

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 15 AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER

**Max:** 25.4°C  
**Min:** 21°C  
**RH:** 87%  
**Rainfall:** 0.4 mm  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Rain or thundershowers likely. Max/Min temp. 27/22 °C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+66,849)	(+1,011)
25,25,144	49,134

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,921)	(+9)
TS: 88,396	674
(+ 8,943)	(+97)
AP: 2,73,085	2,475

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

**2,12,06,883**  
**DEATHS**  
**7,59,824**  
**COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES**  
**213**  
 worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Shravana Bahula Ekadasi till 2.14 pm  
**Star:** Mrigashira till 6.34 am  
**Varjyam:** 3.07 pm to 4.45 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 6.02 am to 7.43 am  
**Rahukalam:** 9 am to 10.30 am  
**HJRI CALENDAR**  
 Zulhijja 24,1441 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.55 am  
**Zohar:** 12.30 pm  
**Asar:** 4.47 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.47 pm  
**Isha:** 7.58 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.41 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.59 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 2.03 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 3.35 PM**

## COUNTER POINT



Are you sure he is our minister?

## IN BRIEF

### India can give fitting reply: Prez

**New Delhi:** President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday said while India believes in peace it is also capable of giving a befitting response to any attempt of aggression as shown by its troops in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh after “some in our neighbourhood”, a veiled reference to China, tried to carry out their “misadventure of expansion”. In his address to the nation on the eve of the 74th Independence Day, he spoke about the ‘Aatmanirbhar’ initiative and allayed fears of foreign investors saying India’s self-reliance means being self-sufficient without alienating or creating distance from the world.

## NATION | 4

**Ashok Gehlot wins trust vote in Rajasthan**



## BUSINESS | 7

**RBI to transfer ₹57,128 cr to govt**



## SPORTS | 8

**Tata Group expresses interest to sponsor IPL**



### NO RESPITE FROM RAIN IN KHAMMAM, BHADRADRI

**DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM/KOTHAGU-DEM, AUG. 14**

There was no respite from rain in Khammam and Bhadradri districts on Friday. The water level in Godavari at Bhadrachalam touched 36.7 feet while the low-lying areas in the vicinity were submerged. The present water level is six feet less than the first warning of 43 feet. The drains that were set up to divert rain water into the river were badly affected because garbage is piled all over. Officials opened 23 gates for free flow of flood water into Taliperu project and released 1.28 lakh cusecs into Godavari.

■ **Page 2: Rains lashed 30 mandals in 2 districts**

### Spirit of freedom



The war memorial at Secunderabad's Parade Ground is decorated with the Tricolour ahead of the Independence Day celebrations on August 15. The state is set for subdued Independence Day celebrations on Saturday.

— P. SURENDRA

# India, China troops clashed several times in May, June

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 14**

Indian and Chinese troops clashed brutally at multiple times in May and June at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, a fact that emerged on Friday after the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) recommended 21 names of its men for gallantry medals. They faced the Chinese during face offs and skirmishes in May-June 2020, some of which lasted for 17-20 hours.

In a statement, ITBP director general S.S. Deswal said that the force

has recommended 21 Gallantry medals and 294 DG Gallantry Commendations for ITBP personnel “for displaying raw courage and bravery” during the face-off with Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh in May-June.

“The ITBP troops not only effectively used shields to protect themselves but also responded fiercely to PLA advancing troops and brought the situation under control. With the highest order of professional skills, ITBP troops fought shoulder to shoulder and also brought the injured Indian Army troops to the rear,” the

statement said.

It said that even when the ITBP troops fought the whole night, they received minimum casualties by giving befitting reply to the stone pelters of the PLA. “At places they gave determined standoff about 17 to 20 hours throughout the intervening nights,” said ITBP. “Due to the high altitude training and manoeuvre experience of the force in the Himalayas deployments, the ITBP troops kept the PLA troops at bay and due to the all out and befitting response of ITBP jawans at almost all fronts, many areas were safeguarded in the

hyper sensitive areas,” ITBP said. This shows that the situation at LAC was more serious than previously known.

Till now only clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in Pangong Tso and Galwan on May 5, and in Galwan Valley on 15 June in Ladakh have been reported. Indian and Chinese troops had also clashed in Sikkim on May 9.

Also, 294 ITBP personnel were awarded with the DG’s commendation rolls and insignias on the eve of Independence Day for their courage and bravery during clashes with Chinese troops.

# Bhushan guilty of contempt: SC

**‘Unfair’ criticism of judiciary must be dealt with firmly, says court; sentencing on Aug. 20**

**PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, AUG. 14**

The Supreme Court on Friday held activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of “criminal contempt” for lowering its dignity and authority by questioning, via his tweets, the functioning of the top court in the last six years under the present Chief Justice, Sharad A. Bobde, and his predecessors. The court fixed August 20 for his sentencing.

Holding that the tweet in question was “malicious” and based on “distorted facts”, a bench comprising Justice Arun Mishra, Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Krishna Murari said that the tweet had the “effect of destabilising the very foundation” of the judiciary. The country’s top court has taken exception of that part of Mr Bhushan’s June 27 tweet in which he said that the SC has played a substantial role in allowing the destruction of democracy in the past six years, since 2014, and questioned the role of the



Prashant Bhushan

last four Chief Justices in particular in allowing it.

The court said that in its “considered view” the tweet “undermines the dignity and authority of the institution of the Supreme Court of India and the CJI and directly affronts the majesty of law.”

“There is no matter of doubt that the tweet tends to shake the public confidence in the institution of judiciary,” it said.

The “scurrilous/malicious attacks” by Mr Bhushan are not only “against one or two judges but the entire Supreme

Court in its functioning of the last six years.”

The court said that the “scurrilous allegations, which are malicious in nature and have the tendency to scandalise the court are not expected from a person, who is a lawyer of 30 years standing.” Saying that the tweet is not “fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary, made bona fide in the public interest,” the court said while rejecting Mr Bhushan’s contention that his criticism was bona fide and in public interest.

Justifying its firm stand in holding Mr Bhushan guilty, the court said that an attack on the SC does not only tend to erode the confidence of an ordinary litigant in it, but similarly tends to impact the confidence of judges across the country in the SC.

The court let off Twitter, accepting its explanation that it was an intermediary and has no control over the material posted on social media platform.

■ **More reports on Pg 4**

# Police team thrash Adivasi on suspicion of helping Maoists

**PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC ADILABAD, AUG.14**

A team of special police, combing the forests for Maoists, allegedly thrashed an Adivasi Soyam Vikram, 36, suspecting him of extending

help to the Maoists at Chapral village of Ghanpur gram panchayat. Though the incident took place on August 8, it came to light late since some ruling party leaders and Adivasi leaders tried to ‘settle’ the matter. The villagers of Chapral

brought the issue to the notice of the community leaders and held a meeting the next day at Mattadiguda and wanted to stage a protest in Utnoor.

■ **Page 2: Vikram son-in-law of village head**

# Cops bust fake surety racket

**PULI SHARAT KUMAR | DC PEDDAPALLI, AUG. 14**

In a major breakthrough, Ramagundam task force police officials along with Godavarikhani Two Town police busted a gang that produced fake property documents as sureties to secure bail for the release of under-trials. They nabbed eight members, which included a clerk of the court and seized fake documents, bill receipts and rubber stamps from their possession in Godavarikhani of Peddapalli district on Friday.

According to Commissioner of Police, V. Satyanarayana, the eight were Boini Komuraiah (53), Mallipally Kishan (35), Md. Taaz (32), Pulipaka Shekar (32), Julia

Srinivas (34), Batthini Shiva Kumar(30) and Julia Adi Narayana (31), residents of Singireddypally of Ramgiri mandal and Nimmathi Mahendar (43), resident of Godavarikhani, a clerk with an advocate.

Task force CI Raj Kumar and ASI Masthan first caught two persons while they were communicating to a client within the court premises in Godavarikhani to provide fake surety along with documents. This led to the arrest of the rest of the gang. The racket came to light when the panchayat secretary of Jallaram village, Hari Krishna lodged a complaint in the Godavarikhani Two Town police station.

■ **Page 2: Gang cheated court for years**

## SPB IMPROVES AFTER BULLETIN SCARES FANS

**BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14**

After a medical bulletin on the health of legendary playback singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam issued by a hospital in Chennai where he was being treated for Covid-19 said he was in a critical condition caused concern among his fans and followers, his family on Friday evening announced that he was in much better shape than he was earlier in the day.

Balasubrahmanyam’s son S.P. Charan, and sister S.P. Vasantha said that the singer was seriously unwell earlier on Friday but had recovered. Charan said that his father’s condition had improved under the care of the doctors.

■ **Page 2: No cause for concern, says son**

## TRS | OPTIONS

**Ruling party may field late MLA’s wife or son**

# Congress to contest Dubbaka bypoll

**S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14**

The battle for the Dubbaka Assembly seat byelection, necessitated by the death of TRS MLA S. Ramalinga Reddy, is hotting up with the Congress announcing that it will make a contest of it. The TRS is likely to field either Ramalinga Reddy’s wife, who is 55, or their son, who is 31.

The general convention has been to leave the bypoll uncontested when a sitting legislator dies.

Ramalinga Reddy was a close associate of Chandrashekar Rao and built a stronghold for the TRS in Dubbaka. Sources said that the Chief Minister, working president K.T. Rama Rao and finance minister T. Harish Rao were keen not only on retaining the seat but also to ensure that the strong base created by Ramalinga Reddy is not weakened.

State Congress president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday announced that the Congress would contest the

byelections. He asked DCC president Narsa Reddy to take measures to strengthen the party at the mandal level and convene a constituency-level meeting. He asked the party cadre to gear up for the byelection.

Interestingly, soon after the demise of Ramalinga Reddy, Siddipet Congress MLA T. Jayaprakash Reddy alias Jagga Reddy had demanded that the TRS to a give ticket to Ramalinga Reddy’s wife. He said he would persuade Uttam Kumar Reddy not to

contest the poll if Ramalinga Reddy’s wife was nominated.

The TPCC chief made the announcement when Telangana Jana Samiti leader Bhawani Reddy joined the party. There is a feeling that the party may nominate her for the bypoll. There was also talk in the Congress that M. Nageswara Reddy, who had contested in 2018, was not keen this time.

■ **Page 2: TRS got 54% vote share in Dubbaka**



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## SHORT TAKES

## GANG CHEATED COURT FOR YEARS

From page 1

The probe panel included DCPs P. Ravinder and Ashok Kumar and ACP Umendar.

Satyanarayana said that the gang has been cheating the court for the last few years. In the investigation it is learnt that the gang has produced around 200 fake surety documents to local and other state under-trials.

The police are also investigating the role of some advocates, he informed.

## NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN, SAYS SON

From page 1

There is no cause for concern and he will get better, Charan said. Vasantha said her brother's will power was strong and with the prayers of all his well-wishers and God's grace, he will recover soon and come back home safe and sound.

Earlier, news of the sudden deterioration of the health one of the India's greatest playback singers was announced in the afternoon by the hospital where the singer had admitted himself on August 5.

The hospital had said, "there has been a setback in the health of Thiru S.P. Balasubrahmanyam," and his condition had deteriorated on August 13 and he was moved to the ICU. The hospital had added that Balasubrahmanyam was "on life support" and that his condition was critical.

## TRS GOT 54% VOTE SHARE IN DUBBAKA

From page 1

He had contested from Siddipet in 2018 on a TJS ticket which had an alliance with the Congress. The TRS had secured 53.37 per cent and 54.36 per cent votes in Dubbaka in 2014 and 2018. The Congress vote share fell from 28.75 per cent to 16.31 per cent while the BJP improved from 9.82 per cent to 13.75.

The BJP is taking the bypoll exercise seriously under its new state president Bandi Sanjay. Party leaders are of the opinion that the BJP position has been improving after it won four seats in the general elections last year. Sanjay is said to be working out the pro and cons of contesting in the byelection and selecting the strongest candidate.

## RAINS LASHED 30 MANDALS IN 2 DISTRICTS

FROM PAGE 1

Heavy rains lashed thirty mandals in the two districts while it was moderate in another ten mandals. It is feared that the water from various tanks that were overflowing may inundate crops in ten mandals and some colonies in gram panchayats. All 21 mandals in Khammam and 21 mandals in Bhadrachalam district recorded around two to three cm rainfall.

The farmers are worried as half-foot of water is stagnant in the fields while chilli and cotton plants were submerged. Rain water has inundated 10,000 acres of various crops in both the districts but officials asked farmers not to brood over the stagnation. The Wyra reservoir received more than its FRL and officials are releasing water to the canals and sluice. There was a breach at SRSP canal in Gattu Singaram of Kusumanchi mandal and irrigation officials swung into action to address the problem.

BJP leaders, led by G Satyanarayana, planted paddy saplings on the roads in 12 and 13 divisions of Khammam because of mud and water. The rains not only hit farm operations but also paralysed life in the villages.

With cold waves observed in the two districts, doctors have cautioned people against the flu and cold.

● **THE FARMERS** are worried as half-foot of water is stagnant in the fields while chilli and cotton plants were submerged.

● **RAIN WATER** has inundated 10,000 acres of various crops in both the districts but officials asked farmers not to brood over the stagnation.

## On high alert



CISF personnel take position at the Shamshabad International airport on Friday, the eve of Independence Day celebrations on the back of a general security alert. — GANDHI

## Two police officials get President's honour, police medals given to 12

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA T. | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

Inspector-General, CID, P. Pramod Kumar, and sub-inspector, KPHB, Thota Subrahmanyam were awarded the President's Police Medal and 12 officers were awarded the Indian Police Medal by the Union home ministry for their meritorious service on the eve of Independence Day.

The police officials awarded the Indian Police Medal are: Counter Intelligence additional superintendents of police P. Venkatagiri, B. Kistaiah, ACB deputy director M. Ravinder Reddy, Cyberabad cyber-crimes ACP Ch Y. Srinivas Kumar, Bhongir ACP N.

● **TS POLICE** Academy deputy superintendent K. Ravinder Reddy, inspector E. Nagaraju and Rachakonda Special Branch sub-inspector Shaik Sadiq Ali were also awarded the Indian Police Medal for meritorious service.

Bhujanga Rao, TS Special Police Battalion (Warangal) additional commandant M. Jayaraju and Intelligence DSP D. Anand Kumar.

TS Police Academy deputy superintendent K. Ravinder Reddy, inspector E. Nagaraju and Rachakonda Special Branch sub-inspector Shaik Sadiq Ali were also awarded the Indian Police Medal for meritorious service.



P. Pramod Kumar



Thota Subrahmanyam



Y. Srinivas Kumar



N. Bhujanga Rao

## TS records 1,921 cases, districts register 1,565

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUG 14

There was no respite for the people from Coronavirus with nearly 2,000 more Covid-19 cases being reported even as nine more people lost their lives to the disease.

The health department said on Friday that it had recorded 1,921 Covid-19 cases on Thursday, taking the total to 88,396 while the toll increased to 674.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area, mostly comprising Hyderabad district, continued to log the most daily cases with 356. Medchal-Malkajgiri district recorded 168 cases while Ranga Reddy dis-

● **THE DEPARTMENT** said the active cases as on Thursday stood at 23,438 of whom 16,439 persons were either in home or institution.

trict had 134, the health department said in its daily Covid-19 bulletin. The department said the active cases as on Thursday stood at 23,438 of whom 16,439 persons were either in home or institutional isolation.

It said a total of 22,046 Covid-19 determination tests were conducted between Wednesday and Thursday of which results from 1,151 tests were pending.

## Kids shifted out of Maruthi home

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA T. | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

Following the constitution of a high-power committee to probe the sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl at an orphanage and the incidents that led to her death, the child welfare department has shifted the children admitted at Maruthi Orphanage, where the victim was housed, to state-run homes for better care and protection.

Department commissioner Divya Devarajan on Friday said that the committee comprising senior-level officers is probing the incident.

The orphanage has been closed and its registration suspended.

The Maruti Orphanage at Miyapur was housing 49 students.

Speaking to the media, the official said the committee would carry out a thorough probe into the statements of the victim. Three cases were registered based on her statement, and the prime accused were arrested. There are about 429 private homes in the state,

## STUDENTS HOLD PROTEST, SEEK JUSTICE FOR GIRL

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG 14

The All India Democratic Students Organisation (AIDSO) on Friday staged a protest in front of the Hyderabad collectorate, demanding action in the Ameenpur orphanage rape case. The delegation submitted a memorandum to the joint collector demanding severe punishment for the culprits as well as strict monitoring of all orphanages by the government.

Whoever is responsible for the incident will have to face legal action. We will strive to bring the case to a logical conclusion," the commissioner said.

which house about 13,000 children. All the homes will be inspected.

"Very pathetic information has come out in the incident.

Whoever is responsible for the incident will have to face legal action. We will strive to bring the case to a logical conclusion," the commissioner said.

## Roads disappear with rains



BJP leaders led by G. Satyanarayana plant paddy saplings in Division 12 and 13 in what was supposed to be a road on Friday in Khammam. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

## US consulates to begin student visa processing

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

The US embassy and consulates in India, including the Hyderabad consulate, will begin processing student and academic exchange visitor visa applications on a limited basis from August 17.

As per the announcement made on the US embassy website, emergency student and exchange visitor appointment requests received prior to August 12 will be processed first and public appointments will be taken up later.

Appointments will be refreshed as per the availability, generally two weeks in advance, said the announcement.

In a tweet, the US Consulate-General, Hyderabad, said, "Student visas are a

● **THE EMBASSY ALSO** requested prospective students and exchange visitors to schedule an appointment no more than three weeks prior to their class start date, and asked the students to continue monitoring the website <https://in.usembassy.gov/visas/> for availability.

high priority, and we will make every effort to assist applicants in a timely fashion, while keeping our customers and staff safe."

It added that due to the very limited appointment availability, all requests may not be accommodated in time for the start of the

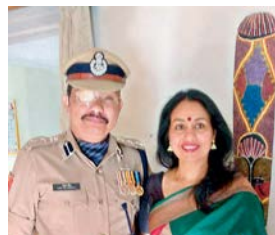
## CRPF braveheart eager for action

## He was shot 9 times in J&amp;K anti-terror op

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

This "terminator" is yet to pick up his AK-47. Hit by nine enemy bullets — one of which is still lodged in his hip — on a cold morning on February 14, 2017, when the braveheart was leading an operation to flush out terrorists from the Hajin area of Bandipora in the Kashmir Valley, which ended up in a fierce gun battle, Chetan Kumar Cheeta's unconditional commitment to the nation made the country salute him. Now commanding the Fifth Battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in New Delhi, Cheeta who has undergone half-a-dozen surgeries along with numerous painful skin grafts reminisces about the Independence Day celebrations while he was posted in Kashmir.

Looking forward for reconstruction of his right eye from a Hyderabad-based hospital and another surgery for the movement of his left hand, both of which were pierced by enemy bullets, Cheeta says that but for that encounter he along with his team would have been patrolling the streets



Chetan Kumar Cheeta along with his wife.

of Srinagar — something he misses every Independence Day since 2017.

"On the days leading to August 15, we would receive multiple inputs about untoward incidents that were likely to take place in a few areas in the Valley. Black flags would be hoisted in a few areas while those bent upon creating trouble would try to prevent some locals from hoisting the Tricolour. Patrolling would be intensified across sensitive areas and we could cover every inch. There were trouble-makers but there were also those who genuinely wanted to join the 1-Day celebrations," Cheeta recalled in a conversation with *Deccan Chronicle*.

Back then, Cheeta was commanding the 45th battalion of CRPF at

Sumbal, Bandipora.

A recipient of the Kirti Chakra, the second highest peacetime gallantry medal, Cheeta, 48, says that more than the celebrations, preventing untoward incidents in the run-up to the Independence Day was a challenge but the forces ensured that terrorists did not succeed.

Asked whether he is raring to go to Kashmir, he said: "I am fighting fit and if my force sends me there, I will not hesitate to do field operations. The CRPF is no less than the Army when it comes to dealing with terrorists."

His colleagues often recall how he would be the first to opt to be in the 'striking force' during operations and neutralised terrorists. "I did my duty and faced bullets. Youngsters in the country should give their 100 per cent to the country," Cheeta says.

His wife says that though he has recovered well and miraculously so, she is trying to get in touch with doctors at the LV Prasad Eye Institute for reconstruction of his eye. "Besides, another surgery has to be performed for his hand. But he is mentally very alert."

## Teen carves National Flag on rice grain

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC WARANGAL, AUG. 14

Commemorating the 74th Independence Day, 16-year-old Thatikonda Sriji of Arunodaya Colony in Hanamkonda has carved the National Flag on a rice grain measuring just 2mm in length.

He has been fascinated by micro sculpting from a young age and created several such structures since 2015 when he was in sixth standard. He is currently



The National Flag carved out on a rice grain by Thatikonda Sriji.

pursuing his diploma second year in a private polytechnic college at Rampur.

Sriji said he carved the Flag in just 45 minutes. He

also carved the Flag on the tip of a pencil, which was 3mm in height and took him one hour.

His works in micro art include several fascinating carvings on the leads of pencils, chalk and rice grains. His earlier works have earned him a place in the *Credence Book of World Record*. Sriji said he was encouraged by his uncle Muchoju Raju, a goldsmith, to pursue the art and takes noted British sculptor Willard Wigan as inspiration.

## TAHSILDAR HELD WITH ₹1.1 CR BRIBE AT KEESARA

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA T. | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

The Anti-Corruption Bureau caught Keesara tahsildar E. Bala Nagaraju on Friday night, for allegedly taking bribe of ₹1.1 crore in a land issue.

According to sources, the ACB sleuths caught Nagaraju at his house in AS Rao Nagar along with the cash. The officials had to carry a counting machine to count the money.

The tahsildar has reportedly taken the money in connection with 28 acres of land at Ramally village in Keesara mandal which was in dispute.

The officials also caught real estate broker C Srinath, 50, and realtor K Anji Reddy, 40, in connection with the case. Searches were carried out at his house and at his office on Friday night, said the sources.

## Vikram son-in-law of village head

FROM PAGE 1

Vikram is the son-in-law of the village head (Patel), Atram Ballarshah. The locals took Vikram to a private hospital in Uttoor and got him treated for injuries.

The villagers allege that special party police had asked Vikram to wear an olive green dress and run away from the place, which he refused to do. They alleged that the police wanted to kill Vikram in a fake encounter but the women quarrelled with the police and rescued him.

The assaulting of Vikram led to another issue in the village. Since they entered an Adivasi house wearing their boots and kicked Vikram, the Uttoor police reportedly gave a sum of ₹10,000 to the Chapral village elders

● **THE VILLAGERS** allege that special party police had asked Vikram to wear an olive green dress and run away from the place, which he refused to do.

to perform a purification rituals which is called 'vittad'.

Adivasis perform this ritual when they feel someone among them or a house or village is 'polluted'. Sometimes, they simply vacate that village and set up new gudem in some other place when they feel that the village is 'polluted' by someone.

The villagers had refused to interact with the police when a senior official went to the village to inquire into the incident.



## OTHER STORIES

TIGER KILLS COW  
AT KARANJI IN  
BHEEMPURDC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, AUG. 14

Villagers of Karanji in Bheempur mandal informed forest officials on Friday, that a tiger on the prowl in the area has killed a cow. The tiger is said to have killed the domestic animal on Thursday night.

Forest Beat Officer Keshav of Arli (T) visited the spot on Friday and confirmed that the cow was killed by the tiger as pug marks of the wild animal were found at the location.

Karanji is located on the border of Telangana and Maharashtra. Tigers from the Tipperishwar Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra migrate to the Adilabad forests by crossing the river Penganga. The villagers requested the forest officials to take steps for the safety of the people and cattle.

COVID-19 MOBILE  
TESTING VAN ROLLS  
OUT IN NIZAMABADDC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 14

A Covid-19 testing mobile van was launched in Nizamabad on Friday. District collector C. Narayana Reddy flagged off the van from the collectorate.

Speaking on the occasion, the collector said that over the last few days a large number of Coronavirus positive cases are being reported in the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation limits. The mobile van will conduct Covid-19 tests at various places in the town.

"Pregnant women, those above 55 years, primary contacts of the Coronavirus positive cases will be tested at their residences," adding that isolation kits will be handed over to the positive patients immediately.

Municipal commissioner Jithesh V. Patil, mobile van in-charge Dr Anjana and others were present.

LEFT PARTIES, TD  
TO TAKE PLEDGE  
AGAINST BJPDC CORRESPONDENT,  
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 14

A meeting was held with the leaders of the CPM, CPI and CPM ML-New Democracy along with the Telugu Desam (TD) leaders under the leadership CPM leader Bandari Shekar at the CPM party office in Karimnagar district on Friday. The members plan to take a pledge at the Telangana Chowrastra on Saturday, against the anti-peoples policies adopted by the BJP government.

CPM ML-New Democracy leader, Gindam Prasad in the meeting said that the irresponsible behaviour of the Central government is leading to the Coronavirus spreading at rapid pace across the country. He appealed to the people to join them in taking the pledge.

Mr Prasad alleged that instead of sanctioning additional funds to the states to fight the Coronavirus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried to display his dominance on other states during the lockdown and played with the lives of innocent people. Mr Prasad also alleged that the government is trying to kill the labour rights in the name of Covid-19 rules, by not allowing them to hold any protests and is trying to kill human rights leaders by putting them in jail.

■ **PRIME MINISTER** Narendra Modi tried to display his dominance.

UP police arrests 2 from TS  
for kidnapping 10-yr-old boyDC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 14

A friendship developed on Facebook led to the kidnapping of a 10-year-old boy in Uttar Pradesh with the help of the boy's mother.

The incident occurred on August 5 in Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh. However it came to light on Friday following the arrest of two persons in Nizamabad district in Telangana state.

The accused were identified as Ashwaq, 24 of Jalalpur village in Varni mandal and Imran, 23, of Kandakurthi village in Renjal mandal.

According to police, Ashwaq came in contact with a married woman from UP on Facebook. Their friendship

■ **THE ACCUSED** were identified as Ashwaq, 24 of Jalalpur village in Varni mandal and Imran, 23, of Kandakurthi village in Renjal mandal.

led to illicit relationship and Ashwaq visited UP a few times and the couple decided to elope from Moradabad. They required money to elope and hatched a plan to kidnap the 10-year-old son of the woman.

On August 5, Ashwaq with the help of the victim's mother kidnapped the boy. He called boy's father and demanded ₹30 lakh to free the boy. But, the boy's father approached the police and the

police began searching for the boy. Suspecting trouble, the boy's mother alerted Ashwaq to free her son and escape. Ashwaq, who travelled to Moradabad in a car with a driver Imran fled from there.

In the meanwhile, the UP police investigating the case noticed that the kidnappers belonged to Telangana state.

On Friday, a team of UP police officials visited Nizamabad district and arrested the duo. The UP police also interrogated the woman.

The accused were produced in the Nizamabad court and handed over to the UP police.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Renjal SI P. Raghavendar confirmed the arrest of the accused by the UP police.

## I-Day celebrations sans students

All cultural programmes cancelled, no speeches; invitee list restricted to below 100

Celebrations to wrap  
up in 20 minutesNARENDER  
PULLOOR | DC  
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 14

As India celebrates its 74th Independence Day on August 15, schools across the state for the first time will celebrate the day without students on Saturday.

However, teachers have been asked to participate in the flag hoisting celebrations.

Various departments of the government are making arrangements for the I-Day programme following the Covid-19 safety protocol.

In Kamareddy district headquarters, Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy will hoist the tricolour, while minister for roads and buildings, legislative affairs and housing V. Prashanth Reddy will hoist the National Flag at the Police Parade Grounds on Saturday.

For the I-Day celebrations only a selected few have been invited to participate. Usually during the Independence Day celebrations in Nizamabad and Kamareddy district headquarters, cultural programmes would be held.

There would be dance, songs, police parade and drum beats.

Students consider Independence Day important and have always enthusiastically taken part in the programmes.

However, this year all cultural programmes have been cancelled due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

A. RAVINDRA  
SESHU | DC  
KHAMMAM, AUG. 14

Owing to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, for the first time in several years Independence Day is being celebrated without the speech of a minister on Saturday.

The programme is going to be a low-key affair and will be held in the collectorate instead of the Police Parade Grounds in Khammam.

In addition, the incessant rains are also another reason for the programme and guest list to be cut short.

Invitations have been sent out to minister for transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar who will hoist the flag, MLAs of Palair, Wyra, Sattupalli and Madhira and MLCs. Department heads have also been asked to participate in the celebrations



■ **IN KAMAREDDY** district headquarters, Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy will hoist the tricolour, while minister for roads and buildings, legislative affairs and housing V. Prashanth Reddy will hoist the National Flag at the Police Parade Grounds on Saturday.

■ **NO INVITATIONS** sent out to freedom fighters. There will be no issuing of awards/merit, for best employee, best social worker, best non-governmental organisation and best performance certificates to students.

and the media has been allowed permission to cover the programme.

The programme will be completed within 20 minutes. No invitations were sent to freedom fighters. There will be no issuing of awards/merit, for best employee, best social worker, best non-governmental organisation and best performance certificates to students.

The gathering for the celebrations has been kept below 100 against the earlier attendance of 1,500 every year.

WARANGAL CP  
CHOSEN FOR PREZ  
POLICE MEDALDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, AUG. 14

Warangal in-charge Commissioner of Police P. Pramod Kumar has been chosen for the President's Police Medal by the Indian Government this Independence Day.

Mr Pramod joined the force in 1991 as the DSP of Sirpur Kagaznagar. He gained an impeccable record during his service at various locations in various posts across old Andhra Pradesh and in the newly formed Telangana state.

In 2019, he was promoted as Inspector General and headed the state's CID department. On June 31, 2020, Mr Pramod was given additional charge of the Warangal commissioner.

Mr Pramod has previously received two United Nations peace awards, the India police medal and the police seva pathakam award. Officers in the Warangal commissionerate congratulated Mr Pramod on the occasion.

## Self-lockdown not working, Covid cases rise

DC CORRESPONDENT  
BHADRACHALAM, AUG. 14

Bhadrachalam town has seen a rise in the number of Covid-19 positive cases. Of the 68 samples collected on Friday, 31 persons tested positive for the virus taking the number of infected persons to 130 in the holy town. Patients were given medical kits and were asked to home isolate.

Despite the traders implementing self-lockdown there has been no relief to the number of persons being infected with the virus.

Tests were conducted on five persons in the primary health centre in Kallur, one tested positive. In Kusumanchi mandal of the 14 on whom tests were done 10 tested positive — seven in Palair, two from Kusumanchi and one from Kistaram

village.

As the number of positive cases rise daily, CPI-M leader S. Sudhakar has demanded that the government set up an isolation centre in Wyra.

People from Kothagudem have complained about the Covid-19 testing. They say that the doctors are not separating those persons suspected to be having symptoms of Covid-19 from people who are coming in with complaints of other sicknesses. They allege that all people coming to the hospital are being sent to the Covid-19 testing centre. The health employees at the desk are giving medication to patients without collecting their samples.

Khammam district reported 125 cases and 78 cases in Bhadrachalam on Friday.



Farm labourers work in a paddy field in Warangal on Friday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Farmers forced to shell out more  
to hire agriculture labourersANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC  
WARANGAL, AUG. 14

Even though the good rainfall has brought cheers to paddy farmers lifting their hopes of a profitable crop output, the shortage of farm labourers due to the Coronavirus pandemic is a cause of worry.

Currently as it is the sowing season for paddy, there is good demand for farm labourers in old Warangal district. However, labourers are unwilling to work in the fields due to the fear of the Coronavirus.

While finding farm labourers is a challenging task for farmers, the demand for higher wages is another burden farmers

■ **PADDY IS** going to be cultivated in an estimated 4,92,514 acres this year. The works of sapling transplantation are in full swing in half of the area. With the district having received good rainfall, farmers have begun work in their fields.

have to bear to get their work done. While previously farm labourers would take payment on a daily basis, presently they are demanding payment on acreage bases.

Paddy is going to be cultivated in an estimated 4,92,514 acres this year. The works of sapling transplantation are in full swing in half of the area. With the district having received good rainfall, farmers have begun work in their fields.

As per the suggestions of

## Fearing stigma, +ve man ends life

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, AUG. 14

A 30-year-old man who tested positive for the Coronavirus in Warangal Rural district died by suicide two days ago. His body was discovered on Friday in the well behind his home.

The deceased a native of Madipalli village in Nallabelli mandal was living in Narsampet town with his family where he worked as a petty vendor.

Three days ago he underwent the Covid-19 test and tested positive for the virus.

Family and friends said he was worried about the way people around him would treat him once they knew that he was infected with

■ **THREE DAYS** ago he underwent the Covid-19 test and tested positive for the virus.

■ **AFRAID, HE** went missing. His family lodged a missing person's complaint with the local police who in turn launched a man hunt for him.

the virus.

Afraid, he went missing. His family lodged a missing person's complaint with the local police who in turn launched a man hunt for him. He was found dead inside a well behind his house. Narsampet MLA Peddi

Sudharshan Reddy consoled the death and assured that the family would be looked after by him.

Mr Sudharshan Reddy said, "There is no need to be worried about the Coronavirus. One must face it with confidence and positivity. The near and dear one of those who have contracted the virus must be supportive and help them in their recovery. One can recover from the virus fast if one home quarantines and takes nutritious food. The state has made available all facilities necessary to treat Covid-19 patients in Narsampet. I appeal to the people not to take such extreme steps due to the Coronavirus."

UTTAM SLAMS  
CM FOR SPIKE IN  
DALIT ATTACKSS.A. ISHAQUI | DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy expressed concern over the increase in attacks and atrocities on Dalits across the state.

He was speaking at an event where Telangana Jana Samiti secretary Bhawani Reddy joined the Congress at his residence in Banjara Hills on Friday. He said a Dalit farmer, Narsimhulu, had died by suicide in Gajwel, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's constituency, after his land was forcibly taken by the government. Another Dalit youth ended his life in the police station after he was subjected to harassment by the police at the instance of ruling TRS leaders.

He said the CM had remained a silent spectator to the atrocities on Dalits and Girijans. Social justice was possible only through the Congress, he said.

He said that a representation would be made with the Union social justice ministry, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and National Scheduled Castes Commission on the attacks on Dalits.

On other issues, he said the government had failed to control the spread of Coronavirus. Data on infected persons and deaths were being suppressed.



SHORT TAKES

MUKHERJEE REMAINS CRITICAL, SAYS DAUGHTER

New Delhi, Aug. 14: The condition of former president Pranab Mukherjee remains critical but has not worsened, his daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee said on Friday.

Doctors attending on the 84-year-old former president at the hospital said his condition remained unchanged on Friday morning. Mukherjee was admitted to the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi cantonment on Monday and was operated for the removal of a clot in the brain.

He had also tested positive for Covid-19. "The condition of Pranab Mukherjee remains unchanged this morning (August 14, 2020). He is under intensive care and continues to be on ventilatory support. His vital parameters are presently stable," the hospital said in a statement.

The former President's daughter took to Twitter after the medical bulletin, saying his condition has not worsened. "Without getting into medical jargons, whatever I could understand from the last two days is that though my dad's condition continues to remain very critical, it hasn't worsened. There's little improvement in his eyes' reaction to light," she said.

Pranab Mukherjee served as the 13th President of India from 2012 to 2017.

U.P. LEGISLATOR ARRESTED IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, AUG. 14

MLA from Gyanpur in Uttar Pradesh Vijay Mishra who had earlier feared his encounter death at the hands of UP police, was on Friday arrested in Agar district of Madhya Pradesh. The lawmaker who was reportedly on his way to Rajasthan after paying a visit to Mahakal temple in Ujjain was arrested at Tanodia in Agar district, police said.

"Tip off by UP police led to the MLA's arrest", Indore range inspector general of police Rakesh Gupta said. A team of UP police reportedly reached Agar late in the night to take custody of the MLA, police sources said.

The lawmaker was scheduled to be produced in a local court in Bhadohi district in UP on Saturday, sources said. The MLA who was wanted by UP police in several cases including the one related to a property dispute in UP, had earlier circulated a video in social media accusing UP police of conspiring to kill him in encounter.

ELEPHANT KILLS FOREST RANGER IN MP

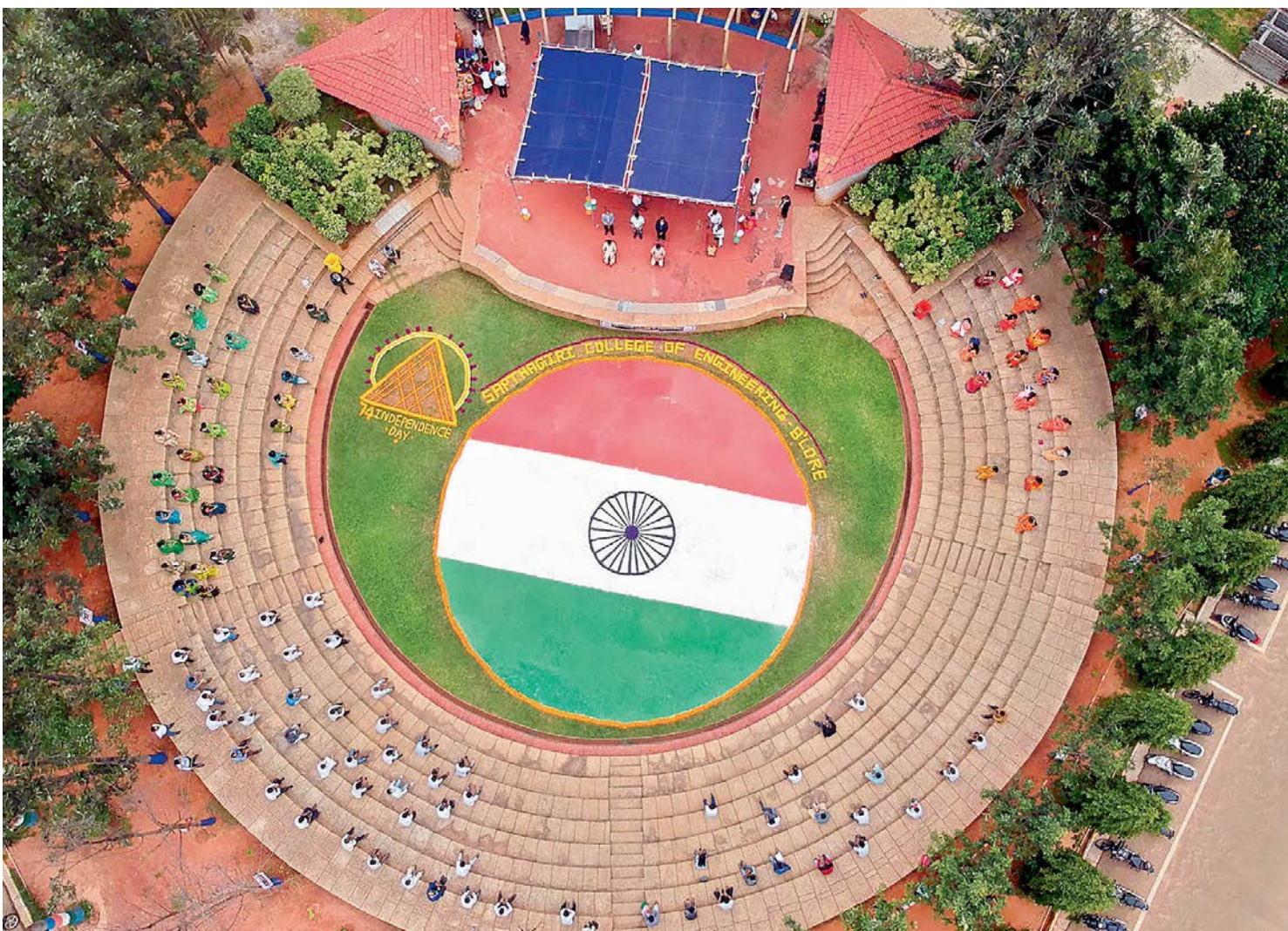
DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, AUG 14

An elephant deployed in tiger tracking in Panna tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh on Friday attacked the local forest ranger B.R. Bhagat, leading to his death.

The pachyderm which had been deployed in tiger tracking in Hinouti range of Panna tiger reserve for the past one week suddenly became aggressive and killed the forest officer with his tusks, official reports reaching here said.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expressed shock and grief over the death of the forest officer. Territorial fight between the two tigers in the area last week had led to death of one and injury to the other.

The Panna tiger reserve authorities had launched an exercise to track the wounded tiger for its treatment.



A 4,000 sqft Tricolor rangoli made by students and teachers of a private engineering college in Bengaluru on Friday as part of the 74th Independence Day celebrations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver his seventh straight Independence Day speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Saturday - an address that comes amid the Coronavirus pandemic, a border standoff with China and a slew of reforms by the government under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

— PTI

# Shaurya Chakra for 3 Army officers for J&K operations

## Officers who fought Chinese troops may get gallantry awards on R-Day

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 14

Three Indian Army personnel — Lt Colonel Krishan Singh Rawat, Major Anil Urs and Havildar Alok Kumar Dubey — have been conferred with the prestigious Shaurya Chakra for counter terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Indian Army personnel who have courageously fought Chinese troops in Eastern Ladakh, particularly in Galwan Valley are likely to be given gallantry awards during Republic Day in January.

They don't figure in the gallantry awards list for

Independence Day.

Wing Commander Vishak Nair, from the Indian Air Force, has also been conferred with the Shaurya Chakra on the eve of Independence Day. President Ram Nath Kovind has approved 84 awards and decorations to the Armed Forces personnel and members of the Paramilitary Forces.

The awards include one Kirti Chakra, nine Shaurya Chakras, five Bar to Sena Medals (Gallantry), 60 Sena Medals (Gallantry), four Nao Sena Medals (Gallantry) and five Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry). Major Anil, from

Maratha Light Infantry laid an ambush on receiving intelligence that terrorists were planning to infiltrate from across the line of control (LoC).

On spotting the group of terrorists Major Anil brought down effective fire killing three terrorists. Being in close proximity to LoC, his action drew violent fire from the Pakistan army.

However, Maj Anil chose to remain at the location awaiting an opportunity to engage the rest of the terrorists.

After a life threatening wait of 15 minutes, the team sighted and brought down fire on two more ter-

rorists leading to neutralisation of a total five terrorists in the ambush.

Lt Colonel Rawat, Sena Medal, from the elite Special Forces was team leader of a mission oriented team, deployed along the LoC in J&K for conduct of counter infiltration and counter terrorist operations.

On receiving inputs about infiltration attempts by terrorists, he led his team to a 36 hours search and kill ambush, in a tough terrain and under difficult weather conditions near LoC.

He and his team killed four terrorists during the operation.

Havildar Alok, from Rajput Regiment 44 battalion of the Rashtriya Rifles, was deployed as a stop in the inner cordon during an operation last year in June in a village in J&K.

He challenged a group of terrorists who were trying to break the cordon and killed one category A++ terrorist despite coming under indiscriminate fire from them.

He further prevented other terrorists from escaping and facilitated his team to tighten the cordon.

His courageous action led to elimination of all four terrorists.

## INDIA: PULLBACK PROCESS IS COMPLEX

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 14

India on Friday termed the process of disengagement between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as a "complex" one that requires "re-deployment of troops by each side towards their regular posts on their respective sides of the LAC" but added significantly that this can be "one only through mutually agreed reciprocal actions".

While reiterating its expectation that China would "sincerely work" with India towards the objective of complete disengagement and de-escalation, New Delhi — in a clear message to Beijing — also reaffirmed that "the state of the border and the future of our ties cannot be separated".

# Huge cache of arms, ammo found in Assam

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, AUG. 14

In what Assam police claimed its pursuit to make Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) area free from illegal arms, security forces on Friday, a day before the Independence day, recovered huge cache of arms and ammunitions from Udalguri district of Bodoland Territorial council.

Informing that the operation was conducted jointly by Udalguri and Guwahati police, security sources said that the cache of sophisticated weapons belonged to NDFB.

Guwahati Police Commissioner Munna Prashad Gupta, who is also the ADGP of the Special Branch of Assam Police, told reporters that based on source information, Guwahati police conducted a search operation

● **GUWAHATI POLICE** conducted a search operation along with Udalguri police at several places in Udalguri district and recovered the arms, ammunition and explosives.

● **NO ARRESTS** have been made so far in this connection and investigation is on.

along with Udalguri police at several places in Udalguri district and recovered the arms, ammunition and explosives on Thursday night.

The arms were recovered from multiple locations of Udalguri district where the police found them kept hidden underground.

However, no arrests have been made so far in this connection and investigation is on.

Earlier, police had also recovered a huge cache of

arms and ammunition in Kokrajhar, Baksa and Chirang district.

All these weapons belong to various faction of NDFB which recently surrendered in mass, security sources said, adding that NDFB factions were suspected to have not surrendered their entire inventory.

Meanwhile Assam is already on alert ahead of Independence Day. Several militant outfits of the region have given a call to boycott the Independence Day celebrations.

The Intelligence agencies have warned that these outfits may try to carry out subversive activities to make their presence felt.

The Army, Police and the paramilitary forces are intensifying their operations and carrying out frisking and checking at various parts of the state.

# Bhushan verdict unfortunate, say legal experts

New Delhi, Aug. 14: The Supreme Court's Friday verdict holding Prashant Bhushan guilty of contempt for his two derogatory tweets against the judiciary was termed as "unfortunate" by legal experts who said the activist-lawyer was only exercising his freedom of expression.

Senior advocates Vikas Singh and Arvind Datar said those tweets could have been inappropriate but does not attract the charge of contempt of court.

However, taking a different stand, senior advocate Ajit Sinha, said it was for the court to decide and there's no point making any comment on the verdict.

It was Supreme Court's domain, he said.

Singh, former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), said what the apex court ruled was not right.

"I do not approve what he said. It may be inappropriate, but it was a part of his free speech. It was not right what the court held today," he said.

Singh's view was shared by Datar, who termed the verdict as unfortunate, and did not agree with the finding that what Bhushan had said amounted to contempt of court.

It is unfortunate what the apex court decided today. Whatever he said was his freedom of expression and I do not think it amounts to contempt to court, Datar said.

— PTI

# Yechury says verdict weakens democracy

New Delhi, Aug. 14: The Supreme Court judgement on Friday holding activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his tweets has weakened India's Constitutional democracy, alleged CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

The SC held Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his two derogatory tweets against the judiciary saying they cannot be said to be a fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary made in the public interest.

Holding that Bhushan attempted to scandalise the entire institution of the SC, the top court said, "If such an attack is not dealt with, with requisite degree of firmness, it may affect the national honour and prestige in the comity of nations."

"Whether one agrees with the precise formulation of Prashant Bhushan's tweets or not, the SC judgement convicting him of contempt is alarming."

ing. It brings into the ambit of contempt, bona-fide criticism of the role played by SC as a Constitutional authority," Yechury said.

"The judgement will prevent open and free discussion on the role of the Supreme Court in India's democracy. This weakens India's Constitutional democracy," he said in a series of tweets.

He also said that the judgement also brings within its scope, genuine criticism of its present day functioning and approach.

"Hitherto, such statements were protected speech under Article 19 (1)(a) under the Constitution and were not considered contemptuous," he said.

A bench of Justices Arun Mishra, B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murari said: "The tweets which are based on the distorted facts, in our considered view, amount to committing criminal contempt."

— PTI

# Gehlot govt wins confidence vote

Jaipur, Aug. 14: The Ashok Gehlot government won a confidence vote in the Rajasthan Assembly on Friday, ending for now the threat triggered by a rebellion within the Congress ranks in the state.

The motion of confidence moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dhariwal was passed by voice vote, an expected win after the return of the 19 dissident Congress MLAs led by Sachin Pilot to the party-fold. During the discussion, Pilot said he will fight for the Congress as its "strongest warrior".

Replying to the debate on the motion, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot criticised the BJP, accusing it again of trying to bring down his government. "I will not let the government topple at any cost even if you make all attempts," he said.

Gehlot said the crisis had come to an end in a beautiful manner and this had hurt the Bharatiya Janata Party.

What was done in Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Madhya Pradesh? Elected governments are being toppled and democracy is under danger," he said.

Without taking names, he alleged that a Union minister was involved in the conspiracy to topple his government, saying this had become clear after some audio clips surfaced. The indirect reference was to Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who has earlier rejected the Congress allegation.

The BJP had earlier said it will move a no trust motion against the government, but called off the move after the Congress itself announced that it will seek a floor test.

Referring to his seat being changed - earlier he sat next to Gehlot as the deputy CM - Pilot said he is now placed at the 'border' between his party and the opposition in the House. "Who is sent to the border? The strongest warrior is sent," he said.

# Congress, BJP spar over Kamal Nath's I-Day speech

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, AUG. 14

The ruling BJP here on Friday took a jibe at former chief minister and Congress veteran Kamal Nath for addressing people on the eve of Independence Day, reminding him that August 14 is Pakistan's Independence Day.

The remark by BJP spokesman Hitesh Vajpayee has invited sharp reactions from the Congress which described

the observation as 'mischievous and unfortunate'.

Congress spokesman Narendra Singh Saluja cited the customary address to the nation on the eve of Independence Day by President of India and said he was surprised that the BJP leaders have no knowledge about Independence Day eve addresses by public figures. In his twitter post, Vajpayee wondered if Nath was going to wish Pakistan on its Independence Day by addressing people of MP on

the day.

Nath, in his address, recounted the achievements of his government during its short tenure of 15 months, saying he endeavoured to change the profile of Madhya Pradesh to turn the state into an investment destination.

Nath said his government that fell in March had initiated steps to establish 'gaushalas' or cowsheds in every panchayat, besides undertaking various social welfare measures.

SOUR | TIES

## Accused browsed internet to find out methods to execute plan

# Kerala youth poisons family for property

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 14

A 22-year-old youth was arrested in Kasargod district of Kerala on the charges of poisoning his 16-year-old sister to death by feeding her ice cream laced with poison and also attempting to kill his parents using the same method.

The police said that the accused Albin Benny had allegedly planned to wipe

out the entire family for inheritance and lead a lavish life with his girlfriend.

While his sister Anne Mary Maria died on August 5, their parents Olikkal Benny and Bessy were also admitted to a hospital after they consumed the ice cream. However, both recovered.

The accused had earlier planned to mix rat poison with chicken curry to kill his sister. However, with the plan not working, the accused browsed the inter-

net to find out other methods for executing his plan and subsequently got the idea of mixing poison with ice cream.

Albin prepared the ice cream at home for carrying out his plan. After having ice cream, Anne Mary started vomiting and also had diarrhoea. She died in a local hospital and everyone suspected it to be death due to food poisoning.

However, the incident took a new turn when

traces of rat poison were found in the post-mortem report which led to suspicion.

Though the accused tried to mislead the family and doctors that he had also consumed the ice cream, on diagnostic tests carried out by health officials no traces of poison were found in his body.

According to locals, the accused had a strange personality. He used to spend time alone and seldom

interacted with the neighbours.

After completing plus two, Albin had secured a job in a hotel in Kottayam district. However, due to Covid-19 lockdown he returned home. He was glued to his mobile phone most of the time, chatting with his girlfriend for long hours. Albin was brought to his house on Friday for evidence collection during which he narrated the entire sequence of the crime.





## IN BRIEF

**Powerful landslide kills 11 in Nepal**

**Kathmandu:** Eleven bodies were recovered Friday after a landslide tore down a village in north-central Nepal, police said, as rescuers dug through mud to find another 27 missing. Mud and stone came hurtling down on the remote hillside village in Sindhupalchowk district in early Friday morning. At least 37 houses have been damaged by the disaster, local police official Madhav Kafle said. "Search and rescue is under way in coordination between the army, police and armed police force," Kafle said. Helicopters are being used to reach the remote site after the landslide blocked roads.

**Ex-spy endangers Saudi royal secrets**

**Riyadh:** A former Saudi intelligence czar's lawsuit in the US courts makes a host of incendiary claims, including that the powerful crown prince tried to have him killed, and threatens to spill more royal secrets. A source close to the Saudi royal court has shrugged off Saad Aljabri's 107-page lawsuit filed last week, insisting that the former spy chief himself faced serious allegations of corruption. But the case, lodged after Riyadh detained two of Aljabri's adult children without charge, threatens to become a public slanging match that could pull aside the curtain on the kingdom's Shakespearean power plays. The lawsuit marks the first time a former top official has legally challenged Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and, if true, exposes what observers call a violent government campaign to snare overseas rivals and critics.

**Virus delays SA circumcision rites**

**Port Elizabeth:** South African 17-year-old Sinoyolo was looking forward to becoming a "man" this year. His uncle had made arrangements for him to travel to the mountains overlooking the South African city of Port Elizabeth in December for his initiation. Known in the local Xhosa language as "Ukwuluko", the secretive rite of passage marks a boy's transition into adulthood. Every June and December thousands of initiates between 15 and 17 years old spend at least three weeks secluded in the bush, where they are circumcised and taught to be responsible men. But this year, for the first time in living memory, the ritual has been called off because of the Coronavirus. "If we send them there and find that one boy is positive (for the virus), it means all 20 of them will be infected," said Afra Msutu, a Xhosa chief. "When you go to the mountains and get circumcised, for the first seven days you are very vulnerable," he added, noting that initiates stay in close quarters with access only to a traditional doctor.

**US SEIZES BITCOINS USED TO FUND MILITANT GROUPS**

**Washington, Aug. 14:** The Justice Department has said that it has seized millions of dollars from cryptocurrency accounts that militant groups, including al-Qaida and the Islamic State, relied on to finance their organisations and violent plots. Law enforcement officials on Thursday said the groups used the accounts to solicit donations, including by trying to raise money from the sale of fraudulent personal protective equipment for the Coronavirus pandemic. Officials described it as the largest-ever seizure of virtual currency funds related to terrorism.

It's also part of a broader Justice Department goal of disrupting the financing of extremist organisations, including those designated as foreign terror groups. Cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin are favoured for illicit transactions because they are perceived as hard to trace, and one of the groups singled out on Thursday explicitly encouraged donations by telling potential contributors that the money trail would be difficult for law enforcement to untangle, the department said.

The legal action, which included undercover law enforcement work and a forfeiture complaint filed in Washington's federal court, is meant to deprive the organisations of funds needed to buy weapons and develop fighters, Assistant Attorney General John Demers said in a conference call with reporters announcing the case.

**Don stokes false birther theory about Harris**

**Washington, Aug. 14:** US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he had heard Democratic vice-presidential running mate Kamala Harris was not eligible to serve, stoking a false claim echoing the baseless "birther" theory he promoted about Barack Obama.

At a White House news conference, Trump was asked about "claims circulating on social media" that Harris was not eligible and whether he could say she met the legal requirements for vice-president.

"I heard it today that she doesn't meet the requirements. And, by the way, the lawyer that wrote that piece is a very highly qualified, very talented lawyer. I have no idea if that's right," Trump said. "I would have assumed the Democrats would have checked that out before she gets chosen to run for vice-president," he said.

"But that's a very serious — you're saying that — they're saying that she doesn't qualify because she wasn't born in this country," but in Kenya. Even after Obama submitted a copy of his birth certificate that showed his birthplace as Hawaii, Trump alleged it was a fake. During his 2016 election campaign, Trump finally dropped his claims.

The reporter replied that Harris was born in the United States but her parents might not have been permanent residents at the time.

Trump appeared to be referring to a Newsweek op-ed by a conservative law professor wrongly claiming the California senator was not eligible to serve as vice-president or president because of the immigration status of her parents when she was born.

Harris was born in Oakland, California in 1964 to a father from Jamaica and a mother from India.

Trump earned national political prominence by promoting the "birther" lie that Obama, America's



Donald Trump

**TRUMP SAYS U.S. WILL COLLAPSE IF BIDEN IS ELECTED**

**Washington, Aug. 14:** President Donald Trump has said that the US would collapse and become the world's laughing stock if the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee Joe Biden wins the November 3 presidential elections.

Trump said Biden's proposed policies were not good for the country.

"Today, we saw Joe Biden continue to politicise a pandemic and to show his appalling lack of respect for the American people. That's what it is. At every turn, Biden has been wrong about the virus, ignoring the scientific evidence and putting left-wing politics before facts and evidence," Trump told reporters on Thursday at the White House.

"The world will be laughing and taking full advantage of the United States if Joe Biden ever became President. Our Country would Collapse!" Trump said in a tweet.

"Sleepy Joe opposed both the China and the Europe travel bans. You know that. He opposed the China travel ban that I instituted very early and the Europe travel ban that I instituted quite early. If I listened to his advice, hundreds of thousands more people would have died. This is according to many people," the president said. —PTI

first black president, was not born in the United States. —AFP

**US to host Kosovo talks next month**

**Pristina, Aug. 14:** Kosovo and Serbia leaders will meet at the White House next month as Washington renews its effort to tackle their troubled relationship after an earlier summit fell through, officials said on Friday.

The former Balkan war foes were supposed to meet in the US in June but the talks were aborted after Kosovo President Hashim Thaci cancelled his trip to face an indictment from special prosecutors in The Hague for war crimes linked to the late 1990s conflict.

More than 20 years after that war, the neighbours still have a tense relationship, with Serbia refusing to recognise the independence that Kosovo, a former province home to an ethnic Albanian majority, declared in 2008.

While Brussels has been leading negotiations between the two sides for nearly a decade, the US has recently sought a

more publicly active role under Richard Grenell, a special envoy appointed by President Donald Trump. "We are happy to announce that the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia will meet at the White House for a negotiation on September 2," Grenell wrote on Twitter.

Kosovo Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti confirmed his attendance and said the summit would focus on "major projects that will change the economic perspective of Kosovo and the region".

Speaking on television, Serbian President Vucic also said his side would "take part in the talks and the topics will be related to the economy." Grenell, a former ambassador to Berlin who has ruffled feathers in Europe with his brash and blunt style, has previously faced accusations of complicating the EU-led process to bring Belgrade and Pristina to an accord. —AFP

**Belarus fights back**

Members of the Belarusian diaspora and Ukrainian activists burn flares and hold a banner with the Pahonia coat of arms during a rally in support of Belarusians protesting against rigged presidential elections, outside the Belarusian embassy in Kiev on Friday. The main challenger in Belarus' disputed presidential election called for mass weekend rallies and workers were walking off the job on August 14 as defiance mounted against strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko. —AFP

**World leaders hail Israel-UAE pact as Palestinians cry foul****Israel pledges to suspend its planned annexation of Palestinian lands**

**Jerusalem, Aug. 14:** World leaders voiced hope Friday that a historic deal between the UAE and Israel could kickstart moribund Middle East peace talks, even as the Palestinians and some of their allies denounced the move to normalise ties as a betrayal of their cause.

Announced by US President Donald Trump on Thursday, it is only the third such accord Israel has struck with an Arab country, and raised the prospect of similar deals with other pro-Western Gulf states.

The deal sees Israel pledge to suspend its planned annexation of Palestinian lands, a concession welcomed by European and some pro-Western Arab governments as a boost for hopes of peace.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed Israel was not abandoning its plans to one day annex the Jordan Valley and Jewish settlements across the occupied West Bank.

News of the agreement was broken by Trump, in a tweet hailing a "Huge breakthrough".

He said leaders from the two countries would sign the deal at the White House in around three weeks, evoking memories of previous US-mediated Middle East accords. It could also help boost Trump's reelection hopes

**Tehran, Aug. 14:** Iran and Turkey lashed out at their regional rival the United Arab Emirates on Friday over its decision to normalise diplomatic relations with Israel in a US-brokered deal, accusing it of betraying the Palestinian cause.

Iran's Foreign Ministry called the deal a "dagger that was unjustly struck by the UAE in the backs of the Palestinian people and all Muslims." Turkey said the peoples of the region "will never forget and will never forgive this hypocritical behaviour" by the UAE. The UAE, which has never fought Israel and has quietly been improving ties for years, said the

agreement put a hold on Israel's plans to unilaterally annex parts of the occupied West Bank, which the Palestinians view as the heartland of their future state. But the Turkish Foreign Ministry said the UAE had no authority to negotiate with Israel on behalf of the Palestinians or "to make concessions on matters vital to Palestine." The agreement would make the UAE the first Gulf Arab state — and the third Arab country, after Egypt and Jordan — to have full diplomatic ties with Israel.

The Palestinians say the deal amounts to "treason" and have called on Arab

and Muslim countries to oppose it. The historic deal delivered a key foreign policy victory for US President Donald Trump as he seeks re-election and reflected a changing Middle East in which shared concerns about archenemy Iran have largely overtaken traditional Arab support for the Palestinians.

Trump has predicted that other countries in the region will follow the UAE's lead. Israel, the UAE and other Gulf countries that view Iran as a regional menace have been cultivating closer ties in recent years. Turkey has had diplomatic relations with Israel for decades. —PTI

in the November US polls. The Palestinian leadership rejected the deal as a "betrayal" of their cause, saying they would withdraw their ambassador from the Emirates.

Following on Friday prayers in Jerusalem, worshippers outside the Al-Aqsa mosque walked on pictures of UAE strongman Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. In the West Bank city of

Nablus, people set fire to pictures of Sheikh Mohamed, Netanyahu and Trump.

In Ramallah, office worker Jihad Hussein said: "The Palestinian people have been stabbed in the back by the Emirates leadership."

Establishing diplomatic ties between Israel and Washington's Middle East allies, including the oil-rich Gulf monarchies, has

been central to Trump's regional strategy to contain Iran, also an arch-foe of Israel.

Under the deal, Israel and the UAE "agreed to the full normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates", according to a joint statement on Thursday evening by Trump, Netanyahu and Sheikh Mohamed. They added that Israel

**Resolution on Chinese aggression against India introduced in US**

**Washington, Aug. 14:** A bipartisan group of two influential US senators has introduced a resolution in the Senate, condemning Chinese military aggression to change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India and calling for a diplomatic solution.

Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter standoff in several

areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh since May 5. The situation deteriorated after the June 15 Galwan Valley clashes in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed and an unconfirmed number of Chinese soldiers died.

The resolution was introduced by Senator John Cornyn, Republican Senate Majority Whip, and Senator

Mark Warner, ranking member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, on Thursday.

Cornyn and Warner are co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus. The Senate resolution follows the passage of a similar resolution by the House of Representatives as part of the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) last month. "As a cofounder

of the Senate India Caucus, I know firsthand the importance of a strong relationship between the US and India. I commend India's commitment to standing up to China and maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. It is more important than ever that we support our Indian partners as they defend against Chinese aggression," Cornyn said. —PTI

**AFGHANISTAN BEGINS TO FREE 400 PRISONERS**

**Kabul, Aug 14:** Afghan authorities on Friday said they had started to release 400 Taliban prisoners, the final hurdle in long-delayed peace talks between the two warring sides, even as President Ashraf Ghani warned they were a "danger to the world".

The Afghan government and the Taliban are set to meet within days of the prisoner release being completed, in a move that has drawn widespread condemnation after it emerged many of the inmates were involved in attacks that killed scores of Afghans and foreigners.

A group of 80 prisoners was released on Thursday, said National Security Council spokesman Javid Faisal, tweeting that it would "speed up efforts for direct talks and a lasting, nationwide ceasefire".

The peace talks will be held in Doha, Qatar. —AFP

would "suspend declaring sovereignty" over occupied Palestinian West Bank areas — an idea proposed in Trump's controversial peace plan unveiled earlier this year.

Sheikh Mohamed stressed in a tweet that an agreement has been "reached to stop further Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories".

But Netanyahu insisted afterwards that he had only agreed to delay, not cancel, the annexations. The plans remained "on the table", he said.

On Friday the prime minister appointed his national security advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat to lead the negotiations with the Emiratis.

US Gulf allies Bahrain and Oman welcomed the annexation deal, and Egypt, the only other Arab country to have a formal peace treaty with Israel, praised a deal that would scrap annexation. Thanking them Netanyahu said the "peace treaty" with the UAE "is expanding the circle of peace".

The European Union said normalisation would benefit both Israel and the UAE, but foreign policy spokeswoman Nabila Massrali stressed the bloc's commitment to a two-state solution. "We are, of course, ready to work on the resumption of the negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians," she said. —AFP

**NZ EXTENDS CITY LOCKDOWN TO STAMP OUT VIRUS**

**Wellington, Aug. 14:** Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern extended a lockdown in New Zealand's largest city on Friday, giving health authorities more time to trace and contain a strain of Coronavirus previously unseen in the country.

Ardern said stay-at-home orders would remain in force across Auckland until Aug. 26 in a bid to prevent a mystery outbreak from becoming a fully blown second wave.

Genomic tests indicated the latest infections were not the same strain of Coronavirus recorded in New Zealand earlier this year.

"This suggests it's not a case of the virus being dormant, or of burning embers in our community, it appears to be new to New Zealand," Ardern said.

She added that tests were also unable to link the outbreak to any cases among quarantined travellers from overseas. Since four people tested positive on Tuesday - the first cases of community transmission in 102 days — New Zealand has now detected a cluster of 30 virus cases. —AFP

**SPACE | STUDY Mystery had enthralled skywatchers since the star began to lose luminosity last Oct.****Dust clouds dim bright star Betelgeuse**

**Paris, Aug. 14:** The sudden dimming of one of the Milky Way's orion stars, Betelgeuse, could be due to a dust cloud spewing up from its surface, astronomers said on Thursday.

The mystery has enthralled skywatchers since the star — part of the Orion constellation — began to lose luminosity last October, with some experts suggesting it could herald its explosion into a supernova.

But researchers working with the Hubble telescope

now have a clearer picture, seeing superhot plasma being unleashed from the star's surface, cooling in the outer layers of the atmosphere and eventually turning to dust.

"The resulting cloud blocked light from about a quarter of the star's surface," the European Space Agency said in a statement, adding that the star has since returned to its normal brightness.

"With Hubble, we see the material as it left the star's visible surface and moved out through the atmos-

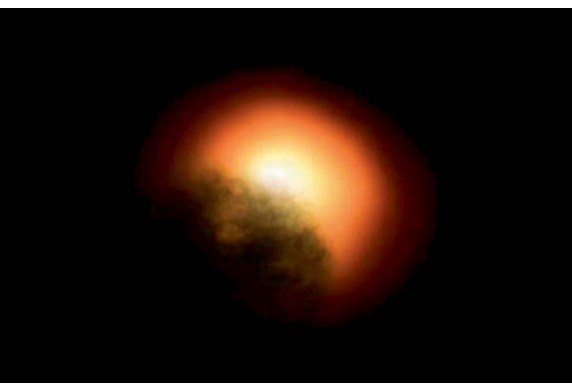
phere, before the dust formed that caused the star to appear to dim," said lead researcher Andrea Dupree of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in the

United States.

"We could see the effect of a dense, hot region in the southeast part of the star moving outward."

The researchers, due to publish their findings in The Astrophysical Journal, said they were not sure of the ultimate cause of the plasma eruption.

Betelgeuse, almost 1,000 times the size of the Sun, is 725 light years from Earth, meaning the event witnessed by the telescope happened around the beginning of the 14th century. —AFP



Picture of the Betelgeuse, one of the Milky Way's orion stars. —AFP





DECCAN  
Chronicle

15 AUGUST 2020

# Green shoots of peace in Israel-UAE accord

A landmark accord between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, brokered by Washington, comes on the back of an Israeli assurance that it would suspend annexing more areas of the occupied West Bank. Israel and UAE are to soon establish full-scale diplomatic relations but the Palestinians, who have been seeking a homeland in an elusive two-State solution to a long running feud, are miffed as there is very little in it for their greater cause. Iran, predictably enough, is upset at what clearly is the formalisation of the building of an axis of powers in the region against a Muslim country in which there is place even for the Jewish nation. The primary gainer in the deal would be Israel, which gives up only further annexation — viewed as unnecessary by a majority of its people — as it gets recognition in the contentious Middle East cauldron where religion was a clear divide in which Israel was the traditional outcast even amid Sunni-Shia tensions.

The other gainer from a historic deal that would have been unthinkable when Yasser Arafat's Palestine was facing its existential crisis is the US President Donald Trump who scores a rare foreign policy success after fruitlessly cavorting with North Korea and then grappling with China on a trade deal whose chances were totally undermined by the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. Seen as an election gift served up by his son-in-law and plenipotentiary Jared Kushner, the world will be hoping that a sincerity of purpose may have dawned at last for a region of many conflicts to experience real peace. The deal is, however, founded on assurances from a beleaguered Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who seems to be trading his territorial ambitions at least temporarily for friendship. The deal may, however, bolster his survival in a shaky coalition in the face of severe opposition in which his own people have been referring to him sardonically as "Crime Minister" in demonstrations every day outside his home.

Iran and Turkey's diatribe that all Muslims have been betrayed in the deal may be a tad exaggerated because Middle East countries have been reshaping their approach to Israel for years. Iran and many of its proxies in the region, including Hezbollah and Hamas, besides Syria and Yemen are the losers now. The Palestinian cause has lain on the backburner even as petroleum-rich countries have been dealing secretly with Israel for its cybertech, agricultural and health care expertise. It is moot whether Israel abandoning its "land for peace" policy would facilitate a grand entente in which the Palestinian Authority, led by Mahmoud Abbas, would return to the negotiating table. There has been no clear road map for this in recent times and the fear is the optics that looks so good in a US election year may fade in months. It would be in the interest of durable peace in the Middle East were UAE's recognition of Israel to lead to other Arab states following suit though a more just two-State solution seems as far away as ever. What has happened is at best the sighting of green shoots of peace.

## Argue, decorously

The death of Congress spokesperson Rajiv Tyagi due to a heart attack after attending a TV discussion on Wednesday has triggered a debate on the necessity of bringing in some civility to what has been happening in TV studios of late. People who have watched Indian television debates now would hardly vouch that they became better informed after watching them. Instead, they would hear what they loved to hear, and not the other side of the argument. This cacophony with little clarity offers an antithesis to journalistic principles, and is hence unfortunate.

Democracy demands that the people, the ultimate arbiters, have access to the right information so that they can take informed decisions on issues concerning them and the nation. Mass media is one of the sources through which they get such information. Discourses, whether on television or in other platforms, help this process, and hence are extremely important.

Freedom of the media is not expressly mentioned in our Constitution, but Article 19(1)(a) which deals with the right to speech and expression of citizens stands guarantee to it. This article identifies the right of the media with that of the citizens, and hence inseparable, making it one of the strongest safeguards for media freedom. Hence it is incumbent on the media to be responsible while enjoying this freedom.

Independent media has a role only in a democracy, and it is for the survival of its own self-interest that the media must strengthen the democratic processes by being democratic in its conduct of business. The Indian media has traditionally opposed governmental intervention, and rightly so. It has opted for self-regulation instead. It is time the organisations which have a moral authority on the channels exert themselves and help discussion rooms return to their basics, instead of making them gas chambers for participants and the idea of democratic disagreement.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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K. SUBHAKAR  
Printer & Publisher

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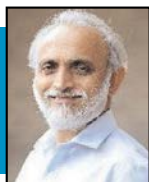
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Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-08

Subhani



# India's mood is sombre: Is Modi govt out of sync?



Parsa  
Venkateshwar  
Rao Jr

**The BJP is possibly yet to learn that a sweeping parliamentary majority may not be sufficient to do what is right for the country**

Covid life and that they must do it on their own.

It is the governments that are less than clear-eyed, less than tough, and less than honest compared to ordinary people. And this Independence Day, it is the immature swagger of the governments, especially that of Prime Minister Modi and his colleagues, that will strike the wrong note in these troubling days. But neither the Prime Minister nor his colleagues are willing to respect the sombre mood of the Indian public with the constant public banter of their tenuous achievements, displaying utter insensitivity which is a sign of the arrogance of those in power. The Modi government seem to believe that the help they offered to people during the Covid-19 crisis is largesse doled out by generous rulers. And they expect the people to be grateful to the government.

Mr Modi and his colleagues are only too willing to use the Covid-19 crisis and the Chinese threat in Ladakh as a cover to divert attention from their mishandling of major issues like Jammu and Kashmir, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019, and the economy in general. In the flush of last year's electoral victory, the Modi government had assumed that it can indulge in its favourite game of strongarm tactics, and brush aside public opinion in Jammu and Kashmir. It is now learning that the abrogation of Article 370 did not solve the Kashmir problem, and that humiliating the people of the state by bifurcating it and reducing it to a Union Territory was

not a sound idea, and that there is no alternative to the political process. The further abrogation of Article 35A with the dishonest intent of changing the demography of the Kashmir Valley has angered the people of Jammu as well because they do not want to be swamped by the intended demographic change. Similarly, the CAA was flaunted as the whim of a "Hindu state" which will protect Hindus in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, while the Assamese are totally opposed to the settling of Hindu refugees from Bangladesh in the state. And the BJP was playing to the Assamese Hindu identity to win the Assembly elections.

The Narendra Modi government has been flailing its hands for the past six years to make the economy hum, but it found itself committing all the unforced errors possible, including the November 2016 demonetisation, and alienating one Reserve Bank of India governor after another. Even the incumbent, Shaktikanta Das, who wanted to be accommodative to the government's demands, including the transfer of the RBI's huge reserves to the treasury, finds himself in a tight spot. Mr Modi does not seem to get the message that he has not set the economy free from government interference and that the ideal of "ease of business" is yet to be realised fully.

It is a hard lesson that Mr Modi is not willing to learn — that you could win a parliamentary majority but it does not ensure that the whims and fancies of a popular government do not strengthen the country in any way, including Mr Modi associating himself with the construction of the Ram Mandir at the site of the demolished Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

*The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst*

## LETTERS

### BENGALURU RIOTS

I am ashamed to say that our politicians will never want peaceful co-existence of different religious communities in India. Riots have become a tool for them to remain in power or return to power. In Independent India, communal riots are a big challenge and the best solution is swift enforcement of law to arrest perpetrators, shoot at sight and death sentence.

**Mansoor Dashti**  
Secunderabad

### ONLINE I-DAY

It is going to be a unique Independence Day this year with all the students attending celebrations online in the presence of their parents. All the fun and group celebrations at school will become imaginary and probably be shown in the background. Maybe some graphics can also be added to make the visuals attractive.

**V. Vijayakumar**  
Hyderabad

### EXAM SCHEDULE

As the UGC has imposed a September 30 deadline for all higher educational institutions to conduct final term exams for students, the ministry of home affairs on Thursday informed the Supreme Court that it decided to allow colleges and universities to open and conduct final term examinations. This has made students nostalgic about the time spent in watching Netflix and video games and reminded them about the effort needed to get to studies.

**Malik Mohammad Faisal**  
Hyderabad

### Giri's call to banish poverty, joblessness

NEW DELHI, Aug. 14 President V. V. Giri today identified unemployment and poverty as the country's biggest problems. He warned the nation that frustration born out of poverty and social injustice was a potent cause for unleashing disruptive forces. In a broadcast to the nation on the eve of the 23rd anniversary of Independence Day,

50 YEARS AGO IN  
DECCAN  
Chronicle

he said the vicious circle of lack of resources leading to unemployment and perpetuation of poverty "must be broken if we are to survive as a nation."

He urged a bold plan of full employment coupled with rapid growth with emphasis on using human resources fully.

Viswanath  
Jandhyala



# Don't celebrate India's surprise trade surplus

The Covid-19 pandemic is set to leave around 170 countries with lower GDP per capita by the end of the year. The IMF forecasts a sharp contraction of almost five percent in global economy during the year, as compared to a growth of 2.9 per cent in 2019. The downward revision of 8.2 percentage points from its January 2020 projection (of a growth of 3.3 per cent) is a major revision over a very short period by any standards. This only goes to show the enormity of the threat that the world is facing today from coronavirus, which could significantly alter the way business is conducted, trade across borders takes place and people engage with each other. In line with global trends, the IMF has slashed India's growth projection to -4.5 per cent for 2020 which is a substantial 10.3 percentage points lower than the January 2020 outlook of 5.8 per cent.

Subdued growth prospects, as a result of the global pandemic, have had adverse effects on demand, both global and domestic, thereby also leading to a slump in trade. UNCTAD, in its recent report, esti-

mated that India's trade impact due to the Covid-19 outbreak could be around US \$348 million. India is among the top 15 most affected countries on account of manufacturing slowdown in China that is disrupting world trade. As per the estimates, exports across global value chains could decrease by around US \$50 billion during the year in case there is a two per cent reduction in China's exports of intermediate inputs.

India's exports and imports saw a positive growth in February 2020, but plummeted in the last four months, recording steep contraction. With the average rate of contraction in imports of 53.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2020-21 being much larger than the average rate of contraction in exports, which was 36.3 per cent, India incidentally recorded a surprise trade surplus in June 2020.

The trade surplus of US \$800 million witnessed in June 2020, based on the provisional estimates of the ministry of commerce and industry, though subject to revision, is important on several counts. It represents a trade surplus for India after a gap of 18 long years, with the

last surplus recorded in January 2002, with a modest surplus of US \$10 million. A year prior to that, in February 2001, India had accounted for its largest trade surplus, of US \$238 million, in the last 30-year period prior to May 2020.

For a country that has been traditionally dependent on imports to meet its domestic demand, and has not witnessed an annual trade surplus for the last several decades, to have recorded a trade surplus of value close to a billion US dollars, is a matter to cheer though not an occasion to celebrate, given the circumstances under which it was achieved. One must also recognise the fact that the country has witnessed its largest trade deficit to the tune of US \$190 billion in 2012-13, and more recently in 2018-19 recorded a deficit of US \$184 billion.

The surplus in trade witnessed last month, could be attributed to several factors. While major commodity groups such as gems and jewellery, readymade garments of all textiles, petroleum products, electronic goods, engineering goods, and plastic, among others, recorded negative growth during June 2020 vis-à-vis June 2019, major

commodity groups including iron ore, rice, organic and inorganic chemicals, drugs and pharmaceuticals, have in fact recorded positive growth during the same period, with partial resumption of domestic industrial activity and opening up and relaxations in many countries.

Major import commodities including gold, coal, coke and briquettes, petroleum crude and products; electrical and non-electrical machinery, and electronic goods, have shown negative growth in June 2020 over the corresponding month of last year. The global Brent price for crude (\$/bbl) has decreased by almost 37 per cent in June 2020 vis-a-vis June 2019.

Partially reflecting a slump in domestic demand, while non-oil imports witnessed a contraction of 45 per cent, non-oil and non-gold imports recorded a negative growth of 41 per cent in June 2020 as compared to June 2019, contributing to the trade surplus. Gold imports during the first quarter of FY 21, witnessed an astonishing contraction of almost 94 per cent.

The circumstances under which India recorded its trade surplus

last month leave no room for complacency. To be able to continue to witness surplus in external trade, along with a pickup in domestic demand and industrial activity, several concerted efforts and reforms would be needed. Addressing supply and demand disruptions would necessitate ensuring an enabling environment and kickstarting domestic manufacturing activity, especially through MSMEs on a large scale. The clarion call by the Prime Minister to reduce import dependency and to strive towards an *Atma Nirbhar Bharat* is an effort in this direction. A change in mindset possibly leading to large scale local production, sourcing and acceptance of non-essential discretionary items, which are otherwise imported, only due to their intrinsic brand value, could also perhaps be a game changer in the medium to long run, with countless spillover benefits for the domestic economy.

*The author is an economist with India Exim Bank. The views expressed here are personal.*



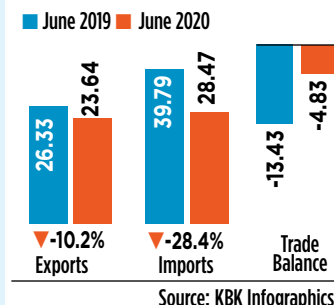
## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,877.34	-1.13
Nifty 50	11,178.40	-1.08
S&P 500*	3,376.01	0.08
Dollar (₹)	74.90	-0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.87	0.00
Euro (₹)	88.43	0.09
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,691,730	1.35
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.71	-0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.965	0.070
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.701	-0.015

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

### Merchandise trade

India's exports declined by 10.2% during July 2020 while imports registered a fall of 28.40% over the same month of the previous year



## WPI inflation at -0.58% in July, food prices spike



The wholesale price-based inflation stood at (-) 0.58 per cent in July, even as food items turned costlier. WPI inflation in June was at (-) 1.81 per cent, while for the month of May and April it was (-) 3.37 per cent and (-) 1.57 per cent, respectively. Inflation was at 1.17 per cent in July 2019. Inflation in food articles in July stood at 4.08 per cent, as against 2.04 per cent in June. But fuel and power basket inflation fell 9.84 per cent.

## Forex reserves climb \$3.62 bn to record \$538.19 bn

The country's foreign exchange reserves swelled by \$3.623 billion to a record high of \$538.19 billion in the week ended August 7, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended July 31, the reserves had increased by \$11.938 billion to reach \$534.568 billion. Foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, rose by \$1.464 billion to \$492.293 billion. Gold reserves were up by \$2.160 billion to \$39.785 billion.

## DigiValet rolls out hotel guest solution Thru

DigiValet, the makers of the guest-facing technology across luxury hotels, has launched Thru, an end-to-end cloud-based solution for hotel guests. This solution will help the hotel guests to complete their check-in process from their own device, without having to download any app or software. By facilitating check-ins remotely, Thru eliminates all touch-points that the guests would otherwise be exposed to.



## Dividend in tune with Budget estimate of ₹60K cr Govt to get ₹57K cr from RBI

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, AUG. 14

The central board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday approved a dividend transfer of Rs 57,128 crore to the central government for the accounting year 2019-20.

The board has also decided to maintain the contingency risk buffer at 5.5 per cent as mandated by the Bimal Jalan Committee. The transfer of 2019-20 is sharply lower than last year's. Last August, the central bank had announced the highest ever dividend transfer of Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the government. The dividend then comprised Rs 1.23 lakh crore of annual dividend for the year 2018-19 and Rs 52,637 crore from its



surplus capital identified by a revised economic capital framework.

The Jalan panel had also recommended that the interim dividend should be paid only under exceptional circumstances. The high-level panel, under the leadership of former RBI governor Bimal Jalan, was formed to recommend

ways to utilise RBI's excess cash reserves.

The RBI usually transfers surplus to the government in August after closing its books in June. RBI and the government follow different fiscal years. RBI is in the process of aligning its fiscal year with the government's from April 1, 2021. The RBI earns its profits

primarily from the interest it gets from the purchase and sale of government securities, the interest earned from lending to banks and interest earned on bond holdings. The dividend was lower this year as the RBI earned less from bond holdings and did not have one-time gains to transfer as it did in the previous year.

The transfer while lower than last year is in line with the amount that the government had budgeted for. The Union government had pegged Rs 60,000 crore as dividend from RBI in the Union Budget 2020-21. The government had budgeted a fiscal deficit at Rs 7.96 lakh crore for FY21. The fiscal deficit stood at 83.2 per cent of the FY21 budget target.

## Bond yields rise to three-month high as market rules out more rate cuts

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, AUG. 14

Government bond yields rose on Friday after retail inflation spiked in July, ruling out expectations of more accommodation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Traders expect the RBI to announce an open market operation (OMO) or a special OMO to address the nervousness in the bond market.

The yield on the 5.79 per cent bond due in 2030 rose five basis points to 5.95 per cent on Friday. The 10-year bond yield has risen

to the highest since May this year as the July Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation climbed to 6.93 per against the expectations of 6.25 per cent. Economists feel that we may be nearing an end to the RBI rate cut cycle.

Yields and bond prices move in opposite direction. The yields have already been on the rise since the RBI kept rates on hold at a policy review last week amidst inflationary pressures against wider expectations of a rate cut.

However, the higher retail inflation print was

primarily on account of higher food prices and some believe that a normal monsoon and a good kharif harvest could help the inflation cool off in the September-March period.

"Retail inflation breaching MPC's upper band of 6 per cent in seven out of last eight months makes the task of MPC difficult. We believe the MPC will watch the inflation trajectory very carefully before taking the decision of further rate cuts," said Devendra Kumar Pant, chief economist at India Ratings.

"We maintain further scope for upto 50 bps cut in the current cycle but with the MPC's desire for statistical reflection of durably low inflation, near-term cuts may be ruled out. Irrespective of the policy stance, the RBI's yield curve management in the form of outright OMOs and operation twist will continue," said Madhavi Arora, economist at Edelweiss.

Retail inflation has breached the RBI's upper tolerance limit of six per cent for four consecutive months and seven out of eight months.

## PE/VC FUNDS STRIKE \$1.7 BN BUYOUT DEALS IN JULY

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, AUG. 14

Private equity and venture capital funds are finding the current economic slump as an opportunity to buy controlling stakes in quality businesses at attractive valuations. July saw the highest value and number of buyout deals in 11 months.

In July, six buyout deals valued \$1.7 billion were inked and across different deal types, buyouts recorded the highest value of investments. July recorded the highest value and number of buyouts in 11 months, says a monthly report by IVCA-EY.

Between January and June this year, only 14 buyouts had happened and that too for a total transaction value of \$794 million. Buyout deals in the month of July were almost \$1 billion more than the entire value of H1 2020.

Among the major deals, Majesco was fully bought over by Thoma Bravo for \$594 million. KKR Asian Fund III picked up 65 per cent in J B Chemicals.

## Smartphone use up 50% in small cities

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, AUG. 14

Smartphone usage in cities and towns beyond tier-I increased 50 per cent during lockdown and the usage for productive work saw a growth of 100 per cent, finds a study.

During the lockdown period between March 25 and May 31, users in tier-II and beyond depended on their smartphones more for professional and personal purposes, says a study conducted by CyberMedia Research (CMR) with Tecno Mobile.

As many employees were working from home, there was 100 per cent more usage of smartphones for work-related purposes compared to pre-Covid times.

Further, 84 per cent of consumers who responded to the survey depended on their smartphones for accessing information on government schemes, weather patterns, and market linkage information for farm produce.

Among them, 83 per cent used their phones for content consumption, includ-

ing creating and consuming short-form videos, music and videos. A similar share of respondents used phones for online banking, shopping and utility bill payments.

Beyond work, consumers spent increased time on their phone for consuming content, including video OTT, audio OTT and gaming.

Around three in every seven users started some new activities and hobbies during the lockdown period. For instance, 21 per cent of the users learnt new skills, 19 per cent listened to music, while 18 per cent took up new hobbies on their phones.

One in three parents depended on their smartphone for facilitating their kid's online education.

"The smartphone is a key daily driver for consumers living in cities and towns beyond tier-I. We call this the 'Aspirational Bharat'. What the survey highlights is how smartphone usage is changing, during lockdown, said Prabhu Ram, head, Industry Intelligence Group, CMR.

## When investors back media and democracy

STEPHEN ENGLE & KARI LINDBERG  
AUG. 14

Jimmy Lai, the media mogul who owns the pro-democracy *Apple Daily* newspaper, warned investors not to buy his Next Digital Ltd media empire's stock because the company's fundamentals don't justify its recent rally. Moments later, the shares resumed their climb in Hong Kong.

"People with very little money just want to express their anger and express their support for our company," Lai said in an interview with Bloomberg Television on Friday. "Everybody bought a little bit. That became a lot of it and jacked up the price. I was telling people 'don't do it, don't do it, because you're going to lose money'."

The warning from Lai, who was released on bail Wednesday after becoming the most prominent pro-democracy activist to be arrested under Hong Kong's new national secu-



Jimmy Lai

city law, fell on deaf ears. Next Digital shares climbed as much as 42 per cent Friday morning, resuming the roller-coaster ride the holding company's been on this week. Lai denies he broke the law.

The shares are still up almost 400 per cent for the week and last traded at 44 H.K. cents, although that's far below their intraday high of HK\$1.96.

Hong Kong's Securities and Futures Commission has requested brokers to submit client information and recent transaction records related to Next

Digital's shares, the Hong Kong Economic Journal reported, citing unidentified brokers. On Tuesday, the regulator warned investors to exercise "extreme caution" with the stock and that it would closely monitor trading activity in Next Digital.

In response to the report, Lai said he doesn't know what the SFC might be trying to do but said the people who recently bought the shares were just expressing support for the company, which owns *Apple Daily*. The paper's offices were searched this week by the police.

Separately, Lai ruled out taking advantage of Next Digital's share surge by issuing new stock at inflated prices, saying that would be a "very dishonest way" for the company to raise money. Lai also said he has no plans to divest his shares in his media empire, whose business "will go on without me" should he be convicted.

—Bloomberg

## Mutual funds offloading large-caps for mid-caps

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, AUG. 14

Mutual funds were net sellers of equity assets worth Rs 9,195 crore in July as the stock market peaked to a five-month high from the March lows, as per data provided by the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

A portfolio analysis of top mutual funds like SBI and HDFC Mutual Fund show they sold part of their large-cap stockholdings in their portfolios in July and redeploying the money in the mid-cap and other promising large stocks.

Even smaller mutual funds said they reduced holdings in some stocks due to higher valuations, superlative returns obtained and on view that the business had changed.

This month too mutual funds have been net sellers of equity assets worth Rs 3,857.87 crore, as on August 14.

Debt mutual funds saw a net investment of Rs 31,897.85 crore in July and Rs 5,946.51 crore in August so far.

Since many large-cap stocks' prices peaked due to abundant liquidity despite their weak fundamentals due to the Covid-19 impact, fund managers have started to shift their allocation to potential underperforming mid-caps, leading to a rally in the broader market of late.

Atul Kumar, head-equity, Quantum Mutual Fund, said, "July turned



out to be another good month for Indian equities. S&P BSE Sensex performed significantly better than developed market indices such as Dow Jones and S&P 500 in July.

"Position in a health-care stock was trimmed during the month owing to higher valuations and the stock giving superlative returns. The scheme is also selling its position in a power utility stock as its view of business has changed."

Mid-cap stocks are still looking attractive to fund managers and they still see many winners in the broader market compared to their large-cap holdings.

"S&P BSE Sensex performance was slightly better than emerging markets overall. It gained 9.05 per cent as compared to 9.01 per cent return by MSCI Emerging Market Index in US dollar terms. Small and mid-cap indices' gains lagged that of the narrower benchmark S&P BSE Sensex. S&P BSE Mid-cap Index made a gain of 5.5 per cent during the month. Return on

BSE Small-cap Index was 5.3 per cent," Kumar said.

According to reports SBI Mutual Fund has reduced holdings in SBI, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Life and raised holdings in mid-caps like Union Bank, Federal Bank, SJVN, Indian Hotel and NHPC.

Navneet Munot, chief investment officer, SBI Mutual Fund, in a letter to SBI Mutual Fund investors says his funds are sticking to a bottom-up approach for stock picking as there are real risks because of a retail frenzy, plateauing economic activity, a potential fiscal cliff in the US and uncertainty around the US presidential elections.

HDFC Mutual Fund, the Second largest fund house in the country also sold shares of Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ITC, Axis Bank, Vodafone Idea and Aurobindo Pharma among others while the fund house picked up shares of Wipro, Infosys, Sun Pharma, Tata Steel and CDSL, among others.

## Shriram City Union cuts loans to small biz by 99%



Yalamati Srinivasa Chakravarti

GANESH NAGARAJAN  
AUG. 14

Shriram City Union Finance Ltd, a shadow lender backed by Apax Partners, is turning cautious on its key customers as the coronavirus pandemic rolls businesses.

Loans to small businesses, including grain merchants, which make up a little over half of the company's borrowers, plunged 99 per cent to Rs 20 crore in the June quarter from a year ago. While there's demand for small-ticket loans, the financier prefers to wait for more clarity on their recovery, according to CEO Yalamati Srinivasa Chakravarti.

"Most of the businesses have not come back to their normal level of sales," Chakravarti said by phone. "I have to look at their cash flows much more closely than earlier."

The bulk of Shriram City's customers seek loans of less than Rs 15 lakh, and are probably among the most vulnerable in an economy forecast to shrink for the first time in decades.

The government's massive stimulus package announced in May was aimed at helping small businesses, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepared to restart the economy. Earlier this month, the RBI allowed financiers to restructure certain loans by granting extensions of as long as two years with or without a freeze on repayments.

Chakravarti said he is against recasting loans as the practice leads to problems down the road. He predicts people will resume borrowing as states start lifting lockdowns.

—Bloomberg





## SHORT TAKES

## UK opens stadia to fans gradually

**London:** British sports fans will be allowed in to some pilot events from this weekend to test the safe return of spectators, with the government hoping bigger crowds can start attending venues from the start of October.

Around 300 spectators will attend the final two days of the World Snooker Championship at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre this weekend, the British government said on Thursday.

It added that more pilot events will follow with a view to reopening competition venues for sports fans, with social distancing measures in place from October 1.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson called off previously planned pilot events with some fans in attendance during the first two weeks of August. However, Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said, "we can now make further careful progress on recovery with allowing audiences back for indoor performances, fans back at sports events and the reopening of more Covid-19 secure leisure businesses." — AP

## Lahiri one under, Atwal yet to finish

**Greensboro:** Returning to action after more than five months, Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri shot a one-under 69 at the Wyndham Championship while Arjun Atwal was two-under in his unfinished first round, halted by inclement weather.

It was a fairly good round that should have fetched Lahiri a better score but he was found wanting on the greens, where he twice missed putts inside five feet and on four other occasions he was 10-11 feet or less from the pin.

Considering he was competing after a long time, he hit the ball well finding 10 of the 14 fairways and 13 of the 18 greens, but the putting prevented him from finishing with a better card.

Lahiri had just two birdies, but gave away one bogey in his round and was Tied-67th. Atwal, the 2010 winner of the Wyndham, playing this week with a sponsor's exemption, looked set for a great start as he was four-under through 16 holes but then double bogeyed the 17th. — PTI

## Boxer Benavidez remains unbeaten

**New York:** Undeclared American David Benavidez defends his World Boxing Council super middleweight world title for the third time on Saturday against Colombia's Alexis Angulo. Benavidez, 22-0 with 19 knockouts, returns to action in the feature bout at Uncasville, Connecticut, some 11 months after stopping countryman Anthony Dirrell in the ninth round.

"I'm very eager to get back in the ring and give the fans a great fight. Training camp has been amazing. Fortunately, my dad opened his own gym just before the pandemic, so we've had private training and been able to safely bring in sparring partners to help me work," Benavidez said.

In 2017, Benavidez became the youngest champion in super middleweight history at age 20 by beating Ronald Gavril in a split decision for the vacant crown, then kept it by winning a unanimous decision over the Romanian in a 2018 rematch. — AFP

## PORTLAND GO PAST NETS IN NBA MATCH

**Miami:** Damian Lillard scored 42 points and came up with a key late steal as the Portland Trail Blazers edged the Brooklyn Nets 134-133 on Thursday to keep their NBA playoff hopes alive.

The scrappy, scintillating win put the Blazers into a weekend play-in series with the Memphis Grizzlies for the final Western Conference playoff berth. Caris LeVert, who led the playoff-bound Nets with 37 points, had a chance to deny them but missed a potential game-winning jump shot as time expired. — AFP

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20

Printed and Published by

K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan

Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed

at Deccan Chronicle Press situated

at Plot No. 9 Alwal Village, Valsad,

Nagar Taluk, Medchal Malkajgiri

Dist. Telangana and Published at

36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3.

RNI Registration No. 3081/1957.

Editor: Aditya Sinha

BIGGIES ON BOARD  
Tata Group joins race to be IPL title sponsor

**New Delhi, Aug. 14:** Multinational conglomerate Tata Group has submitted its 'Expression of Interest' to become IPL title sponsor this year, joining education technology company Unacademy and fantasy sports platform Dream11 in a bid to replace Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for one season.

Friday was the last date of submission of 'EOI' to the BCCI. The IPL will be held from September 19 to November 10 in the UAE this year and the winning bidder will hold the rights for four months and 13 days.

Tata Group's entry into the fray makes the bidding war on August 18 very interesting as BCCI is expecting that the winning bid will not be much lower than Vivo's ₹440 crore annual contract even though the rights period is of a short duration.

"Yes, Tata Group has submitted their Expression of Interest to buy IPL title rights," a group spokesperson said.

A source in the BCCI earlier confirmed the submission of EOIs from the other two companies.

"The EOI doesn't have to mention the bid amount. It will be sent on August 18," the official said.

"Post the delivery of the EOI, BCCI shall inform the rights, product categories and entitlements to the interested third parties. The final bid should be sent to eoi@bcci.tv between 11 am to 1 pm on August 18, 2020," the BCCI has already stated.

— PTI

● **Tata Group's entry into the fray makes the bidding war on August 18 very interesting as BCCI is expecting that the winning bid will not be much lower than Vivo's ₹440 crore annual contract even though the rights period is of a short duration.**



Chennai Super Kings players Piyush Chawla (from left), Suresh Raina, Monu Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Karn Sharma and Deepak Chahar fly on a special flight to Chennai on Friday.

**C. SANTOSH KUMAR | DC**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 14

Three-time champions Chennai Super Kings have stolen a march over their IPL rivals by managing to assemble their core team in the city for a five-day training camp starting on Saturday at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium. The team will shake off the rust before they leave for Dubai on August 21. The 13th edition of the tournament starts on September 19 in the UAE.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Suresh Raina, Ambati Rayudu, Deepak Chahar, Piyush Chawla, Kedar Jadhav, Karn Sharma and others arrived in Chennai by a chartered flight on

● **Chennai Super Kings flew in their top players via a chartered flight and are all set to resume training for the IPL. Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Suresh Raina, Ambati Rayudu were among the cricketers to arrive in Chennai on Friday.**

Friday afternoon. They headed straight to a star hotel where an entire block is reserved for the team. CSK officials and their social media team who will accompany the team to the UAE are also staying in the same hotel.

"The chartered flight had stopovers in Pune, Delhi, Ranchi and Hyderabad before bringing the players together to Chennai. All of them had tested negative at their respective cities. There

will be two more testings in Chennai — during camp — before they leave by another chartered flight to Dubai. All the foreign players will come directly to Dubai in batches," said a CSK team official.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who opted out of the Chennai camp due to personal reasons, will join the squad in Dubai.

**Mini bubble at MAC**  
With the CSK players set

to begin their training on Saturday, the M. A. Chidambaram stadium has been turned into a bubble. Around 100 people, including Tamil Nadu Cricket Association staff, groundsman, security and drivers, have been tested. The camp will be held behind closed doors.

"Even the media will not be allowed in. We have already handpicked net bowlers who will travel with the team to the UAE. Those players too were tested and none of them were positive. They are also staying in the team hotel. We have sent a car to Coimbatore to pick up N. Jagadeesan, Tamil Nadu wicket-keeper batsman," the CSK official said.

## US | OPEN

## Reigning champ Bianca pulls out

**New York, Aug. 14:** Novak Djokovic boosted the US Open by saying on Thursday that he will play in the Grand Slam tennis event while reigning women's champion Bianca Andreescu joined a host of notable no-shows.

"After many discussions with those closest to me, I have made the difficult decision not to return to New York this year," Andreescu said in a statement.

"I have taken this step in order to focus on my match fitness and ensure that I return ready to play at my highest level." Andreescu defeated Serena Williams 6-3, 7-5 in last year's US Open final.

"The US Open victory last year has been the high point of my career thus far and I will miss not being there," Andreescu said.

"However, I realize that the unforeseen challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic, have compromised my ability to prepare and compete to the degree necessary to play at my highest level," she added.

Top-ranked Djokovic, a 17-time Slam singles champion, ended speculation by saying he would travel to New York on Saturday and play a tuneup event inside a Covid-19 quarantine bubble on the Flushing

● **With 2019 women's singles winner Bianca Andreescu withdrawing due to the Pandemic, the US Open this year will be played without defending champions.**

● **Last year's men's champion Rafael Nadal had earlier pulled out of the Grand Slam.**

Meadows grounds ahead of the US Open start on August 31.

"It was not an easy decision to make with all the obstacles and challenges on many sides," three-time US Open winner Djokovic said.

"But the prospect of competing again makes me really excited," he added.

The 33-year-old Serbian will be the only member of the "Big Three" at Arthur Ashe Stadium, with reigning champion Rafael Nadal — a four-time winner — deciding already not to defend his 2019 title and five-time champion Roger Federer out with a knee injury.

— AFP



Serena Williams (left) and Venus Williams tap racquets after their women's singles match at the Top Seed Open in Lexington, Kentucky (USA) on Thursday. Serena won in three sets at 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

— AFP

## Serena rallies for win over Venus

**Washington, Aug. 14:** Serena Williams rallied to defeat sister Venus Williams 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 on Thursday in a second-round matchup of Grand Slam champions at the WTA Top Seed Open.

Top-seeded Serena, a 23-time Grand Slam winner, said the victory will boost her confidence heading into the US Open as she improved to 19-12 in the 22-year-old rivalry with Venus.

"I wanted to win this for my game and my confidence," said Serena, whose only title as a mother came in January at Auckland.

Serena smacked a cross-court forehand winner to break Venus for a 2-1 lead in the third set, then dropped the next four games, only to break again in the seventh on another forehand cross-court winner, then hold to 4-4.

Serena zipped a backhand cross-court winner past Venus to break for a 5-4 lead and served out the match, aided by an umpire over-rule ace to reach 30-30.

Serena followed the call with her 14th ace and won after two hours and 19 minutes when Venus sent a forehand beyond the baseline.

— AFP

## HALEP FIGHTS HER WAY INTO QUARTERS

**Prague, Aug. 14:** Reigning Wimbledon champion Simona Halep reached the quarterfinals of the WTA Prague Open after grinding out a three-set win against Czech doubles specialist Barbora Krejickova on Thursday.

The lacklustre Romanian world number two overpowered the 118th-ranked Krejickova 3-6, 7-5 and 6-2 in two hours and five minutes in her second post-lockdown match.

On a scorching hot Thursday afternoon and behind closed doors, the 28-year-old Halep struggled with her right shoulder which affected her serve as she piled up ten double faults and gave away seven breaks.

She was 0-2 down in the third set but then won six games in a row after finally regaining composure as Krejickova lost much of the resolve she had shown earlier in the match.

— AFP

## HAMILTON BEATS BOTTAS TO TOP SPAIN PRACTICE

**Barcelona, Aug. 14:** Lewis Hamilton bounced back to top the times ahead of his teammate Valtteri Bottas as Mercedes continued to dominate Friday's second free practice at this weekend's Spanish Grand Prix.

The championship leader and six-times champion had been second behind the Finn after the morning's opening session, but re-established his supremacy on a hot afternoon at the Circuit de Catalunya.

Hamilton clocked a best lap in one minute and 16.883 seconds to outpace Bottas by 0.287 seconds with Max Verstappen, winner of last weekend's 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone, third for Red Bull, eight-tenths adrift of the fastest lap.

Daniel Ricciardo was fourth for Renault ahead of Romain Grosjean of Haas who outpaced Charles Leclerc, who was sixth for Ferrari.

— AFP

## No English, Aussies in early IPL stages

**London, Aug. 14:** England and Australia's IPL-bound players are likely to miss the first week of Indian Premier League after it was announced that the two teams will play six white-ball games from September 4-16 at Southampton and Manchester respectively.

England and Australia will be playing three T20 Internationals at the Ageas Bowl on September 4, 6 and 8 while the ODIs will be held on September 11, 13 and 16 at the Old Trafford.

The latest that the players can touch base in UAE is September 17 or 18 and

as per the IPL SOP, will be quarantined for six days with RT-PCR tests on day 1, 3 and 6. On the seventh day, they will be entering the bio-bubble provided they test negative on all three occasions.

Effectively, none of the players will be available for at least the first two to three games of their respective franchises.

A total of 29 players from England and Australia are part of the eight IPL squads including top draws like David Warner, Ben Stokes, Jofra Archer, Steve Smith and this year's record buy Pat Cummins.

— PTI

## McDONALD TO MISS OZ TOUR, WILL PLAY IPL

**Sydney, Aug. 14:** Australia's senior assistant coach Andrew McDonald will miss next month's tour of England owing to a pre-existing commitment with his Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Rajasthan Royals (RR), the country's cricket board said on Friday. "Australian men's team Senior Assistant Coach Andrew McDonald will not travel with the squad to the UK to fulfill a pre-existing commitment as Head Coach of the Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League," Cricket Australia said in a statement.

— PTI

ATM overdraft, out of order  
Leipzig send Atletico out of Champions League

**Lisbon, Aug. 14:** Leipzig stunned Atletico Madrid 2-1 on Thursday to reach the Champions League semifinals for the first time as Tyler Adams' 88th-minute winner earned them a showdown with Paris Saint-Germain.

Atletico looked to have secured extra-time at the Estadio Jose Alvalade when Joao Felix won and then scored a penalty to cancel out Dani Olmo's headed opener early in the second half.

But Adams proved an unlikely hero for Leipzig, coming off the bench to snatch victory in Lisbon after his fired effort took a cruel deflection of Stefan Savic and flew in.

The win marks an historic night for Leipzig, who were only formed 11 years ago and played their first ever season in Germany's top flight in 2016.

Progress to the last four



Tyler Adams (right) of Leipzig celebrates his goal with teammates during their UEFA Champions League quarterfinal match against Atletico Madrid at the Jose Alvalade stadium in Lisbon on Thursday. Leipzig won 2-1.

— AFP

also puts another feather in the cap of their coach Julian Nagelsmann, whose stock will rise even further after ousting Diego Simeone, one of this competition's most gnarly tacticians.

"I'm perhaps one of the happiest coaches in the world. Tonight we're happy. Tomorrow we'll start looking at Paris. That will be another difficult game but we'll have a plan," Nagelsmann said.

Their challenge is now to defeat PSG on Tuesday, the French champions who have only played three matches in almost half a year and needed a late escape to see off Atalanta.

— AFP

## CITY TAKE ON LYON FOR A SPOT IN SEMIS

**London, Aug. 14:** Manchester City finally have a marquee victory in the knockout stages of the Champions League after seeing off Real Madrid to reach the last eight, but they want much more in Lisbon over the next week with Pep Guardiola insisting they cannot be satisfied by beating the 13-time winners.

It took City eight seasons in the Champions League to beat a former winner over two legs, but disposing of Madrid both home and away, pre and post football's shutdown showed a maturity and ability to handle pressure situations that Pep's men have lacked in previous Champions League campaigns.

— AFP

**LIVE ON TV**  
**Champions League quarterfinal: Manchester City vs Lyon from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD.**

