

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | SATURDAY | 29 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34.5°C
Min: 26.6°C
RH: 56%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 34/26°C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Bhadrapada Shuddha Ekadasi till 8.18 am
Star: Purvashadha till 1.04 pm
Variyam: 9.20 pm to 11 pm
Durmuhurtam: 6.05 am to 7.44 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HILARI CALENDAR
Muharram 9, 1442 AH
PRAYERS(SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 4.46 am
Zohar: 12.10 pm
Asar: 4.34 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 7.36 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.57 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 3.41 AM
MOONSET TODAY 3.14 PM

COUNTER

POINT



I need a big loan to buy a computer and the net package for my daughter, she is in LKG!

BRIEF

Covid cases in AP hit 4-lakh

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh is continuing to witness a surge in confirmed cases of Coronavirus since the last few days. The state has registered 10,526 new Covid-19 cases, raising the overall tally to 4,03,616, apart from 81 deaths, taking the death toll to 3,714 during the last 24 hours. With this, the number of Coronavirus cases reported in the state has crossed the four-lakh mark. In their Covid-19 bulletin issued here on Friday, state health authorities have reported that out of 61,331 samples tested, 10,526 individuals have tested Covid positive. Now 96,191 patients are undergoing treatment in the state.

■ Full report on Page 3

Cong MP from TN dies of Covid

Chennai: Congress MP from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu H. Vasanthakumar died of Covid-19 at a hospital here on Friday, the party said. The 70-year-old first time MP, who was admitted to the Apollo Hospitals on August 10 after he tested positive for coronavirus, succumbed to the illness, a party spokesperson said. Earlier, in a statement, Apollo Hospitals said the MP was in critical condition and treated by a team of doctors for severe Covid pneumonia. Vasanthakumar was a two-time MLA and elected to the Lok Sabha in the 2019 elections. — PTI

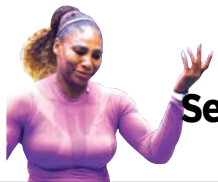
WORLD | 5

Abe resigns as PM due to poor health



SPORTS | 8

Serena handed tough draw at US Open



CASES (+75,778)
34,59,295
DEATHS (+1006)
62,691
covid19india.org

STATE GOVT BULLETINS
TELANGANA (+2,932)
1,17,415
(+11)
799
ANDHRA PRADESH (+10,526)
4,03,616
(+81)
3,714

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES
2,47,78,958
DEATHS
8,38,432
COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
213

CENTRE BACKS AP'S STANCE ON RLIS PROJECT

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI DC KURNOOL, AUG. 28

Affirming the stand taken by the AP government, the Centre on Friday made it clear that the proposed Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme (RLIS) does not require environmental clearance because it is not a new project and does not involve any addition to the cultivable command area (CCA).

In an affidavit filed before the National Green Tribunal bench at Chennai, Dr Sunamani Kerketta, director, Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change, said the RLIS does not fall under any category listed in the schedule of EIA Notification 2006.

She said the RLIS is neither an irrigation project nor is a power generation component involved. Therefore, it is not covered under item 1(c) of the EIA Notification.

This stand is expected to put to rest the contentions of the Telangana state government as it vindicates the stand of the Andhra Pradesh government that the RLIS is not a new irrigation project.

■ Page 2: No nod needed for new pumping method

6 Opposition-ruled states move SC on NEET, JEE dates

● **THE STATES** which approached the court through their respective ministers are Maharashtra, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

● **THE PETITION** sought reconsideration of the SC's August 17 order

The petition sought reconsideration of the August 17 order saying that if it wasn't reviewed, grave and irreparable harm and injury will befall the students appearing for

the NEET/JEE and would severely jeopardise public health. The other grounds raised are the safety, security and right to life of all the candidates appearing for the NEET/JEE exams.

It adds that the August 17 order ignores the logistical difficulties in holding the JEE from September 1 and NEET on September 13.

Meanwhile, the IIT-Delhi has appealed to its students and alumni to help those appearing for the JEE-Advanced next month with transport to reach their exam centres. The institute has also suggested to its students and alumni to come up with a registration portal for needy candidates and help take care of their logistics.

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Bihar elections not to be postponed: SC

New Delhi, Aug. 28: Stating that Covid-19 cannot be a ground for postponing elections, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a PIL seeking to defer the Bihar Assembly polls till the state is free of Coronavirus.

The Election Commission of India will consider everything, a bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said. The bench, also comprising Justices R.S. Reddy and M.R. Shah, said it is a premature petition as no notification for

the Assembly polls has been issued till now. The petitioner, Avinash Thakur, had sought a direction to the Chief Election Commissioner to postpone the polls due to the Covid-19 pandemic on the ground that the Representation of the People Act provides for the deferment of polls in extraordinary situations. "How can we ask the EC to not hold elections? Covid cannot be a valid ground for postponing polls," the bench stated.

— PTI

SUPER KINGS IN QUARANTINE AFTER 10 TEST COVID POSITIVE

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, AUG. 28

In what could be a big blow to their IPL preparations, at least 10 members of the Chennai Super Kings have tested positive for Covid-19 in Dubai. Super Kings, who landed in the UAE on August 21, were supposed to begin their training session on Friday, but have now been forced to extend their room quarantine till September 1. IPL is scheduled to start on September 19 with Mumbai Indians taking on CSK in the opener. Neither CSK nor BCCI has issued an official statement, but it's learnt that Indian fast bowler Deepak Chahar, a top franchise official's wife, a few net bowlers and a couple of members of the social media team are among those infected. As per IPL's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), those who test positive will be isolated and allowed to return to the bio-bubble only after at least two weeks of quarantine and two negative test reports.

■ Page 8: IPL teams begin practice amid

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

In another setback to those resisting examinations in the midst of Covid pandemic, the Supreme Court on Friday ruled that states and universities cannot promote students in the final year/terminal semes-

ter without holding examinations. It brushed aside the suggestion that students be awarded marks based on their previous performance and internal assessment.

Upholding the July 6 circular of the University Grant Commission (UGC) directing universities and

colleges across the country to conduct final year examinations by September 30, a bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah,

however, said that the decision of the State Disaster Management Authority not to hold final

examination by September 30 would prevail over the UGC deadline.

In this case, Maharashtra State Disaster Management Authority had decided against holding final year examinations by September 30, 2020.

The Supreme Court further ordered that if any

State/Union Territory taking recourse to Disaster Management Act 2005 decides that it is not possible to hold exams by September 30, then it would approach the UGC for the extension of the deadline and the same would be considered by the UGC.

Jagan sets stone for YSR Vedadri

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy took potshots at the earlier Telugu Desam government, which, he said, did not take up construction of Vedadri lift irrigation project despite availability of water from the adjacent Krishna river.

Speaking after virtually laying the foundation stone for YSR Vedadri lift irrigation project from his camp office here on Friday, he said his government has decided to complete the YSR Vedadri lift irrigation project by February.

He pointed out that this was being done within 14 months of coming to power and they were determined to complete the project by February.

He said, "Though the Krishna river is close to Vedadri, the previous government failed to take up the project. The Vedadri lift irrigation project provides irrigation water to 38,627 acres in areas of Nandigama Jaggayyapet, Vatsavai and Penuganchipolu of Krishna district."

"Drinking water will be supplied to 30 villages under DBR Branch Canal, including Jaggayyapet Municipality. The government has set a target of supplying 2.7 TMC of water to the area and will be spending ₹490 crore towards the project," he said.

Ministers and MLAs hailed the initiative. Jaggayyapet MLA Samineni Udayabhanu said that this was a marriage anniversary gift from the Chief Minister as Jagan Mohan Reddy is celebrating his marriage anniversary on Friday.

Calling him a *Rythu Bandavudu* (farmers' saviour), he said that the farmers in the region are happy as the land value in this area will go up correspondingly.

Ministers Anil Kumar Yadav, Perni Venkata- maiah and Kodali Venkateswara Rao, MLAs Samineni Udayabhanu, Mondithoka Jaganmohan Rao and Kayle Anil Kumar, Women's Commission chairperson Vasireddy Padma, District Collector A. Md. Imtiaz and others participated in the event at Vedadri.

HC TELLS AP TO COUNTER PLEA OF FARMERS

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

The AP High Court has directed the state government to file a counter affidavit in two weeks on a batch of petitions filed by farmers from the Amaravati capital region who said they were not paid annuity by the state government for the takeover of their lands.

The HC division bench, comprising Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari and Justice K. Lalitha held a virtual hearing here on Friday. Farmers from Krishnayapalem village Bojjavarapu Yesu, Kondapalli Saroja, Manchikalapudi Amar had filed the petitions stating that the farmers had sold their assigned and patta lands to the government to build the capital.

Counsel Karuman- chi Indraneel Babu argued on behalf of the farmers. Responding to it, the court directed the state government to file a counter affidavit.

SWEET | EFFECTS

Wild honey production gets major boost in state

Covid-19 helps bees come back

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 28

Although Covid-19 is spreading terror among human beings, it is providing some advantages to the environment and wildlife. Since the lockdown, there has been a substantial increase in the population of honey bees in Andhra Pradesh.

This is a significant change as for the past several years, the bee population had come down, and as a result of which there was a drastic fall in wild honey (natural) production.

Several private honey suppliers are selling artificial honey by feeding sugar solutions to the colonies and collecting honey.

● **THE HONEY** bees from other forest areas, including Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and other areas are migrating to Andhra Pradesh forests.

There is a huge demand for wild honey in Andhra Pradesh and also abroad.

Mobile towers and large scale disturbances in forest areas have impacted bee populations. However, since the lockdown, its population has increased substantially and the social insects have been erecting colonies at several places.

There are two seasons for wild honey (April-July, and November-January).

Due to the severe radiation impact, bees have lost their memory and are not returning to the colonies. They are hitting trees and dying, as a result.

However, with complete silence from the human disturbances, the bees from other forest areas, including Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and other areas are migrating to Andhra Pradesh forests.

Collecting wild honey is one of the prime revenue sources of tribals, whose produce is procured by the AP Girijan Cooperative Corp (GCC). However, the tribals are lamenting that they are failing to witness honey colonies even in dense forest areas. As the

income is low compared to normal seasons, tribals are reluctant to collect honey.

"There is a huge market potential, which translates to 3,500 quintals every year. However, we are hardly procuring 1,500 quintals from AP forest areas, including Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, and Chittoor and Kurnool districts. In order to bring a balance between demand and supply, we are procuring wild honey from Gujarat and Jharkhand to the tune of 1,000 to 1,200 quintals," said general manager (in-charge), AP GCC, Justus Yustus.

■ Page 2: Tribals are happy with honey colonies

Are all surfaces in your home germ*-free?

Maxkleen

Maxkleen Kills 99.9%* Germs*

Cleaning everything you touch is as important as cleaning your hands.

Maxkleen kills 99.9%* bacteria and kills viruses*^s across surfaces keeping your home safe.

Maxkleen Disinfectant Range

FREE SANTOOR SOAP*

*As per standard laboratory test protocol on select bacteria and fungi. When used diluted as per "How to Use Wipro Maxkleen Floor Cleaner" on the product pack. *For Floor Cleaner, Effective against viruses, protozoa etc based on active ingredient when used undiluted with approximate 10 min contact time. *As per standard laboratory tests on select bacteria and fungi, when sprayed directly on contaminant surface. \$For Surface Sanitizer, on select viruses, based on active ingredient, when sprayed directly on contaminant surface with approximate 15 min contact time. --Free Santoor 75g soap worth ₹20 with every 500ml Maxkleen floor cleaner worth ₹93 (inclusive of all taxes)

IN BRIEF

CAREFUL STUDY OF GST PROPOSAL NEEDED: BUGGANADC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, AUG. 28

Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy said that the state was awaiting the correspondence from Union finance ministry on GST compensation cess fund.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had offered two borrowing options to states to make the shortfall in the goods and services tax (GST) compensation cess fund including a special window to directly rise funds from Reserve Bank of India.

Mr Buggana Rajendranath Reddy said the state has to receive approximately ₹10,000 crore of from the Centre and he said the options suggested by the Union finance minister would be weighed carefully keeping the interests of the state.

Speaking to this newspaper, he said, "We have to read the fine print closely to understand the real import of the text. Since this is a first experience it needs utmost caution and clarity to take a final decision."

HC URGED NOT TO TAKE UP PILs WHICH HAVE NO SUBSTANCESAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

Advocate-General S. Sairam appealed to the High Court not to entertain petitions lacking substance for hearing.

The A-G was referring to a PIL filed by an advocate challenging the action of the state government in diverting endowments funds from AP Brahmin Welfare Corporation to Amma Vadi scheme to help school students pursue education. He said that the Corporation was not part of the Endowments Department and its commissioner had the administrative control.

The A-G said that the petitioner being an advocate did not show any basis for diversion of endowments funds and made it clear that the terms of the GO did not specify any diversion of funds. In response to it, the HC expressed its displeasure at the petitioner as it did not find anything wrong with the action of the government. When the court wanted to dismiss the petition, the petitioner sought a week's time to file supportive documents for his claim.

DALIT AUTOMAN'S DEATH CONTINUES TO CREATE RUCKUSDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, AUG. 28

The death of a Punganur-based Dalit auto driver, Om Pratap, continues to create a ruckus in political circles in the state with TD party leaders, who embarked on a fact-finding mission in the matter following party chief, N. Chandrababu Naidu's direction, were allegedly house arrested by the police in their respective homes in Chittoor district on Friday.

Om Pratap, from Chittoor district, was in an inebriated condition when he abused the state government and AP Chief Minister for hiking the prices of liquor in the state. This video record exploded on social media.

On Monday, the driver died at his residence due to some medical ailments say his family members and the local police. But Mr Naidu and his son, Nara Lokesh, alleged that the driver had died due to the harassment by the ruling party leaders and demanded a high-level probe in the matter.

However, Om Pratap's family members have urged Mr Naidu and Mr Lokesh not to politicise the death of their kin as they do not have any doubts in the matter.

Mr Naidu directed the district TD leaders to find out facts in the issue, on Thursday. Former minister, N. Amarnath Reddy, TD district president, Pulivarthi Nani, party Punganur leaders, N. Srinath Reddy and his wife, Aneetha, on Friday embarked on a fact-finding mission, but they were all placed under house arrest by the police in the morning.

Amarnath Reddy said that they wanted to find out the facts, as there were some doubts in the whole episode. He alleged that that post-mortem was not held initially but only when it became an issue. He said that the party has been demanding that the call data of the deceased be made public and that the CBI should conduct an enquiry into the issue.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy welcomes TD former MLA Panchakarla Ramesh into the party by putting on a the party kandaava at the camp office on Friday. YSRC Rajya Sabha member V. Vijayasai Reddy and AP minister Velampalli Srinivas are also seen.

Nobody can stop executive capital in Vizag: Vijayasai**Former TD MLA from North Andhra joins YSRC**DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

The YSRC Congress has declared that nobody could stop the government from establishing executive capital in Visakhapatnam.

Speaking after former TD MLA from North Andhra Panchakarla Ramesh Babu joined the YSRC in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy here on Friday, Rajya Sabha member V. Vijayasai Reddy asserted that, "There should be no doubt about government's determination to establish executive capital in Visakhapatnam and that nobody can stop it."

"Mr Jagan is the only

leader who is striving for the welfare of SCs, STs, BCs and minorities in the state and ₹60,000 crore spent in the last 14 months testifies to his commitment," MP said and added that Chandrababu Naidu deceived these sections during his 14-year rule as CM.

"Constitution gives the state the right to shift executive capital in accordance with law. No institution can go against constitution on the capital issue," he observed.

Terming TD as casteist, Mr Vijayasai Reddy said that YSRC sought removal of MP K. Raghuramkrishnam Raju from chairmanship of subordinate legislative committee

as well as his disqualification for anti-party activities.

After joining the ruling party, Mr Ramesh Babu said, "I am impressed by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's decentralisation of administration and plan to set up executive capital at Visakhapatnam."

He said he was vexed with TD chief Chandrababu Naidu's constant opposition to CM Jagan despite the latter's sincere efforts for the all-round development of the state, especially North Andhra districts.

According to Mr Ramesh Babu, there was discontent in TD over imposition of Lokesh on the party by

Mr Naidu. "Mr Naidu did nothing for North Andhra, but he is now shedding crocodile tears and, at the same time, trying to backstab them by opposing executive capital in Vizag," the former TD leader alleged.

Former minister and TD MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao had initiated Mr Ramesh Babu into politics in 2009 after formation of Praja Rajyam and got him ticket to contest from Pendurthy, which he won with a handsome majority.

He joined the TD along with Ganta and won from Yelamanchili in 2014. He fought from the same constituency and lost to U.V. Ramana Murthy Raju of YSRC.

4 more held in connection with Gummanur gamblingD. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, AUG. 28

Four more persons associated with a gambling den at the native village of labour minister Gummanur Jayaram including key organiser Narayana were arrested on Friday by the Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB).

The SEB teams led by additional SP Gowthami Sali conducted raids at Gummanur village of Alur Assembly segment on Thursday and arrested 32 persons besides seizing ₹5,34,150, 35 cars, 38 mobile phones and six bikes from the gamblers.

Adoni DSP Vinod Kumar told the media that a total of 36 persons who were arrested were produced before the Alur court magistrate and were remanded. They were later sent to the Adoni sub jail.

Minister Jayaram told the media on Friday that he and his immediate family were living in Alur. None from his family had any links with those arrested for running the gambling ring, he said. He had never supported or encouraged illegal and anti-social activities, Jayaram said.

● Adoni DSP Vinod Kumar said that a total of 36 persons who were arrested were produced before the Alur court magistrate and were remanded.

TD demands resignation of minister JayaramDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

Telugu Desam AP president K. Kala Venkatrao on Friday slammed the ruling YSRC ministers and leaders for 'committing violations and illegal activities' without any commitment for a proper brand image for Andhra Pradesh. He deplored that by encouraging gambling activities in different places, the ruling party leaders have turned the state into 'Pekatanthra Pradesh'.

Mr Venkatrao said that even in the native assembly segment of the Chief Minister, the ruling party leaders were running gambling clubs to loot the public. He demanded CM Jagan to take corrective steps immediately and minister Jayaram to submit his resignation taking responsibility of conducting gambling den.

Mr Venkatrao ridiculed that gambling became the state game of the state but not kabaddi in YSRC government rule. He alleged that anti-social activities were going on unabated and violations of the laws of the land became the order of the day. He demanded the immediate resignation of labour

● K. Kala Venkatrao alleged that the ruling party ministers were competing to encourage gambling dens and illicit arrack making units in their areas.

minister Gummanur Jayaram owning moral responsibility for the running of a huge gambling racket in his own village in Kurnool district.

Mr Venkatrao stated that it was condemnable that the YSRC leaders there have not only committed offences but also attacked the policemen who came there to arrest them. He alleged that the close relatives of the minister were involved in this crime and stringent action should be taken in this regard.

He further alleged that the ruling party ministers were competing to encourage gambling dens and illicit arrack making units in their areas instead of putting their villages on the map of development and progress.

He claimed that YSRC Chippagiri mandal convener Gummanur Narayana was behind the gambling den being run at Gummanur, the native village of minister Jayaram.

Corona pandemic eclipses Tirumala brahmotsavamAVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, AUG. 28

The Coronavirus pandemic continues to eclipse all religious festivities at the sacred hill shrine of Lord Venkateshwara here. The grandiose annual Brahmotsavams, scheduled to be observed from September 19 to 27, will this time be held on low key note and that too within the temple premises, the very first time in the history of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

The TTD Trust Board, which met under the chairmanship of Y.V. Subba Reddy, announced on Friday that the Salakattla brahmotsavams will be performed inside the main temple complex in order to avoid mass pilgrim gatherings along the four mada streets encircling the temple, where the procession of all vahana sevas will be carried out during the nine days.

The Srivari annual brahmotsavams are a nine-day spectacular fest and celebrated with pomp and gaiety. Normally, the temple management makes massive arrangements including decking up the hill town with giant decorations and illuminations, colourful processions of Lord Malayappa on different celestial carriers and cultural programmes by renowned artistes from across the country. However, Covid-19 continues to impact festivities.

The TTD chairman maintained that since there are two annual brahmotsavams this year, the Board will re-evaluate the situation in September on how to execute the second brahmotsavams which is slated for October.

"If the pandemic will lose its intensity by September, the second brahmotsavams will be carried out as usual. Until then, we have the responsibility of ensuring that the devotees, TTD staffers and priests do not fall prey to the virus", he said.

**TTD board weighs revenue options**DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, AUG. 28

TTD Trust Board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy said that the temple body is mulling over depositing a certain amount of gold and cash in banks on a monthly basis instead of going for long tenures, as part of the idea of increasing revenues.

Speaking to the media after the trust board meeting at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala on Friday, Mr Subba Reddy said that, based on the current scenario, the trust board had resolved to negotiate with the RBI and banks to enhance the rate of interest on TTD deposits, as banks were offering low interest rates at present.

Claiming that they have decided to modernise TTD's solid waste management practices at Tirumala and the compost fertilisers generated from the accumulated wet waste will be given to farmers on a cost-to-cost basis, Mr Subba Reddy said, "New technology for solid waste management in Tirumala will be brought up soon and TTD trustee Dr Sudha Narayana Murthy has come forward to donate ₹1 crore to take up the project."

The board resolved to go ahead with the construction of the Lord Venkateswara divya kshetrams in Jammu, Varanasi, Chennai and other parts

of the country once the pandemic subsides. "The maha kumbhabhishekam event at Visakhapatnam and Bhubaneswar will be performed after relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions and the board has given the nod to release a sum of ₹4.95 crore towards building a ghat road for the Vizag temple," said Mr Subba Reddy.

The other decisions taken up by the board include the construction of 50-ward rooms for patients at the TTD run BIRRD hospital in Tirupati at a cost of ₹5.5 crore, facilitating VIP break darshan as an alternative for devotees who got their arjitha sevas and udayasthamana sevas cancelled due to the pandemic, to intensify gosamrakshana initiatives and donate one cow to every temple in the state and issue 3,000 free darshan tokens at Bhudevi complex in Tirupati from today onwards.

TTD employees eligible for treatment under the EHS will be covered under the YSR Aarogyasri scheme.

Mr Subbareddy complimented the employees for rendering impeccable service to pilgrims even during the pandemic and assured that they will provide quality treatment to Covid-19 affected employees as per the norms prescribed by the state government.

Atchannaidu gets bail in ESI scamDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

Telugu Desam MLA K. Atchannaidu got bail from the Andhra Pradesh High Court in the multi-crore ESI scam case. Granting him bail, the court ordered him not to leave the country without permission.

TD MP K. Rammohan Naidu said that the prayers of TD cadres had yielded good results as Mr Atchannaidu had secured bail. He said Mr Atchannaidu was undergoing treatment for Covid-19 and appealed to TD cadres not to visit him. He thanked TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu and other TD leaders for extending support to their family during these difficult times.

Former minister and senior TD leader Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu flayed the ruling YSRC leaders for "targeting and putting" Mr Atchannaidu in jail out of sheer political vendetta and harassment.

He stated that, ultimately, it was in court that Mr Atchannaidu could get some justice now.



Alleging that the YSRC government was behaving atrociously towards political opponents especially the TD leaders, Mr Patrudu said that even Kollu Ravindra was harassed and implicated in a false case and fabricated murder charges were levelled against him.

Mr Patrudu said that this was the height of vendetta ever pursued by any government.

YSRC leaders were not mending their ways even though the courts had passed strictures against the government's orders over 93 times in the past 15 months, said Mr Patrudu, adding that the government was not only harassing opponents but also committing flagrant violations of the constitution and the rule of law in the state.

SLP FILED IN APEX COURT AGAINST TD CENTRAL OFFICEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

YSRC Mangalagiri MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy filed a petition in the Supreme Court on Friday against construction of Telugu Desam central office NTR Bhavan in Atmakur as it violated all rules.

He said that the TD obtained lease for the land from the government for a meagre price and this has to be cancelled. The petitioner's lawyer Allanki Ramesh filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court to the effect.

Mr Ramakrishna Reddy stated that the TD has obtained a 99-year lease from the then TD government for about 3.65 acres of land on June 22, 2017 through GO 228 for the party office.

He said the law prohibits construction of buildings on land adjacent to the canal.

TRIBALS ARE HAPPY WITH HONEY COLONIES

From Page 1

Due to heavy rains, wild honey production from AP forest areas has been less than encouraging. However, there is hope of good production in the next season, Yustus said.

Meanwhile, the tribals are also expressing their happiness over the new trend of honey colonies. Some of the researchers are also confirming that bees were coming back to AP forests and setting up around two colonies on a tree.

"It is a good sign when bees start setting up colonies. There is optimism that the population will double in another two to three years," said J. Swarna Latha, a researcher on bee population and wild honey production.

No nod needed for new pumping method

From Page 1

Telangana state had advanced arguments on Friday, contesting the claims of the AP government, filed a 110-page affidavit of objections before the NGT bench.

Dr Sunamani stated that the RLIS does not come under the category of expansion and modernisation of existing projects as there is no such activity in respect of either power generation or irrigation.

The Centre's affidavit stated the environmental clearance had been taken by the AP government for the three schemes —

Telugu Ganga, Srisaillam Right Bank Canal and Galeru Nagari — to which the project will be supplying water.

Dr Sunamani stated that the environment clearance for the Telugu Ganga project and the Srisaillam Right Bank Canal was granted prior to the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 1994. The Galeru Nagari Sujala Sravanthi was granted under the notification in 1994 and its capacity is stated as 38 tmc ft. These three schemes were constructed at different times and have got environmental clearances

● The TS government asked the NGT to ignore the report of the joint committee dated August 8, 2020, and consider the objection filed by the state or alternatively call for a fresh report.

separately from the Union environment ministry, she said.

A review of the EC conditions revealed that changing the RLIS from gravity discharge to pumping should not be considered as change in scope as the environmental clearance does not restrict the schemes to

gravity discharge, the Centre said.

The TS government asked the NGT to ignore the report of the joint committee dated August 8, 2020, and consider the objection filed by the state or alternatively call for a fresh report and give an opportunity to the state to participate before the joint committee.

Dr Rajat Kumar, TS principal secretary, irrigation and water department, in his objection affidavit urged the NGT to declare the action of the AP government initiating work on the RLIS without obtaining environment

clearance as illegal under the provisions of the Environment Protection Act 1968 and Water Prevention and Control of Pollution Act, 1974.

He sought a direction to the Centre to conduct a detailed study on the adverse effects on the Krishna river flora and fauna, livelihood of people in Telangana state and downstream of Srisaillam project due to the RLIS.

AP stated that its submissions to the objections filed by TS be recorded by the NGT on the report of joint committee dated August 8 and pass suitable orders.

IN BRIEF

Infant found abandoned

Tirupati: Days old girl child was found abandoned in bushes near Pothupeta village in PTM Mandal of Chittoor district late on Thursday. While the details of the parents were yet to be ascertained, the police said that a passerby early on Friday morning heard the infant crying and found her draped in a towel. The police suspected that the parents left the baby in the bushes as they were unwilling to raise a girl child. The locals, who went to the outskirts of the village for a nature call, were returning home when they found the baby. They immediately informed the police on the incident. The police arrived at the spot and rushed the infant to the nearby government hospital for medical checkups. The police said the baby must be a day or two old and that she is healthy. The baby will be shifted to a childcare home after all the health checkups are done. A case was registered, and police officers were deployed to find out the details of the parents.

Police apprehends murder accused

Nellore: The police have nabbed the accused in the murder of a woman in Kavali on Friday. It may be recalled that the body of a woman identified as Shakeela, 25, was found dumped on the road at Puchhalapalli street in Kavali on Thursday morning. The police have jumped into action and apprehended the accused identified as S.K. Akthar on Friday. The DSP of Kavali D. Prasad said that the woman had been living with her mother after separating from her husband Khader Basha about four years ago.

Husband alleges SI trapped his wife

Nellore: The Nellore SP Bhaskar Bhushan has ordered a probe into a petition submitted by a resident of Bitragunta alleging that his wife fell in the trap of a sub-inspector living with him. In his petition, he said that the couple has a child, but his wife is ignoring both of them because she was under the influence of the SI.

APPSC TO HOLD GROUP-1 (MAINS) EXAMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG 28

The Andhra Pradesh public service commission (APPSC) will conduct Group-1 services (Mains) written examination in all 13 districts in AP and Hyderabad in Telangana from November 2 to 13, despite the raging pandemic.

The commission asked all provisionally qualified candidates for Group-1 (Mains) written examination to give three preferences of examination centre afresh on or before September 10 by visiting their website <https://psc.ap.gov.in>, with their OTRP ID.

It said that the commission reserved the right to allot the applicant to any centre of examination depending on availability.

The examination centres are: Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Eluru, Vijayawada, Guntur, Ongole, Nellore, Tirupati, Kadapa, Anantapur, Kurnool and Hyderabad.

10 VENTILATORS PROVIDED TO AREA HOSPITAL

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, AUG. 28

Social welfare minister Pinepe Viswaroop said that 10 ventilators are being provided to Area Hospital at Amalapuram in Konaseema area. A news item was published about the pathetic conditions in the area hospital in these columns recently.

Mr Viswaroop on Friday along with the East Godavari District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy visited Amalapuram town.

Mr Viswaroop said that he noticed that there were no ventilators in the hospital and he took steps to provide five ventilators in a few days back. Now, another five ventilators will be provided to the hospital and it will help and cater to the needs of the patients. He thanked Mr Muralidhar Reddy for providing the ventilators to the hospital.

APSPDCL to augment power supply shortly

NAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, AUG. 28

Engineering officials of Andhra Pradesh Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (APSPDCL) are conducting a load flow study to enable uninterrupted supply of quality power.

The ongoing supply in different parts of the district over the last month has received complaints from that area. Also, as per the government directives, necessary arrangements are being made to supply electricity to agriculture for nine hours only during the day. The district currently has 288 power substations for all categories. There are a total of 11,11,120 electrical connections for all segments. An average of 11 million units of electricity is being consumed every day.

Excessive loads on existing substations can lead to technical faults as well as accidents. Engineering officials are proposing the construction of new substations to reduce burden. Accordingly, it is proposed to construct 50 new substations in the district.

These include substations with capacities of

- The ongoing supply in different parts of the district over the last month has received complaints from that area
- The district currently has 288 power substations

33/11 and 132/33 KV. Required funds have already been sanctioned for 17 substations. Construction is underway in various proposed areas at a cost of ₹100 crore. 33/11 KV13 substations are under construction at a cost of ₹2 crore each. Of the eight 132/33 KV substations that have been sanctioned, construction work is in progress in four. An amount of ₹20 crore has been released for their construction.

A P S P D C L Superintendent Engineer Nallabotula Srinivasulu told *Deccan Chronicle* that they are making a load flow study to find out the requirements and faults in the distribution of power.

“The state government is particularly keen on supplying uninterrupted power to the agriculture sector. We are doing our best to supply nine hours of power during daytime to the agriculture sector,” he said.

SURVEY ON PULMONARY VULNERABLE GROUPS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, AUG. 28

A survey is being taken up on Pulmonary Vulnerable Tribal Groups in the agency area in East Godavari by ITDA. The volunteers will do the survey and submit a report to the ITDA project office.

er in the first week of September. ITDA project officer, Rampachodavaram, C. Adhithya Praveen said that the survey app has been developed in Telugu language and the volunteers should upload the details of the families of the groups on the app.

Govt benefits not for recovering debts: Collector

NAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, AUG. 28

District collector Chevuri Harikiran directed bank officials not to credit the amount of various welfare schemes deposited by the government into the accounts of beneficiaries who have to repay pending debts with the banks.

Speaking during a District Consultative Committee (DCC) and District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting of bankers here on Friday, Harikiran said that bankers work hard to

encourage entrepreneurs in the district.

He approved the formation of a sub-committee of 7-10 members headed by the District Joint Collector (Welfare) to bolster economic progress in the district. Speaking about various loan targets and the progress achieved, he said the district has disbursed ₹4,601.49 crore against the target of ₹12,950 crore in the district credit plan loan as on June 30 for the financial year 2020-21 and had achieved 35.53 per cent growth. Under the credit plan, agricultural loans are targeted at

₹5,500 crore and by June 30, loans amounting to ₹2,187.05 crore have been disbursed by 39.76 per cent. The total amount of loans for the entire agricultural and allied sectors is ₹7,530 crore against the target of ₹2,510.40 crore and 33.34 per cent progress has been achieved. He said the target for priority sectors was ₹10,250 crore, with an increase of 31.11 per cent to ₹3,188.71 crore.

For non-priority sectors it was ₹12,950 crore while loans of ₹4,601.49 crore were provided and 35.53 per cent progress had been achieved.

Ex-DCCB chief booked for misusing ₹16 crore

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, AUG. 28

A case was booked against former DCCB chairman Varupula Jogiraju alias Raja and four other bank employees by Prathipadu police on Friday on charges of misappropriation of ₹16.47 crore.

The fraud was reportedly took place when Mr Raja was the president of Primary Cooperative Credit Society in Lampakalova in Prathipadu mandal. The police said that one of the accused, former CEO of DCCB Manchala Dharma Rao obtained interim orders from AP High Court to prevent

coercive steps against him for three weeks.

According to Prathipadu sub-inspector A. Satyanarayana, this is a case of criminal breach of trust by public servant, cheating by personation, cheating, forgery for purpose of cheating, using as genuine a forged document, falsification of accounts and abetment in furtherance of common intention that occurred between 11, May 2018 and 30, July 2019 at PACS Limited in Lampakalova village.

He said that the accused Raja committed a lot of malpractices, embezzlement of loan amounts, falsification of

accounts, impersonation and misappropriation in the society during his tenure with the active support of other accused former CEO of the society Ch.Venkata Rao, current CEO K.Appa Rao, ex-branch managers of DCCB in Prathipadu branch Makineedi Narasimha Murthy and P a t a m s e t t i Muralikrishna and the ex-CEO of DCCB M. Dharma Rao. The Poddapuram divisional cooperative officer A.Radhakrishna Rao lodged a complaint with Prathipadu police. A case was filed against the accused under 409, 419, 420, 468, 471, 477-A, 109 r/w 34 IPC.

COVID | TALES

HOSKOTE
NAGABHUSHANAM | DC
ANANTAPUR, AUG 28

After many decades, if ever, the centuries-old historical Gugudu Kullayiswamy Peerlachavidi was confined to only few devotees during peerla pandaga, part-muharram at Gugudu village in Narpala mandal in the district in the wake of the pandemic. At least 3 lakh devotees

are expected to perform darshan and give offerings to the deities during the ongoing Muharram event on normal days and tens of thousands join the agnigundam celebrations. The endowment department imposed a lockdown, restricting devotees, worried about contamination at small peerla chavidi and Hanuman temples and in the congested streets of Gugudu village. Narpala tahsildar, Sridhar, told

State crosses 4-lakh mark with 10K cases

AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 66,317 samples

KAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 28

Andhra Pradesh is continuing to witness a surge in confirmed cases of Coronavirus since the last few days.

The state has registered 10,526 new Covid-19 cases, raising the overall tally to 4,03,616, apart from 81 deaths, taking the death toll to 3,714 during the last 24 hours. With this, the number of Coronavirus cases reported in the state has crossed the four-lakh mark.

In their Covid-19 bulletin issued here on Friday, state health authorities have reported that out of 61,331 samples tested, 10,526 individuals have tested Coronavirus positive. Out of the total 35,41,321 samples tested so far in the state, 3,03,711 patients have been discharged after recovery, while 96,191 patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals of the state.

East Godavari continues to top the list of new infections by registering 1,178 cases, followed by 1,151 in Nellore, 986 in West Godavari, 896 in Visakhapatnam, 874 in Prakasam, 833 in Anantapur, 819 in Chittoor, 801 in Guntur, 764 in Srikakulam, 757 in Kurnool, 552 in Vizianagaram, 501 in Kadapa and 414 in Krishna.

With regard to cumulative infections, East Godavari has again been worst affected with



Medical Staff collects the swab from the people for Covid-19 testing at Sanjeevini Bus which was set up at Government ENT Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Friday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

55,834 cases, followed by 42,457 in Kurnool, 38,596 in Anantapur, 34,206 in Visakhapatnam, 34,122 in West Godavari, 34,035 in Guntur, 33,952 in Chittoor, 27,528 in Nellore, 23,756 in Kadapa, 21,714 in Srikakulam, 20,555 in Prakasam, 18,586 in Vizianagaram, 15,380 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

East Godavari is also showing a good Covid-19 recovery rate, as 37,146 patients have recovered in the district so far, followed by 35,127 in Kurnool, 32,494 in Anantapur, 28,777 in

West Godavari, 27,109 in Visakhapatnam, 26,199 in Guntur, 24,730 in Chittoor, 21,101 in Nellore, 17,597 in Kadapa, 15,348 in Srikakulam, 12,822 in Krishna, 11,324 in Prakasam and 11,042 in Vizianagaram, apart from 2,461 recoveries from other states and 434 from other countries.

Chittoor district has registered 10 cases of death due to Coronavirus, followed by nine in Kadapa, eight each in Nellore, Prakasam and West Godavari, six each in East Godavari, Kurnool and Visakhapatnam, five

each in Anantapur, Krishna and Srikakulam, four in Guntur and one in Vizianagaram.

State health authorities have discharged 8,463 Covid-19 infected patients from various hospitals after their recovery during the last 24 hours in the state.

AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 66,317 samples, thereby registering a Covid-19 positive rate of 11.40, while Maharashtra has tested 30,975 samples with a positive rate of 18.96 and Telangana has tested 29,071 samples with a positive rate of 10.02.

Inter-state trains soon

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 28

After a high-level meeting and elaborate discussions, the railway board has endorsed powers to the zones for running of inter-state special trains after the Covid-19 unlock 5. With this, the railway zones have to decide to run the special trains according to the local public demand, representations from the elected representatives, and consultation with the state government for the possibility of running inter-state special trains.

According to A.K. Tripath, the Senior Divisional

- The railway zones have to decide to run the special trains according to the local public demand, representations from the elected representatives, and consultation with the state

Commercial Manager, Waltair division, it would give relief to the daily commuters, farmers, vendors, small scale business persons and employees who relied on train services for their daily travel. The inter-state special trains would also be planned, if state governments permit, he added.

Nursery legend Palla passes away

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC
RAJAHMUNDRY, AUG 28

Palla Venkanna, 85, a pioneer in nursery sector, passed away in a private hospital in Rajahmundry on Friday. He is survived by three sons and a daughter.

Venkanna began the nursery revolution at Kadiyam, near Rajahmundry in the early 1980s. He had only a half-acre plot and, though he was handicapped, he used to sell plants, on a bicycle with the help of a person. By and by he bought several acres and raised nurseries.

Inspired by him, several farmers in the area took up cultivation of nurseries and brought global fame to Kadiyam for nurseries. Buyers from all over the country and also abroad visit Kadiyam nurseries for ornamental plants. Many



A file picture of Palla Venkanna

film directors like Raghavendra Rao, Dasari Narayana Rao, Ramakrishna, E.V.V.

Satyanarayana and others used the nurseries for film shooting. He also worked in the

A strong belief is that Rama came to the area in the avatar of a peer, as Kullayappa

Peerla Pandaga low key this year due to Covid-19

Deccan Chronicle that all necessary measures were taken at temples on the occasion of the 13 day long on-going festival. The Gugudu, a small village about 27 kilometres from Anantapur, has a shrine of Kullayiswamy, also named Pir Kullayappa, who, it is believed, was the eldest grandson and heir of prophet Muhammad.

The muharram festival in Rayaaseema region is a

- The endowment department imposed a lockdown, restricting devotees, worried about contamination at small peerla chavidi and Hanuman temples

blend of Hindu and Islamic customs and rituals centralised at Gugudu, connecting to all other parts. An interesting story is observed by many devo-

tees in Gugudu, which means the nest of Guha, who is none other than the boatman who helped Rama, Sita and Lakshmana to reach the other side of the river.

A strong belief is that Rama came to the area in the avatar of a peer, as Kullayappa, meaning the god with a cap. The local Muslims believed that Kullayappa was one of the faqirs sent by Baba Fakhruddin to spread the

message of Sufism.

The villagers of Gugudu believe the pirs were found in a deep well on the outskirts of Gugudu and kept adjacent to the Hanuman temple. Devotees offer in both traditions to the temples —Hanuman and Kullayaswamy.

The Muslim rulers of the medieval period - Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore - introduced the public rituals of muharram in the Rayalaseema

region. The rituals of the muharram festival have been brought together with Sufi practices and also participation of Hindus resulting in a pluralistic devotional culture.

Endowment department officials said the festival is observed this year with few devotees because of the pandemic. RTC was also not operating special buses to Gugudu from various parts of region this year, unlike every year.

IN BRIEFS

HC dismisses Choksi's plea

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Friday dismissed a plea by Mehul Choksi, an accused in the nearly \$2 billion PNB scam, to conduct pre-screening of Netflix documentary, *Bad Boy Billionaires*. Justice Navin Chawla, after hearing the matter for over two hours, declined to grant relief to Choksi saying a writ petition for enforcement of a private right cannot be maintainable. The court said his remedy lies in a civil suit and granted him the liberty to raise the issue in a civil suit.

HC stays telecast by Sudarshan TV

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Friday restrained Sudarshan TV from telecasting its programme titled *Bindas Bol*, whose latest promo claimed that the channel was all set to broadcast a 'big expose on conspiracy to infiltrate Muslims in government service'. The show was scheduled to air on Friday at 8 pm. Justice Navin Chawla issued notice and sought responses of Central government, the Union Public Service Commission, Sudarshan TV, and its Editor-in-Chief, Suresh Chavhanke on a petition filed by former and present students of Jamia Millia Islamia University.

Pandemic care now part of MBBS course

New Delhi: Medical students will now learn about pandemic management along with its social, legal and other aspects in the MBBS course with India's apex medical education regulator introducing a new module to better prepare doctors for challenges posed by pandemics like Covid-19.

BJP WELCOMES SC's VERDICT ON BIHAR ELECTIONS

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, AUG. 28

The BJP on Friday welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to dismiss the petition seeking deferment of Assembly elections slated to be held this year.

"We welcome the Supreme Court's decision to reject the petition seeking a stay on the Bihar assembly elections. It's the prerogative of the election commission to decide when and how to hold elections. We also welcome the way the election commission is working hard to conduct fair and safe elections during the pandemic," BJP spokesperson Nikhil Anand told this newspaper.

During the hearing, the Supreme Court observed that "Covid-19 cannot be a valid ground to postpone elections." Opposition parties, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Congress, have been expressing strong reservations against holding Assembly polls in the middle of a pandemic. Jamui MP and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) chief Chirag Paswan joined the opposition in demanding the postponement of elections in Bihar.

The Bihar Assembly completes its current tenure on November 19. In the event of the postponement of elections, the state will be placed under President's rule.

NATH'S FARM LOAN WAIVER CLAIM A SHAM: SHIVRAJ

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, AUG. 28

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday called senior Congress leader Kamal Nath's claim that crop loans of 26 lakh farmers in the state had been waived during his regime, a sham.

Reacting to Nath's claim, Chouhan said the farm loan waiver scheme was implemented only in papers.

"The Kamal Nath government gave only loan waiver certificates to the farmers, but did not give money to the concerned banks. This has caused miseries to the farmers since they failed to secure fresh crop loans from banks since their loans were not written off", the Chief Minister told reporters here. The Nath government had failed to pay the premiums of crop insurances of the farmers, he said.

Shiite mourners detained



Policemen detain Shiite mourners trying to take out a Muharram procession during restrictions under section 144 at Abi Guzar at Batamalo in Srinagar on Friday. Authorities imposed restrictions in Lal Chowk and adjoining areas to foil the Muharram procession. This year, to stop the spread of Covid-19, different parties of Shiite Muslims had given a call to pay heed to the administration and not participate in any large congregations. Meanwhile, the Bombay High Court granted permission for a Muharram procession in Mumbai with stringent restrictions in place. — PTI

Oppn stages nationwide stir against holding of NEET, JEE

Demand that exams be deferred due to Covid-19 pandemic, floods

Chandigarh, Aug. 28: The Congress and its youth wing on Friday staged nationwide protests against holding JEE and NEET amid the Covid-pandemic.

Protests were held in Haryana, Punjab and their joint capital Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Goa, Uttarakhand, and Bengaluru.

Various Opposition parties, including the Congress, have demanded that the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) be deferred due to the Covid-19 pandemic and floods in parts of the country, even as the Union government has made it clear that they will be held as per schedule with due precautions.

In Haryana, Congress leaders and workers held protests at many places including Karnal, Kaithal, Bhiwani and Sirsa. Congress workers in

Bhiwani burnt an effigy of the Union education minister and demanded that the exams be deferred keeping in view the present Covid-19 situation. In Sirsa, Congress workers, during a protest, demanded that the exams be deferred for now. "What is the urgency of holding these exams when cases are increasing. Why are lives of thousands of students and their families being put at risk," a Congress leader said.

Members of the Chandigarh Territorial Congress, led by its president Pradeep Chhabra, staged a protest against holding of these exams, with him saying this is not the time to "endanger the lives of students". "Don't play with the lives of students," read a placard at the protest in Chandigarh. At many places in Punjab, the Youth Congress submitted memorandums addressed to the Centre

through the district administrations on the issue. It demanded that these exams be put off for the time being.

In Rajasthan, Transport minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas, chief whip Mahesh Joshi, former Pradesh Congress Committee president Sachin Pilot and other leaders took part in the agitation at the main gate of Malviya National Institute of Technology (MNIT) on JLN Marg. "The Centre is adamant on holding the examinations while ignoring the plight of lakhs of students and putting their lives at stake. Congress will intensify the agitation if the exams are not postponed," Khachariyawas said while addressing the protesters.

Meanwhile, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel strongly opposed the Centre's decision to hold NEET and JEE exams amid the Covid-19 pandemic. — PTI

Students raise safety concerns on Twitter

New Delhi, Aug. 28: Many students have taken to Twitter to express their concern over holding of JEE and NEET during the Covid-19 pandemic, amid a plea by Opposition leaders on Friday seeking review of the Supreme Court's order allowing the Centre to conduct the entrance exams in September.

The hashtag 'speakupforstudentsafety' has been trending since Friday morning with at least 2.25 million posts on the microblogging site.

While many students in their tweets pointed out the challenges of making it to examination centres under the present circumstances, others talked about their inability to

cope with the stress of having to appear for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), especially when Coronavirus cases are on the rise.

"500 cases: Complete lockdown. 75000 cases: Students forced for exams! #SpeakUpForStudentSafety," a Twitter user posted. "#SpeakUpForStudentSafety government really need to look at psychological conditions of the candidates, should give proper instructions about how the students who affected by flood or Covid will be giving exams. SC really needs to reconsider its decision," posted another user.

— PTI

CBI questions Rhea for 10 hrs in Sushant case

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, AUG. 28

A week after taking over the probe of Sushant Singh Rajput suicide, the Central Bureau of Investigation grilled his girlfriend and prime accused Rhea Chakraborty on Friday for over 10 hours.

The questioning comes a day after the agency questioned her brother Showik in the case. The officials also grilled Rajput's flatmate Siddharth Pithani and house manager Samuel Miranda apart from Chakraborty on Friday.

The investigating team began questioning shortly after 10.30 am at their DRDO guest house base. She was asked to provide her financial details which she produced after arriving. The officials are in the process of getting clarity on the allegation raised against her by Rajput's father.

"Chakraborty's family will be questioned at a later stage and if needed they will be grilled together," said an officer privy to the investigation.

Before questioning Chakraborty, the CBI grilled Rajput's flat mate Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh and domestic help Deepesh Sawant. The suicide probe is also being simultaneously followed up by the money laundering probe by the Enforcement Directorate and drugs

CONG DEMANDS PROBE INTO 'BJP's ANGLE'

SONU
SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 28

The Maharashtra unit of the Congress on Friday demanded that the "BJP angle" in the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case should be probed.

Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant claimed that the CBI was going to question Sandeep Singh, who was producer of the biopic *PM Narendra Modi*, with regard to the drugs aspect of the case.

He also alleged that the BJP demanded a CBI probe to shield Sandeep from Mumbai police's lens.

The Congress' demand came a day after saffron party leader Ram Kadam demanded a thorough probe in the drug nexus prevailing in Bollywood.

probe by the Narcotics Control Bureau, which registered a fresh case.

The FIR was filed based on alleged findings of drug consumption and peddling at his Bandra residence, where he was found hanging on June 14.

J&K: Four militants killed in encounter

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, Aug. 28

Four militants were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Shopian district on Friday afternoon. Their fifth associate, however, surrendered before the security forces, the officials said.

The police and Army officials said that J&K police's counterinsurgency Special Operations Group (SOG) along with the Army's 44 Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) launched a cordon-and-search operation

in Shopian's Kiloora village following a tip off on the presence of militants.

"As the joint team encircled the suspected spot, the hiding militants fired upon them. The fire was retaliated by the joint team, triggering off an encounter", a police spokesman said.

However, defence spokesman, Colonel Rajesh Kalia, said that the fifth militant "surrendered" before the security forces. He also said that two AK assault rifles and three pistols were recovered from the scene of the clash and that the identities of the slain militants are being ascertained.

MPs TO GET COVID TESTS; AIRLINES TO SERVE FOOD

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, AUG. 28

India once again recorded a single-day spike of 75,778 Coronavirus cases taking the country's overall infections till now to 34,59,295, out of which 26.40 lakh people have recovered. Such high numbers are emerging as the government plans to restart Metro train services, call the Monsoon Session of Parliament, hold medical and engineering entrance exams as well as university exams.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday held a meeting to discuss the ways to hold the session during which it was decided that all MPs will undergo a RT-PCR test to check their Covid-19 status before the session starts from September 10. It is learnt the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha may either function on alternate days or have staggered timings.

The government has, meanwhile, allowed airlines to serve pre-packed meals and beverages on domestic flights and hot meals on international flights depending on the duration of the flight.

The civil aviation ministry has said only single-use disposable trays, plates and cutlery should be used while serving food or beverages in domestic and overseas flights and the crew shall wear a fresh set of gloves for every meal/beverage service.

7 killed, 2 missing as Odisha battles floods

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 28

At least seven people were killed and two others went missing in Odisha since Wednesday due to floods triggered due to continuous rainfall.

According to Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Kumar Jena, majority of the victims were swept away while passing submerged roads.

"We have received reports regarding the death of seven people in the flood. Two others are missing. Two teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

and equal number of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) have been sent to north Odisha districts to carry out rescue and evacuation work," said the SRC.

He added that several thousand people were evacuated from low lying areas and accommodated in cyclone-shelters and other buildings.

Major rivers such as Mahanadi, Baitarani, Brahmani, Subarnarekha and Budhabalanga were in spate with their water flowing above the danger marks, submerging low-lying areas and paddy fields in several districts, disaster management minister Sudam Marndi said.

HC judge in Tablighi case disagrees with his colleague on anti-CAA stir

Mumbai, Aug 28: Justice M.G. Sewlikar of the Bombay High Court, who was part of a bench that quashed cases against foreign nationals who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi, said on Friday that he disagreed with certain observations in the ruling. He did not agree with remarks made by his colleague, Justice T.V. Nalavade, about action taken against members of the Muslim community over protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC), he said.

A division bench of Justices Nalavade and Sewlikar — part of the

● THE bench had said accused were made 'scapegoats' and baseless allegations were leveled against them.

Aurangabad bench of the HC — had on August 21 quashed FIRs filed against 29 foreigners, who had attended the event in Delhi in March this year, for allegedly violating visa conditions.

The bench had said the accused were made "scapegoats" and baseless allegations were leveled that they were responsible for spreading Coronavirus in the country. It said that the state government acted under "political compulsion", and there was a big propaganda against the foreigners who attended the Tablighi gathering.

"A political government tries to find the scapegoat when there is a pandemic or calamity and the circumstances show that there is probability that these foreigners were chosen to make them a scapegoat," the court had said.

However, Justice Sewlikar had stated on August 21 that while he agreed with the operative part of the order (quashing of FIRs), he did not agree with Justice Nalavade on few of the observations, and would pass a separate order. On Friday, Justice Sewlikar issued a four-page order

saying he did not agree with the remarks made by Justice Nalavade. "I find it difficult to concur with the observations (on CAA and NRC) as allegations in this respect are not made in the petitions nor there is any evidence in this regard. Therefore, in my opinion these observations are outside the scope of the petitions," Justice Sewlikar said.

Justice Nalavade in his order had said that there were largescale protests across the country by members of the Muslim community against CAA and NRC as they believed that citizenship would not be given to Muslim refugees and migrants. — PTI

LETTER SAGA TVM MP must understand that he has to work within boundaries: Kodikunnil

Tharoor 'guest artiste' in Cong: KPCC chief

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG. 28

A section of top Congress leaders in Kerala have started targeting Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor ever since he, along with 22 prominent Congress leaders, wrote a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi, seeking ground-breaking changes in the organisation and style of the leadership of the party.

KPCC working president, Kodikunnil Suresh, MP and the party's chief

whip in Lok Sabha, said Tharoor was like a 'guest artiste' in the Congress. "He is definitely not a politician. Tharoor is yet to understand that he has to work within the boundaries of Congress organisation. At times he does things in haste," said Suresh.

Suresh, who represents Mavelikkara constituency in the Lok Sabha, said everyone in the party should function in line with the organisational policies and programmes. "Tharoor may be a global citizen but he should not

take any decision or say anything according to his will. He should comply with the party's policies and programmes," he said, while replying to questions from reporters on the sidelines of social reformer Ayyankali's 150th birth anniversary celebrations in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday.

Tharoor on Thursday had sought to steer clear of any controversy related to the letter issue saying that matter should be put to rest. "I've been silent for four days on recent events in @INCIndia because

once the Congress president says the issue is behind us, it is the duty of all of us to work together constructively in the interests of the party," Tharoor tweeted on Thursday. "I urge all my colleagues to uphold this principle and end the debate," he added in the tweet.

Earlier, former Kerala chief minister, K. Karunakaran's, son and Vadakara MP K. Muraliedharan, mocked Tharoor saying only the high command can talk against an MP if there is any act of indiscipline on his part.

RAISING ISSUES DOES NOT AMOUNT TO REBELLION: CONG SPOKESMAN

Mumbai, Aug. 28: Congress spokesman Anant Gadgil on Friday said raising issues does not amount to rebellion and dared BJP leaders to speak against their national leadership on issues of Chinese "intrusion" and "failures" on economic and foreign policy fronts. He said internal democracy certainly exists in the Congress party.

"Will BJP leaders speak

out against their national leadership? I challenge the BJP to debate on issues of Chinese intrusion, foreign policy and economy. Will BJP leaders raise voice against their central leadership," Gadgil sought to know, attacking the saffron party. Raising issues does not mean rebellion, he said, referring to over 20 Congress leaders writing a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi. — PTI

IN BRIEF

Aus PM 'open' to repatriate gunman

Sydney: Canberra is open to the idea of New Zealand sending the Australian-born gunman behind the Christchurch mosque massacre back home to serve his life sentence, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Friday. White supremacist Brenton Tarrant was sentenced to life without parole on Thursday for the attacks on two mosques last year that killed 51 Muslim worshippers. Soon after the punishment was handed down, New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters said Tarrant, 29, should be transferred to the Australian prison system. "The Islamic community and all of New Zealand has already suffered enough without having to pay astronomical prison costs to keep him safe in our prison system," Peters said.

Turkish lawyer dies on hunger strike

Ankara: A human rights lawyer on hunger strike in a Turkish prison to demand a fair trial for herself and colleagues has died, an attorney's group said. Ebru Timtik, 42, died in an Istanbul hospital late Thursday, the Progressive Lawyers' Association said. She had been fasting for 238 days. The lawyer and 17 of her colleagues were accused of links to the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, or DHKP/C, a militant group designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. She was convicted in March 2019 and sentenced to 13 years and six months in prison. Her case was under review by an appeals court.

1st woman of colour as New Jersey judge

Trenton: The nomination of the first woman of colour to sit on New Jersey's Supreme Court was confirmed on Thursday by the state Senate. Fabiana Pierre-Louis, a 39-year-old attorney in private practice and a former federal prosecutor, was nominated by Democratic Governor Phil Murphy in June to succeed Justice Walter Timpone. He was nominated to the court by former Republican Governor Chris Christie in 2016 and will reach the mandatory retirement age of 70 later this year. "Ms Pierre-Louis is a New Jersey success story who will bring more diversity to the highest court of the most diverse state in the country," said Senate President Steve Sweeney, also a Democrat. She is Murphy's first pick for the high court.

US braces for mass anti-racism protest

Washington: Anti-racism protesters were planning to flood the streets of the US capital on Friday, after a white officer's shooting of African American Jacob Blake rekindled outrage over police violence and sparked a boycott movement in the sports world. Tens of thousands of demonstrators are expected on the streets of Washington for a march to mark the date of civil rights leader Martin Luther King's historic "I have a dream" speech. The demonstration has been dubbed "Get Your Knee Off Our Necks," in reference to African American George Floyd, who suffocated beneath the knee of a white officer in Minneapolis, igniting the most widespread civil unrest in the country in decades.

ALLOWING SHARIF TO LEAVE PAK WAS A MISTAKE: IMRAN

Islamabad, Aug. 28: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that allowing his predecessor Nawaz Sharif to leave the country was a "mistake" and that his government "regretted" the decision. In a wide-ranging interview to ARY News on Thursday night, Khan hinted that he was surprised into sending Sharif abroad, saying that the reports presented to his government suggested that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) supremo was severely ill, reports *Dawn news*. The federal cabinet, he said, had held a long debate over whether the government should let Sharif leave on humanitarian grounds. The Prime minister further said the court had declared that the government would be responsible, should anything happen to Sharif.

Japanese PM Abe ill, to demit office

Leadership race kicks off in third largest economy, Tokyo stocks tumble over 2%

Tokyo, Aug. 28: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced Friday he will resign, ending his record-breaking tenure in a bombshell development that kicks off a leadership race in the world's third-largest economy.

Abe said he is suffering a recurrence of the ulcerative colitis that forced him to cut short a first term in office and said that he no longer felt able to continue as prime minister. "There must not be time when I am not able to deliver results," he said, speaking in a calm but sombre voice.

"Now that I am not able to fulfil the mandate from the people with confidence, I have decided that I should no longer occupy the position of the prime minister." While speculation about Abe's political future has been growing in recent weeks, after he twice visited hospital for unspecified health checks, the resignation nonetheless came as a surprise.

Even as recently as Friday morning, the government's spokesman had appeared to dismiss concerns about Abe's health and suggested he would stay on in office.

But Abe made clear that would not be possible, and offered apologies for once again having to cut short his tenure.

"I would like to sincerely apologise to the people of Japan for leaving my post with one year left in my term of office, and amid the coronavirus woes, while various policies are still in the process of being implemented," he



Who could be next

● Taro Aso, gaffe-prone finance minister

● Shigeru Ishiba, popular ex-defence minister

● Yoshihide Suga, power player and adviser

● Fumio Kishida, favoured successor

● Taro Kono, colourful Twitter user

said, bowing deeply.

Abe said he would "firmly execute my duty to the end," and until the next prime minister is appointed, a process that is expected to require a leadership election involving ruling party lawmakers and members.

The resignation shocked the markets, with Tokyo stocks plunging more than two percent towards the end of afternoon trade when reports of Abe's decision first emerged.

"It was a big surprise," said Shinichi Nishikawa, a professor of political science at Meiji University in Tokyo.

"His resignation comes

at a time when Japan is facing tough issues, including measures against the Coronavirus," Nishikawa said.

The Kremlin on Friday hailed Shinzo Abe's contribution to bilateral ties between Moscow and Tokyo after the Japanese Prime Minister announced his resignation for health reasons.

Russia's relationship with Japan has been overshadowed by a decades-long territorial dispute over Tokyo's claim to a chain of islands seized by the Soviet Union in the final days of World War II.

"Shinzo Abe really made an invaluable contribution to the development of bilateral Russian-Japanese relations," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Putin and Abe met many times to try to find a solution to the impasse over the Kuril islands, known in Japan as the Northern Territories.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Friday she "regrets" the resignation of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on health grounds, hailing his "fight for multilateralism." Merkel said she and her fellow veteran leader in the Group of Seven industrialised nations had a "shared foundation of values".

"I of course regret his resignation and wish him all the best for his health," she told reporters. "We always worked very, very well together... He was always someone who committed himself to the fight for multilateralism." — *AFP*



Angela Merkel

MERKEL WARNS OF PANDEMIC DIFFICULTIES

Berlin, Aug. 28: Coping with the Coronavirus will become more challenging in the coming autumn and winter months, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in her annual summer press conference on Friday.

"Some things are likely to be more difficult over the next few months than they are in the summer," Merkel said.

"We have all enjoyed the freedoms and relative protection from aerosols in the summer, which is possible through life outdoors," she said, referring to micro-particles that are thought to spread through the air, especially in enclosed spaces.

Merkel's comments came after she agreed a wave of new measures with the leaders of Germany's 16 federal states on Thursday designed to combat rising case numbers in Germany blamed mainly on summer travel and private parties. — *AFP*



Donald Trump Jr., Tiffany Trump, President Donald Trump, first lady Melania Trump and Barron Trump stand on stage on the South Lawn of the White House on the fourth day of the Republican National Convention. — *AFP*

Trump says Biden wants to destroy 'American greatness'

Harris slams Don over social unrest

Washington, Aug. 28: President Donald Trump warned on Thursday that his election opponent Joe Biden wants to destroy "American greatness" in a speech accepting the Republican nomination for a second term against a backdrop of explosive racial tensions and the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

The former celebrity real estate developer declared himself all that stands between Americans and the disaster he claimed his "weak" Democratic rival would bring if he wins on November 3.

"This election will decide whether we save the American Dream," Trump said. "Joe Biden is not a savior of America's soul. He's the destroyer of America's jobs and given the chance, he'll be the destroyer of American greatness." Despite Trump's warnings of chaos, his bid for reelection is already taking place amid levels of turmoil the country hasn't seen for decades, a fact

rubbed in by a Black Lives Matter protest outside the White House — with shouting and vuvuzela trumpets audible inside

in Wisconsin.

The shooting sparked nationwide rage and three nights of violence in the city of Kenosha. Tensions soared when two protesters were shot dead Tuesday.

A white 17-year-old was detained on murder charges connected to the protesters' slayings, and Trump announced he was sending federal forces to Kenosha to "restore law and order." On Wednesday Vice President Mike Pence warned people watching the Republican convention that they "won't be safe in Joe Biden's America." — *AFP*

rubbed in by a Black Lives Matter protest outside the White House — with shouting and vuvuzela trumpets audible inside

the fences. Trump spoke from the White House's South Lawn, which he had transformed into a flashy event center

US def. chief says China destabilising Indo-Pacific

Koror, Palau, Aug. 28: US Defense Secretary Mark Esper accused China of "destabilising" the Pacific region on Friday on a whistle-stop trip to the tiny island nation of Palau.

The visit, which lasted barely three hours, comes as Washington attempts to counter Beijing's efforts to gain influence in the sparsely populated but strategically important Pacific island nations.

Esper said the United States and Palau shared values of freedom "where all countries respect the rules and norms for peace and prosperity of all nations".

"This is especially important today, as we continue work alongside our allies and partners to protect that international system that is under threat from China and its ongoing destabilising activities in the region," he said.

Beijing has enjoyed recent success in the Pacific, persuading the Solomon Islands and Kiribati last year to switch diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to China. That left Palau as one of

U.S. WARSHIP SAILS NEAR DISPUTED PARACEL ISLANDS IN S. CHINA SEA

Beijing, Aug. 28: An American warship sailed near the disputed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, the U.S. Navy has said, challenging Beijing's claims on the resource-rich waterway and prompting a warning from the Chinese military.

The Thursday operation came a day after China fired ballistic missiles into the sea as part of ongoing live-fire exercises, inflaming already high tensions between Washington and Beijing.

The US regularly conduct "freedom of navigation operations" in the

area to challenge Chinese territorial claims.

The U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet said in a statement that the USS Mustin, a guided-missile destroyer, sailed on Thursday "in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands to ensure critical shipping lanes in the area remain free and open".

The Chinese military on Friday accused the US ship of entering "China's territorial waters" near the islands "without authorisation". Chinese forces tracked the warship and then warned it to leave, said military spokesman Li Huamin. — *AFP*

Taiwan's four remaining allies in the Pacific and only 15 worldwide.

The nation of 22,000, which lies about 1,500 kilometres (930 miles) east of the Philippines, has retained strong ties to Taiwan and the United States under Palau President Tommy Remengesau, despite pres-

sure from China to switch.

Remengesau said China had employed "aggressive moves" in the region but he understood why it had won over some island nations. "It's no secret that they are loaning money and putting money into the economies of many Pacific island nations," he said. — *AFP*

for the final night of the Republican convention.

Trampling over long-running presidential custom to separate the executive mansion from political campaigning, Trump had some 1,500 white chairs laid out in front of the stage bedecked with rows of US flags and two giant video screens.

His message of anarchy under Democratic rule was amplified by a string of warm-up speakers including his powerful daughter Ivanka.

And when Trump finally came to deliver the main speech, he did not hold back.

"If the left gains power, they will demolish the suburbs, confiscate your guns," he said, while branding Biden as a man with a history of "betrayals" and "blunders." Biden responded on Twitter, asking: "When Donald Trump says tonight you won't be safe in Joe Biden's America, look around and ask yourself: How safe do you feel in Donald Trump's America?" — *AFP*

EU FINALISES LIST FROM BELARUS TO BE BLACKLISTED

Berlin, Aug. 28: The European Union has agreed to impose sanctions on up to 20 senior Belarus officials suspected of election fraud and the crackdown on protesters and is likely to put President Alexander Lukashenko on its list at some point, the bloc's foreign ministers said on Friday at a meeting in Berlin.

In Vienna, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe offered to mediate between the two sides in Belarus, with chairman Edi Rama pledging not to "interfere in internal affairs," but at the same time stressing human rights abuses must end.

Belarus authoritarian president of 26 years has faced weeks of protests since he was reelected to a sixth term on August 9 with 80 per cent of the vote. The opposition says the poll was rigged and the EU, among others, disputes the results.

In the first four days of demonstrations that followed, Belarus security forces detained almost 7,000 people and injured hundreds with rubber bullets, stun grenades and clubs. — *PTI*

BACK TO FUTURE

Machine can fly for 10 minutes; potential to be seen when it can stay in air for 30 minutes

Japan's 'flying car' has successful flight

Tokyo, Aug. 28: The decades-old dream of zipping around in the sky as simply as driving on highways may be becoming less illusory.

Japan's SkyDrive Inc., among the myriads of "flying car" projects around the world, has carried out a successful though modest test flight with one person aboard. In a video shown to reporters on Friday, a contraption that looked like a slick motorcycle with propellers lifted several feet (1-2

meters) off the ground, and hovered in a netted area for four minutes.

Tomohiro Fukuzawa, who heads the SkyDrive effort, said he hopes "the flying car" can be made into a real-life product by 2023, but he acknowledged that making it safe was critical. "Of the world's more than 100 flying car projects, only a handful has succeeded with a person on board," he said.

"I hope many people will want to ride it and feel safe." The machine so far

can fly for just five to 10 minutes but if that can become 30 minutes, it will have more potential, including exports to places like China, Fukuzawa said. Unlike airplanes and helicopters, eVTOL, or "electric vertical takeoff and landing," vehicles offer quick point-to-point personal travel, at least in principle.

They could do away with the hassle of airports and traffic jams and the cost of hiring pilots, they could fly automatically.

Battery sizes, air traffic control and other infrastructure issues are among the many potential challenges to commercializing them. "Many things have to happen," said Sanjiv Singh, professor at the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, who co-founded Near Earth Autonomy, near Pittsburgh, which is also working on an eVTOL aircraft.

"If they cost \$10 million, no one is going to buy them. If they fly for 5 minutes, no

one is going to buy them. If they fall out of the sky every so often, no one is going to buy them," Singh said in a telephone interview.

The SkyDrive project began humbly as a volunteer project called Carti-ator in 2012, with funding by top Japanese companies including automaker Toyota Motor Corp., electronics company Panasonic Corp. and videogame developer Bandai Namco. — *AP*



This picture shows a test flight of a manned 'flying car' at Toyota Test Field in Toyota, central Japan. — *AP*

DECCAN Chronicle

29 AUGUST 2020

GST meet: Has govt failed its citizens?

During the GST Council meeting on August 27, the government of India has invoked the *force majeure* clause (a phrase in French for superior force or the act of God) to renege on its statutory obligation to make good the loss incurred by states on account of switching over to the Goods and Services Tax. The Centre argued that the shortfall in revenue collection was because of an extraordinary situation caused by a pandemic and that it is not bound to make good loss caused by an act of God. The Central government's argument was based on two factors — one, the promise that it made to states to make good its revenue loss on account of the GST rollout, and two, a contraction that the Indian economy is expected to witness this financial year. The Centre believes that the revenue shortfall would be considerably more because of the Covid-19 drag on the economy and should not be attributed to the GST.

According to the Union finance ministry's estimates, the loss to states on account of GST rollout is ₹97,000 crore, while the overall shortfall in revenue is ₹2.37 lakh crores. Since the overall loss of revenue is more than double the loss caused by the GST rollout, the Centre refused to bail out states using funds from its coffers. This argument, however, glosses over one crucial point. While agreeing to the GST regime, the states had sought compensation for relinquishing their financial independence. If the states had not acceded to the GST regime, they would have been free to raise revenue depending on their local circumstances. They would not have been forced to stand before the GST Council with a begging bowl.

The Centre also cannot wash its hands of the revenue shortfall because of the decline in the economic growth had started in the last financial year itself. It would, therefore, be entirely wrong to blame God because coronavirus did not emerge in the country suddenly out of blue. Even if we accept that God has sent coronavirus to punish us, He has given enough opportunity for India to take steps to protect itself from the virus. However, it was overconfidence of the Narendra Modi government that was busy in welcoming US President Donald Trump and unseating the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh which brought India to this pass.

Since the Central government has invoked *force majeure* to escape its responsibility, one wonders if the ordinary citizens too would have an opportunity to escape their contractual responsibility to pay loan instalments without attracting legal action by banks. Why should there be different yardsticks for the Central government and its citizens? After all, the Bhagavad Gita says, "Whatever actions great persons perform, common people follow. Whatever standards they set, all the world pursues". Will Sangh Parivar ideologues advise Prime Minister Narendra Modi to let citizens follow examples set by them?

Protect tribes in Andamans

The pandemic figures spelled bad news and worse for Indians on Friday morning. After topping 75,000, the number of daily cases recorded in India rose to 77,500 and counting so that, statistically speaking, now at least one Indian citizen in every random 400 has come in contact with the Covid-19 virus. The virus this week also infected 10 members of the dying Great Andamanese tribe of just 53 people. This calls for urgent action. The government, at the Centre and the Union territory level, is morally bound to protect its citizens. Many among the infected used to travel to Port Blair where they hold government jobs. With a population of four lakhs, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has reported 2,268 cases so far, with 37 deaths.

The government is obliged to protect the Great Andamanese from the latest epidemic also for historical reasons. The Great Andamanese are an endangered tribe whose numbers have dwindled from 8,000 in 1858 to the paltry figure of the present day. This happened because the British settlers coercively altered their hunter-gatherer lifestyle, in the process introducing diseases among them. Successive epidemics of syphilis, measles, conjunctivitis and other diseases blinded and decimated huge populations.

Epidemics, in fact, are a major threat to tribes that newly emerge from isolation. This was last witnessed when, three years after they were socialised, in 1999, the Jarawa tribe got almost wiped out by a measles epidemic. The population of Jarawas stands between 250 and 400 today. The Onges number no more than 100. Thus, containing the coronavirus at this stage is vitally important, seeing as the Great Andamanese tribe, along with the Onges, Jarawas and the uncontacted Sentinelese, form part of the Indian chapter of the human genome project. Should these people disappear, the key to solving the mysteries of human evolution will be lost forever.

The UT administration should, therefore, swing into patrol, conduct a risk assessment and ensure complete eradication of the disease from one island to the next in a deadline-driven manner before the crisis gets out of hand.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

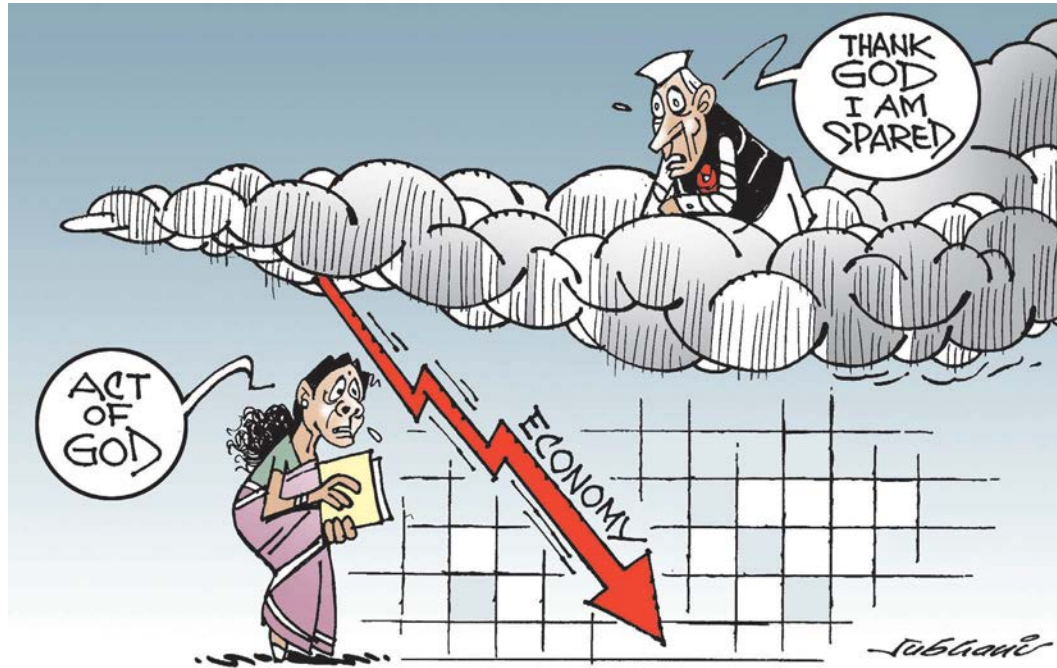
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Subhani



Chinese mischief likely in Himachal, U'khand



Claude Arpi

It's difficult to talk to China, they always play by their own changeable rules, promoting their own interests

After China's People's Liberation Army had crossed the Line of Actual Control, which for years has been considered as the de facto border between the two countries, in Ladakh, China's ambassador to India Sun Weidong had the gall to say that the two countries should be partners, not rivals.

On July 10, he added that the June 15 Galwan Valley clash was a "situation that neither China nor India would like to see... Currently, our frontline troops are disengaging on the ground."

All this does not tally with the facts.

Mr Sun also insisted: "China has all along advocated that peace is of paramount importance. We are neither a warlike state nor an assertive country."

It seems to be a bad joke. While multiple rounds of negotiations have been held between the Indian corps commander and his Chinese counterpart, not much hope remains for a "pre-April" solution before winter sets in. When Beijing suggested that both sides go back equidistantly from the Finger 4 area in Ladakh, this was rejected by New Delhi.

In the meantime, Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat has declared that the "military option" was on the table if the diplomatic option failed.

But what is far more worrying is the possibility of the PLA opening a second front in the central sector of the 4,056-km Sino-Indian boundary. On May 17, IANS reported that Chinese helicopters had violated Indian airspace twice in Himachal Pradesh in April: "The first intrusion was reported on April 11 and the second on April 20. In both incidents, a Chinese heli-

copter was observed flying on the Indian side of the international border close to Sumdoh in Spiti subdivision," an official was quoted as saying.

Most of the Indian media reported the area was not "disputed" by China, but that isn't the case. This area, called Chuva and Chuje by Beijing, has since the mid-1950s been on China's long list of places selected to extend its territory.

In fact, there are five "disputed" areas in the central sector, which stretches over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand: Chuva-Chuje, Shipki-la, Nilang-Jadhang, Barahoti-Lapthal and Lipulekh (recently engulfed in Nepal's new maps).

On July 30, 1980, the now-defunct historical division of the external affairs ministry sent a Secret Note to the East Asia division, dealing with China. This was with reference to the claims/occupation by China of some Indian areas in the central sector.

This note described the Sino-Indian boundary in the middle sector. "This sector of the boundary also has natural features of watersheds, mountain passes and river valleys. Its location is as follows: starting from the terminal point of the western sector, it runs southward along the watershed west of the Pare River and Chuva River, passes by the converging point of Pare River and Spiti River, crosses the Sutlej River west of Shipki Pass, continues southward along the watershed."

The historical division said at the 1960 talks with China, Indian officials brought forward clear and conclusive evidence "to show that the alignment as shown by them in the middle sector had, throughout its length a

It's difficult to talk to China, they always play by their own changeable rules, promoting their own interests

Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. This is another tenuous claim from China, with no historical, cartographical or geographical backup. It is now a dormant claim, but with Beijing in the mood to claim Tajikistan's Pamir region and Vladivostok (and Ladakh), it could well be revived. It is a plain violation of Indian territory, without any justification as it was mentioned in the 1954 agreement, which meant that north of the pass was Tibet and south India.

Other places "disputed" by China in the central sector are Nilang (Nelang) and Jadhang, located south of Tsangchok-la. It was the only area disputed by the Tibetan government before independence; but it was a "gentle" dispute between neighbours sharing the same values. No troops were ever involved.

For Tibetans, their claim was based on the fact that the 13th Dalai Lama is supposed to have said the border was located at a bridge on the Gungum *nala* on the way to Gangotri.

For British India, the principle of the watershed was the prime deciding factor and thus Tsangchok-la was the border (India has since Independence followed the same principle).

During the 1960 talks, China added two more "disputes" — Lapthal and Sangchamalla, areas adjacent to Barahoti.

What is strange is that these claims are not based on any of the principles normally used to demarcate a boundary — watershed, river, customary routes, grazing rights, etc. That is why it's difficult to talk to China, they always play by their own changeable rules, promoting their own interests.

These claims could indeed be pretexts for China's adventurism in future; and India should be ready to respond.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

LETTERS

MEDIA TRIALS

A very pertinent question has been raised by three social activists in Mumbai who filed a PIL seeking Maharashtra HC to restrain a section of media from reporting further on the death of Sushant Singh Rajput. A section of media as alleged in the PIL has been conducting 'trial' all by itself, pronouncing judgment(s) and even likely 'conviction'(!).

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

FAMILY CULTURE

The author's observations are cogent and rational (*It is time for Congress to change its 'culture, DC, Aug. 28*). He has deftly touched upon the crux of the problem. Instead of showing political acumen and perspicacity, the GOP is trying to shoot the messenger. If it is not handled aptly, it will be grist to mill for the ruling party.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

All Congress men are fully aware that the party is in a poor state and it is impossible for it to regain semblance of national party either with the Gandhi family or a new version of Sitaram Kesari at the helm. All the signatories of the toothless letter have no safe bases in their states and time is running out for them to regain power. The show must go on with "somehow syndrome" with rudderless national party.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

PM's move shocks princes

NEW DELHI, August 28
Intendant-general of the rulers' concord Maharaja of Dhrangadhra is writing to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi expressing the astonishment of the princes that the Government should be going ahead with the legislation to abolish privy purses, while efforts were still on to solve the problem through bipartite negotiations.

The Maharaja is understood to have pointed out that any discussions between the Government and the concord after the legislation was adopted by Parliament would be pointless.

Ayesha Khaliq



Marriage age tweak won't meet gender, health goals

The Prime Minister's announcement to raise the legal marriageable age limit for girls from 18 to 21 years has been hailed by advocates as a historic move. Proponents argue that the future law would address serious concerns like population control, early pregnancy and motherhood, maternal mortality, lack of opportunities for higher education, careers and gender injustice. Equally strong views of disagreement are being articulated by scholars, NGOs, activists and opinion-makers, the author included. The opponents hold the view that the proposed law is not likely to succeed in changing the socio-cultural realities at the ground level and the gender barriers against women in achieving its intended goals. The structural inequalities and prejudices of the society that are the root causes of the problem cannot be adequately addressed only through legal interventions.

As per the Unicef, at least 1.5 million girls under the age of 18 are married each year — making India home to the largest number of child brides. The ongoing Covid-19 crisis will further increase the number of child marriages in the country. As seen in the aftermath of Ebola in affected countries, child marriage rates increased drastically, for reasons of

deteriorating economic opportunities and future uncertainties. The sudden and prolonged March lockdown has hit hard a very large section of our country's population; leading to economic deprivation. As a result, poor parents, out of work due to Covid, are marrying off minor daughters to reduce financial burden. The closure of schools has aggravated the problem. Tragically, poor parents see this as an opportunity to get their minor daughters married at a lower cost on ceremonies and dowry. Overall, the current situation will further undermine efforts of past years to combat child marriages in India. Families coming from lower socioeconomic strata, particularly in rural areas, are thus being compelled to marry their offspring early. Raising the legal age of marriage is not going to make any favourable impact on this section of the society.

Thus the proposed law is not a panacea for gender injustice. Though well-intentioned, it will not easily translate into desired outcomes. The law will not effectively target the underlying causes that lead to child marriages, overpopulation, malnutrition and maternal mortality. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and the Young Lives in 2018 noted that the high prevalence of child marriages in India is

mainly due to poverty and lack of education. In addition to this, it is equally necessary to address cultural and sociological reasons behind the phenomenon.

The multiple factors that are responsible for child marriages, despite a law prohibiting it, include caste, class, custom, coercion, economy, education and poverty. The most significant factor is gender inequality and the low value associated with girls and women in India. The discrimination against girls starts from the womb and continues to reflect in their access to food, education, employment and other resources. The cultural and patriarchal values ingrained in our society view them as a social and economic burden on the family. Child marriage is also a part of this systematic unfairness. In rural communities, structural inequalities and patriarchy are perpetrated in the guise of custom. Societal pressure forces families into marrying daughters early to prevent them from becoming sexually active before marriage. The low priority assigned to providing resources for a girl's education contributes to their further marginalisation. The families that want to educate their daughters are unable to do so, due to inadequacy of resources and, in many cases, lack of neighbourhood schools.

Instead of raising the legal marriageable age, girls need to be provided with equal opportunities to continue their education. Though the Right to Education Act assures education until the age of 14 years, an incremental move would be to ensure quality education till the age of 18, access to higher education, job opportunities and training. Education provides a stepping stone for girls to move out of inter-generational poverty. This approach will make girls economically independent and strengthen their agency to make informed decisions regarding their career, reproductive health, life, and whether to marry or not.

The existing laws have not so far succeeded in curbing the problem of child marriage. Even though the minimum age of marriage is 18 years, in rural and backward areas, minor girls as young as 12 or 13 get married. The proposal will only lead to a change in the law, but will not change the societal realities. Effectively addressing it requires enormous effort and resources. The state and society together have to challenge gender stereotypes and socio-cultural barriers to women's empowerment. They may act through well-planned interventions and awareness drives with parents and communities. The focus of gov-

ernment policies and advocacy should be on enhancing capabilities, skills, education, and employability of the girls and women. Additionally, advocating and promoting the sexual and reproductive health for girls and women would be an ideal approach to address their overall well-being and achieve desired population control. This will enable them to make informed decisions on contraceptive services, abortion, and family planning. The social empowerment of women is needed foremost to progress towards gender equality and their emancipation. Our society needs to deconstruct existing prejudices and treat women as autonomous individuals, equal at the household and community levels. The focus needs to be oriented towards their empowerment by providing them with education, vocations, and equal opportunities. This approach will help better address the problems related to early marriages, a skewed sex ratio, maternal mortality and population.

The writer is an alumnus of the MSc social policy studies programme at the London School of Economics and the sociology masters programme from Delhi School of Economics. She is currently working with Women Power Connect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	39,467.31 0.90
Nifty 50	11,647.60 0.76
S&P 500*	3,496.22 0.33
Dollar (₹)	73.39 0.58
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.38 0.16
Euro (₹)	87.38 0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,155*252 0.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.03 -0.06
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.097 -0.050
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.721 -0.025

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Gold bond opens on Aug. 31; issue priced at ₹5,117

The issue price for the sixth tranche of the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme has been fixed at Rs 5,117 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India said. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2020-21 series VI will open for subscription on August 31 and close on September 4. The issue price for the bonds (series V), which were open for subscription from August 3 to August 7, was Rs 5,334 per gram of gold.

NZ probing cyber attacks on stock market



New Zealand's government and its foreign spy agency are getting involved after cyber attacks disrupted trading on the nation's stock market several times this week. The attacks have affected the private company NZX which hosts the market, halting trading for hours at a time. Finance minister Grant Robertson said ministers had asked the Government Communications Security Bureau intelligence agency to help.

Taxpayers under faceless scrutiny to get intimation

The Income Tax Department will soon start sending out intimation to assesses undergoing scrutiny that such cases would now be handled under faceless assessment. CBDT additional commissioner Jaishree Sharma said domestic transfer pricing cases too will be covered under the faceless assessment mechanism. Reassessment cases would also be part of the faceless scheme.

Kawasaki Vulcan S cruiser bike costs ₹5.79 lakh

Japanese automaker Kawasaki Motors introduced the new BS-6 compliant middleweight cruiser bike Vulcan S priced at Rs 5.79 lakh at pan-India showroom. With this, Kawasaki has updated its entire 650cc lineup to comply with BS6 regulations. The Vulcan S is powered by the 650cc, liquid-cooled, parallel-twin engine that offers 61PS of power and 63Nm of torque, and the bike is mated to a 6-speed gearbox.



■ Investors regain ₹45 L cr after March dip

Market back at pre-Covid level

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, AUG. 28

It was a good week for the market, with banks and other financials helping market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50 to regain pre-Covid-19 levels. BSE's market capitalisation stood above Rs 1.58 lakh crore compared to the March 2020 low of over Rs 1.13 lakh crore, indicating investors regaining around Rs 45 lakh crore in the sharp recovery so far.

During the week, the Nifty Bank index gained a hefty 9.97 per cent, of which 4.19 per cent gain came on Friday.

On Friday, the Sensex closed at 39,467, up 353 points while the Nifty-50 gained 88 points at 11,647.

The Nifty closed the week up 2.43 per cent.

The key indices held up admirably above the mark buoyed by expectations from the twin verdicts next week which would have an impact on banking stocks, analysts said.

The Supreme Court, during the week, heard a plea seeking interest waiver for six months during the loan moratorium period granted by the Reserve Bank. The apex court adjourned the hearing to September 1 while giving the government one week's time to clarify its position.

The SC may also pronounce order in the matter of adjusted gross revenue dues of the telecom companies next week.

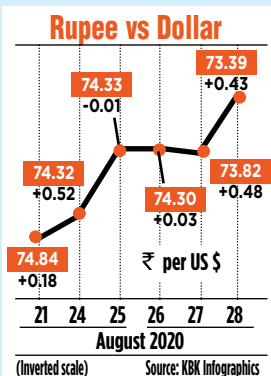
Vikas Jain, senior

Rupee posts biggest weekly gain in 20 months at 73.38

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, AUG. 28

Weak dollar, sustained foreign fund inflows and absence of currency intervention from the Reserve Bank helped the rupee rise to its highest level in six months and become the best performer in Asia on Friday.

The rupee closed 42 paise up 73.38 against the dollar, up 0.6 per cent compared to its previous close of 73.81. During the session, the rupee rose to 73.28, its highest level since March 5. The rupee has risen nearly 2 per cent for the week, its biggest weekly gain since the week ended December 21, 2018 as the central bank halted dollar purchases, traders said. As a result, the rupee is finally taking cues from the Asian peers, especially the yuan, which is trading at



a seven-month high.

The Dollar Index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, is at a two-year low at 92.50. So far this month foreign portfolio investors have invested Rs 50,000 crore in the domestic market.

Analysts said the RBI has probably stepped aside from the dollar buying intervention.

research analyst, Reliance Securities said, "The positive news flow from the domestic and global markets set the ball rolling for banking stocks. The US Federal Reserve's new policy stance to let inflation run higher and unemployment run lower, meaning prolonged low interest

rate, is one of the reasons which created positive sentiments on banking stocks."

The major gainers included Indusind Bank (32 per cent), Tata Motors (18 per cent), Axis Bank (16 per cent), SBI (13.6 per cent) and Shriram Transport (12.6 per cent).

Murugappa all set to bag CG Power

New Delhi, Aug 28: Exactly a year after founder Gautam Thapar was sacked as its chairman, CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd is set to get a new promoter in Murugappa Group after its offer to invest Rs 700 crore in the fraud-hit firm found no challenger.

Chennai-based Murugappa Group firm Tube Investments of India Ltd (TIL) had earlier this month offered to invest Rs 700 crore in CG Power for a 56.6 per cent stake.

Lenders to CG Power, which had defaulted on loan repayments since the fraud was detected in the firm last year, launched a so-called Swiss challenge to explore if any other eligible investor was willing to better the Murugappa offer.

No counteroffer was received at the close of the bidding on August 26, two sources with direct knowledge of the development said.

Lenders are not evaluating the Murugappa offer and are likely to approve it later in the day, they said.

While CG Power is an established player in industrial motors and power components, Tube Investments is the engineering arm of the Rs 36,900-crore Murugappa Group.

A year back, the board of CG Power, erstwhile known as Crompton Greaves, had removed founder Gautam Thapar as the company chairman, citing fraud. — PTI

World Bank suspends ease of business report

Probing irregularities in data; India rankings may be revised

ARCHANA CHAUDHARY
AUG. 28

The World Bank has suspended publication of its Doing Business report to probe alleged irregularities in the underlying data.

"A number of irregularities have been reported regarding changes to the data in the Doing Business 2018 and Doing Business 2020 reports, published in October 2017 and 2019. The changes in the data were inconsistent with the Doing Business methodology," the World Bank said in a statement on Thursday. "We will act based on the findings and will retrospectively correct the data of countries that were most affected by the irregularities."

Published since 2003, the report ranks 190 economies based on how easy it is to do business there, taking into account trading regulations, property rights, contract enforcement, investment laws, the availability of credit and a number of other factors.

In recent years, there have been questions about the integrity of the rankings. Paul Romer quit in 2018 as the World Bank's chief economist after questioning changes to Chile's order in the Doing Business report.

Changes to the World Bank's methodology penalised Chile under



INDIA 72ND ON WAGE LIST

New Delhi, Aug. 28: India has been ranked a lowly 72nd among 106 countries in terms of the average wage per month, while Switzerland topped the chart, according to a global ranking of average wages prepared by Picodi.com.

With an average monthly wage of Rs 32,800 (\$437), India has been ranked 72nd among 106 countries surveyed by Picodi.com, an international e-commerce platform which provides discount coupons.

Switzerland, where the average wage converted into rupees comes to Rs 4,49,000 (\$5,989), topped the ranking. —PTI

Socialist governments, even though the underlying indicators barely moved, Justin Sandefur, senior fellow at the Center

for Global Development, wrote in a blog in November. "Similarly in India, where Narendra Modi used India's surge in the Doing Business rankings as a political talking point, we showed that methodological changes, not reform, had pushed India up the rankings," he wrote.

India rose to No. 63 in 2019 from 142 in 2014, when PM Narendra Modi first took office.

"India will continue with our efforts to improve the ease of doing business, irrespective of the World Bank's actions regarding its rankings," Yogesh Baweja, spokesman for India's trade ministry, said by phone. "Our steps are part of our efforts to ensure ease of working and ease of living for people."

The World Bank is auditing data collection processes and is reviewing changes that occurred after the institutional data review process for the last five Doing Business reports, the multilateral lender said.

—Bloomberg

Cereal exports jump over 200%

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 28

Cereals, other than wheat and rice, have seen a jump in demand in the overseas market due to the pandemic with their exports growing over 200 per cent in July.

In July, exports of cereals like bajra, oats, corn, ragi, quinoa, yellow maize, sorghum and their seeds collectively grew 226 per cent to Rs 330 crore against Rs 101 crore in the same month last year. Between April and July, exports grew 32 per cent to Rs 673 crore against Rs 509 crore in the year-ago period.

Among the cereals, certain varieties of popcorn fetched export revenues of Rs 190 crore in July against nil exports in July 2019. Yellow maize and another variety of maize too saw an emerging demand in the overseas market this July.

According to K. Unnikrishnan, deputy director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations, cereals have witnessed increased demand from African countries

and the Gulf region during the lockdown.

"Many of the exporting nations had imposed restrictions on shipments to ensure food security during the lockdown. On the other hand, India had excess production and there were no restrictions on exports. This made countries in Africa and the Gulf region increasingly buy from India," he said.

Further, the Gulf region was seen stocking up commodities fearing scarcity.

In the case of maize, Vietnam, one of the largest producers, had a lower output and countries turned to India. Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka have been buyers of cereal seeds from India.

Apart from volumes, price rise in cereals also helped export earnings.

Acreage of major kharif crops		
	Aug 28, 2019: 1,009	Aug 28, 2020: 1,082.22
Rice	354.41	389.81
Pulses	128.65	134.57
Coarse cereals	172.49	176.89
Oilseeds	170.99	193.29
Sugarcane	51.68	52.29
Jute & mesta	6.86	6.97
Cotton	124.90	128.41
Total sown area in lakh hectare		

Source: Ministry of Agriculture/KBK Infographics

India may get vaccine by early 2021

New Delhi, Aug 28: As Covid-19 vaccine trials move ahead at a breakneck speed, an approved vaccine is likely to hit the Indian market by the first quarter of 2021, Bernstein said in a report.

Globally, there are four candidates that are close to approval by the end of 2020 or early 2021.

Through partnerships, India has access to two of those AZ/Oxford's viral vector vaccine and Novavax's protein subunit vaccine.

"Phase I/II data looks promising for both in terms of safety and the vaccine's ability to elicit an immune response," it said. "We are optimistic that there will be an approved vaccine in the market by 1Q calendar year 2021 in India."

While the vaccine could be available at \$3-6 (Rs 225-550) per dose, herd immunity might be two years away due to implementation challenges, it said, adding the experience in large scale adult vaccination programmes is thin.

US-BASED BCM TIES UP WITH BE FOR VACCINE PRODUCTION

SEEMA HAKHU KACHRU
HOUSTON, AUG. 28

In the race to find a cure for the coronavirus infection, Texas-based Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) has entered into a licensing agreement with Indian pharmaceutical company Biological E Limited (BE) for the development of a safe, effective and affordable vaccine.

According to BCM, Hyderabad-headquartered BE has licenced the recombinant protein Covid-19 vaccine candidate developed at Baylor. The company engaged in

licence negotiations with the BCM Ventures team after initial discussions on Baylor's technology and how it could possibly work on a vaccine to address the current global pandemic.

The company will leverage its past experience for the further development and commercialisation of the vaccine candidate, which is currently produced using a proven yeast-based expression technology, the Texas-based BCM said.

At a webinar organised by the Consul General of India in Houston, Dr Peter Hotez, professor and dean

of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor, said he and his colleagues have already been making SARs and MERS vaccines.

"Then, when we got word about Covid-19, we saw that the sequence for the new virus was similar to some of the viruses that we were already making vaccines for," said Hotez.

Hotez and his team were able to quickly move on to creating a Covid-19 vaccine, which resulted in the collaboration with a large vaccine producer in India. —PTI

mentation programme demands.

Cold chain storage and trained manpower will be the biggest hurdles, it said. "Even assuming 2x current throughput, implementation in the government programme can take 18-20

months...We believe, the first set of vaccines will be allocated to the vulnerable population, healthcare workers, population above 65 years followed by essential sector workers and the economically weaker section," it said. —PTI

Sarda Agro insolvency plan scrapped

New Delhi, Aug 28: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Friday set aside the insolvency proceedings initiated against Telangana-based Sarda Agro Oils, citing that claims were filed by the lender three years after declaring the account as a non-performing asset.

The ruling comes nearly a year after the Hyderabad bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) admitted a plea from Allahabad Bank for insolvency proceedings against the company.

In an order, a three-member bench of the NCLAT said the date of default is computed from the date of declaration of account as a NPA (non-performing asset) and such date of default would not shift.

It will be "impermissible to proceed with Section 7 application," filed by the bank which is after the limitation period of three years, the order said.



Sarda Agro

Under Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), a financial creditor can get insolvency proceedings initiated against the corporate debtor concerned.

The NCLAT's ruling has come on a petition filed by Sarda Agro Oils' managing director Jagdish Prasad Sarada challenging the NCLT order.

The appellate tribunal observed that the appellant's account was declared as NPA on September 30, 2015 by the bank after irregular repayments. Then, it filed an application under Section 7 of the IBC to initiate

insolvency proceedings on December 31, 2018.

"We are of the firm view that the determining factor is the three years period from the date of default NPA," the NCLAT bench, headed by acting chairperson Justice B. L. Bhat, said.

According to the NCLAT, the Supreme Court has also held that the limitation period for application under Section 7 of the IBC is three years as provided by the Limitation Act, 1963 and is extendable only by the application of Section 5 of Limitation Act, 1963 if any case for condonation of delay is made out. Section 5 pertains to extension of the stipulated period.

The appellate tribunal has directed the NCLT to close the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) initiated against Sarda Agro Oils and set aside the appointment of resolution professional, declaring all consequential action taken by him as "illegal". —PTI

SHORT TAKES



Vinesh Phogat

Khel Ratna Vinesh is Covid positive

New Delhi: India's top woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Friday said she has tested positive for Covid-19. Selected for this year's Khel Ratna award, she had been training at her village in Sonepat with coach Om Prakash. "Yes, I have tested positive for Covid-19 when my sample was taken in Sonepat before the dress rehearsal for the awards ceremony. I will recover soon, God willing. I am in isolation at home," Vinesh said. The 26-year-old will skip Saturday's virtual ceremony for the National Sports Awards distribution. She is one among five athletes chosen for the country's highest sporting honour this year. — PTI

Coach dies a day ahead of award

New Delhi: Veteran athletics coach Purshottam Rai died due to a cardiac arrest on Friday, tragically a day before he was to be conferred with the prestigious Dronacharya Award. He was 79. "He took part in the rehearsal for the National Sports Awards but later suffered heart attack and passed away," an Athletics Federation of India official said. The National Sports Awards ceremony will be held virtually on Saturday due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Rai was to receive the Dronacharya Award from President Ram Nath Kovind in the lifetime category. Rai coached top athletes such as Olympian quartermiler Vandana Rao, heptathlete Pramila Aiyappa, Ashwini Nachappa, Murali Kuttan, M. K. Asha, E. B. Shyla, Rosa Kutty and G. Pramila. "It is a tragic incident and we at AFI are shocked. He spent his whole life for athletics and he made immense contribution. We condole his tragic demise and express our condolences to his family," said AFI president Adil Sumariwalla. — PTI

Arsenal, Liverpool in clash for Shield

London: Jordan Henderson has urged Liverpool to show their hunger to retain the Premier League title when they face Arsenal in the Community Shield on Saturday. Just five weeks after Liverpool captain Henderson lifted the Premier League trophy, Jurgen Klopp's side kick off the new season in the glamour friendly at Wembley. While their Premier League title defence doesn't get underway until September 12, the Reds are keen to lay down an early marker to their title rivals. Henderson knows FA Cup winners Arsenal will pose a good test of Liverpool's desire for more silverware after beating the champions 2-1 at the Emirates Stadium late last season. — AFP

Live on TV

FORMULA ONE

Belgian Grand Prix Practice-3 from 3.25 pm; Qualifying from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

TOUR DE FRANCE

Cycling race from 5.30 pm on Eurosport, HD

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Barbados Tridents vs Trinbago Knight Riders from 7.30 pm; St Kitts & Nevis Patriots vs Jamaica Tallawahs from 11.45 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

FA COMMUNITY SHIELD

Arsenal vs Liverpool from 9 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

T20 CRICKET

England vs Pakistan from 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

UFC FIGHT NIGHT

Anthony Smith vs Aleksandar Rakic from 6.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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Left: Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma spends time with his family in their hotel room in Abu Dhabi. **Right:** Royal Challengers Bangalore's South African batsman AB de Villiers poses with his cricket kit and face shield in these photos posted by MI and RCB teams respectively.



Shaken sides train

IPL teams begin practice amid Covid scare

C. SANTOSH KUMAR | DC with agency inputs
CHENNAI, AUG. 28

With just 22 days left before the start of the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League, multiple members of the Chennai Super Kings contingent have tested positive for Covid-19, causing an upheaval ahead of the event starting September 19. The Chennai Super Kings were the only team to have a pre-departure conditioning camp in Chennai where they had created a 'mini bubble' at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. According to sources, a net bowler and a member of the social media team had to be dropped from the contingent after they tested positive in Chennai.

CSK have travelled with a fat contingent of 55 members. All of them were tested upon arrival at the Dubai airport followed by three more tests on days 1, 3 and 6 at the hotel.

"The infection could have been picked up either from those left out from the squad or the airport. Those who have tested positive are mostly asymptomatic. The BCCI-appointed healthcare officials have begun procedures to trace the contacts," said the team source.

Jittery BCCI officials have called for an informal meeting with franchise representatives.

Meanwhile, after completing a mandatory seven-day quarantine period in Abu Dhabi,



RCB captain Virat Kohli shares a light moment during a training session.

Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Rajasthan Royals were the latest set of teams to come out of their isolation and shake the rust off in their first practice session at various ICC Academies on Thursday.

RCB and India captain Virat Kohli appeared cheerful as he kicked about a volleyball and shared some light

moments with teammates. Meanwhile, the Delhi Capitals have signed Australian all-rounder Daniel Sams to replace England's Jason Roy.

Roy was on Thursday ruled out of England's T20 series against Pakistan after sustaining a side strain. However the Delhi Capitals said he had opted out of the IPL "for personal reasons".

"The IPL is a huge platform for any cricketer, and back home, we all follow the tournament extremely closely every year," said Sams, 27.

"I feel fortunate to be a part of it this year...I can't wait to join the rest of the players in the UAE," Sams was quoted as saying in a statement released by the franchise late on Thursday.

KNIGHT RIDERS RECORD FIFTH STRAIGHT WIN

Port of Spain, Aug. 28: Trinbago Knight Riders maintained their clean slate with a fifth win in as many matches, while Mohammed Nabi produced a career-best five-wicket haul to guide St Lucia Zouks to a six-wicket triumph in the Caribbean Premier League here.

Sent into bat, the Warriors posted a lowly 112 for 7. The Knight Riders then overhauled the target, scoring 115 for 3 with 10 balls to spare.

Trinbago got an early break when Sikandar Raza clean bowled Brandon King (6) in the second over of the innings. Khary Pierre then struck twice in one over, dismissing Chandrapaul Hemraj (2) and Nicholas Pooran (1) to leave Amazon Warriors at 12 for 3.

Chasing the total, Imran Tahir broke through with two wickets in two balls in the sixth over, sending back Lendl Simmons (19) with a google and then a big leg-break ended Colin Munro's (0) stay. Darren Bravo (26) denied Tahir the hat-trick.

After 10 overs, the Knight Riders were 51 for two but soon Tion Webster was sent back by Chris Green. Yet they stayed on the course and needed 35 off the last 36 balls. — PTI

Andhra captain Pradeep retires

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 28

Andamani Ganga Pradeep, former captain of the Andhra Ranji Trophy team, announced his retirement from all formats of first class cricket on Friday.

In his letter addressed to the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA), which was forwarded to BCCI, he thanked the Krishna District Cricket Association, from where he represented the ACA in all tournaments, and also the ACA for giving him all encouragement for his growth in the game. He specially thanked his family for their co-operation.

"It's time for me to say goodbye and make way for the youngsters," the 33-year-old wrote, adding he will continue to be associated with cricket and would like to help budding players in future.

Pradeep played 64 Ranji Trophy matches and scored 2,757 runs with six centuries and 13 half centuries. In List 'A' matches he got three more centuries (1,053 runs). Pradeep was also a good fielder and has 81 catches to his account in all matches.

He also led the India Under 17 team and was part of the India Under 19 side.

● **Pradeep played 64 Ranji Trophy matches and scored 2,757 runs with six centuries and 13 half centuries. In List 'A' matches he got three more centuries (1,053 runs).**

● **Pradeep was also a good fielder and has 81 catches to his account in all matches.**

● **He also led the India Under 17 team and was part of the India Under 19 side.**

Pradeep was born in Vijayawada into a family of cricketers — his father AG Prasad, elder brother AG Praveen and maternal uncle I. Sreenivas all represented Andhra in Ranji Trophy.

Presently, Pradeep is working as Assistant Manager in Indian Overseas Bank at Chennai.

ACA president P. Sarat Chandra Reddy thanked Pradeep for his services. "ACA is proud to have players of such caliber and stature. I wish him all the best and his services shall be best utilised by ACA when required," he said.



A. G. Pradeep

Serena handed tough US draw

New York, Aug. 28: Serena Williams could see plenty of fellow Americans in her US Open quest for a 24th career Grand Slam title, including Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin in a semifinal match.

The women's draw offers some challenges for the 38-year-old third seed. Serena, one Slam singles crown shy of matching Margaret Court's all-time record, could meet 2017 US Open champion Sloane Stephens in the third round and 2017 US Open runner-up and seventh seed Madison Keys in a quarterfinal before a chance at Kenin in the semis and potentially Czech top seed Karolina Pliskova in the final.

And that's not even counting a possible fourth-round matchup against Greek 15th seed Maria Sakkari, who ousted Williams from this week's US Open tuneup event in New York.

On the men's side, world No.1 Novak Djokovic's path could include a semifinal against Stefanos Tsitsipas or Alexander Zverev.

The 33-year-old Serbian star, a 17-time Grand Slam winner who has captured five of the past seven men's singles Slams, begins his quest for a fourth US Open title against Bosnia and Herzegovina's 107th-ranked Damir Dzumhur.

Austrian second seed Dominic Thiem, who pushed Djokovic to five sets before falling in this year's Australian Open final, was placed on the opposite end of the bracket, setting up the possibility of a rematch in the championship match.

With fellow "Big Three" players Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer absent, Djokovic has a prime chance to close the gap on his record rivals in a field of 128 that is missing several standouts. — AFP

TOUR DE FRANCE ROLLS OUT IN CYCLE OF GLOOM

Nice (France), Aug. 28: There are always sunshine and smiles on the French Riviera but the 2020 Tour de France will roll out of Nice on Saturday under a cloud of Covid-19 gloom, with doubts the 21-day jaunt across the peaks and plains will be end with its usual dash up the Champs Elysees in Paris.

Leaving the well heeled Riviera resort the 22 teams will race 3,484km through some of the prettiest vistas in France in a globally popular event.

Defending champion Colombian Egan Bernal is again a good bet for the overall leader's fabled yellow jersey, along with Primoz Roglic and Thibaut Pinot chief among his rivals on a course that crosses all five of France's mountain ranges. — AFP



View of shoes worn by Cameron Champ that read "Black Lives Matter" as seen during the first round of the BMW Championship in Olympia Fields on Friday. — AFP

Champ makes statement with shoes, Tiger joins in

Washington, Aug. 28: Cameron Champ considered not playing in Thursday's opening round of the USPGA's BMW Championship over the police shooting of Jacob Blake, but made his own statement with his shoes.

The 25-year-old biracial American, who has a Black father and a white mother, wore one white shoe and one black shoe with messages of support during his seven-over 77 at Olympia Fields, where Tiger Woods and Tony Finau also backed the growing sport boycott movement.

"I definitely thought about it for sure. But obviously I feel like I can do a lot more playing, and again, showing my support and expressing myself," Champ said of sitting out.

Champ had Blake's name and "Black Lives Matter" among the messages on his shoes, objecting to police brutality and racial injustice.

The PGA on Thursday backed the game boycotts and sport shutdowns by the NBA, NHL, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer and Women's NBA clubs over

shooting of Blake in Kenosha. "The PGA Tour supports them and any of our own members standing up for issues they believe in," the tour said in a statement.

Woods, a 15-time major winner and reigning Masters champion, said he did not consider sitting out the round, which would have ended his bid to qualify for next week's Tour Championship. "No, I talked to the commissioner and they were on board. He released his statement, and all the guys were on board," Woods said. — AFP

BASEBALLERS PITCH IN WITH 7 GAMES OFF

New York, Aug. 28: The New York Mets and Miami Marlins made sure their point was clear on Thursday as seven Major League Baseball games were postponed in protest of racial injustice.

The Mets and Marlins didn't announce their plans prior to the game, taking the field in uniform and standing with caps off for 42 seconds.

It was a strong statement on the eve of MLB's Jackie Robinson Day — which commemorates the player who broke MLB's colour barrier and wore jersey No.42.

Dominic Smith led the Mets onto the field and led them off, after a shirt with the legend "Black Lives Matter" was placed on top of home plate.

Smith had been emotional after the Mets won on Wednesday night — when the team went ahead with games even as the issues of racial injustice and police brutality roiled the NBA and the rest of the sports world.

"I think the most difficult part is to see people still don't care. For this to just continually happen, it just shows just the hate in people's hearts," Smith said on Wednesday night. — AFP