10. Rank based counselling would be held in four phases. Admission for other three-year undergraduate and five-year integrated programmes is open.



A fishermen fishes in the Lower Manair Dam in in Karimnagar on Thursday.

— YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

Fish seeds released in Lower Manair dam

DC CORRESPONDENT,
 KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 6

BC welfare, food and civil supplies minister, Gangula Kamalakara released fish seeds in the Lower Manair Dam in Karimnagar district on Thursday. This year 2.36 crore fish seedlings were released in 800 lakes in the district.

Mr Kamalakara said, "With the distribution of free fish seedlings across the state, Telangana will witness a blue revolution. Presently we are importing fish from other states, we will soon start exporting. Last year, fishermen earned ₹70 crore profit, while this year they can expect to earn more than ₹100 crore." Last year 2 crore fish seedlings were released in 760 lakes across the district.

The government has already sanctioned autos, mopeds and fishing nets along with the distribution of fish seedlings on a 100 percent subsidy.

Later, the minister laid the foundation stone for the construction of five check dams on the Manair river at the Lower Manair Dam at a cost of ₹87.9 lakh.

With the construction of check dams and a cable bridge, the Manair river will soon become a tourist hub. Apart from this, groundwater levels are also expected to increase in the surrounding mandals of Alaganur, Manakondur and Sadashivapally in Karimnagar district.



BC welfare, food and civil supplies minister, Gangula Kamalakara accompanied by mayor Y. Sunil Rao release fish seeds in the Lower Manair Dam in Karimnagar district on Thursday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

14,000 fishermen to benefit in Khammam

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KHAMMAM, AUG. 6

In a day or two the fisheries department will begin dropping 3.45 crore fish seedlings in 963 water sources in Khammam district this season. Four varieties of fish - Bocha (katla), Bangaru Teega (goldfish), Moju and Seelavathi (rohu) have been made available. Seedling of size 35mm to 40 mm will be dropped in small ponds and 80mm to 100 mm size in medium reservoirs. Nearly 14,000 fishermen from 186 fishermen societies stand to benefit.

The plan is to see that fishermen earn an income of ₹100 crore. Due to the incessant rains, all the major reservoirs and 600 tanks received plenty of water. The government will soon be releasing water to the

● **DUE TO** incessant rains, major reservoirs and 600 tanks received plenty of water. The government will soon release water to the NSP left canal which will fill up the tanks that got less water.

NSP left canal which will fill up the tanks that received less water.

Khammam district has a good amount of reservoirs like Palair, Wyra and Lankasagar along with medium irrigation tanks including Betupalli and Nagulavancha. There are 215 long water sources and 744 short-term water tanks in Khammam district. The fish seedlings have been ordered from various companies in Andhra Pradesh.

ATM CASH LOADERS SPIHON OFF ₹1.23 CR

JAYENDRA CHAITANYA T. I DC
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

More than ₹1.22 crore, meant for depositing in ATMs of various banks, has gone missing with three persons who were to replenish the ATMs also going missing.

A cash management company based in Secunderabad with a contract for filling cash into 36 ATMs of various banks, merged its routes following the Covid-19 outbreak and gave custody of the cash to three of its employees, identified as R. Rajya Shekhar, Rama Bharat, and Sai Teja

● **IN JULY** the company found the three had not been to work.

Ashwin.

In July, the company found that the trio has not been to work for quite some time, and an audit revealed that ₹1.22,98,000 meant for ATM replenishments went missing.

The company then lodged a complaint with the Hyderabad Central Crime Station police. CCS inspector P. Padmanabha Raju said that they are questioning some suspects and as per investigations so far, the cash is reportedly in possession of Raja Shekhar, who is absconding.

‘Govt. has betrayed dalits by grabbing podu lands’

DC CORRESPONDENT,
 SIRICILLA, AUG. 6

Members of various dalit organisations visited Adavipandiri village and interacted with the dalit community. They also inspected the podu lands in Veernapally mandal of Rajanna Sircilla district on Thursday.

The state general secretary of the 'Dalita Liberation Front', Marwadi Sudarshan said, "Many poor dalit families of Adavipandiri village have been earning their livelihood by cultivating podu lands in the village for the past 30 years.

"But the forest officials in

● **THEY WARNED** a massive movement would be taken up if action not taken.

the last few days have fenced the podu lands not allowing the dalits to cultivate. With the help of the police force, the dalits have been restricted in their homes."

Before coming to power, the TRS government had promised dalits that it would distribute 3 acres to each family and would make a dalit the Chief Minister. But we have been betrayed and the TRS is also trying to grab the podu lands cultivated by the dal-

its, he said.

The dalit organisations urged IT minister and constituency MLA K.T. Rama Rao and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar to visit Adavipandiri village and distribute pattas for the podu lands among the dalits. They also sought protection of the dalits from the forest and the police officials.

He warned that if the government behaved stubbornly, then along with the representatives of various dalit organisations they would take up a massive movement until justice is given to the dalits of Adavipandiri village.



Members of various dalit organisations collect details of the podu lands cultivated by the dalit families here in Adavipandiri village of Veernapally mandal of Rajanna Sircilla district on Thursday.

IN BRIEF

UoH to resume PG classes online

Hyderabad: The University of Hyderabad on Thursday said it will resume classes in online mode for about 2,000 ongoing post-graduate students from August 20. Since some students are likely to face financial challenges to go online, the UoH will re-purpose the boarding allowance scholarship of ₹1,000 a month into a digital access grant.

Woman SI rescues techie

Hyderabad: A 31-year-old software professional who wanted to end his life, reportedly due to financial problems, was saved by the Uppal police. Early on Thursday, the techie told his colleague Marshal over the phone that he was ending his life by suicide, and cut the call. Marshal called the Alwal police, who alerted the Uppal police. Sub-inspector J. Chandana swiftly traced the location of the techie's number and reached out to him. The techie was referred to a professional counsellor.

JAYASHANKAR'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 6

Telangana ideologue Prof K. Jayashankar's birth anniversary was celebrated in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts on Thursday.

Ruling TRS leaders and employee unions garlanded the statues of Jayashankar in both the districts.

They recalled the services of the late professor in the formation of Telangana state.

Mandal offices, government schools also celebrated the birth anniversary on Thursday.

The officials garlanded the portraits of Jayashankar. Banswada municipal chairman Jangam Gangadhar said that Prof Jayashankar is a role model for the present generation of people.

TTD DEFENDS SVBC FOR SKIPPING AYODHYA EVENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, AUG. 6

Reacting to criticism from BJP leaders and others over Sri Venkateswara Bhakthi Channel's (SVBC) failure to live telecast the 'bhoomi puja' for Ram temple on Wednesday, TTD clarified that the channel was broadcasting the celestial wedding of Lord Venkateswara from Tirumala at the time when the historic event took place at Ayodhya.

In a statement on Thursday, TTD maintained that the live telecast of Lord's celestial wedding had been going on every day without a break ever since SVBC was established and it was watched by crores of devotees across the globe.

TTD said noted pundit Kuppa Siva Subhramanyam had spoken about the Ram mandir 'bhoomi puja' during Sundarakanda Phatanam on SVBC on Wednesday and 1 pm news bulletin had made a mention of the event.

The channel also telecast the footage of 'bhoomi puja' for one hour between 1 pm to 2 pm on Thursday.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Vishnuvardhan Reddy demanded immediate removal of SVBC CEO Venkata Nagesh for the 'gross negligence'.

Stressing that skipping the important programme was deliberate, he demanded that the CM, endowments minister and TTD chairman S.V. Subba Reddy make a statement.

Online classes under HC lens

Court questions long classes for lower grades, forcing parents to pay fee

VUJJINI
VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

Concerned that excessive use of computers, laptops, smartphones and tabs by children in lower classes for online classes could impact their physical and mental health, the Telangana High Court questioned the government as to how it was allowing corporate schools to hold online classes for hours.

"The state government is informing the court that it is yet to take call on conducting online classes. In reality, several schools are conducting online

classes for hours, even up to the fifth class, and school managements are demanding that parents pay the fee. Unless they pay, the schools don't allow the child to join online classes. How it is happening? Is there no authority to supervise it," a division bench of Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy asked the government.

The bench was hearing PILs filed by the Hyderabad Parents Association and others questioning demand for fee from school managements for allowing online classes. Justice Vijaysen Reddy

expressed anguish over the functioning of Oakridge and Delhi Public Schools, which, according to information, were holding online classes for four to five hours with a 20-minute break.

Justice Reddy asked counsel representing a group of private schools that are holding online classes as to whether drill classes are being held to involve children in physical activity.

Sanjeev Kumar, special counsel to the government, said the state Cabinet had decided on August 5 to hold online and distance education classes. An official

announcement will be made by way of a notification and a government order, he said. It may not be possible to have a uniform time table with regard to the teaching hours.

At this, Chief Justice Chauhan observed: "On the hand, the State says that an official announcement is yet to be out on and on the other all private schools are asking parents to cough up the fee towards online classes. Why can't the government come up with a clear decision, why is it saying 'May be yes or perhaps not'? This is a contradictory statement." The Chief Justice said, "You cannot

have a child from Classes 1 to 5 sit before a screen for four hours continuously, because the attention of the child of such an age group cannot be more than 10 minutes. It will adversely affect the child. Perhaps, we are asking the child to be more disciplined than age permits him. Parents cannot maintain patience for not more than 20 minutes with the child in the house when compared to the teachers, who are patient even after spending five hours with the children."

CBSE counsel sought two weeks time to file its stand. The hearing was adjourned to August 27.

NO NON-VEG FOR COVID PATIENTS IN TTD-RUN HOSPITALS

PATHRI
RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 6

All hospitals are serving non-vegetarian food to Covid patients except those run by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams in Tirupati. However, nutritious food is being served in the TTD-run Covid hospitals.

Health minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas disclosed this while inspecting Covid wards at Padmavathi Medical College in Tirupati on Thursday.

He directed the district administration to provide quality food to the patients.

He urged the doctors to create awareness among patients on plasma therapy and encourage those who recently recovered from the disease to donate plasma to help save the patients in serious condition.

"Doctors have to focus on plasma collection as it will help in speedy recovery of the patients in critical condition," the minister suggested.

Hospitals and care centres should display on their notice boards the number of beds available and number of patients discharged on a daily basis.

"We have issued orders to the district authorities to recruit doctors, technicians and other staff in Covid hospitals," said Mr Srinivas.

He warned of stringent action against private hospital fleeing Covid patients.

He along with deputy CM K.Narayana Swamy and minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy visited the state Covid hospital attached to SVIMS.

Later, reviewing the situation with officials at SV Senate Hall, he told collector Narayana Bharath Gupta to arrange additional beds for Covid care.

He directed the medical and health department to ensure that non-Covid patients were not denied treatment.

Etala turns focus to district hospitals

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

Health minister Etala Rajendar instructed all collectors to ensure that every Covid-19 patient gets proper treatment and those in home isolation are provided with homecare kits. He was speaking along with Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, to the collectors during a video conference.

Rajendar said the collectors should seek suggestions and advice from the district ministers with respect to extending treatment to Covid-19 patients. They were asked to send proposals for setting up of Covid-19 testing centres, provide details of medical staff vacancies and forward proposals on private hospitals seeking to treat Covid-19 patients. Somesh Kumar stressed the need to test all people coming for Covid-19 tests.

Those who test positive, should be counselled. If

● **RAJENDAR SAID** the collectors should seek suggestions and advice from the district ministers with respect to extending treatment to Covid-19 patients. They were asked to send proposals for setting up of Covid-19 testing centres, provide details of medical staff vacancies and forward proposals on private hospitals seeking to treat Covid-19 patients.

they are to be placed in home quarantine, they must be provided with medical kits provided by the government.

The minister asked collectors to review the availability of oxygen at all government hospitals and other medical care facilities. The officials were asked to send proposals to extend oxygen supply to all beds in the area and district hospitals, as well as those attached to medical colleges.

90% hospitals in GHMC fire prone

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

SAFETY NORMS FOR HOSPITALS

There are 950 hospitals, small and big, in the GHMC limits. Almost none of them meets even the basic fire safety norms required for a hospital building to keep their patients and staff safe in the event of a fire.

A survey by the authorities, following the October 2019 fire accident in Shine Children's Hospital, LB Nagar, that saw the death of a four-month old baby and burns to four others in the neonatal ward, revealed that more than 90 per cent of hospitals in the GHMC area fared miserably on fire safety parameters.

The survey followed instructions from the government to ensure all these hospitals meet fire safety requirements.

"Almost every hospital has some deficiency or the other with respect to fire safety," a government official said. Included in the list of violators are some of the biggest names in the healthcare industry. "You name it, it is there in the violators' list," the official added.

The focus on fire safety in hospitals yet again came to the fore with Thursday's fire accident in a Covid-19 designated hospital in Ahmedabad in which at least eight patients in the ICU ward died.

While the National Building Code lays down detailed guidelines for fire prevention, suppression, and rescue in the event of a fire in a hospital, these norms have been practically thrown to the winds in the state and in GHMC limits, a source said. The GHMC follows the NBC code for hospitals as well as GO Ms. No. 168, dated April 7, 2012, with respect to fire safety norms in hospitals.

One of the biggest violations is the setting up of hospitals in buildings meant for residential pur-

● **EMERGENCY** lighting in corridors, stairwells indicating escape routes

● **DOORS** leading to outside the building, to ramps, or fire escape stairways

● **4.5 METRES** of space around the building for fire trucks

● **POSITIVE** pressure corridors, stairwells and all vertical shafts

● **FIRE** resistant doors, fire retardant paint on walls

● **AUTOMATIC** sprinkler system

● **ADMINISTRATIVE** sanction

poses which are simply not designed for the purpose. Incidentally, the building housing the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences at Gachibowli, the latest showpiece of the government's healthcare initiatives and now a Covid-19 designated hospital, was originally built as a residential building.

It was learnt that preparations were on earlier this year to begin taking action after notices were served to the violating hospitals but the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic brought these steps to a halt. Asked what action hospitals violating fire safety norms face, an official said it could mean seizing such buildings and shutting them down. "We will be looking at following up on the earlier notices and taking action on the violators," the official said.

Every one of the hospitals violating fire safety measures, it was learnt, did not even apply for a fire no objection certificate after obtaining one initially, mostly during their setting-up phase.

KTR asks Centre for vaccine plan

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 6

Industries minister K.T. Rama Rao on Thursday requested Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan to constitute a high-level empowered committee comprising officials from the Centre, key state governments and industry to formulate a strategic plan to expedite the development of a vaccine for Covid-19.

Reminding that the PM-Cares fund had allocated ₹100 crore for indigenous vaccine development, Rama Rao requested the minister to expedite the formulation of guidelines for the release of funds to indigenous vaccine manufacturers. Rama Rao said Hyderabad-based companies were working towards developing the vaccine for Covid-19. "I am proud to inform you that one of these companies is leading these efforts and should soon have its Covid-19 vaccine available in the market," he added.

Stressing the need to decentralise some of the clearances and approvals which do not require very high-level scrutiny at the CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation). He noted that CDSCO had a zonal

office along with a sophisticated drug-testing laboratory headed by a Deputy DCGI rank official in Hyderabad. "We request you to kindly instruct CDSCO to delegate more powers and authority, with additional resources, to the zonal office in Hyderabad," Rama Rao said.

Stating that India has one of the most complex regulatory systems in the world for vaccine approvals, Rama Rao suggested that the Centre set up a strict but simple and transparent regulatory regime to fast-track development of vaccines, and help the biotech industry in general. He stressed on the requirement for clear guidelines on the licensing of the Covid-19 vaccine in the country on the lines of FDA and WHO guidelines.

He said, "while two companies lead the vaccine development efforts, there are several other companies joining the race. These efforts need to be expedited while still maintaining regulatory rigour. It is requested that a framework for parallel approvals for clinical trials be developed at the earliest."

He asked for a robust procurement policy in consultation with the industry.

AP records single-day high of 10,328 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 6

After a brief lull in surge of Coronavirus infections, Andhra Pradesh registered single day spike of 10,328 new cases, raising the overall tally to 10,328, apart from 72 deaths due to the virus, taking the death toll to 1,753 in the last 24 hours.

The state health department, in its Covid-19 bulletin issued here on Thursday, stated that out of 63,686 samples tested during the last 24 hours, 10,328 patients have been found to be infected with Coronavirus. The state government has so far tested 22,99,332 samples in all. Of them, 1,96,789 patients have been infected with the virus, while 1,12,870 have been discharged after recovery. 82,166 persons are undergoing treatment for the infection in various hospitals across the state.

With regard to new instances of the virus, East Godavari continues to lead with 1,351 cases, followed by 1,285 in Kurnool, 1,112 in Anantapur, 868 in Guntur, 788 in Nellore, 781 in Visakhapatnam, 798 in West Godavari, 755 in Chittoor, 682 in Srikakulam, 604 in Kadapa, 575 in Vizianagaram, 366 in Prakasam and 363 in Krishna.

In terms of total positive cases, East Godavari has been the worst affected, registering the highest number of 27,580 cases, fol-

lowed by 23,348 in Kurnool, 21,173 in Anantapur, 19,419 in Guntur, 16,682 in Visakhapatnam, 15,786 in W. Godavari, 14,306 in Chittoor, 11,493 in Kadapa, 10,705 in Nellore, 9,636 in Srikakulam, 9,042 in Krishna, 7,468 in Vizianagaram and 7,256 in Prakasam.

As far as recovery rate from infection is concerned, E. Godavari stands first by accounting for 14,792 of recovered cases, followed by 14,263 in Anantapur, 13,314 in Kurnool, 12,007 in Guntur, 11,716 in W. Godavari, 7,948 in Chittoor, 6,940 in Visakhapatnam, 5,832 in Krishna, 5,584 in Kadapa, 5,263 in Nellore, 5,235 in Srikakulam, 4,324 in Prakasam and 2,757 in Vizianagaram.

Among the 72 deaths, Anantapur and E. Godavari accounted for 10 each, followed by nine in Guntur, eight in Chittoor, six each in Krishna, Nellore and Prakasam, four in Visakhapatnam, three each in Kadapa, Vizianagaram and West Godavari, and two each in Kurnool and Srikakulam.

With regard to the cumulative death toll, Kurnool registered the highest 223 deaths, followed by 205 in East Godavari, 198 in Krishna, 188 in Guntur, 147 in Visakhapatnam, 143 in Chittoor, 142 in Anantapur, 117 in West Godavari, 104 in Srikakulam, 86 in Prakasam, 74 in Nellore and 72 in Vizianagaram.



District collector K. Shashanka plants a sapling in the premises of the Collector's camp office in Karimnagar on Thursday. He was nominated by city mayor Y. Sunil Rao for the Green India Challenge initiated by Rajya Sabha member Joganapalli Santosh Rao. — YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

Doctor quizzed on child-trafficking

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 6

The illegal sale of new born babies in and around Visakhapatnam has taken wider dimension with the police finding one more such sale in the city. Presently the police are interrogating Universal Shruti hospital managing director Dr P. Namrata, who was taken into two-day police custody on Thursday.

Commissioner of police R.K. Meena said that they found one more baby and arrested Dr Chekuri Padmaja

of Padmaja Hospital, Seethammadhara and N Nooka Ratnam, a resident of Cheedikada in Vizag district.

It may be recalled that a few days ago, Maharani Peta police arrested six people, including two doctors: Dr P. Namrata, MD of Universal Srusti Hospital, Dr Tirmala, an employee at the same hospital, and six others for selling a baby-boy to a Kolkata-based couple.

As a part of the investigation, police personnel and medical officers carried out searches at Universal Srusti Hospital and Padmaja

Hospital.

In the latest case, the gang sold the newborn baby-girl to a couple from Vizianagaram by informing the mother that she had delivered a still-born child.

The police chief said that they received a complaint from Chandaka Venkata Lakshmi of Chodavaram on July 30. In her complaint, the woman stated that while she was pregnant, she visited Dr Jagga Rao Hospital at Chodavaram last November for a check-up. There, one Nooka Ratnam had informed her that she knew one

doctor at Srusti Hospital in Vizag and assured caesarean operation free of cost.

Trusting her, Venkata Lakshmi visited Srusti Hospital and delivered on January 31. But, Ratnam along with Ramakrishna, Dr Tirumala, Dr Namrata and Dr Sarojini conspired and informed her that she gave birth to a girl, who was still-born. They covered the child in a white cloth to make her believe the baby was dead.

Venkata Lakshmi was discharged from the hospital on February 3. Recently, she came to know that an infant

was sold by Srusti Hospital authorities and immediately approached the MVP Police station in Vizag suspecting that the hospital might have sold her child.

Investigation has revealed that Dr Chekuri Padmaja, DGO of Padmaja Hospital had received the blood and other medical reports of Venkata Lakshmi from Universal Srusti Hospital through Dr Saroja on January 30, who informed her to shift the pregnant woman to Padmaja Hospital. So far, six cases have been registered against Srusti Hospital.



Mahanama

died recently and another son had retired from RTC as a driver, she said.

Her eldest daughter is now 82 years. The second is in her 80s and the third is 70 years old. Two of her daughters have died, said her son Jaya Das Naidu.

It is interesting to note that even at the age of 105, Mahanama still does her own daily chores, said her son. When the district administration took a drive to test all the people above 60 years of age for corona, she tested positive and was

admitted at the State Covid Hospital on July 19.

During her 12-day stay, she had no other symptoms except mild fever; the hospital Superintendent said.

On one occasion when she had some breathing problem, she was provided with oxygen. Apart from that, she was not given any special treatment and she was fully cured of Covid. She was discharged on July 31, he said.

■ **DURING A** drive to test people above 60 years for corona, she tested positive and was admitted at the Covid hospital on July 19.

SHORT TAKES

SUSHANT CASE: CBI BOOKS FIR AGAINST RHEA, OTHERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

The CBI on Thursday registered an FIR against Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty, Indrajit Chakraborty, Sandhya Chakraborty, Showik Chakraborty, Samuel Miranda, Shruti Modi, and others in connection with the death case of Sushant Singh Rajput.

A senior official in the agency said the CBI has booked six accused and others under sections including criminal conspiracy, abetment of suicide, wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement, theft, criminal breach of trust, cheating and criminal intimidation.

The agency sleuths are also in touch with Bihar Police, which was earlier investigating the case, said the official.

The case will be probed by the Special Investigation Team under Superintendent of Police Nupur Prasad and will be supervised by DIG Gagandeep Gambhir and Joint Director Manoj Shashidhar, both are senior IPS officers.

Rajput, 34, was found hanging from the ceiling of his apartment in suburban Bandra in Mumbai on June 14 and since then Mumbai police has been probing the case.

Bihar Police also swung into action following a complaint by Krishna Kishore Singh, 77-year-old father of Rajput, and a resident of Patna.

Patna Police had registered an FIR under IPC sections related to alleged criminal conspiracy, cheating and abetment to suicide among others on the complaint.

KERALA TO SEE FALL IN CASES BY MID-SEPT: EXPERTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 6

Kerala's high level expert committee on Covid-19 Control believes that Coronavirus cases are expected to decline in the state by mid September if the state government continues with tough disease control and prevention measures.

Committee chairman Dr B. Ekbal said the state needs to strictly comply with the break-the-chain activities, strict quarantine and reverse quarantine measures to ensure the slide of Covid-19 by next month. The expert panel's statement comes close on the heels of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan directing the state police to contain the increasing cases of Covid-19 within two weeks.

However, experts say that before the slide Kerala Covid-19 cases are expected to peak by the end of this month or early September.

Meanwhile, on Thursday the state recorded highest single day tally of Covid-19 cases with 1,298 and the total cases so far crossed the 30,000 mark.

Of the new cases 1,017 contracted the disease through contact, 170 came from other states, 78 came from abroad and the source of infection of 76 is yet to be ascertained. The highest number of cases were reported in Thiruvananthapuram district with 219 of which 210 through contact, Kozhikode 174, Kasargod - 153, Palakkad - 136, Malappuram - 129.

At present 1.48 lakh people are under surveillance of which 1.36 lakh are under home/institutional quarantine, 11,437 are in hospitals.

Rain havoc in Mumbai



A landslide took place at Pedder Road area of Mumbai after consistent rainfall on Thursday. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray took stock of the state's preparedness in the wake of the heavy rains and asked authorities to remain alert. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Thackeray and assured all possible support. — *Rajesh Jadhav*

India snubs China for remarks on J&K

Urges Beijing not to interfere in India's internal affairs

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

Hours after China raised the Kashmir issue at the 15-member UN Security Council at the behest of its all-weather friend Pakistan, India on Thursday said it rejected China's interference in India's internal affairs, adding that China's attempt once again "met with little support from the international community". New Delhi also "urged" Beijing "to draw the proper conclusions from such infructuous attempts".

This is the second time in two days India criticised China for its comments and actions on the Kashmir issue.

Making no secret of the close collaboration between China and Pakistan, Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi tweeted Wednesday night that this was the third time in the past year that it was raised at the UN, thanking China "especially", saying Pakistan "welcomed" the meet.

The Chinese move in

‘India committed to its objective’

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

India on Thursday said it 'expects' China to work 'sincerely' with it for 'complete disengagement and de-escalation' at the line of actual control (LAC) in the Ladakh sector to ensure 'full restoration of peace and tranquillity' in the border areas.

This comes amid reports of a stalemate in the Sino-Indian military de-escalation in the Pangong Tso lake region due to the reported reluctance of Chinese PLA troops to pull back.

Ministry of external affairs (MEA) spokesperson, Anurag Srivastava, said, "As I have conveyed earlier, the special representatives of India and

collaboration with Pakistan was obviously planned at the UN on the first anniversary of India's revoking

China had a telephone conversation on July 5 where they discussed the situation in the border areas. They had agreed that early and complete disengagement of the troops along the line of actual control and de-escalation from India-China border areas in accordance with the bilateral agreement and protocols and full restoration of peace and tranquillity was essential for the smooth overall development of bilateral relations."

Making India's position clear, Srivastava added "India remains committed to this objective. We also expect that the Chinese side will work with us sincerely for complete disengagement and de-escalation."

Article 370, that granted special status to the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state.

China first began

raising the Kashmir issue last year at the UNSC for informal deliberations soon after India revoked Article 370.

On Thursday, the external affairs ministry said: "We have noted China initiated a discussion in the UN Security Council on issues pertaining to the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. This was not the first time China has sought to raise a subject that is solely an internal matter of India. As on such occasions, this attempt too met with little support from the international community. We firmly reject China's interference in our internal affairs and urge it to draw proper conclusions from such infructuous attempts."

India had on Wednesday too snubbed China, asking it to refrain from interference in India's internal affairs, hours after Beijing termed the revoking of Article 370 a year ago by New Delhi as "illegal and invalid".

India added that China had no locus standi on the issue.

PUTIN LIKELY TO VISIT INDIA IN OCT.

New Delhi, Aug. 6: Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to visit India in October this year for the Annual Bilateral Summit between the two countries, New Delhi said on Thursday. India said "regional and international issues of interest" are being discussed in exchanges between the two countries.

TV ACTOR SAMEER SHARMA ENDS LIFE BY SUICIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 6

Television actor Sameer Sharma allegedly committed suicide at his home in suburban Malad.

The 44-year-old was found hanging from a ceiling fan in the kitchen of his flat at Neha building in Chincholi Bunder locality in Malad (West) on Wednesday night. Sharma has worked in popular serials like 'Yeh Rishta Hai Pyar Ke', 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi', 'Kahani Ghar-Ghar Ki'.

"We have not found any suicide note at the spot. It seems to be a suicide case. It is suspected that he hanged himself two days back. We have sent the body for an autopsy," said a senior inspector of Malad police station.

The incident came to light when the building's watchman peeped through the kitchen window and saw Sharma hanging.

PM remembers Sushma on her first death anniversary

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

Tributes poured in on the first death anniversary of BJP leader and former External Affairs minister Sushma Swaraj on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi remembered her as "an articulate voice for India at the world stage" while Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu said she was a "blend of modern thinking and traditional values."

Swaraj passed away last year after a cardiac arrest hours after Parliament gave its nod to the bill nullifying the contentious Article 370 about which she tweeted that she was "waiting to see this day in my lifetime."

It was her last tweet and hours later she was rushed to the AIIMS where she breathed her last.

"Remembering Sushma Ji on her first Punya Tithi. Her untimely and unfortunate demise left many saddened.

She served India selflessly and was an articulate voice for India at the world stage," the Prime Minister tweeted.

Recalling how Swaraj used to visit him on every Raksha Bandhan to tie Rakhi, the Vice President said she was seen as "an epitome of Indian culture. She was a blend of modern thinking and traditional values. She was always respectful towards seniors and elders. She was one of the most affable Indian politicians and treated everybody with warmth and affection." Naidu addressed the first memorial lecture organised by the Panjab University in the memory of the late leader.

External Affairs minister and her successor S. Jaishankar said Swaraj was "always an inspiration." Paying tributes to her, Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said "will always remember her as a great orator, visionary leaders and above all a compassionate human being."

Union home minister Amit Shah said Sushma Swaraj was a "towering figure of Indian polity, an outstanding parliamentarian and a brilliant orator who dedicated her entire life in the service of the nation. Her ideals will continue to inspire the generations to come."

Information and Broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said Swaraj was a great orator, lively person and a good human being. Javadekar also addressed an event 'Sushmanjali' organised in the memory of the late leader. Shiv Sena's Priyanka Chaturvedi said Swaraj was an "empowered, talented, dedicated and inspirational daughter of India while Union minister of food processing Harsimrat Kaur Badal said she was a "motherly figure and a role model to many" and will be remembered as an "excellent minister and an astute politician."

Lalu shifted to RIMS director's bungalow

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, AUG. 6

Jailed RJD chief Lalu Yadav has been shifted from the paying ward of the Rajendra Institute Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Ranchi to the official residence of the hospital director located on the premises.

Sources aware of the development told this newspaper that the decision to move Lalu was taken after three of his caretakers tested positive for Covid-19 on July 25. This prompted his doctors to suggest the hospital authorities to shift 72-year-old RJD supremo to an isolated area.

Lalu Yadav is being treated for multiple serious ailments at RIMS Ranchi. Doctors said that he is suffering from heart, renal and other serious diseases and needed to be kept away from Covid-19 patients.

The BJP, however, feels that Lalu Yadav is getting "special treatment" from JMM-Congress-RJD led Mahagathbandhan government in Jharkhand. Talking to this newspaper on the issue, BJP spokesperson Nikhil Anand said, "If Lalu Yadav is being given any kind of special favour

beyond the existing law overlooking the jail manual then the matter is very serious. We would like to warn the Jharkhand government against giving any privileges to any person serving jail sentence."

Lalu Yadav was earlier criticised for using mobile phones and holding political meetings inside the RIMS premises. After he was shifted to the RIMS director's official bungalow, BJP leaders in Ranchi alleged that "the premises would be used as RJD headquarters where meetings will be held to discuss the upcoming assembly elections in Bihar".

After being convicted in the second fodder scam case involving the illegal withdrawal of ₹89.27 Lakh from Deoghar treasury, Lalu Yadav was sent to Birsamunda jail in Ranchi. He was later shifted to the RIMS in March 2018 after his health condition deteriorated.

Fraudulent withdrawal from government treasuries and use of fake bills and vouchers had surfaced in 1996. Officials conducting raids in 1996 had found that money was paid to non-existent companies for supplying fodder to the animal husbandry department.

Panel has discretion to decide on prisoners' bail, parole: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 6

The Bombay high court on Wednesday said the high-powered committee set up by the Maharashtra government had the discretion to decide which prisoners were entitled to be released on temporary bail or parole amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The HC also made it clear that no prisoner can claim right or entitlement to seek temporary release during the pandemic.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Madhav Jamdar was hearing a petition filed by social worker Medha Patkar through her NGO 'National Alliance for People's Movements' challenging an order passed by the high pow-

ered committee.

As per the order dated March 25, 2020, the committee had said those prisoners who have been convicted or are facing charges under special Acts or in serious offences, wherein the punishment is above seven years, are not entitled to be released on temporary bail or parole amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The petitioner's advocate S.B. Talekar had argued that the committee had exceeded its jurisdiction by classifying prisoners and it was infringing upon a person's fundamental right to equality.

The bench, in its order, however, noted that the principle of equality does not take away from the state the power of classifying persons for legitimate purposes.

"Equality before law does

not mean that things which are different shall be treated as though they were the same," the court said.

The bench further noted that the committee had a discretion to determine the category of prisoners who would be entitled to be released on temporary bail or parole.

"It is clear that the HPC (high-powered committee) balanced the rights of the prisoners to maintain maximum possible distancing to contain the spread of Covid-19 as well as the rights of the society," the court said.

"It is fallacious to contend that inmates can claim an absolute right for release in a situation like the prevailing pandemic as if it were flowing either from the Constitution or any other statute," the court said.

CPM slams Muslim League for its reply to Cong's Hindutva stand

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 6

Kerala state unit of the CPM and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan have stepped up attack on Muslim League for what they called their "meek" response to Priyanka Gandhi's statement welcoming bhumi puja ceremony in Ayodhya.

Though the Muslim League national leadership which met in Malappuram on Wednesday passed a resolution slamming Priyanka's statement and terming it untimely, the party stopped short of commenting on the Ayodhya ceremony presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Muslim League's 'soft' stand has irked secular

parties in the Left camp who expected this most formidable political group of Muslim community in Kerala to come out with a decisive position on the temple issue.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who is also member of the CPM politburo recalled that Muslim League had supported Congress even at the time of Babri Masjid demolition in 1992.

The League failed to put up a strong opposition even when the Congress led government stood like a mute spectator as Babri Masjid was razed to ground in 1992. With the local bodies' election in the state scheduled for later this year and crucial assembly elections in 2021, the ruling Left Democratic Front is keen to trigger a debate on Congress' dithering stand on the issue of

Secularism and rights of minorities. The Muslims constitute nearly 30 per cent of Kerala's population and the community has political clout in many parts of the state especially in Malabar region.

The party had played a crucial role in getting former Congress president Rahul Gandhi elected from Wayanad constituency in 2019 elections. Besides, the party also succeeded in rallying a sizable section of Muslims behind Congress led UDF which won 19 of the 20 Lok Sabha seats. The CPM led ruling LDF faced a near rout winning just Alappuzha constituency.

The Left is trying to woo the Muslims by expressing public opposition to the Prime Minister's bhumi puja ceremony in Ayodhya.

WAR OF WORDS Shivraj: MP deserves GI tag for aromatic rice

MP, Punjab fight over Basmati

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, AUG. 6:

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday slammed his Punjab counterpart Capt. Amrinder Singh for mounting pressure on the Centre to deny geographical indication (GI) tagging of basmati of MP, describing it unfair.

Chouhan said there was no basis for opposition to GI tagging of basmati of MP by Punjab Chief Minister since the state has 'written recorded history since 1908' for production of the variant of aromatic rice in 13 districts.

"Government of Madhya Pradesh strongly condemns the letter written by the Punjab Chief Minister to PMO (Prime Minister's Office) regarding allotment of GI tagging of basmati rice of 13 districts of the state", a tweet by chief minister's office (CMO) read.

Chouhan's office here ran a series of tweets justifying the state's demand for GI tagging of basmati rice grown in 13 districts of MP in the wake of Singh shooting a letter to the PMO on Wednesday demanding not to allow MP's basmati to get GI tag. In his letter, Singh argued that GI tagging to MP's basmati would not only be detrimental to

the interest of Punjab and other states who have already been awarded GI tag for their variant of the aromatic rice, but may also have an adverse impact on the export of basmati by India.

The Punjab Chief Minister said India exports basmati to the tune of ₹33,000 crore every year and any dilution in registration of Indian basmati may give advantage to Pakistan (which also produces basmati) in the international market in terms of characteristic and quality parameters.

The MP government, however, dismissed the concern expressed by Singh, saying that GI tagging to the state's bas-

mati would "provide stability to basmati prices in the international markets and boost our export".

"Madhya Pradesh has recorded history since 1908 of basmati production in 13 districts. Records of supplying seeds to farmers in MP in 1944 is recorded in the records of the Scindia state", a tweet by CMO here said.

The state government further said that the Indian Institute of Rice Research, Hyderabad, has recorded production of basmati since the last 25 years and added that exporters from both Punjab and Haryana have been procuring the rice variant from MP.

IN BRIEF

Court indicts Shehbaz, son

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUG. 6

A Pakistani accountability court on Thursday indicted Pakistan Muslim League-(Nawaz) President Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shahbaz in Ramzan Sugar Mills reference. During the hearing headed by judge Amjad Nazir Chaudhry, both the accused pleaded not guilty in the reference and their lawyer requested time for case preparation which was rejected by the court. Shehbaz told the judge that he was being dragged into fake case as he has always worked with honesty and served the people of Punjab for 10 years. "I didn't take salary and even money for petrol for 12 years. I brought investment to Pakistan for economic stability," he added. The PML-N leader said he was a public representative with emotions for general masses.

5 dead in Denver home arson fire

Denver: Five people were found dead Wednesday after an early morning fire destroyed a suburban Denver home — a blaze that authorities said they suspect was intentionally set. Three people escaped the fire by jumping from the home's second floor. Investigators believe the victims were a toddler, an older child and three adults, Denver Fire Department Capt. Greg Pixley said. Their bodies were discovered after firefighters extinguished the fire, which was first reported by a Denver police officer at 2:40 a.m., Pixley said. The three survivors were hospitalised with non-life-threatening injuries, Denver police spokesman Jay Casillas said. Pixley spoke outside the charred house in the Green Valley Ranch neighbourhood. A police officer attempting to rescue people on the first floor was pushed back by the fire's heat, and it appears that those who died were all on the first floor.

Bombs damage ATM in NZ mall

Wellington: Would-be thieves apparently detonated two homemade bombs at a New Zealand mall ATM early Thursday and left other unexploded bombs behind, according to police. Authorities closed the Chartwell Shopping Centre in Hamilton and some nearby streets while they searched the area to make sure it was safe.

A military bomb disposal team was called to the site. Police said they found several homemade explosive devices, including two, that appeared to have exploded. They said the bombs had damaged the ATM and the immediate area around it but hadn't injured anybody. The ATM stood at an exterior wall of the shopping centre at an ANZ bank branch. Police initially declined say what the devices were made from or to confirm that no money had been stolen, saying they would release more details later in the day.

NIRAV MODI IN CUSTODY TILL AUGUST 27

London, Aug. 6: Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, fighting extradition to India, was on Thursday further remanded in custody until August 27 after he appeared via videolink at a regular remand hearing before a UK court on charges over the nearly \$2 billion Punjab National Bank fraud and money laundering case.

The 49-year-old jeweller, who has been lodged at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London since his arrest in March last year, appeared via videolink before District Judge Vanessa Baraitser at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London for a regular 28-day "call-over" hearing. He was told the next hearing in the case will be a case management hearing ahead of a trial set from September 7.

"You will appear via videolink again. Your lawyers may be present in court," said Judge Baraitser, in reference to the part remote setting in operation across UK courts since the Coronavirus lockdown. In May, District Judge Samuel Goozee presided over the first part of Modi's extradition trial, held in a partial remote settings, with the second part scheduled between September 7 and 11. Besides, completing the arguments on establishing a prima facie case against Modi, the trial next month will deal with a second extradition request, made by the Indian authorities and certified by UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.

Don's FB post of kids immune to Covid-19 deleted

Houston, Aug. 6: Social media giant Facebook, for the first time, has removed a post from US President Donald Trump in which he claimed that children were "almost immune" to Covid-19, saying it violated its policy against spreading "misinformation" about the Coronavirus. The post in question was a video clip of a Trump interview on Fox News Channel uploaded by the Trump campaign on Wednesday.

The US President claims in the clip that children are "almost immune" to Covid-19. While much remains unknown about the Coronavirus, children are believed to be able to spread it to others, even without symptoms.

"This video includes false claims that a group of people is immune from Covid-19 which is a violation of our policies around harmful Covid misinformation," Andy Stone, a Facebook policy spokesperson said in a statement.

A link to the post now diverts to a page that says, "This Content Isn't Available Right Now." It is the first time that Facebook has removed a post from Trump entirely, rather than labelling it, as it has done in the past, making it a rare instance in which it has been willing to censor the president.

In June, Facebook removed ads that the Trump campaign posted that featured a symbol Nazis used to classify political prisoners during World War II. Twitter also removed a link to the same video

Test travellers from 'risk areas': Germany

Berlin, Aug. 6: Germany will require people arriving from countries deemed high risk, such as the United States, to take Coronavirus tests starting this weekend, the health minister said Thursday, as the country recorded its highest daily tally of new infections in three months. German officials have voiced alarm over a steady upward creep in the number of new infections over recent weeks.

The national disease control centre, the Robert Koch Institute, said 1,045 cases were recorded on Wednesday — the first time since May 7 that it has counted more than 1,000 new cases in a day. Daily figures can be volatile or distorted by delays in reporting, and

the number is still far short of the peak of more than 6,000 reached in early April.

"What we are seeing is a lot of small outbreaks," Health Minister Jens Spahn told reporters. "People are getting infected at family parties, at their place of work or at community facilities." On top of that, school holidays — the dates of which are staggered across Germany's 16 states — are ending in some regions, increasing concerns that vacationers could bring home the virus. Last Saturday, the government started offering free tests for people returning to the country, a move that Spahn said likely contributed to the increase in recorded cases. — AP

clip, which the official Trump Twitter account @TeamTrump shared earlier on Wednesday.

Links to the tweet now point Twitter users to a message that the tweet violated Twitter's rules and is no longer available. The Trump campaign accused Facebook of "flagrant bias".

"The President was stating a fact that children are less susceptible to the Coronavirus," Courtney Parella, the campaign's deputy national press secretary, said in an emailed

statement.

"Another day, another display of Silicon Valley's flagrant bias against this President, where the rules are only enforced in one direction. Social media companies are not the arbiters of truth," Parella said. A US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study involving 2,500 children published in April found that about one in five infected children were hospitalised versus one in three adults; three children died. — PTI

China sentences 3rd Canadian to death for storing drug at home

Beijing, Aug. 6: China has sentenced a third Canadian citizen to death on drug charges amid a steep decline in relations between the two countries. The Guangzhou Municipal Intermediate Court announced Xu Weihong's penalty on Thursday and said an alleged accomplice, Wen Guanxiang, had been given a life sentence.

Death sentences are automatically referred to China's highest court for review. The brief court statement gave no details but local media in the southern Chinese city at the heart of the country's manufacturing industry said Xu and Wen had gathered ingredients and tools and began making the drug ketamine in October 2016, then stored the final product in Xu's home in Guangzhou's Haizhu district.

Police later confiscated more than 120 kilograms (266 pounds) of the drug from Xu's home and another address, the reports said. Ketamine is a powerful pain killer that has become popular among club goers in China and elsewhere. Relations between China and Canada soured over the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, an executive and the daughter of the founder of Chinese tech giant Huawei, at Vancouver's airport in late 2018. The US wants her ex-

US TALKS TOUGHER ON CHINESE TECH, BUT OFFERS FEW SPECIFICS

New York, Aug. 6: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday called for a big expansion of US government curbs on Chinese technology, saying that it wants to see "untrusted Chinese apps" pulled from the Google and Apple app stores.

Outside experts called Pompeo's proposal vague and possibly illegal. Pompeo called out popular video app TikTok and the messaging app WeChat, which people in the US use to communicate with others in the US and China, as "significant threats to the personal data of American citizens, not to mention tools for CCP content censorship."

CCP refers to the Chinese Communist Party. The US government has

tradited to face fraud charges over the company's dealings with Iran.

Her arrest infuriated Beijing, which sees her case as a political move designed to prevent China's rise as a global technology power.

In apparent retaliation, China detained former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and Canadian

Lebanon officials shift blast blame as Macron calls for serious reforms

Beirut, Aug. 6: Lebanese officials targeted in the investigation of the massive blast that tore through Beirut sought to shift blame for the presence of explosives at the city's port, and the visiting French president warned Thursday that without serious reforms the country would "continue to sink".

The blast Tuesday, which appeared to have been caused by an accidental fire that ignited a warehouse full of ammonium nitrate at the city's port, ripped across the Lebanese capital, killing at least 135 people, injuring more than 5,000 and causing widespread destruction.

It also may have accelerated the country's Coronavirus outbreak, as thousands flooded into hospitals in the wake of the blast. Tens of thousands have been forced to move in with relatives and friends after their homes were damaged, further raising the risks of exposure.

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Thursday amid widespread pledges of international aid. But Lebanon, which was already mired in a severe economic crisis, faces a daunting challenge in rebuilding. It's unclear how much support the international community will offer the notoriously corrupt and dysfunctional government. Macron, who viewed the devastated port and was to meet with senior Lebanese officials, said the visit is "an opportunity to have a frank and challenging dialogue with the Lebanese political powers and institutions".

He said France will work to coordinate aid. Losses from the blast are estimated to be between \$10 billion and \$15 billion, Beirut Governor Marwan Abboud told Saudi-owned TV station *Al-Hadath*. — AP



Volunteers clean the rubble and broken glass from the streets in Beirut on Thursday in the aftermath of a massive explosion in the Lebanese capital. — AFP

Explosion likely an attack: Trump

Washington, Aug. 6: President Donald Trump on Wednesday continued to suggest that the massive explosion that killed at least 135 people in Lebanon might have been a deliberate attack, even as officials in Lebanon and his own defence chief said it's believed to have been an accident. "Whatever happened, it's terrible, but they don't really know what it is," Trump insisted. "Nobody knows yet."

Investigators probing the deadly blast that ripped across Beirut on Tuesday are focused on possible negligence in the storage of tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive fertilizer, in a waterfront warehouse. The Lebanese government ordered the house arrest of several

port officials. On Tuesday, Trump called the explosion a "terrible attack" and said American generals told him it was likely caused by a bomb.

"They seem to think it was an attack," Trump said. "It was a bomb of some kind, yes." Defence Secretary Mark Esper contradicted the president Wednesday, saying most people believe the explosion "was an accident, as reported". But later in the day, Trump insisted, nobody knows for sure. "How can you say accident if somebody left some terrible explosive-type devices and things around perhaps — perhaps it was that. Perhaps it was an attack," Trump told reporters during a White House briefing. — AP

OZ PLEDGES \$1.4MN FOR BEIRUT RELIEF

Beirut, Aug. 6: The Australian government has pledged an initial 2 million Australian dollars (\$1.4 million) to the relief effort in Lebanon following the deadly blast that ripped across the capital Beirut on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters Thursday that the aid will be provided to the World Food Programme and to the Red Cross for food, medical care and essential items. He says his country is considering another round of support.

Morrison says some Australian Embassy personnel were injured but "they are safe and accounted for and we wish them a speedy recovery".

He also thanked the US Embassy officials in Beirut for their support. — AP

Rajapaksas set for landslide win

Colombo, Aug. 6: Sri Lanka's strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa was poised to stage a political comeback on Thursday as his party took an early lead and was set for a landslide victory in the twice-postponed general elections, according to results announced so far. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first world leaders to congratulate Rajapaksa on the outcome of the elections and said the two sides will work together to further advance all areas of bilateral cooperation and to take their special ties to ever newer heights.

"Thank you PM @narendramodi for your congratulatory phone call. With the strong support of the people of #SriLanka, I look forward to working with you closely to further enhance the long-standing cooperation between our two countries. Sri Lanka & India are friends & relations," Rajapaksa tweeted.

The SLPP has polled more votes than its rivals, scoring over 60 per cent of the total votes in the 16 seats officially declared so far from the South, dominated by the Sinhala majority community.

The party won 13 out of 16 seats. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in a tweet described the results as a

"great victory" for the ruling party.

Rajapaksa's party is expected to win control of the 225-member assembly by a comfortable margin, according to analysts. In Galle district, the SLPP won seven out of nine seats on offer while in the neighbouring Matara district they won six out of seven seats on offer.

The nearest rival is the new party formed by former presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa who has relegated his mother party, the United National Party (UNP), of former premier Ranil Wickremesinghe to the fourth place even below the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

The SJB has won only three seats from both districts. In the polling division results from other districts where counting is in progress, the SLPP has taken unassailable leads, sources said. In the Tamil minority dominated north, the main Tamil party — Tamil National Alliance (TNA) — despite bagging a few polling divisions had also suffered unexpected reversals at the hands of SLPP's Tamil allies — the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP). The counting began in the morning after the polls were closed on Wednesday. — PTI

PEACE CEREMONY

Attack witnesses urge world leaders to commit to nuclear disarmament

Survivors mark 75th anniv of 1st atomic attack

Hiroshima, Aug. 6: The dwindling witnesses to the world's first atomic bombing marked its 75th anniversary Thursday, with Hiroshima's mayor and others noting as hypocritical the Japanese government's refusal to sign a nuclear weapons ban treaty. Mayor Kazumi Matsui urged world leaders to more seriously commit to nuclear disarmament, pointing out Japan's failures.

"I ask the Japanese government to heed the appeal of the (bombing survivors) to sign, ratify and become a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons," Matsui said in his peace declaration.

"As the only nation to suffer a nuclear attack, Japan must persuade the global public to unite with the spirit of Hiroshima." His speech highlights what survivors feel is the hypocrisy of Japan's government, which hosts 50,000 American troops and is protected by the US nuclear umbrella. Tokyo has not signed the nuclear weapons ban treaty adopted in 2017, despite its non-nuclear pledge, a failure to act that atomic bombing survivors and pacifist groups call insincere.

The US dropped its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people. The US dropped a second bomb three days later on Nagasaki, killing another 70,000. Japan surrendered August 15, ending World War II and its nearly half-century of aggression in Asia. Survivors, their relatives and other participants marked the 8:15 am blast anniversary with a minute of silence. Thursday's peace ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was scaled down because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

● **SURVIVORS, THEIR relatives and other participants marked the 8:15 am blast anniversary with a minute of silence. Thursday's peace ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was scaled down because of the Coronavirus pandemic.**

The fewer than 1,000 attendees was one-tenth of those attending in past years. Some survivors and their relatives prayed at the park's cenotaph before the

ceremony. The registry of the atomic bombing victims is stored at the cenotaph, whose inscription reads "Let all the souls here rest in peace for we shall not repeat the mistake."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his speech at the ceremony, said Japan is committed to nuclear weapons ban but a nuclear free world cannot be achieved overnight and that it has to start from dialogue between opposite sides.

"Japan's position is to serve as a bridge between different sides and patiently promote their dialogue and actions to achieve a

world without nuclear weapons," Abe said. Nuclear policies are divided amid a harsh security environment, so it is necessary to create common ground first, he said.

An aging group of survivors, known as hibakusha, feel a growing urgency to tell their stories to the youth. Elderly survivors, mostly over 83, lamented the slow progress of nuclear disarmament. They expressed anger over what they said was the Japanese government's reluctance to help and listen to those who suffered from the atomic bombing. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

7 AUGUST 2020

Did PM just discredit India's freedom fight?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has exhorted his fellow citizens to treat August 5 on a par with August 15, India's Independence Day. The call, made after conducting the *bhoomi puja* of the Ram temple at Ayodhya on Wednesday, August 5, defies logic and negates history. Ram's devotees, Mr Modi included, have every right to be joyous when their lord, venerated as *Maryada Purushottam*, or the epitome of honour, gets a proper abode; none has a reason to quarrel with them either. But drawing an impossible parallel with Indian Independence movement and the one for the temple has its risks. For one, the freedom movement was a unifier in itself — Indians of all hues, irrespective of their religion, caste, language, sex, race and region were part of it. Countless people willingly sacrificed their lives for the cause, or suffered in silence, or became martyrs or spent their lives in villages changing their faces. It was a movement to not only liberate this nation from the yoke of foreign rule but also an attempt to unshackle itself from the very many forms of bondages that stopped its citizens from living their lives to the full. And the best product of the movement was the Constitution of India — which promised every Indian citizen justice.

Equally incomprehensible is the silence or subservience of the opposition, save of the Left, to the politicisation of an essentially religious ceremony. None seems to have an issue with the Prime Minister, accompanied by the chief minister of a state, laying the foundation stone of a place of worship of one religion.

struction of the temple. Mr Modi's call for seeing the temple as a symbol of India's unity would have better acceptance had he mentioned those innocent victims and begged their pardon. Perhaps, it would have been a true tribute to Lord Ram.

Equally incomprehensible is the silence or subservience of the opposition, save of the Left, to the politicisation of an essentially religious ceremony. None seems to have an issue with the Prime Minister, accompanied by the chief minister of a state, laying the foundation stone of a place of worship of one religion. The Congress, as it has always been on the issue, is a confused lot, speaking in many voices. The Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party expressed no opinion, nor the DMK of Tamil Nadu. Kerala's CPI(M) chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, however, made two points. One, India's secularist ideals would not have suffered this jolt had the Congress chosen to hold on to them. Two, our agenda must be to contain Covid-19 which has already affected 19 lakh people, and then bring succour to the people the pandemic has reduced to penury. That's some semblance of political sanity and sagacity, if you will.

In Beirut, avoidable tragedy

A devastating instance of sheer human incompetence led to the ripping apart of a swath of the Lebanese capital Beirut, destroying its port and two giant grain silos, killing at least 135 people, besides injuring 5,000 and leaving three lakh people homeless while affecting the lives of 7.5 lakh citizens and causing an estimated \$3 billion in damage. Had the leaders of the judicial or executive branches of the tiny West Asian nation been able to sort out the storage of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, confiscated from a financially distressed Russian cargo ship, rather than leave it lying in a port hangar for close to seven years, an explosion powerful enough to record 3.3 on the Richter scale and reverberate miles away in Cyprus would not have taken place.

It might have suited the leaders of Lebanon to have been in a position to blame it on saboteurs, terrorists, aggressors or conquerors, of whom the country, once proud of its label of 'Switzerland of the East', has seen aplenty in its history. It appears, prima facie, that an innocent enough spark from a welding torch set off stored fireworks, which in turn ignited the chemical that would have been far more useful as a base for fertiliser for a country that virtually imports all its food needs. A government, already in debt to the tune of 165 per cent of GDP, has so far offered a piffling \$66 million as relief even as it keeps its port officials under home arrest.

The scale of indecisiveness and lack of clarity on what to do with a chemical that has at least half the explosive power of TNT is risible. The human tragedy caused by such apathy, particularly when it comes to handling the complexity of man's ingenuity in making substances that can blow mankind to pieces, is shockingly revealing of the fecklessness of politicians who aspire for power but have little understanding of their responsibilities in safeguarding people. To them, investment in human safety seems the least priority.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

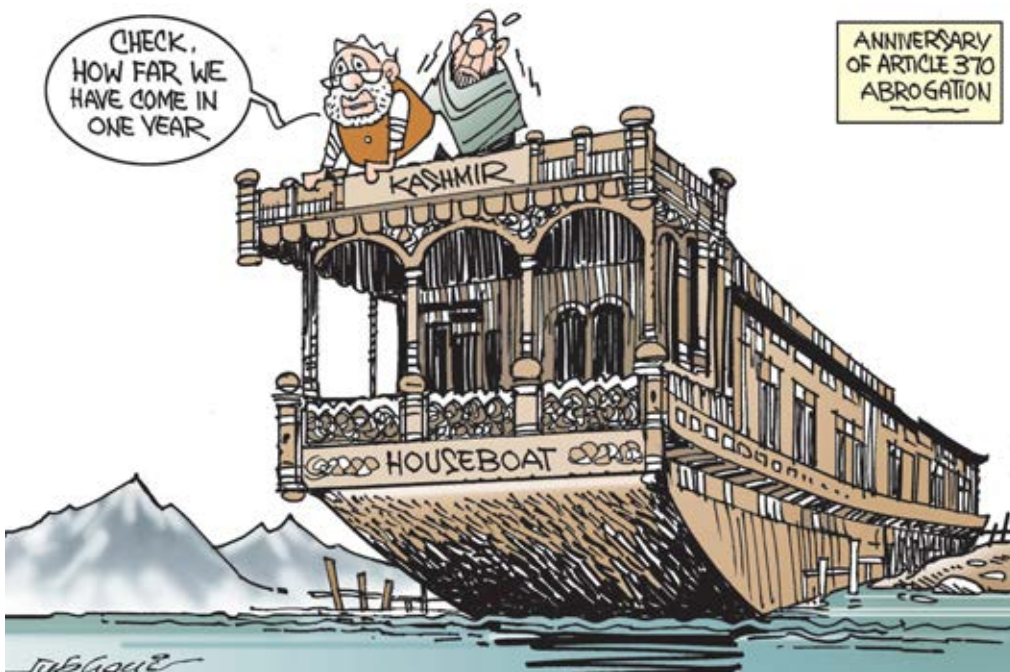
ADITYA SINHA
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patanata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904
Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burrupur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennamudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325
Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTCC Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycad (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014
Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax: 0495 4019 018
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Pandemic on rise: More questions than answers



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Is the coronavirus seeping into every faultline in this country? The honest answer is: We don't know.

Six months into the pandemic, there are more questions than answers about the virus. No one really knows how many Indians have been infected by the new coronavirus, nor how many have died. Perhaps we will never know because so many are asymptomatic and there are cracks in our death registration systems.

This week, a young copywriter told me that his father had died of Covid-19 but the family had managed to persuade the hospital authorities into changing the cause of death into something else because they wished the body to be cremated traditionally.

Meanwhile, India's official Covid-19 tally has crossed the 19-lakh mark; and the death toll is close to 40,000. Currently, India has the largest number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Asia and the third highest number of confirmed cases in the world, after the United States and Brazil.

There are masses of data swirling around.

According to government data, a cumulative total of 2,14,84,402 samples had been tested till August 4. At 2.10 per cent, India's Covid-19 case fatality rate since the first lockdown is low compared to the global average; 50 per cent of deaths have happened in the age group of 60 and above; 37 per cent deaths belong to the 45-60 age group; 11 per cent deaths belong to the 26-44 years age group; while 68 per cent of people who died were men and 32 per cent were women.

The government says 28 states/Union territories show a Covid positivity rate below 10 per cent, and this indicates that the testing strategy

is on the right track.

But the numbers we have don't tell the whole story.

Dr Hemant Shewade, a Bengaluru-based community medicine expert tracking the discourse around Covid-19 data in India points out that nationally, only 86 per cent deaths are captured by the civil registration system and only 22 per cent are medically certified for cause of death.

The Medical Certification of Cause of Death is not enforced in every state with equal efficiency. So far, it has been implemented only in certain hospitals and mostly in urban areas. This can give a very skewed picture even now, when there is a parallel system of Covid-19 death reporting (which are compiled by the district administration and shared with the state government and then with the Centre).

"There is a high possibility of the official Covid death figures coming from Covid-designated hospitals where only confirmed Covid cases, those suspected of having Covid and who reach the Covid hospital in an extreme condition are factored in," says Dr Shewade.

Not all states are equally equipped in terms of health and diagnostic infrastructure and human resources. Where testing is very low, and where medical certification of cause of death is low, it is likely that there will be a gross under-estimation of Covid-19 deaths. For example, Bihar, which has a population of over 120 million, has the lowest testing rate in the country, a mere four tests per 1,000 persons. This means a large number of cases may be going undetected.

There are other gaps in the data which impede our ability to understand the pandemic's trajectory. The data on Covid-19 tests in India doesn't make clear the distinc-

tion between the number of samples being tested and the number of people tested. There is also no official disaggregated data for every state on the RT-PCR tests (gold standard of coronavirus testing) and rapid antigen tests, says Dr Mohak Gupta, now part of the iCART Covid-19 research team and creator of www.coviddtoday.in, an open source project tracking India's state-wise progress against the Covid-19 epidemic.

Only a few states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Delhi share this information publicly but there are no updated national figures. We don't know how many among those who have antigen tests go for a follow-up RT-PCR test and what the results are. We also don't have statewide gender-disaggregated data on Covid deaths in any official portal nor the breakup between deaths in rural areas and those in urban areas. Dr Gupta points out that there is scant contact tracing data so we don't have a granular picture of how and where the virus is spreading, and stresses the need for real-time hospitalisation data and influenza-like illness (ILI) surveillance data in the public domain.

Then there is fear, which prevents insiders from coming forward to tell the truth.

"Unfortunately, there is no law in force that encourages potential whistleblowers in the public sector to bring complaints of corruption and wrongdoing to the attention of the competent authorities. Nor is there any mechanism to protect a whistleblower from reprisals for pointing the finger at wrongdoing. An available recourse is to make complaints to the lokayuktas. Hardly any parent law of such bodies empowers them to protect whistle-

blowers. The only remaining option is to move the courts directly, which few would want to do given the length of time it takes to get a conviction," says Venkatesh Nayak, programme head of the Access to Information Programme of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. As for whistleblowing in the private sector, the extremely limited provisions in the 2013 Companies Act or the Limited Liability Partnerships Act don't inspire much confidence in potential whistleblowers, says Mr Nayak.

There is also no mention of whistleblower provisions in the laws governing societies and trusts, which are of colonial vintage. "It comes as no surprise that doctors and nurses working in entities regulated by any of these laws continue to suffer in silence or at the most make complaints through official channels at considerable risk to themselves and their careers. The only remaining option is to go on mass strike, as is now happening in Zimbabwe. However, the government will clamp down on such legitimate protests by invoking the Essential Services Maintenance Act or draconian provisions of the Disaster Management Act," he adds.

Successive governments have pushed the six-year-old Whistleblowers Protection Act under the carpet without bringing it into force despite repeated reminders from civil society and the media.

Telling the truth has never been easy. However, there are those who persist. As Mr Nayak points out, despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-related lockdowns, citizens are using the Right to Information Act to demand details of action by governments to tackle the epidemic. But delays and refusals are common as are attacks on RTI activists.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

RAM TEMPLE

After decades of wait, the stone was finally laid for constructing a Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. The temple is important not simply from the religio-cultural viewpoint but also in terms of connecting people's lives. In addition to becoming a pilgrimage centre, it is also set to become a trade centre thereby increasing job opportunities for millions.

Ramala Kinnera
Hyderabad

ONLINE CLASSES

It's a good move from the Telangana state government to conduct online classes for school children and restarting the academic year. The government must also consider the lack of power supply and Internet facilities in villages and those from poor families who do not have enough money to buy mobile phones, laptops, etc., and come to their rescue. This move will also be helpful to teachers who have not been paid since March.

Naresh B.
Hyderabad

HOTEL OCCUPANCY

Although hotel occupancy is poor for June quarter due to Covid-19 and lockdowns and the same may continue for September quarter also as per the present virus spread situation but what about December quarter and thereafter quarter as Tourist season starts from October and ends with March? (*Hotel occupancies stay below 20% in June qtr, DC, Aug. 6*). If the virus spread is not contained, the tourist season may get for a toss and hoteliers may not recover from the losses. The Centre must bail them out to save lakhs of hotel staff.

P. V. Tirumala Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Govt. rapped for not getting Soviet maps corrected

NEW DELHI, August 6 The Rajya Sabha today witnessed noisy scenes followed by a walk-out by members belonging to Opposition Congress, Swatantra the Jana Sangh and the Praja Socialist Parties.

It was in protest against the Government's failure to check what they described as "Soviet Union's continued cartographic aggression on India."

Drawing attention to the recent edition of the great Soviet Encyclopedia containing a political map of Asia showing large chunks of Indian territory as Chinese, the members charged that the Soviet Union has been printing such maps.

Dilip Cherian



Dilli Ka Babu

Officer sent to PMO won laurels in TN

A new appointment in the all-powerful Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is viewed with great interest. So, when P. Amudha, who is a 1994 batch IAS officer of Tamil Nadu cadre, was appointed to the PMO as joint secretary, on a lateral shift basis, for the remainder of her five-year central deputation period, observers are speculating about her talent that can meet the high standards of the PMO. Before this appointment, Amudha was serving as a professor at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie. Interestingly, minutes after the news of her appointment emerged Tamil Nadu chief minister E. Palaniswami congratulated the IAS officer in a tweet and said that she had earned the goodwill of the state government as well as the

affection of the people through her honesty and efficiency. Amudha has earned her reputation as an effective field officer and ability to take swift decisions. Her peers recall her work during the Chennai floods in 2015 when she was special officer for monsoon relief in the state. It's these qualities that may have impressed the PMO to reel her in for what could be the most rewarding and challenging assignments for an IAS officer.

WHO WILL BE NEW RBI DEPUTY GOVERNOR?

A search committee headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba will interview candidates for the post of deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India on August 7, according to sources. This was meant to be held on July 23 but was put off without any explanation. The post

had fallen vacant after senior-most deputy governor N.S. Vishwanathan demitted office three months before the end of his tenure in March due to health reasons.

Besides Gauba, the committee includes RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, financial services secretary Debasish Panda and two independent members.

The selected name from the interview will be sent to the appointments committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister for final approval. Sources say that the panel has shortlisted eight candidates for the posts.

The RBI Act mandates that the central bank should have four deputy governors — two from within the ranks, one commercial banker and another an economist to head the monetary policy depart-

ment. At present, the RBI has three deputy governors — B.P. Kanungo, M.K. Jain and Michael Debabrata Patra.

HALT OR GO TO J&K CADRE CHANGE?

The Centre stopped inducting new officers in the J&K cadre of the All India Services after the re-categorisation of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union territories, J&K and Ladakh, in August last year. The process was recently reinitiated, but sources say, it has been put on hold again after receiving feedback from officers that it would lead to confusion.

The J&K cadre of IAS, IPS and IOFS officers was to be merged into the AGMUT cadre. However, according to the regulations, officers already serving in the J&K cadre at the time would continue in

the existing cadre. The cadre controlling authority for AGMUT is the ministry of home affairs while the other cadres are controlled by the department of personnel and training (DoPT).

Apparently, some officers approached the Centre saying that two officers of the same batch would end up under different controlling authorities which would lead to "confusion" and "create differences" between the officers. Seeing the resistance from the babus, the Centre has decided, for now, not to proceed with the proposed cadre merger. Some officers believe that any key decision on the merger will likely happen only after August 15.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,025.45	0.96
Nifty 50	11,200.15	0.89
S&P 500*	3,326.43	-0.04
Dollar (₹)	74.92	0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.64	-0.81
Euro (₹)	88.78	-0.35
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	55,850.752	1.36
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.60	0.43
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.862	0.035
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.515	-0.028

* As of 10:30 PM IST

IDBI Bank in deal to sell 27% stake in insurance JV

IDBI Bank on Thursday said it has entered into a share purchase agreement (SPA) with the other two joint venture partners in IDBI Federal Life Insurance Company (IFLIC), to divest 27 per cent of its stake for ₹595.30 crore. In June, the private sector lender had informed about the stake sale-purchase proposal among the three JV partners. Currently, LIC-promoted IDBI Bank holds 48 per cent in IFLIC.

Gold and silver prices touch new record high



Gold and silver prices touched record levels in the national capital on Thursday and the yellow metal rose by ₹225 to ₹56,590 per 10 grams amid strong rally in the international market, according to HDFC Securities. Silver price surged by ₹1,932 to ₹75,755 per kilogram. On Wednesday, it had closed at ₹73,823 per kg. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at ₹56,365 per 10 grams.

LIC acquires 5% stake in Yes Bank from mart

Yes Bank on Thursday said LIC has acquired close to 5 per cent shareholding in the bank by purchasing shares from the open market. With the fresh acquisition, the hold of LIC has increased from 0.75 per cent to 4.98 per cent, Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing to stock exchanges. LIC purchased 105.98 crore shares, reflecting 4.23 per cent stake, of the bank from the open market, the filing said.

Adani reports consolidated loss of ₹65.67cr

Adani Enterprises on Thursday reported a consolidated loss of ₹65.67 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, impacted by Covid-19 pandemic-induced lockdowns. The company had clocked a consolidated profit of ₹570 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago, the company said in a BSE filing. Its consolidated income for the quarter declined to ₹5,502 crore, as against ₹10,685 crore during the year-ago period.



RBI expects higher inflation, negative economic growth

■ Pauses rate cuts for now; maintains accommodative monetary stance

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 6

Belying expectations, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday kept rates unchanged on Thursday owing to uncertainty around inflation despite signs of growth faltering further. The MPC voted to maintain an accommodative stance, thus opening up possibilities for more future rate cuts.

“While economic activity had started to recover from the lows of April-May, a surge in fresh infections have forced re-clamping of lockdowns in several cities and states to “level-off” various high-frequency indicators,” RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said in his monetary policy address.

The MPC expects headline inflation to remain elevated in Q2FY21 and sees it easing in the second half of the financial year. For 2021, the real GDP growth is expected to be negative.

It refrained from providing growth-inflation forecasts while sticking to the direction based guidance.


“Real GDP growth in the first half of the year is estimated to remain in the contraction zone. For the year 2020-21 as a whole, real GDP growth is also estimated to be negative,” Das said.

He said that the RBI will do whatever is required to revive the economy in the wake of the pandemic.

“With Covid-19 infections rising under fragile micro-economic and financial conditions, we propose to take regulatory and developmental measures, enhance liquidity support for financial markets, ease financial stress while strengthening credit discipline, improve the flow of credit, deepen digital payment systems and facilitate innovations by leveraging technology.”


He said there is enough liquidity at present and that the RBI is using several other monetary operations to boost liquidity in the banking system.

All the six members of the MPC voted for a status quo in rates.



RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Review




Highlights

- Policy rate unchanged at 4%, reverse repo at 3.35%
- Loans against gold enhanced to 90% of the value from current 75% to mitigate COVID-19 impact on households
- To continue with the accommodative stance to revive growth
- Supporting economic recovery assumes primacy in conduct of monetary policy in uncertain global environment
- Sees upside risk to inflation, projects moderation in Oct-Mar
- GDP growth to be negative in current fiscal
- Stressed MSME borrowers eligible for loan restructuring if their accounts were classified standard

- Allows lenders to provide window to restructure loans of corporate, individual borrowers to ease COVID-19 impact
- A new resolution window for corporate and personal loans to be framed
- To put in place safeguards for opening of current accounts and overdraft accounts for customers availing credit facilities from multiple banks
- Priority Sector Lending (PSL) to include startups
- Increased limits for renewable energy, including solar power, and small and marginal farmers and “Weaker Sections” under PSL
- To allow a pilot scheme for small value payments in offline mode while safeguarding interest of users, liability protection

Proposes Online Dispute Resolution for digital payments

- Rs 5,000 crore additional liquidity facility to be provided by the National Housing Bank to boost liquidity in housing sector
- Rs 5,000 crore liquidity support to NABARD to aid agri sector
- Economic activity had started to recover, but surge in infection has forced imposition of lockdowns
- Monetary Policy Committee conscious of primary mandate to achieve inflation target of 4% within a band of +/- 2%



Start-ups get RBI's priority tag

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 6

In a major boost to start-ups, now their loans will come under priority sector lending. RBI will also look into regional disparities in priority sector lending (PSL).

The PSL guidelines were last reviewed in April 2015. In these five years, the country has seen a lot of activity in the start-up space. Acknowledging the potential of start-ups

in boosting the economy, RBI has broadened the scope of PSL to include start-ups.

As per PSL norms, RBI mandates banks to lend a certain portion of their funds to specified sectors like agriculture, micro, small and medium enterprises, export credit, education, housing, social infrastructure, renewable energy, etc.

Further, RBI has also increased the PSL limits for renewable energy.

As part of reviewing the PSL guidelines, an incentive framework is also being put in place for banks to address the regional disparities in the flow of priority sector credit. While higher weightage will be assigned for incremental priority sector credit in the identified districts having lower credit flow, a lower weightage would be assigned in identified districts where the credit flow is higher.

Don't focus overly on ratings: Rajan

Mumbai, Aug. 6: India's policymakers should focus on protecting the economy as businesses struggle amid the coronavirus pandemic instead of being overly focused on what ratings agencies think, former Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan said on Thursday.

“It is also important to convince both domestic and international investors

that after the crisis associated with the pandemic is over, we will return to fiscal responsibility over the medium term, and the government should do more to convince them of that,” Rajan told the Global Markets Forum.

The government has announced several initiatives to help the poor and small- and medium-size businesses, but actual

cash outgo from the government's measures has been estimated at just about one per cent of GDP.

Several attribute the fiscal prudence to fear of a downgrade after Moody's cut India's rating and outlook in early June followed closely by a change in outlook from Fitch.

“The RBI and government have certainly been cooperating, but it seems like it is elsewhere, the

ball is in the government's court to do more,” Rajan said.

He said the RBI needs to focus on whether credit is reaching the stressed areas of the economy and also if the viable firms were able to access credit and not the unviable ones.

“And I think that's where it has to focus its attentions, because resources, as you well know, are limited in India.” — Reuters

Biz optimism slips to record low in Q2

New Delhi, Aug. 6: Business optimism for the July-September quarter slumped to a record low due to sharp rise in Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and staggered easing of restrictions, according to a report.

Dun & Bradstreet Composite Business Optimism Index for the July-September quarter fell to a record low of 29.4. The index registered a decline of 40.6 per cent over the last quarter. The BOI covered about 350 senior executives in June this year.

“The spike in the number of positive Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and the staggered easing of restrictions affected the business optimism levels,” said Arun

Singh, Global Chief Economist, Dun & Bradstreet.

All six optimism indices — volume of sales, net profits, selling prices, new orders, inventories and employees — have registered a decline as compared to the previous quarter, the report said.

“The plethora of containment and non-containment zones, which are near-impossible to track in real time, and the rapid change in guidelines adopted by the various local governments have led to considerable uncertainty amongst businesses that are planning to resume their operations,” Singh said, adding that outlook remained subdued in spite of measures taken to support the flow of capital. — PTI

Byju's acquires coding start-up co for \$300m

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 6

Leading ed-tech company Byju's has acquired Mumbai-based ed-tech start-up, WhiteHat Jr for \$300 million. With the National Education Policy pushing for skills such as coding, this will provide Byju's a major boost.

Founded in November 2018, WhiteHat Jr specializes in coding. With coding fast emerging as a key skill for the future, this integration will help Byju's to further expand its offerings. This partnership is timely with the government pushing skills such as coding from early classes with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Byju's said in a release.

WhiteHat Jr has pres-

Gold can get you 90% of its value as loan

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, AUG. 6

In order to provide higher liquidity to households and small businesses, RBI has increased the Loan-To-Value (LTV) ratio of gold loans offered by banks from 75 per cent to 90 per cent. However, the higher LTV will not be available for non-banking finance companies.

As per the current guidelines, gold loans sanctioned by banks for non-agricultural purposes should not exceed 75 per cent of the value of gold ornaments and jewellery. “With a view to mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on households, it has been decided to increase the permissible loan to value ratio (LTV) for such loans to 90 per cent. This relaxation shall be available till March 31, 2021,” said RBI.

Higher LTV will put more money in the hands of the customer for the same volume of gold pledged. Gold prices have appreciated more than 40 per cent since the beginning of the year. Due to the price appreciation, the loan amount has naturally increased by 40 per cent even at an LTV of 75 per cent. Once the LTV is increased to 90 per cent, this will increase the loan

amount by another 15 per cent. This will solve the liquidity issues of small scale business persons and traders, who account for the largest chunk of the customer base, as well as individuals to a great extent.

The new LTV will be available for a window of eight months. Fresh loans issued post March 31, 2021 will come under 75 per cent LTV.

“THE NEW LTV will be available for a window of eight months. Fresh loans issued post March 31, 2021 will come under 75 per cent LTV.

“THE HIGHER LTV will not be available for non-banking finance companies, including those operating in exclusive gold loan business.

“LTV of 90 per cent in an increasing gold price scenario is fine. Only we must keep an eye on the margin because 10 per cent is a small cushion. This is still manageable. This will help the small businesses, micro and small units who avail gold loans for business needs as well,” said Padmaja Chunduru, MD and CEO of Indian Bank.

Sensex heaves a sigh of relief

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 6

The Sensex and the Nifty-50 gained close to one per cent as RBI announced several measures to provide relief to borrowers and others hit badly by Covid-19 pandemic and kept it's policy stance as accommodative, raising hopes of further interest rate easing in future.

The Sensex gained 362.12 points or 0.96 per cent and regained 38,000 levels closing at 38,025.45. The Nifty-50 index closed at 11,200.15

up 98.50 or 0.89 per cent. Banks and real estate stocks gained as RBI didn't extend loan moratorium period, announced earlier till August 31.

Deepak Jasani, head, Retail Research, HDFC Securities said, “Banking stocks have reacted positively despite no rate cut as the feared extension of moratorium has not happened and they will be spared of the requirement of high provisions if by Septem-ber 30, the new committee's recommendations are implemented.”

US EMI firm plans to enter India by year end

Bengaluru, Aug. 6: Sezzle Inc is testing its buy-now-pay-later service in India for a potential launch at the end of the year, its chief executive officer said, capitalising on rapid global growth in online shopping as competition intensifies in the sector.

Moving into India would mark an ambitious plan for the firm as the second-most populous country gravitates more toward a cash-less society and more people purchase goods on the internet during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Minneapolis-based fintech, which offers interest-free instalment loans at certain online stores, undertook an \$86.3 million (\$61.99 million) equity raise in July, out of which nearly a fifth was earmarked to test international markets.

Sezzle currently only operates in the United States and Canada.

“If this works, we have a massive opportunity in India ... We think it's well worth the opportunity,” chief executive officer Charlie Youakim said, pointing to a digital boom

in India that presents a billion dollar-plus gold mine and could follow the success of firms like SoftBank-backed Paytm.

Youakim said Sezzle started the pilot in July, but was still integrating with the Unified Payments Interface — a

system that would power multiple bank accounts into a mobile application - and is evaluating repayment data.

“Assuming expectations are met, we launch UPI sometime this month and then we'll have some sort of sense come end of

October and then we can turn on ahead of the holiday season,” Youakim added.

In the three months from March, Sezzle added more than 300,000 new customers, highlighting the growing appeal of BNPLs.

Spurred by recent growth, more players are moving into the industry, which first took off in Australia.

Tencent's investment in Afterpay this year was seen by analysts as a possible entry point into China for the BNPL leader. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Camps for junior athletes from Oct.

New Delhi: The national training camps for junior athletes will begin in a phased manner from October 1, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Wednesday. It was decided in SAI's Mission Olympic Cell review meeting that training of junior athletes at its National Centres of Excellence (NCOE), shut since March due to the COVID-19 outbreak, will start in a phased manner from October. The SAI, however, said that the respective state governments where the NCOEs are situated will take the final call, keeping in mind the health and safety of athletes and coaches amid the pandemic. In view of the preparation for Olympics and to ensure that athletes have world-class infrastructure and equipment to train with, the SAI has also decided to enhance the funds at all its NCOEs. To ensure a safe environment for all the athletes, especially those joining the camps in their teenage years, a series of sensitisation workshops will be held in these NCOEs. — PTI

258 juniors make TOPS scheme

New Delhi: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Wednesday shortlisted 258 athletes from across 12 sporting disciplines for support through Target Olympic Podium Scheme Developmental Group, also known as Junior TOPS. The support will be extended through a group/systems approach and a monthly out of pocket allowance of ₹25,000 will be given to every athlete. Of the 12 disciplines, 16 athletes have been shortlisted in athletics, 34 in archery, 27 in badminton, four in cycling, seven in table tennis, 70 in shooting, 14 in swimming, 11 in judo, 36 in boxing, 16 in weightlifting, five in rowing and 18 in wrestling. The SAI's Mission Olympic Cell shortlisted the athletes, including the 85 named before the Covid-19 lockdown. They will be groomed for the 2024 and 2028 Olympics. A SAI statement further said the formal induction of the athletes in the development group would be undertaken after setting an effective monitoring mechanism. — PTI

Yuvraj's house flooded in Mumbai

New Delhi: Out-of-favour India hockey striker Yuvraj Walmiki on Wednesday faced a peculiar problem as he tried to drain out water which flowed into his house in the wake of the heavy rains in Mumbai. Yuvraj posted a video on his Twitter handle, where he was seen trying to drain out ankle-level water from the drawing room of his flat. In the 28-second video, Yuvraj sought help from Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation as well as Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray. A red alert has been issued for 'extremely heavy' rainfall for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region as heavy showers continued for over 24 hours, crippling the city's lifelines. — PTI

ZIDANE LEAVES OUT BALE FOR CITY CLASH

Madrid: Gareth Bale has not been included in the Real Madrid squad for the Champions League match against Manchester City. Coach Zinedine Zidane left the Wales forward out of the list of 24 players who will travel for the round-of-16 match in England on Friday. Bale didn't get many playing minutes under Zidane in the final stage of the Spanish league, a competition Madrid won. His last appearance was on June 24. Madrid lost the first leg 1-2 at home in a match played before the pandemic. — AP

LIVE ON TV
Champions League Round of 16, second leg: Juventus vs Lyon from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony TEN 2; Manchester City vs Real Madrid from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony TEN 1.

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20
Printed and Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Plot No. 9 Alwal Village, Valhalla Nagar Taluk, Medchal Malkajgiri Dist. Telangana and Published at 36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-37.
RNI Registration No. 3081-1953.
Editor: Aditya Sinha

TIGHT ROPE WALK

BCCI sets strict guidelines for IPL teams

New Delhi, Aug. 6: Eight different hotels for the eight participating teams, two mandatory negative Covid-19 test reports before flying to the UAE and punishment for any breach of the bio-secure protocol are part of the BCCI's SOP for the IPL that was handed over to the franchises on Wednesday. The document, accessed states that every franchisee's medical team should obtain the "medical and travel history of all players and support staff" since March 1 this year.

"All Indian players and team support staff must undergo two Covid-19 PCR tests, 24 hours apart, in the week before assembling in the franchises' city of choice," it states.

"This will help reduce the risk of cross infection within the group before flying to the UAE."

"Breach of any Bio-Secure Environment protocols by players and team support staff will be punishable under the IPL Code of Conduct Rules."

Anyone testing positive for Covid-19 will be quarantined and after completion of a 14-day period, the individual will have to undergo two Covid-19 tests, 24 hours apart.

"...if both test reports are negative, he/she may be allowed to fly out to the UAE."

"After arrival in UAE, there will be tests on Day 1, 3 and 6 with testing every fifth day throughout the tournament."

The SOP states that all "franchise teams will be put up in different hotels."

"Team members must be allotted rooms in a separate wing of the hotel that has a separate centralised air conditioning (AC) unit than the rest of the hotel," it adds.

"After the third negative test, team members may be allowed to meet each other within the Bio-Secure Environment. However, wearing a face mask and social distancing protocols must be followed at all times."

The SOP also requires teams to order food in individual rooms and avoid use of common dining areas "to prevent cross infection and coming in contact with other hotel guests."

— PTI

● **Eight different participating teams will be put in eight different hotels.**

● **Team members must be allotted rooms in a separate wing of the hotel.**

● **Every player, staff and family members will have to get two mandatory negative Covid-19 test reports before flying to the UAE.**

● **Punishment for any breach of the bio-secure protocol.**



Royal Challengers Bangalore's captain Virat Kohli (left) and coach Gary Kirsten look on during a training session in this file photo.

Empty stands extended room

New Delhi, Aug. 6: The BCCI's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the upcoming IPL recommends that teams use "empty stands" as extended dressing rooms for training and matches while strategy meetings can now be held outdoors in order to maintain social distancing.

The IPL, to be held from September 19 in the UAE, won't feature any toss mascot this year which means the BCCI will lose out on another avenue of earning sponsorship money.

While players and support staff's families can join them, they won't be allowed to travel in the team bus and can't leave the bio bubble.

According to the SOP which was handed to the franchises the teams will be encouraged to use the stands for dressing room purpose which helps in maintaining social distancing.

"The Bio-Secure Environment means only essential staff will be on site and no members of the public will be allowed. Therefore there will be more vacant areas at the stadium and hence the dressing room does not have to remain within the traditional area."

"Venue Cricket Operation teams should consider using appropriate areas beyond the normal dressing room," the SOP states.

Also, the teams have been asked to use electronic team sheets rather than captains carrying hard copies of their playing XI list.

The SOP also states that franchises might install "Scalene Hypercharge Corona Canon (Shycocon), a device that has the ability to neutralise 99.9 per cent of the coronavirus that might be floating in the air in closed spaces."

For the medical team, including physios and masseurs, the SOP recommends that if they need to get in physical contact with the player (massage sessions etc), they have to wear PPE kits. — PTI

England fast bowler James Anderson (centre) celebrates taking the wicket of Pakistan's Babar Azam on the second day of the first Test cricket at Old Trafford in Manchester on Thursday.

— AFP

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

BCCI, VIVO OFFICIALLY PUT OFF DEAL FOR THE SEASON

New Delhi, Aug. 6: The BCCI on Thursday suspended the IPL title sponsorship deal with Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for the event's upcoming edition amid the Sino-India border face-off.

The BCCI sent out a one-line statement, without giving any details, to say that Vivo will not be associated with the IPL this year.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and vivo Mobile India Pvt Ltd have decided to suspend their partnership for Indian Premier League in 2020," the press release stated.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and vivo Mobile India Pvt Ltd have mutually decided to pause their partnership for the 2020 season of Indian Premier League," it stated.

— PTI

stadium and hence the dressing room does not have to remain within the traditional area."

"Venue Cricket Operation teams should consider using appropriate areas beyond the normal dressing room," the SOP states.

Also, the teams have been asked to use electronic team sheets rather than captains carrying hard copies of their playing XI list.

The SOP also states that

franchises might install "Scalene Hypercharge Corona Canon (Shycocon), a device that has the ability to neutralise 99.9 per cent of the coronavirus that might be floating in the air in closed spaces."

For the medical team, including physios and masseurs, the SOP recommends that if they need to get in physical contact with the player (massage sessions etc), they have to wear PPE kits. — PTI



England fast bowler James Anderson (centre) celebrates taking the wicket of Pakistan's Babar Azam on the second day of the first Test cricket at Old Trafford in Manchester on Thursday.

— AFP

WOMEN'S | TENNIS

Errani rallies for win at Palermo

Palermo, Aug. 6: Former French Open finalist Sara Errani showed signs of reviving her clay-court prowess by rallying past Kristina Pliskova 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 Wednesday to reach the Palermo Ladies Open quarterfinals.

It was the second consecutive three-set win for Errani, who received a wild-card entry for the first tour-level tournament — for men or women — following a five-month break due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Errani will next face rising French player Fiona Ferro, who beat eighth-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-5, 6-2.

Also, qualifier Aliaksandra Sasnovich eased past Jasmine Paolini 6-0, 6-2 for her fifth win in five days; and 19-year-old Italian wild-card entry Elisabetta Cocciaretto eliminated sixth-seeded Donna Vekic in straight sets 6-2, 6-4.

Players and officials for the tournament are being tested every four days for Covid-19 and one player who tested positive withdrew over the weekend.

— AP

● **Italian Sara Errani showed signs of reviving her clay-court prowess by rallying past Kristina Pliskova in a hard-fought 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 match to make the quarterfinals.**

New protocols include fewer ball kids, a limited number of fans and no post-match handshakes between opponents.

Errani, who lost the 2012 French Open final to Maria Sharapova, had struggled to regain her form after serving a two-month ban in 2017 due to an anti-doping violation. Her ranking is down from a career-high of No. 5 in 2013 to No. 169.

Palermo brings back good memories for Errani, who won the Sicilian tournament twice and also finished runner-up twice — to go with three titles in the doubles event.

It was Errani's 180th career win on clay — more than any other active player.



Sara Errani returns to Kristina Pliskova during their women's singles quarterfinal match at the Palermo Open tennis tournament on Thursday. Errani won 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Kyrgios may nick off French Open

Sydney, Aug. 6: Nick Kyrgios dropped a huge hint Thursday that he will skip the French Open, saying the chances of him travelling to Europe this year were "slim to none".

The Australian last week pulled out of the upcoming US Open in New York due to the pandemic, with world number two Rafael Nadal following suit.

Kyrgios, ranked just 40 but a big drawcard, said he wasn't surprised by the Spaniard's decision, noting that the clay court king was likely "eyeing the French Open" in late September.

"And if I was to play I'd probably definitely rather go to Europe (than America) at this time of year for sure with everything going on," he added to Channel Nine television from his Canberra base. But Kyrgios suggested

It's a very slim chance I'll play in Europe. Almost slim to none to be honest. I'm going to use this (time) to stay home, train, be with my family.

— NICK KYRGIOS Australian tennis player

that was also unlikely, casting serious doubt over his presence at Roland Garros. "It's a very slim chance I'll play in Europe. Almost slim to none to be honest," he said.

"I'm going to use this (time) to stay home, train, be with my family, be with my friends and I'm just going to act responsibly, and wait till I think there's better circumstances to play," he added.

Kyrgios also cast doubt on the future of next year's Australian Open in January. — AFP

NOT GIVEN FAIR CHANCE IN FOOTBALL, SAYS BOLT

Sydney, Aug. 6: Sprint legend Usain Bolt on Thursday claimed he wasn't given "a fair chance" to prove himself in Australia's A-League after a failed attempt to become a professional footballer.

The Jamaican, an eight-time Olympic champion, tried out with the Central Coast Mariners in 2018 after quitting athletics, hoping to fulfil a childhood dream to become a footballer.

His quest garnered worldwide attention, which intensified when he scored two goals in a pre-season friendly. But his abilities were questioned, notably by former Ireland striker Andy Keogh who said he had a "touch like a trampoline", and contract talks failed.

Bolt told Australia's Channel Nine television network: "I think I didn't get a fair chance. "I didn't do it how I wanted to do it, but it's something I think I would've been good at," he added.

"But it's just one of those things you miss out on and just have to move on." Bolt, the 100m and 200m world record holder, had previously tried out with clubs in Germany, South Africa and Norway. — AFP

NBA'S BUBBLE SECURE, NO PLAYERS +VE

Lake Buena Vista (US), Aug. 6: The NBA's bubble is still working. The league released its latest results on Wednesday for coronavirus tests performed on players participating in the restarted season at Walt Disney World, and the numbers are still perfect.

Of the 343 players tested since results were last announced July 29, none has been confirmed positive.

That means no player has tested positive since entering the so-called bubble last month. There were two players who tested positive on arrival at Disney.

"The NBA has done an amazing job, right? They've been great," Los Angeles Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. — AFP



LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers reacts during their NBA game against Oklahoma City Thunder at the HP Field House at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, USA, on Wednesday. Oklahoma City won 105-86.

— AP

Everyone on the Lakers' roster played as the purple and gold looked to the playoffs by testing combinations and talent to see who might work well together when needed later in the Orlando bubble, where games resumed last week after a four-month Covid-19 hiatus.

The Orlando Magic and Brooklyn Nets each could have clinched an Eastern Conference playoff berth

with a victory, but both were beaten by title contenders.

Fred VanVleet scored a game-high 21 points and matched Kyle Lowry's game-high 10 assists to spark the defending NBA champion Toronto Raptors over Orlando 109-99.

The Magic fell to 32-37, a half-game behind the seventh-place Brooklyn Nets, who fell to Boston 149-115. Australian guard Joe Ingles scored 25 points, hitting 6-of-11 from 3-point range, while Mike Conley added 23 and French center Rudy Gobert contributed 21 points and 16 rebounds to power the Utah Jazz over Memphis 124-115.

Dillon Brooks scored 23 to lead the Grizzlies, who had 20 points from rookie star Ja Morant plus 21 points and 14 rebounds from Lithuanian big man Jonas Valanciunas. — AFP