

IN BRIEF

Gyms, yoga institutes likely to remain shut

New Delhi: Gymnasiums and yoga institutes in Delhi are unlikely to re-open from Wednesday as no new order has so far been issued by authorities to allow them officials said. On July 31, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority issued an order lifting restrictions on night curfew and since then, the DDMA has not issued other orders giving relaxations under "Unlock-3" phase. Asked whether gymnasiums and yoga centres will be allowed, a top official said, "The government has already issued status quo orders." Another official said, "Such establishments will not be allowed to re-open from Wednesday as the Covid threat may loom large". However, in its new guidelines issued on July 29, the Centre had allowed opening of yoga institutes and gymnasiums from August 5. According to guidelines, schools, colleges, metro rail service, cinema halls along with bars will continue to remain shut till August 31 and political and religious gatherings too will remain prohibited. Last week, the Arvind Kejriwal government decided to allow hotels and weekly markets to reopen. However, L-G overturned the decision as the Covid situation continues to be "fragile". — *PTI*

50-year-old held for supplying drugs

New Delhi: A 50-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly supplying illegal drugs in the national capital, police said on Tuesday. The accused has been identified as Bishan Singh, a resident of Sector-7 of Rohini, they said. Two-and-a-half kilogram heroin, worth over ₹ five crore in the international market, was seized from him, the police said. "On Friday, police got a tip-off that Singh, who was involved in trafficking heroin, would come near Rana Pratap government school in Rithala to supply drugs. Thereafter, a trap was laid and he was apprehended," DCP (crime) Rakesh Pawariya said. The accused was previously involved in four other cases, the police said. He used to supply heroin only to his known addicts and other local suppliers, they said. Singh had developed a good network to receive and dispose heroin from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi through his associates Anwar and Parveen, the DCP added.

Man held for online fraud of ₹1.75 lakh

New Delhi: A civil engineer was arrested for allegedly cheating a doctor of around ₹1.75 lakh on the pretext of selling an iPhone by impersonating an Army officer, police said on Tuesday. The accused has been identified as Parvej Ahmad, 29, a resident of Nuh district, they said. Doctor Rakesh Dubey, posted at Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences, lodged a police complaint alleging that a man cheated him of around ₹1.75 lakh on the pretext of selling the latest iPhone on a website. The seller introduced himself as an Army officer, a senior police officer said. During investigation, police found that the accused routed the money from one e-wallet to another e-wallet and bank accounts. "Later, with technical help, police arrested Ahmad from Nuh district in Haryana on Saturday," DCP (Shahdara) Amit Sharma said. Ahmad said he is a civil engineer and his nearby villagers cheated people by impersonating some officers on the pretext of selling vehicles and latest mobile phones on online platform.

Brothers stab each other to death

Ghaziabad: Two brothers in an inebriated state stabbed each other to death at their home here, police said on Tuesday. Mohan Lal, 28, and Mota, 32, engaged in an argument over some issue after getting drunk on Monday night. They then stabbed each other with knives, City Superintendent of Police Maneesh Mishra said. Police reached the spot after getting information about the incident and took them to MMG district hospital, where they died during treatment. The bodies were sent for post-mortem, Mishra said, adding that the police have registered an FIR on the complaint of their nephew. — *PTI*

674 fresh corona cases take city's tally to 1,39,156 Proud of Delhiites, says CM as active cases now less than 10K

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

The national capital has registered 675 new novel coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours, taking the tally to over 1.39 lakh while the death toll rose to 4,033 with 12 more deaths.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted, "Active cases left in Delhi less than 10,000 today. Delhi is now at 14th position in terms of active cases. No. of deaths have come down to 12 today. I am proud of you, Delhiites. Your 'Delhi Model' is being discussed everywhere. But we should not get complacent and take all precautions."

The three-figure count for the new Covid-19 cases was recorded for the second consecutive day when the total number of tests conducted was 9,295.

The number of active cases stood at 9,897. The total number of cases climbed to 1,39,156.

On Sunday, the daily case count had dipped to

LNJP records 'zero death' from Covid-19 on 2 days in a week

New Delhi, Aug. 4: LNJP Hospital, the Delhi government's biggest Covid treatment facility, did not report any death due to the disease on two days in a week, signalling improvement in the pandemic situation.

The 2,000-bed hospital's medical director Suresh Kumar said on Tuesday the number of people on ventilator at the facility has come down by nearly 25 per cent, compared to the figure a month ago.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted on July 28 that LNJP Hospital had not reported any death on July 27, a feat, doctors said, recorded for the first time in the

last couple of months. "After that day, on two more days, our hospital saw no death from Covid.... It is definitely a good sign for all of us who are fighting this situation," Mr Kumar told PTI.

Delhi recorded 805 fresh coronavirus cases on Monday, taking the tally in the city to over 1.38 lakh, while the death toll from the disease climbed to 4,021, authorities said.

Seventeen new fatalities were recorded, according to the Delhi health department bulletin released on Monday.

The active cases tally stood at 10,207, down from 10,356, on Sunday. — *PTI*

appreciation on the Delhi model.

CM Kejriwal said he is happy that the Delhi model is being recognised across the globe and that all nations need to join hands to fight and defeat Covid-19.

In a video message, the South Korean ambassador said, "I am very impressed with the Delhi Model. Actually, Korean Model is 3T — test, trace, and treat. Delhi Model is test and home quarantine. It is a very effective and wise measure which has been made based on India's, particularly Delhi's, situation. I am very happy and I would like to congratulate the Delhi government that they made this achievement."

Thanking Mr Shin Bong-kil, CM Kejriwal tweeted, "Happy that our Delhi Model is being recognised across the globe. I want to thank South Korean ambassador H.E. Shin Bong-kil for his encouraging words. All nations coming together to defeat Covid is the need of the hour."

dor H.E. Shin Bong-kil, on Tuesday, praised the Delhi Model of combatting the Covid pandemic. Mr Kejriwal thanked the South Korean ambassador for his words of

Goel seeks renaming of Babar Road to 5 Aug. Marg

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

A day before the ground breaking ceremony for Ram Temple in Ayodhya, former Union minister Vijay Goel, on Tuesday, demanded renaming of Babar Road in the national capital as 5, August Marg. Mr Goel, former Delhi BJP president, said that he has written to Union home minister Amit Shah and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) to rename Babar Road near Bengali Market.

"Babar was an invader, who attacked Hindustan and demolished Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The Prime Minister is going to perform ground breaking ceremony for construction of a grand temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday. At such a time, it will be an appropriate move to rename Babar Road as 5, August Marg," Mr Goel said in a press conference.

He, however, said that the Central government or NDMC may rename Babar Road after any other prominent and inspiring personality.

He claimed that his proposal for renaming of Babar Road was supported by the Bengali Market



BJP leader Vijay Goel along with BMTA members installs a road signage after renaming it from Babar Road to 5 August Road in New Delhi on Tuesday. — *G.N. JHA*

Residents Welfare Society and Bengali Market Traders Association.

Mr Goel, who has an office on Babar Road, posed for the cameras with a signboard bearing crossed 'Babar Road' and its proposed new name '5, August Marg.'

"There is no politics in changing the name of the road. In 2015, Aurangzeb Road was changed to APJ Abdul Kalam Marg and in 2016 Race Course Road was renamed as Lok Kalyan Marg. So, there shouldn't be any problem in changing Babar Road's name also. This is on public demand," Mr Goel

said. He said he doesn't want any controversy to be associated with his demand.

"This is not related to any religion. The entire nation, including all the religious communities and groups, have accepted the Supreme Court's judgement paving the way for construction of Ram Mandir," he said.

Mr Goel said that he would write 5, August Marg on his letterhead and in all his correspondence from now on instead of Babar Road and will launch a signature campaign in the area to press for the demand to rename Babar Road.

Prashant Bhushan's statement to SC: No apology, only 'regret'

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

Activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan, on Tuesday, refused to tender apology in an 11-year-old contempt case for alleging misconduct against Justice S.H. Kapadia for being part of a forest bench that had decided the Niyamgiri mining lease in favour of Sterlite Industries — a subsidiary of Vedanta.

In 2009, Mr Bhushan, in an interview to Tehelka magazine, had said that Justice Kapadia should not have been on the bench as he was holding shares of Sterlite Industries.

Justice Kapadia went on to become the Chief Justice of India and later passed away on January 4, 2016.

Refusing to apologise in the 2009 case, Mr Bhushan, in a statement before a three judge bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra, affirmed his "unreserved" support and faith in the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court.

"I have used the word corruption in a wide sense meaning lack of propriety. I did not mean only financial corruption or deriving any pecuniary advantage," Mr Bhushan said in his statement to the court on Tuesday.

However, he said, "If what I have said caused



Prashant Bhushan

hurt to any of them or to their families in any way, I regret the same."

The statement issued by Mr Bhushan on Tuesday is almost the same to the one he had issued way back on January 13, 2010, by way of clarification wherein he had said that he had never attributed any financial corruption against Justice Kapadia.

Mr Bhushan's statement on Tuesday came after Justice Mishra had a long interaction with senior counsel Rajeev Dhavan, lawyer of Prashant Bhushan in the case; Kapil Sibal, lawyer for second contemnor Tarun Tejpal and erstwhile editor of Tehelka magazine; and amicus curiae Harish Salve.

In the course of interaction with senior lawyers, the judges on the bench said that they wanted to put an end to the matter to protect the dignity of the court and of the judges and asked Mr Bhushan and Mr Tejpal to issue statements tendering their apologies.

AAP to restructure Delhi unit: Gopal Rai

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

The Aam Aadmi Party has decided to restructure its Delhi unit at assembly, district, ward, polling station and booth level, senior party leader and minister Gopal Rai said on Tuesday.

The restructuring exercise is being undertaken with an eye on the 2022 municipal polls in the city Mr Rai, who is also the Aam Aadmi Party's



Gopal Rai

Delhi convener, said the restructuring will start from Wednesday and will continue till August 20.

He said the party will give new responsibilities

to those who performed well in the assembly elections held earlier this year. "A 15-day restructuring exercise will start from

Wednesday. The restructuring at district, assembly, ward, polling station and booth level also aims to strengthen the organisation," Mr Rai said.

"We will review the works of our leaders at these five levels and then, the party will make a decision. Those who have done good work during the coronavirus pandemic will also be considered for new responsibilities," the Aam Aadmi Party leader said.



Preparation underway at Red Fort ahead of the upcoming Independence Day celebrations Old Delhi on Tuesday. — *PTI*

'Father of Indian theatre' Ebrahim Alkazi dies at 94

New Delhi, Aug. 4: Theatre doyen, legendary drama teacher and connoisseur of the arts Ebrahim Alkazi died on Tuesday after suffering a heart attack, his son said. He was 94.

Alkazi, who was the longest serving director of the National School of Drama and mentored generations of actors, produced plays such as Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* and Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug*.

He is survived by his son Feisal Alkazi and his daughter Amal Allana, both well known theatre directors.

"Dad died this evening at 2.45 pm after a massive heart attack. He was admitted to the Escorts hospital the day before yesterday," his son Feisal told PTI.

Alkazi, who tutored acting greats such as Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri, had been unwell for a few days. Tributes poured in for the man, who was NSD director from 1962 to 1977, and was described variously as "father of modern

Obituary: 1925-2020

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi expressed sadness at Alkazi's demise and said he will be remembered for his efforts to make theatre more popular and accessible across India

Indian theatre" and "last of the Romans". President Ram Nath Kovind said his death leaves a void in the world of performing arts.

"Ebrahim Alkazi, doyen of Indian theatre, mentored and inspired generations of artists... A Padma Vibhushan recipient, his legacy will live on. My condolences to his family, students and art lovers," the president said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed sadness at Alkazi's demise and said he will be remembered for his efforts to make theatre more popular and accessible across India.

"His contributions to the world of art and culture are noteworthy too. Saddened by his demise. My thoughts are with his family and friends. May his soul rest in peace," Modi said.

The film and theatre industry also mourned the death of the man who strode like the proverbial Colossus across the stage.

"He was the father of modern Indian theatre, he established Indian theatre the way we know it. He only emphasised the importance of training in theatre, if you look at all the famous artistes in the country, you will find so many of them, were trained under him," said Suresh Sharma, director in-charge of NSD.

"Many like me owe our passion for theatre to this formidably knowledgeable man. His contribution to sophistication and polish

in staging and imparting a sense of discipline to every aspect of theatre work is unequalled," Naseeruddin Shah told PTI.

Alkazi was the "true renaissance man", "the last Roman", added film and theatre actor Amol Palekar. Palekar's guru, Satyadev Dubey, was trained under Alkazi.

"Alkazi sahib was, I can say, the renaissance man in true sense. He was the one who showed us new ways of looking at theatre. I can very well imagine because before he left for Delhi to start the National School of Drama, he was closely connected with the renaissance moment in visual arts, what is known as the Bombay group of M F Hussain, S H Raza, Akbar Padamsee. So his connection, not only with theatre but also with visual arts, was something which gave a different perspective."

"The way he built up the National School of Drama with Nemichand Jain and Shantaben Gandhi. All these people not only built the National School of

Drama but a new contemporary theatre culture. And that's his finest contribution. He was the last Roman I would say," Palekar said.

For his contribution to theatre, Alkazi received awards including the Padma Shri in 1966, Padma Bhushan in 1991, and India's second highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan, in 2010.

He also received the Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 1962 for "Direction", and later honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship for his lifetime contribution to theatre.

Apart from revolutionising Indian theatre, Alkazi was also a photography enthusiast, painter and art curator. Alkazi founded the Art Heritage Gallery in Delhi with his wife Roshen Alkazi in 1977.

Remembering Alkazi's connection with visual arts, curator Uma Nair said India has lost "a blue-blooded collector".

"Alkazi was known not just for his visual eye but his mastery over theatre

and love for art and photography. His contribution to cultural life of Mumbai and Delhi are equally important... India has lost a blue blooded collector who had a philatelic eye for the best," Nair said.

Theatre director and playwright Danish Iqbal said Alkazi "patronised arts" in India by contributing in the fields of performing arts, painting, and photography.

"He patronised arts in India, the performing art, theatre, painting and sculpture and set making. And the way he motivated writers, that's absolutely incredible. Take the example of Girish Karnad, he was writing in Kannada, in Kannada, Marathi and English, if I know him in the Hindi heartland and throughout India, the whole credit goes to Alkazi sahab," Iqbal said.

Crediting Alkazi for his "madness for theatre", film and theatre veteran Raghubir Yadav said that he learnt "to be never satisfied with your work" from the late director.

— *PTI*

Hany Babu's custody extended till August 7

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 4

A special court on Tuesday extended the remand of Delhi University professor Hany Babu (54) till August 7. Professor Babu has been arrested in connection with the Elgar Parishad case.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) last week had arrested Babu for his alleged involvement in the case and for allegedly having links with the Communist Party of India (Moist).

The special court had last week remanded him in NIA custody till August 4. As his custody ended on Tuesday, he was produced before the court by the probe agency.

Seeking his custody further, the NIA informed the court that some 1.26 lakh e-mails have been recovered and they need to be scrutinised. His social media accounts, which were used for communicating with other accused persons, suspects and sympathisers of CPI (Maoists) also need to be scrutinised, the agency said.

The NIA further said investigations revealed that Hany was in contact with other arrested accused and they were involved in raising funds for Maoists released from prison, and further probe in this regard was underway. It came to light during the probe that a conspiracy was hatched by the accused persons, who promoted enmity between various caste groups. It led to violence, loss of life and statewide agitation, the NIA said.

After hearing the probe agency's submission, special court judge R.R. Bhosale granted the accused's custody to NIA for three more days.



Hany Babu

SHORT TAKES

J&K youth beaten up in Himachal dies

Srinagar: A youth from Jammu and Kashmir's Kokernag area who was allegedly assaulted by a group of people in Himachal Pradesh recently succumbed to his injuries a few days ago, sparking off protests in his native village in southern Anantnag district. The victim, identified as Fayaz Ahmad Hajam, was "brutally assaulted and wounded by miscreants" in Rohru Road area of Shimla on June 18, his family said. Fayaz, a resident of Zalangam village of Kokernag, was admitted to Shimla's Indira Gandhi Medical College hospital. He was working as a driver in the city for last two years, the family said and claimed that murder was a result of hate crime. The family alleged that though a complaint was launched with the Shimla Police, the accused "aren't being arrested despite the fact that we have named them in the complaint".

Odisha man beaten, made to drink urine

Bhubaneswar: In a bizarre incident, a 32-year-old man was on Monday night allegedly tonsured and forced to drink urine by some locals at Baunsabag village under Tihidi police limits in Odisha's Bhadrak district over a previous enemy, reports said on Tuesday. As per a police complaint lodged by Sukanti Mahalik, wife of the victim, a group of people arrived at their house in the evening and ransacked her husband Sukadev Mahalik's motorcycle parked at the veranda. Later, they tied Sukadev with a rope and thrashed him mercilessly. The attackers dragged him on the village road, smeared his face with lime, tonsured him, and garlanded him with shoes, she alleged in the complaint.

12-yr-old boy saves girl from drowning

Bhubaneswar: Bulu Muduli, a 12-year-old boy of Balimela in Odisha's Malkangiri district has become the talk of the town after he risked his life to save a minor girl from drowning in a river. The teenager, as reports said on Tuesday, saved a schoolgirl on Sunday evening when the latter jumped into a river to end her life after finding out she had failed in annual Standard X Matriculation examinations. As per information, frustrated with her results, the girl went to a bridge near Balimela Power House after to commit suicide. The girl stopped him and asked if he had a mobile phone. Saying that he didn't have one, Bulu left the spot. Just a few metres away, he heard a large splash sound. He turned back to find that the girl had jumped into the river.

DMK legislator meets BJP chief

Chennai: DMK legislator Ku Ka Selvam on Tuesday called on BJP national president J.P. Nadda in New Delhi but denied speculations he was joining the saffron party. Selvam, representing the Thousand Lights Assembly constituency here, praised "Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji" and wanted DMK president M.K. Stalin to snap ties with the Congress and condemn the outfit Karuppar Kootam for denigrating Tamil god Lord Murugan's Kanda Shashti Kavacham hymn. He also urged Stalin to hold the party's internal elections. The MLA, who drove with BJP Tamil Nadu unit president L. Murugan to Nadda's house, told reporters in Delhi that he was in the national capital to meet Railways Minister Piyush Goyal. — PTI

MLA killing: Key accused arrested

New Delhi: The NIA has arrested a key accused in the killing of Chhattisgarh BJP MLA Bhima Mandavi last year in an IED blast carried out by the outlawed CPI (Maoist), an official said on Tuesday. Haripal Singh Chauhan, 44, a resident of Dantewada district, was a co-conspirator in the killing of the MLA on April 9, 2019, an NIA spokesperson said. He became the sixth person to be arrested in the case. Chauhan is a wholesale dealer of everyday-use merchandise in his village. — PTI

Eerie silence in Valley ahead of Article 370 anniv

Separatists and Pakistan-sponsored groups are planning to observe Aug. 5 as a 'black day'

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 4

The local police and Central armed police forces on Tuesday imposed a curfew in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar whereas strict security restrictions are in force elsewhere in the Kashmir Valley, a day before the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the state.

However, following criticism within J&K and outside the UT, the authorities late on Tuesday evening said that curfew imposed in Srinagar the previous night has been lifted but restrictions as part of the lockdown aimed at preventing the spread of Covid-19 would

continue. They, however, claimed that the curfew which was to remain in force till Wednesday evening was lifted "after assessing the situation which remained incident free" on Tuesday.

The security in the remaining parts of J&K including winter capital Jammu has been beefed up further, reports received here said.

As tensions run high, large contingents of policemen have been deployed at the residences of various political leaders belonging to both mainstream and separatist camps to thwart possible attempts by them to organize protests. The police also took several political activists into preventive custody.



Barbed wire is used to block a road in Srinagar on Tuesday.

— H.U. NAQASH

Among them is PDP's Rouf Bhat who had announced at a press conference here on Monday that the party will observe August 5 as "black day" and that a protest demonstration will be held in Srinagar to mark the

anniversary of the "unconstitutional measures" taken on this day last year.

Srinagar's DC Shahid Iqbal Choudhary had claimed on Monday that concerned SSP has reported that a series of inputs

received by the police suggest that separatists and Pakistan-sponsored groups are planning to observe August 5 as a 'black day' and, therefore, there is apprehension of "violent actions and protests" which could "endanger public life and property." He said that such an activity could also defeat the purpose of imposing lockdown to stem the spread of Coronavirus and, therefore, it was decided to clamp curfew and strict security restrictions in the entire district with immediate effect. Mike-fitted police vans went round the city on Monday announcing imposition of curfew and warning of "strict action" against those found violating orders.

COVID: PLACES OF WORSHIP TO OPEN IN J&K ON AUG. 16

Srinagar, Aug. 4: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Tuesday decided to open religious premises and places of worship from August 16 but extended the other standard operating procedures for COVID-19 containment till August 31.

"Major decision by J&K Government. All religious places and places of worship to open in Jammu & Kashmir from August 16, 2020. Religious processions and large religious gatherings remain strictly prohibited," government spokesperson Rohit Kansal said in a tweet.

According to an order issued by the chief secretary, a separate SOP will

be issued for opening of religious places.

Meanwhile, the administration has declared all districts of Kashmir except Baniptora as red zones while Ramban is the only district in Jammu division to be included in this category.

Doda and Kishtwar districts are placed in green zones while rest of the seven districts in Jammu region and Baniptora district have been categorised as orange zones.

The government has asked the people to follow the SOPs for respective zones or face penal action in case of any violation.

Red zones are the ones with a large number of coronavirus cases. — PTI

Landslide on Mumbai WEH after heavy rain, traffic hit

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 4

Heavy showers in Mumbai and neighbouring areas crippled normal life and disrupted rail and road traffic here on Tuesday, with essential services workers like nurses and other medical staff treating Covid-19 patients also finding it difficult to reach hospitals.

Several areas in the city and suburbs received more than 200 mm rainfall since Monday night and heavy showers were likely to continue for the next 48 hours, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

A landslide on the Western Express Highway, a major north-south arterial road, in suburban Kandivali affected vehicular movement from the western suburbs towards south

SEVERAL AREAS in the city and suburbs received more than 200 mm rainfall since Monday night and heavy showers were likely to continue

Mumbai, though there was no casualty. An official said, "We received a call around 7 am informing us about the debris on Ali Yavar Jung Marg (also known as the Western Express Highway)."

Vehicular movement from the area towards south Mumbai was disrupted, affecting regular commuters and those involved in emergency services as authorities closed some portion of the road for clearing the debris, another official said. A car was stuck in the debris and was later removed.

Local train services, which are currently being

operated only for those engaged in essential services, were suspended on some routes in Mumbai and suburbs in the morning due to waterlogging on rail tracks.

The Maharashtra government also announced a holiday for all its offices in Mumbai city and suburbs on Tuesday in view of the heavy rainfall in the metropolis and neighbouring areas.

The Santacruz observatory in western suburbs recorded 254 mm rainfall since Monday night while the Colaba observatory in south Mumbai recorded 220 mm rain during the same period, said the IMD, Mumbai, deputy director general K.S. Hosalkar.

The BMC has deployed high capacity water pumps to discharge water from streets in Byculla, Bhandup and some other areas, a civic official said.

Pakistan's new map exercise is political absurdity: India

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

Hours after Pakistan unveiled a new political map that laid claim to Indian territory in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh union territories as well as parts of the Indian state of Gujarat, India rejected it and termed it "an exercise in political absurdity", adding that these "ridiculous assertions have neither legal validity nor international credibility". India said Islamabad's move "confirms the reality of Pakistan's obsession with territorial aggrandisement supported by cross-border terrorism".

The move announced by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday comes on the eve of the first anniversary on August 5 of India revoking Article 370 that had granted special status to the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir. So far Pakistan had stopped short of calling Kashmir as part of its territory officially and had always pushed for a UN-mandated plebiscite. But

strangely, while the demand for a plebiscite will continue on the part of Islamabad, Pakistan has gone ahead and declared that J&K is part of Pakistan along with some portions of Ladakh to the North and Gujarat to the West. The move is being seen as an attempt to provoke India.

Recently, Nepal had also gone ahead and unveiled a new map that showed that showed portions of territory in India's Uttarakhand as part of that country.



A worker sprays disinfectants on gym equipment after authorities allowed opening of gym and yoga centres during Unlock 3.0 in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

— PTI

CBI, ED get 3 mth to end probe against PC, his son

New Delhi, Aug. 4: A Delhi court Tuesday granted three months to CBI, ED to obtain report on Letters Rogatory form United Kingdom and Singapore in relation to their ongoing probe in Aircel-Maxis matter against former union minister P Chidambaram and his son Karti.

Special Judge Ajay Kumar Kuhar, in a proceedings held through video conferencing, allowed the request made by both the agencies, after the counsel representing them informed that the LRs have been sent but no reply has been received.

The court adjourned the matter, which is at the stage of taking cognizance, for November 3.

During the proceedings on Tuesday, Additional Solicitor General Sanjay Jain, appearing for CBI and ED, submitted that report on the LRs are still awaited and a reminder has been sent to the competent authority in United Kingdom and Singapore on June 27 to expedite the report on the Letters Rogatory.

Senior advocate Sonia Mathur, also appearing for the agencies, submitted that it might take about three months time to get the report. — PTI

Anti-CAA stir in Assam resumes after 5 months

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, AUG. 4

After the gap nearly five months, the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests have started resurfacing with All Assam Students Union taking a lead organised a protest march in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh in which hundreds of students took part in a massive motor-cycle rally.

The protest which came close on the heels of Union home ministry seeking three additional months to frame CAA rules, started with a rally from Chowkidinghee and passed through all the major roads of the town before proceeding towards the residence of chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal in Lakhi Nagar area of Dibrugarh beside the Mancotta road. All the motorcycles stopped just beside the chief minister's residence and the Aasu activists raised slogans against the Citizenship Act.

As in the beginning of March, anti-CAA rallies were put on hold across the state due to the

IN THE beginning of March, anti-CAA rallies were put on hold across the state due to Covid-19 pandemic

Covid-19 pandemic, the protest caught everyone by surprise and security personnel scrambled and threw a protective ring around the chief minister's residence in Dibrugarh. "Our protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act has resumed. Due to the Covid-19, pandemic we had put our agitation on hold since the beginning of March. Now, it will be back in full force. As we have said before, Assam will not shoulder the burden of a single Bangladeshi entering the state after 1971, be it Hindu or Muslim," Aasu Dibrugarh district general secretary Sankor Jyoti Baruah said. According to the manual, the rules for a legislation should be framed within six months of the date of the President's assent or the standing committee on subordinate legislation should be approached for extension of time.



Pradeep Singh

prise for me. I always wanted to be an IAS officer. I would like to work for the deprived sections of society," Singh told PTI on phone from his home in Sonapat.

Twenty-nine-year-old Singh, a 2019-batch Indian Revenue Service (customs and central excise) officer,

is undergoing probation at the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) in Faridabad. He said his main emphasis would be on improving education and farm sectors as he has become part of the most sought-after Indian Administrative Service.

"I have opted for my home state Haryana as the preferred cadre state for the IAS. I am happy that I will now get the chance to work for my state," said Singh. Second-rank holder Kishore is a 2018-batch officer of Indian Economic Service (IES). — PTI

IRS officer Pradeep Singh tops civil services exam

ASHWINI SHRIVASTAVA
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

IRS officer Pradeep Singh tops the list of 829 candidates who have qualified for the prestigious civil services, including the IAS, the IPS and the IFS, the Union Public Service Commission announced on Tuesday.

The top three rank holders — Singh, Jatin Kishore and Pratibha Verma — are serving officers. Singh is a resident of Haryana, while Kishore hails from Delhi and Verma from Uttar Pradesh.

"It is like a dream come true. It is a pleasant sur-

Despite stir, 16 J&K candidates crack civil service examination

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 4

The uneasy situation spawned by the Centre's contentious moves of August 5 last year with regard to Jammu and Kashmir's special status failed to deter the spirit of, at least, 16 IAS aspirants from the erstwhile state.

Among them is Abhishek Augustsya of Jammu. He is ranked at 38, and is at the top of the list of the successful candi-

dates from J&K. Among the other candidates from J&K who have cracked the UPSC civil service exam-2019, the result of which was declared on Tuesday are two more residents of Jammu Sunny Gupta (148) and Dev Ahuti (177). The others are Parth Gupta (240), Asrar Ahmad Kitchloo (248), Asif Yousuf Tantray (328), Namgyal Angmo (323), Aftab Rasool (412) from Trehgam area of Kupwara, among others.

Avoid politicising edu ties, says China

Confucius Centres under govt lens

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

An upset China on Tuesday asked India to "avoid politicising normal cooperation" in the education sector and to "treat Confucius Institutes and China-India higher education cooperation in an objective and fair manner". The latest Chinese reaction was in response to media reports that the Indian Government is reviewing the activities undertaken by the Confucius Centre at various Indian universities. The Confucius Centres — named after ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius — were reportedly established across the world with Beijing's assistance as centres to propagate Chinese culture and Mandarin (Chinese) language-learning.

The latest controversy is also being seen as yet more evidence of the current downturn in Sino-Indian ties following the deadly clash between Indian and Chinese troops at the Galwan val-

ley in the Ladakh sector in mid-June. The two sides are still in prolonged talks to ensure military de-escalation amid reports that Beijing is reluctant to pull back its troops from certain areas in the Ladakh sector.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Chinese Embassy said, "We hope Indian relevant parties can treat Confucius Institutes and China-India higher education cooperation in an objective and fair manner, avoid politicizing normal cooperation, and maintain healthy and stable development of China-India people-to-people exchanges."

The Chinese Embassy added, "With increasingly close economic exchanges, the demand for Chinese language teaching in India is growing."

SHORT TAKES

Over ₹100cr worth gold smuggled into Kerala, says NIA

Kochi: Strongly opposing the bail plea of Kerala gold smuggling accused Swapna Suresh, the NIA on Tuesday alleged in a special court here that she along with four co-accused had illegally brought in gold worth over ₹100 crore through diplomatic channel since November last year. In a detailed counter to the bail application moved by Suresh, the National Investigation Agency, probing the sensational case, also submitted that she had knowledge that the smuggled gold would be used for subversive activities and threaten the country's security and monetary stability. "The accused A-1 to A-5 (Sarith, Suresh, Faisal Fareed, Sandeep Nair and Ramees) and others colluded and conspired to make use of this channel and smuggle gold along with the materials genuinely required by the foreign diplomats at consulate of UAE in Thiruvananthapuram. "Hence, instead of sending just the materials required by Consulate staff, co-conspirators including Fareed in UAE packed gold into various materials neatly hidden and submitted the baggage to the Air Cargo authorities at UAE," the NIA said. On earlier occasions, since November, 2019, when such baggage reached Thiruvananthapuram Airport, Sarith collected it and handed over to Nair who in turn had taken it to his house and other places, opened it with the help of Ramees and other associates, the agency said. "The gold is then handed over to persons known and directed by A-5 to be used in lieu of cash for unlawful activities including funding of such activities," the NIA said and submitted that using this process, the five accused had smuggled in gold around 20 times since November, 2019. — PTI

Kerala: Elderly with memory loss 'raped'

Kochi: A 75-year-old woman, suffering from memory loss, was allegedly raped by an unknown person at a village near Kolenchery in the district, police said on Tuesday. Doctors at the private Medical College hospital, where the elderly woman is being treated have confirmed that she was subjected to rape. Launching an investigation into the case, police said efforts are on to identify the culprit who allegedly sexually assaulted the woman, a mother of two, on Sunday evening. The woman, who is suffering from memory loss is giving different accounts to the doctors as well as police. This makes the investigation complicated. The mental health of the woman is also very poor, they added. — PTI

Chinese checkers

■ Continued from Page 1 governing council on Sunday announced that it was retaining all sponsors for the 2020 edition, a barrage that may have caused Vivo to look for the exit. The door is not entirely closed on the Chinese firm though, it could be back in 2021 and extend its tenure by an year, till 2023. Vivo's five-year deal worth ₹2,199 crore signed in 2017 runs till the 2022 edition of IPL and fetches the BCCI ₹440 crore every year. However, unlike the hostility in Galwan Valley, Vivo's severance will be conflict-free, it is learnt. The BCCI and Vivo are likely to reach a harmonious settlement and resume their partnership subject to improvement of relations between India and China. The BCCI has opened channels to rope in short-term sponsors. "Adani or Ambani could be in the mix," said an official with connections in the Board. "Reliance is such a big firm and has a presence everywhere, from petrol to telecommunications to insurance. Similar is the stature of the Adani Group. One of them just might jump in," he added. Others say Gulf-based firms could also be in fray. "With the tournament being played in oil-rich UAE, companies can gain massive mileage out of the glitzy league. I am sure they would be eyeing the event," another official said. All said, it's a game of Chinese checkers for now. Whoever said sports and politics don't mix.

Another core BJP promise fulfilled under Modi

BJP scores ideological victory over its rivals with temple construction

New Delhi, Aug. 4: For the BJP which was once forced to keep the "contentious" Ram temple issue aside to woo allies, the beginning of construction of a grand temple in Ayodhya is an ideological victory over its rivals with even many Opposition leaders welcoming the development. Incidentally, the ground-breaking ceremony by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the temple's construction, in the presence of leading lights of Hindutva movement, including RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, will be conducted on Wednesday which coincides with the first anniversary of the annulment of Article 370, another key ideological plank for the saffron party.

It is only fitting, political watchers say, that Prime Minister Modi and Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath will be the main political presence at the ground-breaking event, as both are known for their uncompromising commitment to the Hindutva cause. Notably, Mr Modi as a national office-bearer in the BJP played an important role in L.K. Advani's "Ram Rath Yatra" in 1990 while Adityanath's late guru Mahant Avaidyanath headed the group of sadhus and Hindu organisations that was formed in 1984 to spearhead the temple movement.

If the Supreme Court's verdict in November, 2019 in favour of building the temple at the site, where believers hold that Lord Ram was born, put a legal closure to the historical dispute between Hindu and Muslim groups, the beginning of its construction is likely to further consolidate Hindutva sentiments. "For us, the Ayodhya issue had ceased to be a political issue long back. It was always a matter of faith for us, and our manifestoes in all general elections underlined our commitment to build the temple and also scrap Article 370. But, of course, now that both promises have been fulfilled, we will talk about them," a BJP leader said. Though it was Vishwa Hindu Parishad under late Ashok Singhal which conceptualised the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in 1984 and began mobilising sadhus and Hindu groups nationwide, the issue gained political currency like never before after the then BJP president L.K. Advani started his "Ram Rath Yatra" in 1990.

This had followed the party's decision to come out openly in support of the temple's construction, where the Babri mosque stood at that time before



A devotee dressed as Lord Hanuman during an awareness campaign on Covid-19 in Jabalpur on Tuesday. — PTI

▶ **THOUGH IT** was VHP under late Ashok Singhal which conceptualised the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in 1984, the issue gained political currency like never before after the then BJP president L.K. Advani started his 'Ram Rath Yatra' in 1990 being brought down by frenzied kar sevaks in 1992, in its national executive meeting in Palampur in 1989.

Mr Advani's Rath Yatra was also seen as a counter to the Mandal politics aimed at reservation for other backward groups unveiled by the V.P. Singh government in 1990.

Mr Advani launched his famous "Rath Yatra" from Somnath temple in Gujarat, drawing people in thousands as his chariot rolled through the country's heartland, at times triggering communal riots as well, while the movement gained momentum.

The demolition of Babri Masjid at the disputed site on December 6, 1992 made the party a pariah in politics for a while but could not stop its rise to power.

Keen to shun the tag of political "untouchable", the BJP under Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr Advani was forced to put the issue, considered contentious by most parties, along with Article 370 and the Uniform Civil Code on the backburner to make new allies, a necessity for coming to power in the coalition era between 1989-2014.

The party has been steadfast in its commitment to its core causes after Modi took charge of the party and brought it to power in 2014. This was the first time that the BJP won a majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha, making it immune to political pressures that its earlier government under Vajpayee often felt.

The party's win in 2019 with an even bigger mandate has seen it pursue its core causes with a renewed vigour. — PTI

AYODHYA TIMELINE

1528

Mir Baqi, a general of the first Mughal emperor Zahir-ud-Din Babar, builds a mosque in Ayodhya, allegedly at the site of a temple marking the birthplace of Lord Ram

1853

A Hindu-Muslim clash over the site leaves about 75 dead

1949

Idols of 'Ram Lalla' are placed inside the Babri Masjid by a group of people. Government declares the premises as disputed after Muslims protest. The gates of the shrine are locked.

1984

VHP launches Ram Janmabhoomi movement to liberate the site and build a temple there

1986

Feb 1: Faizabad district judge orders opening of the gates, allowing Hindus access to the shrine. Communal tension flares up in various parts of the country. Soon after Babri Masjid Action Committee is launched.

1989

July 10: Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court authorises transfer of all cases from the Faizabad district court to the high court

Nov 9: 'Shilanyas' performed adjacent to the disputed shrine

1990

L.K. Advani's 'Rath Yatra' from Somnath to Ayodhya in support of the temple stopped in Bihar

1992

Dec 6: The Babri Masjid demolished by a mob 'Kar Sevaks'. Communal break out in many parts of the country.

2003

Muslims dispute findings of a court-ordered excavation by Archaeological Survey of India that a structure existed underneath the mosque

2005

Militants attack, the disputed site, using an explosives-laden jeep to blow a hole in the security wall. All militants are killed.

2010

Sep 30: Allahabad HC rules that the disputed land be equally divided between Sunni Waqf Board, Nirmohi Akhara and the party representing 'Ram Lalla'

2011

May 9: Supreme Court stays the Allahabad HC order splitting the disputed land in three parts

Won't let bhumi puja become Jamaat 2.0: VHP

Ayodhya: The VHP said the bhoomi puja ceremony for a Ram temple in Ayodhya is a rare moment that comes once in several lifetimes and that they are overjoyed, but are making sure the event does not become a coronavirus hotspot. VHP working president Alok Kumar also rejected questions about the muhurt of the event, saying the "best advice" has been taken including from the head of the Jyotish department of the Banaras Hindu University on timing of the ceremony. "It is something which comes once in several lifetimes, the finest moment, and we are overjoyed. But, at the same time, we have taken care that it does not become a Jamaat episode-2, he said in an interview, referring to a Tablighi Jamaat congregation in March. — PTI

'Dream close to my heart getting fulfilled': Advani

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

BJP veteran L.K. Advani, who played a pivotal role in the Ramjanambhoomi movement and undertook the Ram Rath Yatra, on Tuesday said it will be a historical and emotional day not only for him but for all Indians when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation.

Mr Advani, 92, said construction of the temple after the decisive verdict of the Supreme Court last year is beginning in "an environment of tranquillity" and will "go a long way in strengthening the bond between Indians. Mr Advani said a grand Ram Mandir was a dream close to his heart and was also a desire and mission of the BJP. "One such dream, close to my heart is now getting fulfilled... A grand



Shri Ram occupies an esteemed place in India's cultural and civilisational heritage and is an embodiment of grace, dignity and decorum. It is my belief that this temple will inspire all Indians to imbibe his virtue

— L.K. Advani, BJP leader

mandir for Shri Ram at Ram Janmabhoomi has been a desire and mission for the Bharatiya Janata Party," he said.

Noting that Lord Ram occupies an esteemed place in India's culture and civilisational heritage and is an embodiment of grace, dignity and decorum, the BJP veteran said it is his belief that the temple will inspire Indians to imbibe his virtues.

The former deputy PM also said that he believes that Ram Mandir will represent India as a "strong, prosperous, peaceful and

harmonious nation with justice for all and exclusion of none so that we can truly usher in Ram Rajya, the epitome of good governance."

The 92-year-old BJP leader is not among the invitees for the ground-breaking ceremony of the temple.

On this auspicious occasion, he said he wanted to express his gratitude to all those saints, leaders and people from India and the world over who made valuable contributions and sacrifices in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

Sino-India LAC talks fail to make headway

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

The fifth Corps Commanders level talks between India and China on Sunday seems to have been unable to achieve any major breakthrough on further disengagement in Pangong Tso and other friction areas.

Though government is yet to come out with any formal statement on the meeting, indications are that China has shown reluctance to move out of the finger areas in the Pangong Tso. China is

reported to have claimed that it had always been present in the finger area.

There have been series of meetings of India's top security brass at various levels in national capital to discuss the outcome of the fifth Corps Commanders level talks and the further way out. There are chances that India may now try high level of diplomatic contacts to try to resolve the military stand-off which has now entered the fourth month.

Chinese are occupying 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 Pangong Tso lake in finger 4 area on July 9 and gone back to finger 5. But Chinese troops still have to vacate 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 including the building of permanent bunkers, huts, installation of artillery

guns and stationing of boats. These indicate the Chinese are preparing themselves for a long haul in the area.

In May 2020, Chinese troops in an aggressive move occupied the area between Finger 4 to Finger 8 and prevented Indian troops from patrolling. In the Hot Springs general area, Chinese troops have reportedly not moved back to that extent in the first phase as was agreed in the agreement of June 6 and has still some presence. Galwan Valley is the only friction point where

Chineses have completely disengaged as per the agreement as there is around 4 kilometer distance between the two armies.

The Army is now preparing for the stand-off with China to continue for a long period and has started to outline stocks and materials needed for winter deployment of the troops at such a high altitude. It is in the process of placing orders for additional tents and shelters from indigenous as well as foreign vendors for winters.

Process to grant women PC in Army set in motion

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

The Indian Army has started the process of giving permanent commission to women officers who have joined the service through Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) and Short Service Commission Women (SSCW). They have been asked to submit the application along with other documents to Army headquarters by August 31, 2020.

Currently women officers are eligible for permanent commission (PC) in only two non-combat streams of the Army which are judge and advocate-general (JAG) and Army Education Corps.

The Supreme Court in February had directed that all serving women officers who have been recruited under the Short Service Commission (SSC) will have to be considered for PC and holding of command in non-combat. Thereafter, last month

the defence ministry had issued a formal order to allow serving women officers to be eligible for permanent commission in eight additional streams.

"Consequent to the receipt of formal government sanction letter for grant of PC to women officers in Indian Army, the Army HQ is in the process of convening a Special Number 5 Selection Board for screening women officers for grant of PC," said Indian Army in a statement.

Agrasen Gehlot skips ED date yet again

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot's elder brother Agrasen once again skipped appearing before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday for questioning in a money-laundering probe linked to a fertiliser scam, citing health issues.

"Earlier also, he did not appear before the agency for questioning. The probe team was

informed by his family members that he could not join the investigation due to health reasons," sources said. Now, he has been asked him to appear before the agency next week, they added.

The ED recently conducted searches at the premises of Agrasen as part of its probe linked to the scam. A Jodhpur-based company, Anupam Krishi, owned by Agrasen was among those where searches were conducted.

SUSHANT CASE

Bihar CM Nitish endorses CBI probe

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, AUG. 4

The Bihar government on Tuesday recommended a CBI probe into the death of Sushant Singh Rajput after the deceased actor's father K.K. Singh made a formal request regarding the issue.

"The state government recommended a CBI probe into the death of Sushant Singh Rajput after his father spoke to the DGP," Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar said.

The move comes amid ongoing tussle over the jurisdictional issue between Maharashtra and Bihar police. Nitish and DGP Guptaeshwar Pandey had earlier expressed displeasure over the mistreatment of Patna police who have been sent to Mumbai to probe the case.

IPS officer Vinay Tiwary, who had landed in Mumbai on Sunday to supervise the ongoing investigation by the Bihar police, was forcibly placed under home quarantine by the BMC authorities. "They are not responding to our repeated messages and phone calls. In a way, they have

MP Cong to send 11 silver bricks for temple: Nath

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Kamal Nath announced sending 11 silver bricks for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, on the eve of the "bhoomi puja" ceremony.

Mr Nath said the silver bricks were bought from contributions made by members of the Congress. "We will send 11 silver bricks for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya on the behalf of citizens of Madhya Pradesh," the former chief minister told reporters.

Welcoming the construction of a Ram temple, Mr Nath said its foundation had been led by Prime Minister (late) Rajiv Gandhi "who had opened the Ram Janmabhoomi temple site in 1985". — PTI

7 Guj religious leaders invited for temple event

Ahmedabad: Seven religious leaders from Gujarat have been invited for the ground-breaking ceremony for Ram temple construction in Ayodhya.

Five of them took a Lucknow-bound flight on Monday and have already reached Ayodhya. Those who have been invited are — Avichaladasji Maharaj of Sarsa Gurugadi in Anand district, Swami P a r m a t m a n a n d j i Maharaj of Rajkot, Acharya Krishnamani Maharaj of Pranami Sampraday, Shambhunath Tundiya of Sant Savaiyanath Dham in Ahmedabad, Madhav-priyadasji Swami of Chharodi Gurukul, Mahant Swamiji of BAPS Swaminarayan sect and Akhileshwar Dasji Maharaj of the VHP, Ahmedabad. —

BJP to distribute 5 lakh laddoo packets in MP

Indore: With an eye on the upcoming bypolls, the ruling BJP in Madhya Pradesh announced that it would celebrate the ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya by distributing nearly five lakh packets of laddoos in Sanver SC reserved constituency in Indore district. However, alleging political gains behind the move, the Congress has demanded that the district administration prevent the BJP from doing so in light of the Covid-19 situation in the state. — PTI

Rane says Sushant was murdered

Mumbai: BJP leader Narayan Rane alleged that actor Sushant Singh Rajput was murdered and did not die by suicide. "He was murdered. The Maharashtra government is trying to save someone. It is not paying attention to the case," Mr Rane was quoted as saying by a news agency. The Maharashtra government has been accused of shielding powerful Bollywood interests by Sushant's family and Bihar politicians, including deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi

announced that they will not let us work there. I have not seen this kind of non-cooperation in my entire career," Mr Pandey said.

While backing Mr Kumar's recommendation to hand over the case to the CBI, the Bihar DGP also said that the state police will lodge a formal protest with the BMC authorities over placing IPS officer Tiwary under forcible home quarantine.

THE ASIAN AGE

5 AUGUST 2020

Repression, mistrust rule Valley 1 yr later

It is exactly one year this day that the Centre ended the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, and created two Union Territories in place of the former state. This meant that New Delhi thought that the people of the state could not be trusted, and that their dignified existence within a democratic India spelt danger to India. The corollary of this perverse understanding was that people had to be brought to heel. In no other state of the Union have citizens been quelled before and subjected to an existence that rivals the worst practices of single-party or military dictatorships.

To suppress the living norms of the people, in J&K, around 40,000 additional soldiers were brought in to supplement the half a million already present; nearly 7,000 people, including nine-year old children, were placed in detention; even second and third-tier politicians were thrown into jail (other than those of BJP); representative government ended; all phones and the Internet were shut; Section 144 CrPC was imposed across Kashmir valley for months together; even doctors reporting to hospitals for duty were thrashed at barriers by police and security; educational institutions shut shop; newspapers were forced to carry only government briefings (propaganda), the writing of editorial opinion ceased and was replaced by tracts on gardening, philosophy and morality; journalists had to report to police stations and a coordination mechanism established between the information department and security department; industry and business collapsed; unemployment soared. All this went on for eight months before the corona virus-related lockdown. Thus, Kashmir has been locked down for one whole year now.

J&K has been through a secessionist movement, it has seen terrorist violence. Still, in the past 70 years, no government at the Centre has taken the step that the Modi government has.

This is fundamentally because they had no doubt that, at its core, the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley was dominated by a firm middle ground in spite of the so-called lures of extremism promoted by a neighboring country. It is this which led Atal Behari Vajpayee, a former PM from the BJP party, to declare that he would interact with the people of the Valley on the basis of “*insaniyat, jambhuriyat, and Kashmiriyat*” (humanity, democracy, and the Kashmiri ethos). In contrast, the present regime appears to believe that in the country’s only Muslim-majority state, although at the time of Partition it had refused to join Pakistan, the entire populace is untrustworthy.

The terms on which Kashmir’s Hindu Maharaja had acceded to India were enshrined as Article 370 of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly itself. It was akin to a treaty that formed part of the building block of the Union of India, but the Modi government dismantled it in legally questionable ways. Today the middle ground in Kashmir is gone. None of the reasons for ending J&K’s constitutional status has proved valid. Terrorism is on the rise, the economy is devastated. We are in a dangerously uncertain situation with China now openly colluding with Pakistan on Kashmir, border trouble erupting in Ladakh, and the people of the valley being in a disturbed state.

What’s special about NEP?

The hullabaloo over the new National Education Policy (NEP) in Tamil Nadu could be intriguing to many. Particularly when every political party jumps into the fray to discuss educational reform or when chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami categorically says that he cannot allow the proposed teaching of three languages in schools in the state, defying his electoral ally, the BJP.

For a clear understanding, one needs to remember that language and education are intertwined with politics in Tamil Nadu, always. The state’s unique two-language policy, stipulating the teaching of English and Tamil alone in schools, was affirmed through an Assembly resolution on January 23, 1968, by the first DMK chief minister C.N. Annadurai and reaffirmed on November 13, 1986, when M.G. Ramachandran was at the helm.

In fact, every education policy — collectively they enabled the state to already achieve a gross enrolment ratio of 49.3 per cent in higher education — has been shaped by politics. Many a custom that prevented subaltern communities from pursuing higher education was removed through government orders and moves to deny opportunities for the marginalised people were fought through political action.

That a proposal by C. Rajagopalachari in 1953 to introduce a “hereditary education policy” cost him his premiership and his successor K. Kamaraj earned the sobriquet “Father of Education (*Kalvi Thanthai*)” for opening more schools is an example of people’s awareness on education and their expectations from political leaders. Earlier, Rajagopalchari had lost his premiership when he tried to introduce Hindi in secondary schools in 1937, triggering the first anti-Hindi agitation in the state.

So politicians of the day, too, cannot ignore the popular perception that learning Hindi in school does not help much. Also people wonder what’s so great about the NEP that only aspires to achieve a GER of 50 per cent in 2035 when Tamil Nadu is just short of 0.7 per cent now.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Vijay Sai Reddy

Rafales to boost India’s bargain strength with China, Pakistan

Rafale jets touching Indian soil are most welcome. The literal meaning of “Rafale” in French is a “gust of wind” and “burst of fire”.

As the meaning suggests, the winds are blowing in favour of India and fire is bursting towards the infiltrators. Five Rafale fighter jets (the first batch in the deal of 36) landing in Ambala is a welcome step when there is imminent threat to our sovereignty from our neighbours.

In 2001, the Government of India placed an order for Rafale jets which are multi-role combat aircraft for the Indian Air Force. Due to the Narendra Modi government’s untiring efforts, the jets became part of our air force after 19 long years.

When Mr Modi visited France in 2015, the government eased the complicated rules and arrested the red-tapism generally prevalent in the defence sector. Finally, we got our first batch of jets at a crucial time when the country is facing aggression and tough times.

I appreciate the agreement signed in September 2016 between India and France namely the inter-governmental agreement (IGA) for the acquisition of 36 fighter jets, a deal worth ₹60,000 crores.

Out of the 36 Rafale aircraft, 30 will be

fighter jets and six will be trainers. The jets could be purchased only because PM Narendra Modi took the right decision to get these aircraft through an inter-governmental agreement with France, after the long-pending procurement process.

I do not want to go into the details of the political criticism of this deal. To me a price cap cannot be put on defending our country’s sovereignty and the independence of our people.

To my party, there can be no compromise on saving our frontiers and our citizens from flagrant violation of our independence. This is the time to rally behind Mr Modi and his efforts to keep India safe and to send a bold and united message to our neighbours that India is not a country to be trifled with and we will protect our country and its frontiers at any cost.

The French-made Rafales are India’s first major acquisition of fighter planes in 23 years, since the Sukhoi jets were imported from Russia. It is a proud moment for all Indians.

Modernising our air force will enhance our bargaining power with our neighbours and send across a strong signal that we are bargaining from a position of strength and will not hesitate to show our might if our borders are violated.

There will not be any Balakot kind of strikes or intrusions since we have sent a strong message with these jets. The moment these steel birds landed on Indian soil, Pakistan was rattled as was evident from its set of complaints reported in the Pakistani media.

Had India had this capability during the aerial encounter with Pakistan last year, many Pakistani F-16s would have been destroyed.

The ability to strike air-to-air targets from up to 150 km away and safely hit land targets 300 km within enemy territory, make India’s Rafales some of the deadliest fighter jets flying in the world.

The arrival of the Rafales could not have been more timely. With Chinese slow to de-escalate at the borders, our airforce cannot make a more emphatic statement. As per IAF experts, Rafale holds major superiority over J20 in terms of engine, combat capabilities, higher weapon load, battle experience and lethal missile power. “Rafale is far superior to the J-20, the Chengdu fighter of China. Even though it’s believed to be a 5th generation fighter it is probably at best a 3.5 generation aircraft. It’s got a third-generation engine as we have in the Sukhoi,” said Air Marshal R Nambiar (retd), who flight-tested the Rafale fighter jets for India.

It is a well-known fact that the Rafale jets we have received are more powerful than China’s J-20s, Pakistan’s JF-17’s or Pakistan’s F16. The touchdown of Rafale combat aircraft in India is the beginning of a new era in our military history.

The Rafale is a twin jet fighter aircraft able to operate as air-to-air fighters and air-to-ground fighters. They can carry advanced weaponry like air to air MCA missiles, long-range meteor missiles, air to ground Hammer missiles, laser guided bombs, non guided classic bombs and scalp long range missiles can penetrate deep inside enemy territory. Rafale can climb up to 60,000 feet per minute during a combat whereas a J-20 can climb up to 59,842.52 feet per minute and a JF-17 has a climbing speed of 59,000 feet per minute. With regard to experience in warfare, Rafale was used widely in war missions in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. The J-20 and JF-17 have had no such experience.

The state-of-the-art 4.5 Generation Rafale jet can reach almost double the speed of sound, with a top speed of 1.8 Mach. With its multi-role capabilities, including electronic warfare, air defence, ground support and in-depth strikes Rafale can also carry more fuel and weapons than the J20. The jets

come with one of the most advanced Meteor air-to-air missiles.

Two F16s need to combine together to counter-challenge a single Rafale in the air. Indian aircraft need not cross the LoC and surgical strikes can be done from deep within Indian soil only. The aircraft can take out the enemy aircraft from a range of more than 100 kms. The aircraft supplied to India are more sophisticated than the ones Egypt or France are using now.

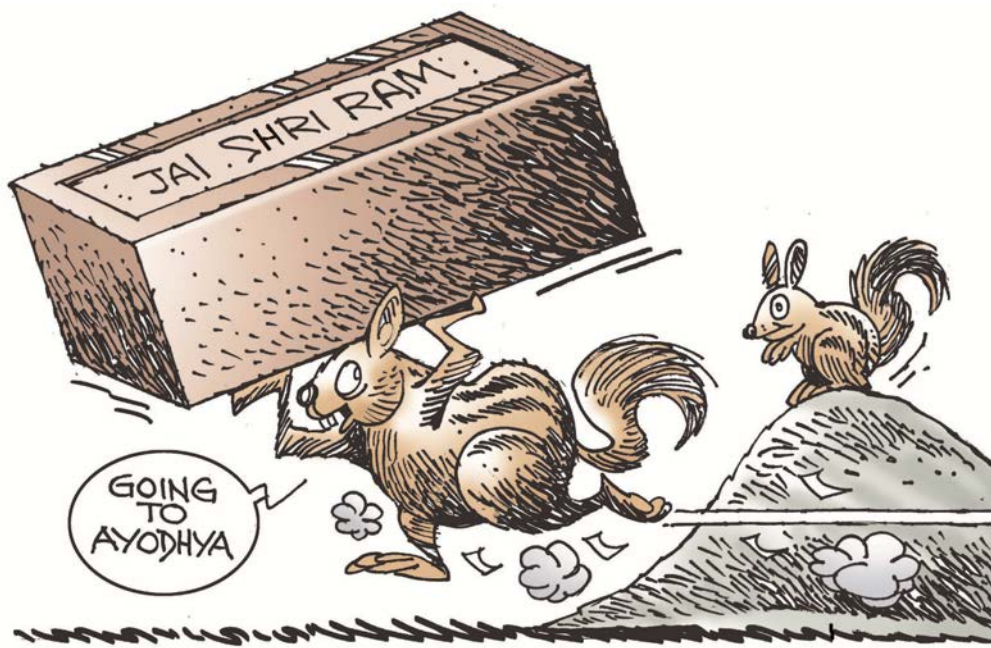
This kind of sophisticated infrastructure is essential for Indian forces in these challenging times. Not only they strengthen the military power of India but also change India’s position in the South Asia.

It is a well-known fact that a powerful country cannot be taken lightly by its neighbours. In this critical time, with the world facing a life-threatening health crisis, it is indeed sad that certain countries actually feel the need to launch full-fledged warfare where precious Indian lives were lost. India cannot allow this to happen.

Hence, I welcome the Rafales wholeheartedly. I hope the remaining “birds of steel” will land as soon as possible.

The writer is a YSRCP MP, its parliamentary party leader and national general secretary

Subhani



Men in The Castle and J&K’s metamorphosis



V. Sudarshan

A fatuous record it certainly is. And yet, it could be out of a satirical version of Franz Kafka’s incomplete and allegorical novel, *The Castle*. In eight days, between January 18 and January 25, 2020, as many as 36 Union ministers visited 60 locations in 12 districts of Jammu and Kashmir and addressed 100 public meetings while inaugurating 210 public projects, probably delivering lengthy monologues to rigged audiences. And yes, grievance boxes have been placed in each and every panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir. Taken together, they represent the core of New Delhi’s new relationship with the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir in the year since Article 370 was abrogated. These are also probably going to be among the talking points of future choreographed visits of foreign diplomats to mark the colossal development strides taken in Jammu and Kashmir.

The real story, however, is quite the opposite. The only politicians who have a free but security-enveloped run of Jammu and Kashmir are the Central ministers, politicians from New Delhi, some of whose official portfolios are much longer than their names but mean little in the new Jammu and Kashmir. Not the local politicians, even the more mildly offensive in the eyes of New Delhi like Saifuddin Soz, who just the other day impotently peered through concertina wiring to wiggle his finger to demonstrate the complete freedom of his movement. And yes, New Delhi, hereinafter to be referred to as “The Castle”, now controls Jammu and Kashmir in exactly the same way as Pakistan controls Occupied Kashmir,

from Islamabad, through nameless bureaucrats, seemingly eliminating the need for elected representatives. Kafka’s novel is set in unending winter and most scenes are dark. *The Castle* bureaucracy unreachable and the protagonist, eerily, is a mysterious character identified simply as “K”, an outsider seeking acceptance. With Kafkaesque efficiency, our bureaucrats in *The Castle* have managed not to hold elections, even to panchayats. This of course underscores the absurd importance of having grievance boxes in every panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir. To prompt a wink-wink reaction from Washington, the Chinese might be well advised take a few pages of this silver-lined playbook’s refinement of democracy and upholding of human rights, to apply to the Uighurs, for instance.

Needless to say, the achievements of the year gone by are unparalleled. In terms of counter-terrorism operations, *The Castle* appears on top of that beast; in the seven months they have culled as many terrorist recruits as they did in almost all of the previous year. And yet, despite this everyday demonstration of efficiency, *The Castle* has been unable to address the alienation and disaffection of the village that lies below, buried deep in the icy drifts in the aftermath of the crude and surgical killing of Article 370. To the nearly 700 companies of paramilitary forces, comprising CRPF, SSB, ITBP and over a hundred companies of the better-primed Rashtriya Rifles, the supply of cannon fodder seems limitless, visible in the new recruits to militancy, some of vintages as recent as three or four days.

Internally, in terms of

With Kafkaesque efficiency, our bureaucrats in Delhi have managed not to hold elections in J&K, even to panchayats

political space, there is a vacuum and nothing else, and the tentative voices of erstwhile mainstream politicians from Kashmir, who stand discredited and acknowledge as much, are heavy with humiliation and distress, indicating an aversion to take up any meaningful political activity in this setting, like characters in search of an absurd author who can squeeze electoral sympathy out of their plight. The separatist voices have shrunk to less than disarranged whispers. In this scenario, government-ordained politicians can posit no role, not even as comic relief. In this terrible space lurks the risk of radical ideologies, and possibly worse. On August 5 there will be plenty of evidence of continued motivation from across the border when the Nishan-e-Pakistan is conferred on Syed Ali Shah Geelani to the drumbeat of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit to PoK, in the form of webinars, Twitterstorms, social media events. And, yes, at least one university named after the separatist, why not?

Kafka died leaving his last novel hanging mid-sentence, unfinished. Several endings thus become plausible. The parallels are uncanny elsewhere as well outside the artificial microcosm of Kashmir, where the larger plots have begun writing themselves, somewhat to our chagrin. From the East to the West our recent neighbourhood initiative, which began with Prime Minister Narendra

Modi’s impromptu inviting of all the leaders to his swearing-in in May 2014, seems to have arrived at a critical and enigmatic phase. The drawbridge is going up, a moat of self-imposed absurdity completes the separation. In Bangladesh,

which we helped liberate, our envoy continues to find difficulty getting an audience with Sheikh Hasina amid protests against our Prime Minister for pushing both the NRC and the CAA, both inimical to Bangladesh, and capable of driving Bangladesh firmly into the Chinese embrace. It is a squabble a day scene with Nepal now. As we get turfed out of Afghanistan and diplomatically booted out of Iran, there is more likely than not a congruence of both tactical and strategic intent involving a range of countries, especially in the Muslim world, more aligned with the Chinese and Pakistanis, than with New Delhi. Just because most of the Gulf and Arab nations have not spoken up about the depredations around these contentious issues does not mean they do not have a clear view or are not watching with concern the goings-on. Any reprieve that we may have got through Covid-19 on the CAA, and even on Kashmir, is temporary and illusory. The EU remains phlegmatic and focused on its key goals where the lack of various freedoms in Kashmir are concerned. It is not going to change its mind or vote. Joe Biden, should he come up trumps, has already been conferred the Hilal-e-Pakistan for his yeoman service for promoting friendship with Pakistan. One year after August 5, 2019, the intransigent military arrival of the Chinese in our part of Ladakh, however helplessly the folks in *The Castle* spin it with Rafales and so on, is the clearest indication that the world as we wished to know it is no longer the same. At the centre of the faultlines of that new world is a word beginning with K. Which ending do you think wants to write itself for our K?

The writer is the author of Adrift: A True Story of Survival at Sea and Anatomy of an Abduction. He writes, among other things, on diplomacy, security, strategic affairs and foreign policy.

LETTERS

RIP AMA ADHE

Tibetan resistance soldier Ama Adhe has died on August 3 at age of 92 in Dharamsala. She was born in 1928 to a Tibetan nomadic family in Kham Nyarong, east Tibet. Ama Adhe’s husband was poisoned by Chinese agents. She was arrested and remained in jail for 27 years. In 1985, Deng Xiaoping pardoned some political prisoners including Ama Adhe. Ama Adhe came to India in 1987 and settled in Dharamsala. Through her book *Ama Adhe: The Voice that Remembers: The Heroic Story of a Woman’s Fight to Free Tibet*, published in 1997, and numerous talks and interviews, she tried her best to counter Chinese propaganda on Tibet. Let us not forget Ama Adhe.

Palden Sonam
Dharamsala

LOOK OUT, AYODHYA

ALL GUESTS coming to Ayodhya will have a coronavirus test. Nevertheless, it is not right to host *bhoomi puja*. Many will be asymptomatic and pass on the virus. Aside from that it only serves to legitimise destruction of 800-year-old heritage, the raging pandemic and the terrible danger it poses to a country of such a large and dense population and poor medical infrastructure must have been deterrents. They weren’t. The gods are sleeping in the month of Bhadracharya, and there is no one to watch over India and its inhabitants.

Neha Jamal
Chandigarh

PRAGMATIC SHAH

THE DAILY COVID count has topped 50K, several days running. A vociferous leadership famously shut down the entire nation only to freeze stiff when it came to reopening the economy. Stunned at the explosive spread, it has now gone silent. Inputs and assistance to government hospitals has dwindled. We are too misguided a nation to prioritise public health spend, now at a mere 1.2 per cent of GDP. That being so, leaders find pragmatism in moving to private care.

R. Narayanan
Mumbai

SHORT TAKES

WORK RESUMES TO REBUILD CHURCH DESTROYED ON 9/11

New York, Aug. 4: After a three year halt due to financial problems, work resumed on Monday on a Greek Orthodox church being built to replace one destroyed in the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Archbishop Elpidophoros, the leader of the Greek Orthodox church in America, stood on a balcony on the unfinished church and used holy water and sprigs of basil to bless the construction of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Centre.

"We have heard the voice of the Lord and we are rebuilding our church," he said.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who was there to see work resume, said the continuing reconstruction is more proof of New Yorkers' persistence to rise from the ashes of the terror attacks. "This St. Nicholas is going to be more splendid and more inviting than the St. Nicholas that was here before," he said. — *AP*

RAJAPAKSA BROS HOPE TO WIN MAJORITY IN POLLS

Colombo, Aug. 4: Sri Lankans head to the polls today with the ruling Rajapaksa brothers looking for a super-majority in parliament to change the constitution and unravel democratic safeguards. Political observers say the ruthless crushing of Tamil separatist rebels to end a decades-old conflict in 2009 — want to end presidential term limits, bring the judiciary and police under their direct control, and extend their dynastic power to a new generation.

The Rajapaksa political dynasty, a long-time force in Sri Lanka, dramatically stormed back to power in November when former defence secretary Gotabaya, 71, was elected president. Gotabaya — a former army officer dubbed "The Terminator" by his own family — won comfortably running on a law-and-order ticket while capitalising on government infighting. — *AFP*

ISAIAS LASHES US EAST COAST WITH WINDS, RAINS

Myrtle Beach, Aug. 4: Hurricane Isaias slammed into North Carolina bringing life-threatening storm surges and leaving more than 3,50,000 homes without power, as the US eastern seaboard batted down for flash floods and destructive winds.

Packing sustained winds of 85 miles per hour (around 140 kilometers per hour), the Category 1 hurricane made landfall in the southern part of the state on Monday just before midnight (0400 GMT), the National Hurricane Center said.

Seawater flowed into streets on the border between the Carolinas, leaving locals to wade through the flooded areas as rain and strong winds whipped the palm trees.

Three hours after reaching the coast, Isaias was downgraded to a Tropical Storm, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said on Tuesday. It is forecast to track northeast, with gusts reaching hurricane force on the mid-Atlantic coast Tuesday, which the NHC said could down trees and cause more blackouts. — *AFP*

GOLDEN GLOBES VOTERS HIT WITH ANTITRUST SUIT

Los Angeles Aug. 4: The exclusive group of film journalists that awards the Golden Globes was accused on Monday of sabotaging non-members while gorging on lavish perks and unparalleled access to Hollywood stars.

An antitrust lawsuit filed against the Hollywood Foreign Press Association said the organisation illegally monopolized entertainment reporting in Los Angeles while creating near-impossible barriers to entry for new members. "All year long, HFPA members enjoy all-expenses-paid trips to film festivals around the world where the studios treat them lavishly and accommodate their every desire," said the suit brought by Norwegian journalist Kjersti Flaas.

"Qualified applicants for admission to the HFPA are virtually always rejected because the majority of its 87 members are unwilling to share or dilute the enormous economic benefits they receive as members," it adds. — *AFP*

2 massive explosions rock Beirut

Beirut, Aug. 4: A massive explosion shook Lebanon's capital Beirut on Tuesday wounding a number of people and causing widespread damage.

The afternoon blast shook several parts of the capital and thick smoke billowed from the city centre. Residents reported windows being blown out and a false ceiling dropping.

The explosion appeared to be centred around Beirut's port and caused wide scale destruction and shattered windows miles away.

An *Associated Press* photographer near Beirut's port witnessed people wounded on the ground and widespread destruction in central Beirut. Some local TV stations reported the blast was at Beirut's port inside an area where firecrackers were stored. — *AP*



A large cloud rises into the air after two explosions rocked the Lebanese capital Beirut on Tuesday. The blasts, which rattled buildings and broke window glass, were felt in several parts of the city. — *AFP*

Trump rails as Nevada opts for mail-in ballots

US Prez has claimed mail ballots would lead to voter fraud

Carson City (US), Aug. 4: Nevada lawmakers passed a bill on Sunday that would add the state to a growing list of US states that will mail active voters' ballots ahead of the November election amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

The bill now heads to Gov. Steve Sisolak, a Democrat. If he signs it will join seven states that plan on automatically sending voters' mail ballots, including California and Vermont, which moved earlier this summer to adopt automatic mail ballot policies.

President Donald Trump called the bill's passage "an illegal late night coup" in a tweet on Monday morning. He accused Sisolak of exploiting Covid-19 to ensure votes in Nevada would favor Democrats.

"Nevada's clubhouse Governor made it impossible for Republicans to win the state. Post Office could never handle the 'Traffic of Mail-In Votes without preparation ... See you in court!'" Former US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid applauded the lawmakers' decision and called Trump's comments desperate.

"He's lying about our state leaders and threatening a bogus lawsuit simply because Democrats made it easier for people to vote," Reid said in a statement. Trump has claimed the mail ballots would lead to fraud and compromise the integrity of the election.

The consensus among experts is that all forms of voter fraud are rare.

MUGHAL-E-AZAM SCREENPLAY FOR OSCAR LIBRARY

London, Aug. 4: Indian cinema classic *Mughal-e-Azam* celebrates its 60th anniversary this week with director K. Asif's son Akbar Asif presenting the screenplay of the film to the Oscars library in Hollywood.

Akbar Asif, the UK-based son of the late director, said he presented the screenplay to the Academy Awards to mark the big anniversary of his father's historical epic starring Prithviraj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar and Madhubala, which falls on Wednesday.

Three versions of the legendary screenplay — in Hindi, Roman text and English translation — are now available at the Margaret Herrick Library, a world-renowned reference and research collection of the Academy devoted to the history and development of the motion picture as an art form and an industry. — *PTI*

US doing well against virus, India has huge problem: Don

Washington, Aug. 4: President Donald Trump has said that as compared to few countries, America is doing "very well" in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, while India is having a "tremendous problem" battling the disease and China is witnessing a "massive flare up" in infections.

India's Covid-19 tally increased to 18,55,745 on Tuesday with 52,050 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day. China on Tuesday reported 36 new cases across the country, down from 43 the previous day. The country's

Covid-19 cases crossed the 100-mark on July 29, for the first time in over three months, sparking the fear of a rebound.

"I think we're doing very well. I think that we have done as well as any nation. If you really look, if you take a look at what's going on, especially now with all these flare ups and nations that they were talking about," Trump told reporters at a news conference here on Monday.

As such, compared to larger countries, the US is doing much better in the fight against the Coron-

avirus, he said. "Don't forget, we're much bigger than — other than India and China. China is having a massive flare up right now. India has a tremendous problem. Other countries have problems," he said in response to a question.

"And I noticed that in the news, in the evening news, I never read about that. In any news, I don't read about the other countries. You're starting to see that other countries are having very big flare ups, countries that thought they were over it, like we thought we might be over in Florida." — *PTI*

Nevada Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske told lawmakers on Friday that she wasn't aware of any fraud in the June primary, when Nevada mailed all active voters absentee ballots and only opened a limited number of polling places to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

Limited polling places in Reno and Las Vegas resulted in lines of up to eight hours. In the June primary, all Nevada counties had one polling place except for Clark County, which had three in the Las Vegas area. The bill requires at least 140 polling places throughout the state in November, including 100 in Clark County, which had 179 in the November 2018 election. — *AP*

PIO researcher killed in US

Houston, Aug. 4: A 43-year-old Indian-origin woman researcher in the US was killed while she was out jogging and police have initiated a homicide investigation, according to media reports.

According to the police, Sarmistha Sen, who was based in Plano city in the state of Texas, was randomly attacked and killed while jogging on August 1

near the Chisholm Trail Park. Her body was found lying in the creek-area near Legacy Drive and Marchman Way by a passer-by, according to reports.

Sen, a mother of two sons, was a pharmacist and researcher who studied molecular biology and worked with cancer patients, reports said. According to the *Dallasnews.com*, a person

of interest in the case has been arrested on a burglary charge.

He was identified on Monday as 29-year-old Bakari Abiona Moncrief, and is in custody at the Collin County jail, the report said. Police say around the same time of the murder, someone broke into a house nearby on the 3400 block of Michael Drive. — *PTI*

3 WRITE SOS ON SAND, RESCUED FROM ISLAND

Wellington, Aug. 4: Three men have been rescued from a tiny Pacific island after writing a giant SOS sign in the sand that was spotted from above, authorities say.

The men had been missing in the Micronesia archipelago for nearly three days when their distress signal was spotted on Sunday on uninhabited Pikelot Island by searchers on Australian and US aircraft, the Australian defense department said on Monday.

The men had apparently set out from Pulawat atoll in a 7-meter (23-foot) boat on July 30 and had intended to travel about 43 kilometers (27 miles) to Pulap atoll when they sailed off course and ran out of fuel, the department said. Searchers in Guam asked for Australian help.

The military ship, Canberra, which was returning to Australia from exercises in Hawaii, diverted to the area and joined forces with US searchers from Guam. The men were found about 190 kilometers (118 miles) from where they had set out. — *AP*

Trump avoids praising Lewis

Washington, Aug. 4: US President Donald Trump said he doesn't know how history will remember civil rights activist John Lewis, but that "he chose not to come to my inauguration," in an interview with US media.

A longtime Democratic congressman, Lewis died on July 17, then received rare honors in Washington and was praised by key figures of both major parties for his life-long fight for equality.

"How do you think history will remember John

Lewis?" Jonathan Swan of the Axios media outlet asked Trump in the interview aired on Monday.

"I don't know, I really don't know," the president answered.

"I don't know John Lewis, he chose not to come to my inauguration," Lewis clashed with Trump on multiple occasions — as well as boycotting his swearing-in ceremony, Lewis cited Russian interference in the 2016 election to question his legitimacy and warned US democracy was under threat. — *AFP*

China accuses US of bullying over TikTok

Beijing, Aug. 4: China accused the United States on Tuesday of "outright bullying" over popular video app TikTok, after President Donald Trump ramped up pressure for its US operations to be sold to an American company.

"This goes against the principles of the market economy and the (World Trade Organisation's) principles of openness, transparency and non-discrimination," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

A day earlier, President Trump gave TikTok six weeks to sell its US operations, in the latest escalation to an ongoing political and trade battle between Washington and Beijing.

The app has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds, because it collects large amounts of personal data on users and is legally bound to share it with authorities in Beijing if they demand it. But Wang told a regular

● **THE APP** has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds, because it collects large amounts of personal data on users and is legally bound to share it with authorities in Beijing if they demand it.

press briefing on Tuesday: "The US, without providing any evidence, has been using an abused concept of national security... unjustifiably suppressing certain non-US companies." He said the national security grounds for the US's clampdown on Chinese firms "does not hold water", adding that the companies conduct their business activities in accordance with international rules and US laws.

"But the US is cracking down on them on trumped-up charges. This is all political manipulation," said Wang, who warned the US not to "open Pandora's box". — *AFP*

US finds possible Covid treatment

Washington, Aug. 4: Scientists in the US have found a potential therapeutic treatment for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, and other Coronaviruses.

Pathogenic Coronaviruses are a major threat to global public health, as shown by the SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, and the newly emerged SARS-CoV-2.

The study, published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*, has found that small molecule protease inhibitors show potency against human Coronaviruses.

These Coronaviruses 3C-like proteases, known as 3CLpro, are strong therapeutic targets because they play vital roles in coronavirus replication, the researchers said.

"Vaccine developments and treatments are the biggest targets in Covid-19 research, and treatment is really key," said Kyeong-Ok Chang, a professor at Kansas State

● **THE STUDY**, published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*, has found that small molecule protease inhibitors show potency against human Coronaviruses.

University in the US. "This paper describes protease inhibitors targeting Coronavirus 3CLpro, which is a well-known therapeutic target," Chang said. The study demonstrates that this series of optimised Coronavirus 3CLpro inhibitors blocked replication of the human coronaviruses MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 in cultured cells and in a mouse model for MERS, the researchers said.

These findings suggest that this series of compounds should be investigated further as a potential therapeutic for human Coronavirus infection, they said. — *AFP*

Chad slows down internet to combat 'hate speech'

U.S. 'CLOUD' SUPREMACY HAS EUROPE WORRIED OVER DATA

Paris, Aug. 4: Europe is sitting on a wealth of data that is the 21st equivalent of a precious metal mine during the gold rush.

But instead of exploiting it themselves Europeans may be allowing American tech giants to gain control of all the excavation equipment, some experts say, pointing to a flurry of

European companies announcing deals with US tech players for cloud services. Renault, Orange, Deutsche Bank, and Lufthansa recently plumped for Google Cloud. Volkswagen signed up with Amazon Web Services. The French health ministry chose Microsoft to house its research data. — *AFP*

them at point-blank range, before being attacked with a knife.

A statement by the public prosecutor said one of the mechanics "died of his wounds" while the officer was hospitalised and "will be prosecuted after he has recovered."

The video is still circulating on Facebook and WhatsApp, and some users have touched on the ethnic background of the soldier, pointing out that he is from the same community as President Idriss Deby Itno, who seized power in 1990. — *AFP*



A security guard pays respects in front of the cenotaph for the atomic bombing victims near Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima, western Japan. — *AP*

There are about 1,36,700 survivors of the atom bomb attacks in Japan

Hibakusha make last plea to scrap N-bombs

Tokyo, Aug. 4: As Japan marks 75 years since the devastating attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the last generation of nuclear bomb survivors are working to ensure their message lives on after them.

The "hibakusha" — literally "person affected by the bomb" — have for decades been a powerful voice calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. There are an estimated

1,36,700 left, many of whom were infants or unborn children at the time of the attacks.

The average age of a survivor now is a little over 83, according to Japan's health ministry, lending an urgency as they share their testimonies and call for a ban on nuclear weapons.

"What we hibakusha are saying is we can't repeat (a nuclear attack)," 88-year-old Terumi Tanaka,

who survived the Nagasaki bombing, said ahead of the anniversaries.

"To this end, we have to let people know what we experienced, for them to hear the facts," Tanaka was 13 when the bomb hit his hometown.

The attack on Nagasaki killed 74,000 people and came three days after a first bomb devastated the city of Hiroshima, killing 140,000.

He has spent much of his life sharing his experience, hoping that explaining the horrors of nuclear weapons will convince people to support a ban.

But he recognises that the community of those who lived through the attacks is shrinking, and their message will have to be passed on by others in the decades to come.

"We will all pass away, eventually," he said. — *AFP*

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,687.91	2.03
Nifty 50	11,095.25	1.87
S&P 500*	3,296.97	0.07
Dollar (₹)	75.04	-0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.99	0.22
Euro (₹)	88.43	-0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,830▲97	0.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.40	0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.833	-0.004
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.515	-0.048

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Sun launches favipiravir at ₹35 per tablet

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries said it has launched antiviral drug favipiravir under the brand name 'FluGuard' for the treatment of mild to moderate cases of Covid-19, at Rs 35 per tablet in India. The stocks of FluGuard will be available in the market from this week, Sun said in a regulatory filing. Favipiravir is the only oral anti-viral treatment approved in India for the treatment of patients with mild to moderate Covid-19, it added.

Adani, Suraksha, Sunteck submit EOI for HDIL



Adani Properties, Suraksha Asset Reconstruction and Sunteck Realty are among six players which have shown initial interest to acquire debt-laden HDIL through the insolvency resolution process, according to a regulatory filing. International Asset Reconstruction Company, N S Software and Harsha Vardhan Reddy have also submitted the EOI, but they were found ineligible.

GCPL Q1 net profit down 3% to ₹395 crore

Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) reported a 3.12 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 394.88 crore in the first quarter ended June 2020 due to pandemic related disruptions in the market. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 407.60 crore in April-June quarter a year ago. Net sales were marginally lower at Rs 2,311.17 crore as against Rs 2,330.59 crore. Total expenses declined 2.16 per cent.

Cipla India biz CEO, 2 other execs leave firm

Drug firm Cipla has witnessed three senior-level exits, including that of executive vice-president and CEO for India business Nikhil Chopra. The other two executives are Nikhil Lalwani, head of India prescription business, and Kunal Khanna, cluster head of chronic and emerging business development and portfolio. "They have served significant tenures in Cipla; we deeply value their contribution," Cipla said.

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Reserve Bank clears appointment Insider Jagdishan to head HDFC Bk

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 4

Private lender HDFC Bank on Tuesday announced that Sashidhar Jagdishan would be its new managing director and chief executive officer for a period of three years from his date of taking charge i.e. October 27. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cleared the appointment, the bank informed the bourses.

Jagdishan replaces Aditya Puri, the high profile banker who led the bank since inception and retires on October 26.

Jagdishan is currently the group head of finance, human resources, legal & secretarial, administration, infrastructure, corporate communications, corporate social responsibility and the strategic change agent of the bank.

Investors cheered the move, sending HDFC Bank's shares up as much as 6 per cent after the news broke out, pushing the broader stock markets higher. The stock closed the day 4 per cent up. HDFC Bank is now the third most valued listed entity in India with a market cap of Rs 6.1 lakh crore after RIL and TCS.

"A meeting of the board of directors of the bank will be convened in due course inter alia to approve the appointment of Mr. Sashidhar Jagdishan as the Managing Director & CEO of the bank, in place of Mr. Aditya Puri, who is due to



Sashidhar Jagdishan

retire as Managing Director of the bank on October 26, 2020," said HDFC Bank in a statement.

"He (Jagdishan) has played a critical role in supporting the growth trajectory of the bank. He has led the finance function and played a pivotal role in aligning the organisation in achieving the strategic objectives over the years," the statement said.

Raamdeo Agrawal, chairman, Motilal Oswal Financial Services said, "Sashidhar has tremendous opportunity to build on the lead the bank has taken in last two decades and remain an example and envy of every single banker in India."

Shyamala Gopinath, chairperson, HDFC Bank, said, "Sashi brings to the table a rare combination of IQ and EQ. Given his understanding of the business, coupled with a strong people connect, we're confident that he'll take the bank to the next level."

"He understands the bank's ethos, culture

which has made it what it is. Given our inherent strengths and now Sashi's leadership, I believe that the best of the bank is yet to come," said Aditya Puri, MD, HDFC Bank.

Speaking about his appointment Jagdishan said, "I fully recognise that Mr. Puri's are huge shoes to fill...I'll leave no stone unturned to carry forward the rich legacy."

Widely known as Sashi, Jagdishan has an overall experience of 30 years, 24 of which he spent in HDFC Bank. He joined the bank in 1996 as a manager in the finance function. He became business head-finance in 1999 and was appointed as chief financial officer in 2008 and played a critical role in supporting the bank's growth trajectory.

Jagdishan holds a master's degree in 'economics of money, banking & finance' from the University of Sheffield, UK.

Prior to HDFC Bank, he had a 3 year stint with Deutsche Bank, Mumbai.

₹500-cr net worth must to sell petrol and diesel

New Delhi, Aug. 4: The government on Tuesday said any entity with a net worth of at least Rs 500 crore is eligible for obtaining the liberalised licence to sell petrol and diesel to retail and bulk consumers.

Clarifying on the November 2019 liberalised fuel licensing regime, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said any entity with a net worth of Rs 250 crore can get a licence to retail petrol and diesel to either bulk or retail consumers. For those seeking authorisation for both retail and bulk should have a minimum net worth of Rs 500 crore at the time of application.

Last year, the Centre had relaxed norms for retailing auto fuels, allowing non-oil companies to venture into the business, a move that could help private and foreign firms to enter the world's fastest-growing market.

Prior to that, a company had to invest Rs 2,000 crore in either hydrocarbon exploration and production, refining, pipelines or liquefied natural gas terminals to obtain a fuel retailing licence.

The ministry said applications may be submitted directly to the ministry. "For retail authorisation, the entity is required to set up at least 100 retail outlets," it said. —PTI

Mkt rebounds on short covering

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 4

The equity market rebounded by around 2 per cent after a 4 per cent fall in the last four sessions, on short covering, supported by abundant liquidity.

The Sensex gained 748.31 points, or 2.03 per cent, closing at 37,687.91 while the Nifty-50 closed 203.65 points, or 1.94 per cent, at 11,095.25.

"The key highlight of the day's trade was huge gains in Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank and good investor participation in the broader market, with smart money finding its way into select midcaps across sectors," said a broker.

Reliance Industries gained 7.10 per cent after a sharp fall in previous ses-



sions while another index heavyweight HDFC Bank gained 3.94 per cent after the bank informed stock exchanges about RBI's approval of Sashidhar Jagdishan, an insider, as MD & CEO of the bank for a period of three years.

Gains in Nifty were largely contributed by RIL and HDFC Bank, together contributing almost 160 points out of the 204-point gain on the index.

The BSE Mid-cap index gained 1.02 per cent and

the BSE Small-cap Index gained 1.23 per cent.

The Nifty Bank index gained 1.97 per cent as other private bank shares also recovered from the previous day's losses.

Shrikant Chouhan, executive VP, technical research, Kotak Securities said, "Reliance Industries stock contributed more than 50 per cent to the overall rise in the Nifty and the balance was supported by financial stocks. The Nifty opened higher on the back of exceptional strength in the US market. We believe the up-move is nothing more than a pull-back to the recent decline."

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 703.74 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 665.69 crore.

Coal mining: Neighbours need govt nod

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 4

In a move that will check easy investments from China and Pakistan, the government has clarified that entities of a country sharing land border with India will have to invest in coal mining activities under the government route.

"It is further clarified that any FDI in commercial coal mining is subject to Applicable Laws including the Press Note 3 of 2020 issued by the Central Government," the government said in a communiqué.

According to this Press Note, "an entity of a country, which shares a land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an

investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, can invest only under the government route". The Press Note was issued in April as the government wanted to curb opportunistic acquisitions and takeovers of domestic companies by investors from neighbouring countries in the backdrop of the pandemic.

Further, a citizen of Pakistan or an entity incorporated in Pakistan can invest only under the government route in sectors/activities other than defence, space, atomic energy and sectors/activities prohibited for foreign investment," the statement said. The government has also issued a corrigendum to the tender document in this regard.

The auction process of coal mines for commercial purposes was launched in June and is still underway. In order to attract overseas investments, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy, 2017 was also amended to permit 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route in coal mining activities, including associated processing infrastructure, for sale of coal, subject to the provisions of Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

However, the government wants to scrutinise the investments arising out of neighbouring countries, including Pakistan and China, in coal mining activities as well.

Indicators till June make FinMin hopeful of recovery

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 4

The worst seems to be over, though the risk of rising Covid-19 cases still linger, finds the finance ministry after considering the economic indicators till June. The ministry expects that the agriculture sector will cushion the coronavirus-hit economy this fiscal.

"With India unlocking, the worst seems to be over for the economy as high-frequency indicators recovered in June 2020 from unprecedented troughs in April; however, risks on account of rising Covid-19 cases and intermittent state lockdowns remain," the Macroeconomic Report for July, released by the Economic Affairs Department said.

It further noted that the rise in Covid-19 cases and subsequent intermittent lockdowns make the recovery prospects fragile and called for constant and dynamic monitoring.

While economic indicators showed recovery in



June, sequential recovery has been interrupted in July. The IHS Markit India Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing went down from 47.2 in June to 46 in July. Rural jobs too indicated a sequential decline in July. "The high-frequency indicators have slowed down in July after showing month-on-month recovery. Unlike the V-shaped recovery that everyone was expecting, it seems it could probably be an L-shaped recovery," said Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services.

According to her, probably the pent-up demand had helped the recovery in May and June, but was exhausted in July. While

the demonetisation and introduction of GST had hit the bottom of the pyramid, the pandemic has hit the salaried middle-class as their income levels are not improving due to job loss and salary cuts.

However, the finance ministry hopes agriculture will reduce the shock of the pandemic on the economy in 2020-21.

"With the forecast of a normal monsoon at 102 per cent of long-period average (LPA), agriculture, which contributes about 15 per cent of total gross value added, is set to cushion the shock of Covid pandemic on the Indian economy in 2020-21," the report said.

"Since September, 2019, the terms of trade have moved in favour of agriculture and have reinforced rural demand. This has manifested in an increase in rural core inflation between March and June 2020. As a result, the push for growth in coming months appears to be pitched in rural India," it said.

Organised electrical players gain in Q1

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 4

While the consumer electrical sector witnessed a revenue decline in the June quarter, organised players have gained market share from unorganised players due to some of their inherent strengths.

With the lockdown disrupting supply chains across the industry, the impact of material shortage was felt more by the unorganised players, finds Motilal Oswal Research. "We believe organised players have gained market share," it said.

While Havells saw market share gains in domestic switchgears and small appliances, Crompton consolidated its position in fans, with gains in bulbs and battens too. V-Guard also reported market share gains in cables and wires.

"Supply chains and migrant labour related issues have disturbed supply chains of unorganised players. It has hit organized players like us less. Most branded companies in the wire space have seen their market shares

improving in May and June," said Mithun Chittilappilly, MD of V-Guard Industries.

While all the consumer electrical companies have seen a revenue decline in the vicinity of 45 per cent in the June quarter, Unlock 1.0 helped healthy sales recovery for organised players in June.

These companies were also providing support to dealers during lockdown times. Havells' working capital requirement went up in Q1 owing to the support it provided to dealers and creditors. Working capital position improved for Crompton, V-Guard and Orient at the end of Q1 against the March quarter.

Organised players were also able to maintain cash positions. Havells and Crompton raised commercial papers and non-convertible debentures in order to bolster cash positions and take advantage of lower interest rates.

Despite drop in demand, companies did not resort to downtrading. According to Havells, electrical products have a good scope of premiumisation.

India has 21 unicorns, but diaspora got 40 more

Mumbai, Aug. 4: India is home to 21 unicorns—or startups with over \$1 billion in valuation each—and 40 more of such companies have been founded overseas by people of Indian origin, a report said on Tuesday. It found that three Chinese investors have backed 11 of the Indian unicorns.

With the 21 unicorns collectively valued at \$73.2 billion, India is the fourth biggest in terms of unicorns, behind the US, China and the UK, going by the Hurun Global Unicorn List.

The number of Indian unicorns is just a tenth of China's 227, it said, adding China has only 16 businesses started outside the country by its diaspora as against the 40 in India. The valuation of the unicorns founded globally by Indians is \$99.6 billion, led by the fintech Robinhood at \$8.5 billion.

Of the 61 unicorns founded by Indians, a massive two-thirds are based outside India, predominantly in the Silicon Valley of the USA, whilst only 21 are based in India, Hurun Report chairman and chief researcher Rupert Hoogewerf said.

He added that the founders of these 40 unicorns need to be recognised as much as someone like Google's chief executive Sundar Pichai and Microsoft's Satya Nadella.

The research pegged the overall number of unicorns at 586 across the world in 29 countries and 145 cities.

A third of the 21 Indian unicorns, which include Paytm, Oyo Rooms, Byju's and Ola Cabs, are in the e-commerce sector and Bengaluru is the unicorn capital of India being home to 8 such enterprises, it said. The youngest Indian unicorn is the 2017-founded Ola Electric, followed by Udaan and Swiggy. —PTI



palettes to warm smiles, when patrons aren't actually in the building. Upping the ante is the fact that these companies' customers expect perfection—a Birkin shopper in one of Cais's focus groups, for example, thought her bag was cheaply made when it arrived in six months instead of nine. This attitude stands in stark contrast to the rest of retail, where companies like Amazon.com Inc and

Walmart Inc have built up their shipping to get goods to customers as fast as possible.

Depending on the customer, speed may also be important for luxury shoppers. But overall, brands that have long prized personalised service must now learn how to control the user experience from shoppers' first click to when the product is unwrapped.

First off, luxury stores



SHORT TAKES

Red card for coughing on field

Zurich: A football player who deliberately coughs close to another player or match official can be issued a red card.

The International Football Association Board, the game's lawmaker, updated its guidelines while the pandemic perseveres.

A referee can only red card a player when they are certain the cough is intentional. A yellow card is also optional.

The new rule falls under "using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures."

IFAB said in a statement: "As with all offenses, the referee has to make a judgment about the true nature of the offense."

"If it were clearly accidental, then the referee would not take action nor if the 'cough' took place with a large distance between the players."

"However, where it is close enough to be clearly offensive, then the referee can take action," the statement from IFAB added.

— AP

World Cup winner Iker calls it a day

Madrid: Spain's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Iker Casillas announced his retirement on Tuesday, after being sidelined for more than a year with a heart problem.

Casillas, 39, also won the European Championship twice with his country in a trophy-laden career which included more than 700 games for Real Madrid.

"Today is both one of the most important and most difficult days of my sporting life, the time to say goodbye has arrived," he said on *Twitter*.

Casillas joined Portuguese side Porto in 2015 after a tearful departure from Madrid but suffered a heart attack in May last year.

He played 167 times for the national team, winning trophies in 2008, 2010, 2012 in a golden age for Spanish football.

He lifted five Spanish league titles and the Champions League on three occasions during his time at the Santiago Bernabeu. — AP

Pune's Ibrahim dominates Rd 2

Mumbai: Pune's Muhammad Ibrahim sparked in Round 2 of the Mumbai Falcons Indian e-Racing Championship, in association with Volkswagen Motorsport India, stunning Amith Kutti of Chennai and winning both his Pro Class races.

Ibrahim, who is currently competing from Kuala Lumpur and famously ran in the top five of the World Rotax Karting Finals recently and was a runner-up in the Asian Rotax Championship too, stamped his authority right from the word go. He bagged pole, with a lap-time of 1:47.778, ahead of Ooty's Niranjan Kumar.

Season 2 Champion Sai Prithvi was third while Kutti could manage only fourth on the grid, ahead of Ankit Tyagi.

As the lights went out for Race 1 at the famed Nurburgring Circuit, Ibrahim made an excellent start to hold on to his lead. Kutti, from fourth, made a daring lunge into Corner 1 to jump to second place. Ibrahim pulled away and cruised to victory ahead of Kutti and Prithvi.

LYING GYMNAST COACH SET FOR PRISON TERM

New York: A former Michigan State University head gymnastics coach is scheduled to be sentenced on Tuesday for lying to police during an investigation into ex-Olympic and university doctor Larry Nassar.

Kathie Klages, 65, was found guilty by a jury in February of a felony and a misdemeanor for denying she knew of Nassar's abuse prior to 2016 when survivors started to come forward publicly. The misdemeanor carries up to a two-year prison sentence or a fine of up to \$5,000. The felony carries up to a 4-year prison sentence or a fine of up to \$5,000.

Klages testified at trial that she did not remember being told about abuse. If the case had not involved Nassar, her lawyer has said, Klages would never have been found guilty.

— AP

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Lines drawn for IPL

Tests, quarantine, bio-bubble part of plan

New Delhi, Aug. 4: Indian players and support staff will have to return negative for Covid-19 at least five times before they start training in the UAE and subsequently will be tested every fifth day during the IPL, according to a draft prepared by the BCCI.

A BCCI official said that all Indian players and support staff will have to undergo two Covid-19 RT-PCR tests, 24 hours apart, a week before joining the 14-day quarantine period with their respective teams in India.

If any individual tests positive, he will go into a 14-day quarantine. After the quarantine, he will be required to undergo two more Covid-19 RT-PCR tests within a space of 24 hours and if they come negative, that person will be cleared to fly to UAE for the IPL beginning November 19.

"Following their arrival in the UAE, the players and support staff will have to return at least three negative tests during a week's quarantine and if they are negative, they can enter the bio-bubble and start training."

"There could be minor changes to this protocol depending on the feedback from the teams but there will not be any compromise on players and team officials' safety," the official said.

During the first week in the UAE, the players and team officials will not be allowed to meet each other in the hotel and they can only do so after they test negative thrice, following which they will be cleared to enter the bio-bubble and start training.

"All overseas players and support staff also need to undergo two Covid-19 RT-PCR tests before flying in to the UAE and can only fly if the tests are negative. If not, then the same 14-day quarantine period and two negative tests to be able to fly to the UAE," said the official.

The players and support staff will be tested on Day 1, Day 3 and Day 6 of their quarantine in the UAE and after clearing that, they will be tested every fifth day during the 53-day event.

Over and above the BCCI testing protocol, the teams can do more tests on their own and additional tests



Chennai Super Kings captain M. S. Dhoni (right) and his Mumbai Indians counterpart Rohit Sharma in this file photo.

● Indian players and support staff will have to undergo two Covid-19 RT-PCR tests, 24 hours apart, a week before joining the 14-day quarantine period with their respective teams in India.

● The players and support staff will be tested on Day 1, Day 3 and Day 6 of their quarantine in the UAE.

● Teams have been told to not fly out before August 20. Families will not be allowed to meet anyone outside bio-bubble.

may also be conducted under the rules put in place by the UAE government.

The teams have been told to not fly out before August 20 so that they can carry out the necessary testing protocols and the quarantine drill if needed.

The BCCI has left it to the teams to decide on the travel of partners and families of the players but they too will have to follow strict bio-secure protocols if they wish to accompany the cricketers and support staff.

The families will not be permitted to meet anyone outside the bio-bubble and will have to practice social

distancing while interacting with other families and the players, that too with a facemask on.

"The families will also not be allowed to enter the PMOA (players and match officials area) and field of play at any time during the training and matches."

"And anyone who breaches the bio-secure protocols, will have to be in self-isolation for seven days and return two negative tests on day 6 and 7 to be allowed to re-enter the bio-bubble," the official added.

The IPL will allow unlimited COVID-19 replacements considering the delicate health safety situation. — PTI

Not sorry to miss league, says Starc

Melbourne, Aug. 4: Left-arm Australian pacer Mitchell Starc doesn't regret giving the IPL a miss this year, saying he is comfortable training for the upcoming summer season.

Starc had pulled out of the lucrative T20 event to focus on the T20 World Cup in Australia which was postponed last month due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I know hindsight is a wonderful thing and now the IPL is on at a different time but no, I wouldn't change it," the 30-year-old, who played for Royal Challengers Bangalore for two years, was quoted as saying by *Cricketer.com.au*.

"I'm happy to spend that time when the blokes are at the IPL in September I'll be getting ready for a summer. The IPL will be around next year and if I feel the urge or people

I'm happy to spend that time when the blokes are at the IPL in September I'll be getting ready for a summer. As of this year I'm very comfortable with the decisions I've made.

— MITCHELL STARC
Australian cricketer on giving the league a miss this year

want me around I'll definitely consider it, but as of this year I'm very comfortable with the decisions I've made," he added.

Starc was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders in the 2018 IPL auction but was ruled out of the season due to an injury and was eventually released in November.

— PTI

WINDIES TOUR OF AUSTRALIA POSTPONED

Melbourne, Aug. 4: The Cricket Australia on Tuesday said it has put on hold a three-game T20I series against the West Indies which was scheduled to be held in October.

Matches of the the T20 series were slated to be held in Townsville, Cairns and the Gold Coast on October 4, 6 and 9 respectively.

It was supposed to be a warm-up series ahead of the T20 World Cup but with the showpiece event being postponed last month due to the global health crisis, the two cricket boards decided to postpone it.

"Together with @windiescricket, we have agreed to postpone the Twenty20 series originally scheduled for Queensland in October," Cricket Australia said in a tweet.

"Serving as warm-ups for the ICC T20 World Cup, the series will now coincide with the rescheduled T20 World Cup in Australia, in either 2021 or 2022."

Top players from both the countries will now take part in the rescheduled 13th IPL, which will be held in the UAE from September 19 to November 10.

— PTI

● Cricket Australia put on hold a three-game T20I series against the West Indies which was scheduled to be held in October.

Rooftop tennis? Roger that!



Tennis legend Roger Federer takes a selfie with budding Italian tennis players Vittoria (13) and Carola (11). A video of two girls playing tennis on a rooftop in Italy had gone viral during the early lockdown phase in April. Three months later, while the girls were being interviewed on the terrace, Federer made an entry, surprising them. The 20-time Grand Slam champion exchanged rallies with the delighted girls on the rooftop, took them out for lunch and also got them enrolled for a week-long training at the Rafael Nadal Academy in Mallorca, Spain.

WOMEN'S | TENNIS

Pliskova makes winning return

Palermo (Italy), Aug. 4: Tour-level tennis resumed after a five-month enforced break on Monday, and players at the Palermo Ladies Open had to handle their own towels and not shake hands of opponents.

The strict rules because of the Coronavirus included no showers on site, and no autographs or photos with fans. Players in the singles main draw come from 16 European countries and Argentina.

A limited number of fans were allowed into the 1,500-seat stadium court.

They watched sixth-seeded Donna Vekic of Croatia beat Arantxa Rus of the Netherlands 6-1, 6-2 in windy conditions in the first official match — for men or women — since early March.

Vekic sealed a place in the second round on her second match point. Vekic will next face Italian teenager Elisabetta Cocciaretto, who beat Polona Herczeg of Slovenia 7-6 (1), 6-3 for her first victory over a player ranked in the top 50.

Laura Siegemund of Germany also eased through in straight sets, beating Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania 6-3, 6-4.

● After a five-month hit, the women's tour-level tennis resumed at the Palermo Ladies Open with strict protocols in places post the Pandemic.

● The players had to handle their own set of towels, not allowed to shower and are no shake hands with their opponents amidst other rules in the tournament.

It was harder for Sara Errani, the only previous champion in the draw. The 2012 winner took nearly three hours to secure a 7-5, 1-6, 6-4 success over Sorana Cirstea.

The Italian next faces Kristina Pliskova who upset third-seeded Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-4.

A third Italian is also through to the second round after Jasmine Paolini rallied from a set and a break down to beat Daria Kasatkina of Russia 5-7, 6-4, 6-4. — AP



Kristina Pliskova serves to third-seeded Maria Sakkari during their singles match at the Palermo Ladies Open in Palermo, Italy, on Tuesday. Pliskova won 6-4, 6-4.

LIED TO CAS TO REDUCE BAN, ADMITS PUERTA

Buenos Aires, Aug. 4: Retired tennis player Mariano Puerta has admitted he lied to the Court of Arbitration for Sport to reduce his suspension after a second positive doping test. Four months after the high point of his career — the final of the 2005 French Open — the Argentine tested positive for etilefrine, a banned cardiorespiratory stimulant. He had also been caught in 2003 for the use of a banned anabolic steroid.

Puerta was initially suspended for eight years, but the penalty was reduced to two years thanks to a defense strategy that he said "was a lie."

"But I did not take any sporting advantage. I don't want to be seen as a deceiver," Puerta said in an interview published by *La Nacion* newspaper on Monday.

Puerta's defense said he drank water from a glass used by his then wife Sol Estevanez. — AP