

SHORT TAKES

Man, aide booked for lucky draw fraud

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has registered a case against a man and his associates for allegedly cheating several people in Govindpuri area, officials said on Friday. A video circulating on social media purportedly shows around a hundred people gathering outside Govindpuri police station demanding the arrest of the accused. Some of the victims said they were duped into investing several lakhs in the scheme. The accused has been identified as Abdul Salam (30), a resident of Govindpuri. He was running a chit-fund group named 'Friends Lucky Draw', police said. He, along with his wife Pinki, brother Abdul Kalam, Fazluddin and other associates had collected money from a large number of investors and escaped, DCP (southeast) R.P. Meena said. Explaining the modus operandi, the DCP said every member had to pay ₹1,000 per month for 15 months. Thereafter, they were given Rs 20,000. The accused also used to pay ₹700 per month to a member who would help join another 10. A lucky draw was also held and the selected member used to get a lump sum amount or a gift as mentioned in the deposition card.

Cops bust interstate illegal arms gang

New Delhi: With the arrest of a 48-year-old man, the Delhi police, on Friday, has claimed to have busted an interstate illegal arms syndicate involved in supplying arms and ammunition to criminals in Delhi, National Capital Region (NCR), and western Uttar Pradesh (UP). The accused have been identified as Abdul Salaam, a resident of Meerut in UP. The police said that it has also recovered 20 country made semi-automatic pistols and 40 magazines along with 50 cartridges concealed in a refined oil tin from the possession of the accused. According to DCP (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwaha, on August 20, specific inputs were received that Abdul Salaam would be at ISBT Sarai Kale Khan between 8.00 pm and 9 pm to deliver the supply of firearms and ammunition to one of his contacts in Delhi. "Acting on the input, a trap was laid and Abdul was nabbed by the members of the police team. He was subsequently booked under Section 25(8) of Arms (Amendment) Act, 2019," said the DCP.

2 boys drown in water-filled pit

Ghaziabad: Two boys drowned in a deep pit filled with rainwater in Ghaziabad district on Friday, police said. The incident took place around 5.30 pm when Jeeshan (11) and Hannan (10), residents of Shaheed Nagar colony in Sahibabad, along with their five friends reached the area behind Shalimar city housing complex and entered the water-filled pit for swimming, they said. The boys slipped into deep water and drowned. Their bodies were fished out by a few people from Sikandarpur village area adjacent to Hindon civil airport, police said. ASP Keshav Kumar said that both the bodies have been sent to mortuary and the families have insisted the bodies be handed over to them without autopsy. Deep pits were dug in the area by brick kiln owners. They are now filled with water due to rainfall in the last two days. — PTI

2 held for burglary in Subhash Place

New Delhi: Two men have been arrested for allegedly burgling a house in Subhash Place area here, police said on Thursday. On August 8, the complaint of house theft was received at Subhash Place police station. The complainant reported that on June 15, he, along with his family, had gone to Ayodhya in UP for the last rites of his father, they said. When the complainant returned, he found his house was ransacked and gold and silver jewellery, one laptop and around ₹10 lakh cash was found stolen, police said. During investigation, police checked the CCTV footage of the area and found two persons with their faces covered going towards M-Block Shakurpur, a senior police officer said.



A man rides cycle at Vijay Chowk as Clouds gather in the sky over in New Delhi on Friday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

■ RoC had complained against 4 bogus companies

2 held for donating ₹2 crore to AAP through shell companies

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, AUG 21

The Delhi Police has arrested two men, including a chartered accountant, for allegedly donating ₹2 crore to the AAP through shell companies, officials said on Friday.

The accused have been identified as Mukesh Kumar (53), a resident of Ganga Vihar, and Sudhanshu Bansal (43), a resident of Laxmi Nagar, they said.

The Delhi Police received a complaint from the Registrar of Companies (RoC) where it was mentioned that the four companies, allegedly on April 5, 2014, donated ₹50 lakh each to the AAP, a senior police officer said.

In its complaint, the RoC alleged that the four com-

panies — Goldmine Buildcon Pvt Ltd, Skyline Metal and Alloys Pvt Ltd, Sun Vision Agencies Pvt Ltd and Infomance Software Solutions Ltd — were bogus and not located at the addresses which were in its record, police said.

There was a huge infusion of money in these companies by way of share premium amount, but the sources from where the money had come were not disclosed, police said.

The RoC issued notices to all the directors of the companies, but none of

able with the RoC record. "FSL report confirmed that the various documents relating to Deepak Aggarwal submitted to Ministry of Corporate Affairs for issuing DIN were bearing his forged signatures. Photograph on the DIN form does not belong to him," joint commissioner of police (EOW) O.P. Mishra said.

It was also found that the forged documents for procuring DIN in the name of Aggarwal were submitted under the Digital Signature Certificate of Chartered Accountant Sudhanshu Bansal, he said.

The investigation also revealed that all the directors of the four companies Yogesh Kumar, Mohit Kumar, Dharmender and others are employees of accused Mukesh Kumar, the officer said.

During the investigation, police found that the four companies did not exist at the address avail-

able with the RoC record.

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Plea in SC seeks live-streaming of Bhushan's contempt case

New Delhi, Aug. 21: A petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Friday seeking directions to start live-streaming of the proceedings in the suo motu contempt case against senior advocate Prashant Bhushan.

The petition, filed by advocate Amritpal Singh Khalsa, said that the print and digital media has been glorifying Bhushan in their reporting and therefore urged for a live-telecast and video recording of the proceedings.

The contempt case against Bhushan will have a substantial effect as far as the Bar and the Bench



Prashant Bhushan

are concerned, not only in India but across the world, the plea contended.

"The instant contempt case is one of the most sensational cases ever since the inception of the Supreme Court, the projection of Prashant Bhushan's case at the hands of print and digital media is nothing but glorifying him and his acts which tend to lower the respect and repute of the institution," the plea submitted. It said that there is a "lobby" which has targeted Chief Justices in the past and of which Bhushan is one of the founding members.

The lobby aims to destabilise the institution of the SC and "criticise to the lowest possible level when favourable orders are not obtained from the court", the plea alleged. Notably, the SC yesterday reserved its order for his two tweets in June concerning present and former Chief Justices of India.

₹1cr for family of sanitation worker who died of corona

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday met the family members of a sanitation worker who recently died of coronavirus and handed over a cheque of ₹1 crore as an ex-gratia to them.

Talking to reporters during his visit in North Delhi's Majnu Ka Tilla area, AAP supremo said that sanitation worker Raju contracted the infection when he was on coronavirus duty and died while serving the

people of Delhi.

"We are proud of such 'corona warriors' who are sacrificing their lives while saving the citizens of Delhi," he said.

The chief minister said that his government will provide all possible assistance to Raju's family



Ajit Mohan

These standards outline what is and is not allowed on Facebook. Meanwhile, Facebook's Oversight Board has said it will be within its scope to examine how the social media giant treats posts from public figures that may violate community standards and are



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal hands over a ₹1 crore cheque to a family member of a sanitation worker, who lost his life due to Covid at Old Chandrawal in New Delhi on Friday.

— PTI

'Shaheen Bagh activists' entry into BJP is a political blunder

Several saffron party leaders express resentment

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

Days after facing embarrassment over allowing joining of over 50 'Shaheen Bagh protesters,' the BJP's central leadership has conveyed its displeasure to the state leaders over the issue. Senior BJP city unit leaders, aware of the development, said the top leadership believes it was a "political blunder."

According to a senior Delhi BJP leader, party central leadership has taken note of joining of individuals from minority community in a strong message to the state unit and termed it a "political blunder" which can be avoided at first instance.

"The central leadership expressed its displeasure and the decision to allow the Shaheen Bagh protesters to join BJP has not helped the party, instead caused huge embarrassment. It advised that such misad-

▶ **ACCORDING TO** a senior Delhi BJP leader, party central leadership has taken note of joining of individuals from minority community in a strong message to the state unit and termed it a "political blunder" which can be avoided at first instance

venture or political blunder must be avoided," he added.

It is learnt from reliable sources in the Delhi BJP that the central leadership also took the view of several senior state leaders who explained that the move politically damaged the party.

"The central leadership took the opinion of some senior state leaders over the controversy surrounding the joining of Shaheen Bagh protesters and many of them explained that it must not be done and it gave political fuel to Opposition AAP," they

said. Some leaders had pointed out to the central leadership that the timing of the joining is not right as there is no election right now and it can be postponed for now.

There is already a strong resentment within the Delhi BJP.

Majority of the party leaders, which include former state unit presidents and current and former office-bearers, questioned the move to allow the joining of these people in the party.

A political storm has erupted after the secretary of Rashtriya Ulama Council's city unit and social worker from Shaheen Bagh Shahzad Ali and others joined Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleged that the Shaheen Bagh agitation was "scripted" by the saffron party for electoral gains in the Delhi Assembly polls.

BJP: Civic bodies to start de-sealing of residential properties

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, on Friday, said that the party ruled municipal corporations will soon start de-sealing of thousands of residential properties sealed under directions of the Supreme Court appointed monitoring committee.

Mr Gupta and his predecessor and Northeast Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari, in a press conference along with three mayors Jai Prakash, Anamika, and Nirmal Jain, welcomed the Supreme Court's directions to the monitoring committee last week.

"We have directed the three municipal corporations to immediately start the de-sealing process. It will benefit 6,000 residential properties sealed under the directions of the monitoring committee," said Mr Gupta.

Encroachment is a matter of concern but the monitoring committee, set up in 2006 to identify unauthorised structures and check misuse of residential properties in Delhi, "cannot exceed its power" and take any action beyond its authorisation, the Supreme Court had said last week.

A bench headed by



Adesh Gupta

Justice Arun Mishra had said that at no point of time the apex court has empowered the monitoring committee to take action with regard to "residential premises not used for commercial purpose" and it is not authorised to take action concerning residential premises situated on private land.

Mr Tiwari, who had faced contempt action for breaking the seal of a property in Gokalpur in 2018, alleged that the monitoring committee worked in a "pick and choose" manner.

"Despite several complaints by me, it did not take any action on unauthorised construction of thousands of houses on the Yamuna floodplain in Okhla," said Mr Tiwari.

Both Mr Gupta and Mr Tiwari said that the monitoring committee has become "irrelevant" as a special task force has been formed to deal with the issue of encroachment in Delhi.

Woman kills husband, tells police it was suicide

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

A 30-year-old woman, along with her accomplices, allegedly killed her husband here and tried to mislead investigators by saying the man had committed suicide, police said on Thursday.

The woman and her husband had a 20-year age difference and the couple did not have any child, they said.

Police said the woman was not happy with her marriage and hatched a plan, with one Veeru Burma and Karan, to kill her husband.

She allegedly had an extra-marital affair with Burma and wanted to marry him, while Karan was staying with the woman and her husband in their house in Budh Vihar area, police said.

The woman's husband worked here in Mayapuri Industrial area, they said. The woman allegedly strangled her husband with the help of Karan after giving the victim sleeping pills.

They later rushed the man to hospital and told doctors he had committed suicide. However, the doctors alerted the police.

FB a non-partisan platform, says India head amid political row

New Delhi, Aug. 21: Facing allegations of bias in handling hate speeches, Facebook on Friday said it is an open, transparent and non-partisan platform, and will continue to remove content posted by public figures in India that are in violation of its community standards. The statement from Facebook (FB) India head Ajit Mohan comes against the backdrop of a political row following a Wall Street Journal report that alleged that the social media platform's content policies favoured the ruling party in India.

"FB is and always has

been an open, transparent and non-partisan platform where people can express themselves freely. Over the last few days, we have been accused of bias in the way we enforce our policies.

"We take allegations of bias incredibly seriously, and want to make it clear that we denounce hate and bigotry in any form," Facebook India vice-president and managing director Ajit Mohan said in a blog post. He also emphasised that the company has an impartial approach to dealing with content and is strongly governed by its Community Standards.



Ajit Mohan

These standards outline what is and is not allowed on Facebook. Meanwhile, Facebook's Oversight Board has said it will be within its scope to examine how the social media giant treats posts from public figures that may violate community standards and are

▶ **RECENTLY,** A Wall Street Journal report alleged that FB's content policies favoured the ruling party in India. Since then, the BJP and Congress have been trading barbs over social media giant's alleged bias

the type of "highly challenging cases" that the board expects to consider once it starts functioning. Asserting that FB's commitment to India is unwavering, Mohan in the blog post said the company's aim is to be an "ally" for India where its platforms

preserve the "pluralistic character of a democracy by offering the freedom for people to express themselves and for entrepreneurs to build new things while also protecting society from broader harm".

"Our Community Standards define what stays on our platform and are enforced globally... We enforce these policies globally without regard to anyone's political position, party affiliation or religious and cultural belief. We have removed and will continue to remove content posted by public figures in India when it violates our

Community Standards," he said. In the wake of the WSJ report, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology has summoned Facebook on September 2 to discuss the issue of alleged misuse of the social media platform.

On Friday, Mr Mohan also said that many questions have been raised specifically about enforcement of FB policies around hate speech and pointed out that it has made "significant progress" in removing hate speech and other harmful content over the past few years.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Special prayers held for SPB at Sabari

Sabarimala: Special prayers were held on Friday at the famous Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple here for the well-being of veteran playback singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, who is critical and on life-support battling Covid-19 at a hospital in Chennai. Special "usha pooja" was held at the temple on behalf of Balasubrahmanyam, the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) said in a release. "A musical offering was held at the temple using *nadaswaram* (wind instrument), *thakil* (percussion instrument) and *Idaykka* (a drum) played by TDB employees Ganesh Thiruvappu, Sugunan and Yadukrishnan respectively. The musicians played '*Shankara nada sareera*', a hit song sung by Balasubrahmanyam," TDB said. The hilltop shrine was opened on Sunday for the monthly 5-day poojas. — PTI

Odisha: 2 youths fall into waterfall, die

Bhubaneswar: Obsession for clicking selfies under risky conditions on Friday proved costly for two youths as they lost their lives after slipping into a waterfall in Odisha's Bargarh district. The deceased were identified as Papu Mahakud (18) and Khirod Soni (20) of Jhipiki village under Paikmal Police Station in Bargarh district. According to reports, Papu, Khirod and their other friend visited Kapildhara waterfall in Nrusinghnath, a famous tourist destination in Odisha, situated about 15 km away from their village, on Friday despite Covid-19 restriction. After reaching the spot, two friends duo Papu and Khirod looked for the place for a perfect selfie shot. Reportedly, they slipped into the waterfall while taking a selfie standing on a huge rock. A firefighting team and police rushed to the spot.

107-year-old woman beats Covid infection

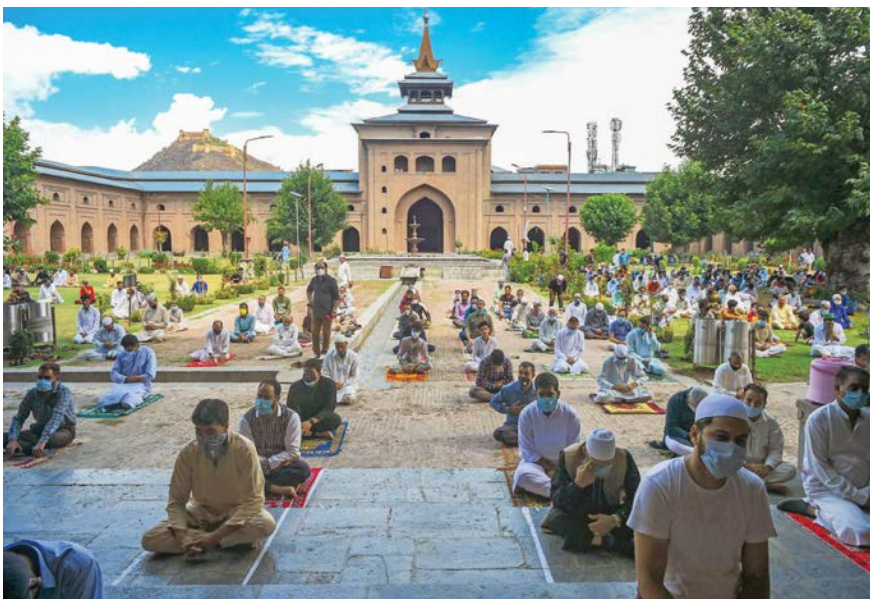
Jalna (Maharashtra): A 107-year-old woman and her 78-year-old daughter have recovered from Covid-19 here in Maharashtra, overcoming the odds of high mortality rate among elderly people, an official said on Friday. The woman-daughter duo along with three other family members were discharged from a Covid-19 hospital in Jalna city on Thursday. The centenarian, her daughter, 65-year-old son and two grandchildren, aged 27 and 17, were undergoing treatment for coronavirus for more than a week at the hospital, district civil surgeon Archana Bhosale said. Residents of Mahi Pura in old Jalna, the family was admitted to the hospital on August 11 after they tested positive for the infection, she said. — PTI

Beating people: FIR against Ballia SDM

Ballia (UP): Police lodged an FIR against a sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) here on Friday, a day after he was suspended for beating people on the pretext of enforcing a drive to wear face masks amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. A case was lodged against SDM Ashok Chaudhary on the basis of a written complaint by Rajat Chaurasiya who alleged that the officer had thrashed and verbally abused him, SHO Ubhaon Police Station, Yogendra Bahadur Singh said. The matter is being investigated, the SHO said. Two videos of the Bilthara Road SDM beating up youths went viral on the social media on Thursday following which some of the victims lodged a complaint with the police. — PTI

UP BJP MLA dies of cardiac arrest

Lucknow/Deoria: BJP MLA from Deoria's Sadar seat, Janmejaya Singh, died of a cardiac arrest at a hospital in Lucknow, party spokesperson Chandra Mohan said on Friday. He was 75. Singh was admitted to Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Institute after he developed health complications and died during pacemaker implantation late on Thursday night, Mohan said. The MLA was initially taken to the civil hospital where he tested negative for coronavirus. Vikram Singh, medical superintendent of Lohia Institute, said the MLA suffered a heart attack.



People offer Friday prayers at historic Jamia Masjid in Srinagar on Friday. The first congregational Friday prayers were held at the grand mosque after five months following the coronavirus outbreak. — PTI

Man of British origin held for sexually abusing boy

Bhubaneswar, Aug. 21: A 68-year-old man of British origin has been arrested on the charge of sexually abusing a minor tribal boy who studies in a shelter home run by him in Odisha's Jharsuguda district, a senior police official said on Friday.

The accused has been running the residential missionary institute at Jharsuguda with more than 500 children for about 25 years, Jharsuguda Superintendent of Police Rahul P.R. said.

The man, who has adopted Indian citizenship, was arrested on Thursday on the basis of a complaint lodged by the minor boy, a hostel inmate. Further investigation in the case is in progress, he said.

The man has been booked under relevant sections of IPC, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences



Patrick Bridge

THE ACCUSED has been running the residential missionary institute at Jharsuguda with more than 500 children for about 25 years. The man had launched Faith Outreach along with his wife around 25 years ago to educate to tribal students.

(POCSO) Act and SC/ST (POA) Act, the SP said.

As per the complaint lodged by the boy the man had sexually assaulted him when they were returning from Rayagada district last year, sources in the police said.

The incident relating to the alleged sexual abuse came to light during a probe into misuse of funds being provided by a foreign NGO, they said.

The man had launched Faith Outreach along with his wife around 25 years ago to provide education to tribal students. It has a centre which provides home and care for abandoned babies and a childrens home that provides clothing, education, medical care and daily food to over 500 poor children, the sources said.

The organisation also has a training centre that prepares volunteers to work as social workers in the local communities.

However, the hostel at the shelter home has been closed since March this year in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, a police official said.

No senior official of the organization was immediately available for comment on the incident. — PTI

Quality test of imported toys must from Sept. 1

New Delhi, Aug. 21: Consumer affairs minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Friday said that imported toys will be allowed to enter India only after complying with the mandatory quality norms from September 1 onwards.

The government is in the process of making quality standards mandatory for 371 tariff lines ranging from steel, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and electrical machinery to furniture to check shipments of sub-standard and non-essential goods, including from China.

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the government's nodal agency that frames quality standards in coordination with the concerned ministries.

"The mandatory quality control standard (QCS) for toys will be implemented from September 1 onwards. BIS staff will be deployed at major ports to take the sample and test the product for quality," Mr Paswan told reporters.

Besides toys, the QCS for steel, chemicals, electronic goods and heavy machinery as well as for food items like packaged water and milk products are in the process, he said.

According to BIS director general Pramod Kumar Tiwari, the implementation of the QCS for each product is being decided by the concerned ministry. For instance, the mandatory gold standard will come into force from June 2021. — PTI

JEE Main and NEET to be held as per Sept. scheme

QCS for steel and chemicals also under consideration

Conduct entrance exams like NEET, JEE after Diwali: Swamy

New Delhi, Aug. 21: BJP MP Subramanian Swamy on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to conduct entrance examinations such as the NEET and the JEE after Diwali in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In a tweet, Swamy said that he has spoken to education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and had written an urgent letter to the Prime Minister on this matter.

"There is widespread desperation amongst the youth since this exam is make or break for them and they have to take it fully prepared," Swamy said in the letter to Modi, adding that the required infrastructure for conducting these exams (amid the pandemic) is also not in place in the country.

The Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main is



Subramanian Swamy

scheduled to be held between September 1 and 6 while the JEE (Advanced) on September 27. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) will be held on September 13.

On Monday, the Supreme Court dismissed a plea seeking postponement of JEE (Main) April 2020 and NEET-Undergraduate examinations in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Underlining that the Supreme Court judgment does not bind the government when to hold the exam, Swamy indicated that holding the exams, in his opinion, "may lead to suicides". — PTI

There have been demands from several students and parents to further postpone the entrance exams in view of increasing coronavirus cases.

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a plea seeking postponement of JEE (Main) April 2020 and NEET-Undergraduate examinations, which are scheduled to be conducted in September, amid spurt in number of Covid-19 cases, saying precious year of students "cannot be wasted" and life has to go on.

The NTA said it has made elaborate arrangements to sanitise centres

before and after the examinations, and give fresh masks and hand gloves.

The NTA has also prepared a comprehensive advisory regarding Covid-19 for all functionaries for centre management, the testing agency said.

In order to solicit support of states for maintaining law and order, power supply, facilitation of movement of candidates and exam functionaries, crowd management in front of exam centres, we have also written to the state chief secretaries, DGPs, and DMs/SPs of the concerned cities, the NTA said. — PTI

SC rejects plea against Gogoi

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea seeking an "in-house" inquiry against former Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi for an alleged bias and improper conduct in passing an ex-parte order in July 2016.

Dismissing the plea as "infructuous", Justice Arun Mishra heading a three-judge bench told the petitioner-in-person that Justice Gogoi has since retired and "nothing can be done now, we can't help you".

As the PIL petitioner-in-person Arun Ramchandra Hublikar from Pune persisted with his plea, the court asked him what was he doing for last two years since he had filed the PIL.

Hublikar said that he wrote dozens of letters to the court registry and had met the secretary general personally for a date but nothing happened.



Ranjan Gogoi

"Supreme Court has not taken my case, that is my grievance. No am ag senior citizen at the age of 69", Hublikar told the court.

"Nothing remains that can be considered. With the lapse of time that has happened. Whether your fault or God's fault, your prayers have become infructuous" Justice Mishra said dismissing the PIL.

The registry, in its office report, stated that Hublikar, petitioner-in-person, had filed the petition on 24.05.2018 and he had made frivolous allegations against the retired CJI in three applications.

The case was listed before the Court on 10.12.2018, but Hublikar requested an adjournment expressing his inability to appear and accordingly the Court ordered listing of the matter in August 2019.

Uma sets political circles abuzz with MP ambition

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 21

Former chief minister Uma Bharti, the "die-hard saffronite", has literally set the social media on fire when she posted a picture in which she was seen romancing with monsoon rains.

The twitter post showing the saffron-clad leader enjoying monsoon rains trickling through a pipe from the roof of her official bungalow here along with her young niece has attracted 1,57,000 likes within a few hours.

"I enjoyed the monsoon rains leaking through the pipe from the roof under the open sky along with 'beti' (referring to her niece) Nitya. I thanked the god", she tweeted while posting the picture of her rain bath.

The post was retweet-



Uma Bharti enjoys monsoon rain. — Twitter

ed 796 times and commented by 174 followers within a few hours.

The 61-year-old "sanyasin" also took the opportunity to wish good rainfall this monsoon and good harvesting by farmers of Madhya Pradesh.

The picture has incidentally stirred a flutter in BJP circle here amid growing speculations that she was trying to stage a comeback to MP politics by taking active role in the

upcoming by-elections to the 27 assembly constituencies in the state, scheduled to be held by end of September this year.

In fact, Ms Bharti has of late been found touring MP very frequently giving rise to the speculation on her growing ambition to return to MP politics.

Besides, she has also been found to be engaging her in political activities in Bhopal in the last eight months.

SC permits opening of Jain temples for rituals

'Order can't be cited as precedent for festivals'

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

The Supreme Court on Friday permitted the Jain community in Mumbai to perform Paryushan rituals for two days — August 22 and 23 — only in three temples belonging to the community located one each in Byculla, Dadar (W) and Chembur

have undertaken to restrict the entry of devotees only to five persons at any given time, subject to a maximum of 250 devotees on a single day. Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a three-judge bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that the order was limited to the Paryushan given its limited participation with restricted entry and can't be cited as a precedent for the festivals involving large congregations like Ghanesh Chaturthi.

"We make it clear that this order is not intended to be used as a precedent by other persons to seek permission to hold any festivals/festivities which would involve, by their very nature, congregation of people, such as 'Ganesh Festival'", the court said shutting its doors on any petitioners who may approach the top court seeking relaxation of restriction for holding festivities relating to Ghanesh Chaturthi which is round the corner. While relaxing restrictions for observance of Paryushan for two days limited to three temples in Mumbai, CJI Bobde noting the resistance by Maharashtra government to any easing of curbs in the wake of Covid pandemic said, "They are willing to take the risk when money is involved but then it comes to religion, they say there is Covid and we can't do this or that."

JAIN COMMUNITY in Mumbai to perform Paryushan rituals for two days — August 22 and 23 — only in three temples belonging to the community located one each in Byculla, Dadar (W) and Chembur

have undertaken to restrict the entry of devotees only to five persons at any given time, subject to a maximum of 250 devotees on a single day. Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a three-judge bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian said that the order was limited to the Paryushan given its limited participation with restricted entry and can't be cited as a precedent for the festivals involving large congregations like Ghanesh Chaturthi.

"We make it clear that

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PROJECT)-I
SHAHDARA (NORTH) ZONE
G.T. ROAD, OPPOSITE SHYAM LAL COLLEGE,
SHAHDARA, DELHI-110032

The online tenders are invited on behalf of the Commissioner EDMC from the contractors/firms who fulfill the conditions for execution of the following works vide NIT No: D/EE-(PR)-I Shah (N)/20-21/02 dated 20.08.2020:-

1. **Name of work:** Construction of Pucca School Building at MC pry School, Tahipur No.1 in Ward No.34E, New Seemapuri, Shahdara (North) Zone. Part B: Electrical work, Part C: Dismantling of old existing structure, **Head of Account:** XL-VII-Education, **Tender Amount:** Item Rate, **Earnest Money:** Rs.13,27,900/-, **Time of Completion:** 12 Months, **Tender No.**319099. Tender and other details can be seen and download from the website <https://mcdetenders.com> on or before 11.09.20 upto 15:00 hours. The last date of submission of tender forms with earnest money and tender cost will be submitted on 14.09.20 upto 15:00 hours **Sd/-**
R.O. No. 42/DPI/EDMC/2020-21 **E.E. (Pr.)-I Shah (N)**
EDMC'S CITIZENS HELPLINE NO. 155303

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
Head Office: 10-152/1, Ashoknagar, Bandar Road, Vijayawada-520007.
Tender No: Mktg./M2/1920(3)/KMS-2019-20 Dated: 21.08.2020

TENDER NOTICE
APPOINTMENT OF MANUFACTURERS FOR SUPPLY OF 7663 UNITS OF UNIVERSAL MOISTURE METERS TO RITHVI BAROSA KENDRAS IN ANDHRA PRADESH STATE FOR STRENGTHENING OF PADDY PRODUCTION OPERATIONS AT VILLAGE LEVEL THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT.

Andhra Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd invites Tenders for Appointment of Manufacturers for Supply of Universal Moisture Meters

Interested Manufacturers from All Over India may visit www.apsccsl.in or www.appeprocurement.gov.in to view and download tender documents free of cost and attend Online Pre-Bid meeting on 27.08.2020.

Interested tenders to submit bids should be registered in the website www.appeprocurement.gov.in and should obtain digital Signature Certificates from any Certifying Authority in India. The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature certificates are mentioned in the website www.appeprocurement.gov.in or contact the helpdesk of procurement portal. Phone numbers: 08645-246370/171/72/73/74.

Last date for online registration and completion of formalities for e-auction shall be up to 5.00 PM of 04.09.2020 and tentative date for online e-auction through e-procurement platform would be 09.09.2020 from 12.00 PM onwards. **Sd/- VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR**

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer - (E&M)
Technical Laboratory Campus, Ghazipur, Delhi
No. EE-E&M/EDMC/ENGG/2020-21/162 Dated : 20.08.2020

CORRIGENDUM

Due to technical error in uploading the bid. In view of above the date extended, the revised schedule with extended date of Press NIT No EE-E&M/EDMC/ENGG/2020-21/06 dated 21.07.2020 (Tender No 318995) uploaded in <http://mcdetenders.com>. Kindly see the revised schedule on the MCD website <http://mcdetenders.com>

RO NO - 43/DPI/EAST/2020-21 Ex. Engineer (E&M)
EDMC's Citizens Helpline No. 155303

Phone/Fax No: 0194 - 2443031/2433032 (Sgt)
Website: www.jkpolice.gov.in 0191-2458029/2458255 (Jammu)
email: phj@jkpolice.gov.in

POLICE HEADQUARTERS J&K, SRINAGAR
[GIST]

NIT NO: 32 of 2020
Dated: 18.08.2020

E-tenders are hereby invited by Police Hqrs, J&K, from Original Manufacturers or their authorized dealers having proper authorisation of the manufacturer to quote against the tender for the supply of Bomb Inhibitor as indicated in the detailed SBD & BOQ. The download of NIT shall start on 20.08.2020 at 11:00 hours. Tenders shall be submitted online on J&K Government e-procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in before 05.09.2020 upto 1800 hours.

The tenders (technical bids only) will be opened online on 07.09.2020 at 11:00 hours at Police Headquarters, Peerbagh Srinagar. In case of unforeseen circumstances, the date of opening will be next working day or else as notified separately. Detailed tender documents with terms and conditions are available on J&K Government e-procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in.

(Rayees Mohammad Bhat)-IPS,
AIG of Police (Provision/Transport)
For Director General of Police,
J&K Srinagar.

No.: Prov-II/Sec-56/19-20/33507-19 Dated: 18.08.2020.

DIPK-4291/20 Dated 20.08.20

SHORT TAKES

No withdrawal from banks in Maha town

Aurangabad: In a bid to prevent the spread of coronavirus in rural areas, the district administration of Hingoli in Maharashtra has stopped cash withdrawal facility at banks, an official said on Friday. Bank business correspondents and customer service centers, which were set up amid the viral outbreak, will distribute cash in villages according to a set timetable, the official said. Apart from this, gram-sevaks will be deployed to distribute money in villages where these centres are not available, he said. Banks have been directed to make a timetable for villages and gram-sevaks will have to get withdrawal slips filled from accountholders and submit them at banks a day before the scheduled cash distribution, the official said. Collector Ruchesh Jaywansi instructed gram-sevaks to take the help of police while distributing cash. — PTI

Medical report must for MLAs in Punjab

Chandigarh: In the wake of coronavirus pandemic, Punjab Assembly Speaker Rana K.P. Singh on Friday said that the latest coronavirus negative report is mandatory for ministers, MLAs, officers and employees to attend the Punjab Vidhan Sabha session. The assembly session will begin from August 28 amid the Covid-19. "Latest corona negative report will be mandatory for ministers, MLAs, officers and employees to attend the session of Punjab Vidhan Sabha, that begins on August 28," said Punjab Assembly Speaker. According to the Union health ministry, Punjab has 13,830 active cases, 23,037 cured/discharged/migrated cases and 957 deaths as of August 21. — ANI

20 people ill after gas leak in Andhra

Amaravati: At least 20 workers, majority of them women, fell sick after a leak of ammonium gas late on Thursday night in a dairy belonging to a private agro products firm in Putalapattu constituency in Andhra Pradesh. While three of the victims were shifted to Ruia Hospital in temple town of Tirupati, five were admitted to the CMC hospital in Vellore in neighbouring Tamil Nadu. The others were undergoing treatment in the government hospital in Chittoor, the police said. Chittoor district Collector Narayana Bharat Gupta and Superintendent of Police Senthil Kumar visited the dairy unit and supervised the rescue operation. — PTI

Nearly 83 lakh hit in flood-hit Bihar

Patna: The flood situation in Bihar remained grim on Friday with an additional 1.13 lakh people bearing the brunt in 16 districts in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of affected people to 82.92 lakh, disaster management department bulletin said. Flood-related deaths remained unchanged at 27, the bulletin said. As many as 82,92,464 people have been affected by the deluge in 1,322 panchayats of 130 blocks since Thursday. Additional five panchayat areas faced flood fury in the past 24 hours while the number of blocks and districts remained the same at 130 and 16 respectively. Till Thursday, 81,79,257 people were impacted by the calamity. — PTI

Man working for terror outfit held

Srinagar: An overground worker of a terrorist organisation was arrested from Ganderbal district of J&K on Friday and a grenade seized from his possession, the police said. The man tried to evade a "naka" set up by security forces near the Baderkund Nursery area in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, a police official said. He said due to timely action by the security personnel at the "naka", the man was apprehended and a grenade was seized from his possession. The police official said the man was identified as Showkat Ahmad Bhat, a resident of the Urpash area in the district. The police were trying to ascertain which terrorist organisation Bhat was affiliated to, he added. — PTI



People violate social distancing norms as they step out for shopping on the eve of Ganesha Chaturthi festival at Dadar market in Mumbai on Friday. — PTI

Fire accident: 1 victim had just recovered from Covid

AGE CORRESPONDENT
Hyderabad, Aug. 21

Dharavath Sunder Naik, 32, an assistant engineer of Genco who died in the Srisailem power plant fire, had recovered from Covid-19 one month back and had reportedly returned to duty only on Thursday, sources said. Naik, a native of Jagani thanda of Chivvema mandal of Suryapet district, returned to Srisailem on July 25 after being treated at home and completing the quarantine period at his native home.

Sunder was a resident of the Genco quarters at Srisailem along with wife Prameela and two daughters, Mansavini and Nihaswi.

According to family members Sunder spoke to his wife and his parents at around 11.30 pm after the fire broke out. He asked his parents to take care of his daughters and wife as he could not escape death. All the nine persons who

MISHAP DEEPLY UNFORTUNATE: PM

New Delhi, Aug. 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday described the Srisailem hydroelectric plant fire tragedy, in which nine persons were killed, as "deeply unfortunate" and hoped that the injured recover at the earliest. The incident took place

died in the fire accident at the Srisailem hydel power station spoke to their family members even as they tried to escape from the flames and thick smoke.

Mohan Rao, an assistant engineer and resident of Jeedimetla in Hyderabad, spoke to his family and one of his colleagues Venu and told them that his chances of escaping were bleak. He was among the nine victims.

Deputy engineer Srinivas Goud spoke to his family around 11.30 pm over phone and told them that there was no

chance for him to escape from the death trap as the smoke had engulfed in the plant. "If the rescue teams do not reach us in 30 minutes, we will not survive," he said, according to sources. He is suspected to have died shortly afterwards. Nine people, including seven employees of the Telangana State Power Generation Corporation (TS Genco) and two from a private firm, were killed and eight others injured in a fire mishap at the Srisailem Left Bank hydel power station.

late Thursday night in the plant on the Telangana-Andhra Pradesh border. "Fire at the Srisailem hydroelectric plant is deeply unfortunate. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. I hope those injured recover at the earliest," the PM said in a tweet. — PTI

Covid count crosses 29L, 68,898 new cases in 24 hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

India's overall cases of coronavirus crossed 29 lakhs on Friday after 68,898 new cases were detected in the last 24 hours. Out of these new cases the highest were detected in Maharashtra, where close to 15,000 persons were found to be infected with the deadly virus. Fresh cases in Andhra Pradesh were close to 10,000, while Karnataka had nearly 8,000 new cases in the last 24 hours, according to the Union health ministry.

The overall fatalities due to Covid-19 so far is 54,849 with 983 new deaths in the last one day. As per COVID19India.org, the totals deaths were past 55,000.

At the same time India logged the highest single day recoveries as 62,282 were discharged in the last 24 hours taking total recoveries to nearly 21.59 lakhs.

"The gap between recovered patients and active Covid-19 cases has increased and reached

Offices, shops in Haryana to remain closed on weekends

Chandigarh, Aug. 21: Haryana home and health minister Anil Vij on Friday said all offices and shops, except those providing essential services, will remain closed on every Saturday and Sunday in the wake of increase in Covid-19 cases in the state. "All offices and shops except essential will remain closed in Haryana on every Saturday and Sunday due to #COVID-19," Mr Vij said in a tweet.

14,66,918 today. As a higher number of patients recover, their percentage rate continues to steeply rise along with steady decline in percentage active cases. With such a high level of recoveries, India's recovery rate has soared past 74 per cent (74.28 per cent) ensuring more and more patients are recovering. This is bolstered by 33

CBI may take FBI's help to crack Sushant death case

Central agency may send certain evidence to US body for analysis

PRAMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

The CBI, which collected crucial forensic evidence pertaining to the death case of Sushant Singh Rajput from Mumbai police on Friday, is contemplating seeking assistance of the USA's premier investigating agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), for a detailed scientific analysis of the evidence.

Sources said, "CBI forensic experts have collected all scientific evidence pertaining to the case from the Mumbai police. If required, the agency may send certain evidence to the FBI for a detailed forensic analysis. The FBI has the most advanced forensic lab in the world".

Final decision in this regard will be taken only after detailed scrutiny of the evidence by the CBI's forensic experts, they clarified. Earlier, the CBI had sought help from the FBI in the Bhanwari Devi murder case of Rajasthan.

Besides, it is learnt that the CBI is exploring the option of sending certain forensic evidence for "Touch-DNA" test to an UK-based agency. "Touch DNA is a forensic method for analysing DNA left at the scene of a crime. With this test, it would be easy for the investigators to ascertain the identity of those who were present at the crime scene. Samples for the test are sent to the UK as there's no facility in the country to carry this sophisticated scientific tests", sources said. Final decision in this regard will also be taken only after collecting all evidence, they added.

The CBI sleuths met senior cops of Mumbai police and collected evidence.

Mumbai, Aug. 21: The CBI team brought an unidentified person related to the Sushant Singh Rajput death case, to the guest-house where they are staying, for questioning on Friday.

A meeting of CBI officers, who arrived from Delhi on Thursday, to investigate the Sushant Singh Rajput Death case, is underway at the airforce transit facility in Santacruz, Mumbai, said sources.

"A meeting of CBI officers, who arrived from Delhi yesterday, is underway at airforce transit

facility in Santacruz, Mumbai", sources said.

On August 19, while holding that the FIR registered in Patna over the death of Bollywood actor was legitimate, the Supreme Court directed the CBI to investigate the case.

The single-judge bench of Justice Hrishikesh Roy also said the Bihar Government was competent to recommend transferring the case to the CBI.

The apex court also asked the Mumbai Police to hand over all the evidence collected so far in the case to the CBI. The state of Maharashtra

refused the option to challenge the order, Justice Roy said.

The CBI has registered an FIR against Rhea Chakraborty and others in connection with the actor's death after the Centre accepted Bihar government's recommendation to transfer the probe in the matter from Patna.

An FIR was registered in Patna on a complaint filed by K.K. Singh, Rajput's father, under sections related to abetment to suicide. Rajput was found dead at his Mumbai residence on June 14. — ANI

Rane: Rhea-Aditya link must be probed

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, AUG. 21

BJP leader and legislator Nitesh Rane on Friday demanded a CBI probe into why actress Rhea Chakraborty named Shiv Sena leader Aaditya Thackeray in the Sushant Singh Rajput death case, while nobody else had mentioned his name.

The BJP leader also said that transport minister Anil Parab should also be probed as he had said that a party was held on June 13 even when the state was under lockdown. Nitesh also claimed that whatever information he has regarding this, he would



give it to the CBI at the appropriate time.

Speaking with this newspaper, Mr Rane said, "I want to know why Rhea Chakraborty has given only a clarification on Aaditya Thackeray? Why did she not mention any other politician or cabinet minister's name from the Maharashtra government? None of us from the opposition has ever mentioned Aaditya's name. We had said that a young minister from the Maharashtra government might be involved that is why the police is being pressurised."

More railway coaches may be converted to Covid units

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

The home ministry along with the railway ministry is working on a contingency plan to convert more train coaches into hospital wards in view of anticipated sharp increase in coronavirus cases in the coming months.

Two officers from each ministry will be designated as nodal officers for specific states for this purpose.

The home ministry has been working as nodal agency with other concerned ministries and departments to make all necessary arrangements for Covid-19 management both during the lockdown and now as unlock is being implemented in the country.

It is estimated that with intensified testing and opening of the economy there could a sharp increase in number of coronavirus cases in the country during September and October.

9 guards of Lalu test +ve for Covid

Docs closely watching RJD chief

Patna, Aug. 21: Nine security personnel deployed for the security of RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav have tested positive for Covid-19.

"Nine security personnel deployed for Lalu Prasad's security, have tested positive for Covid-19. The security personnel have been removed from their duties," DrUmesh Prasad, physician of RJD chief said.

"The Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) has requested concerned authorities to deploy nine new security personnel," he added.

Doctors, however, said his chances of exposure are very low as the security guards were deployed outside and did not come in contact with him.

The 72-year old RJD chief is currently lodged at Kelly Directors' Bungalow of the RIMS.

"The policemen, who were found positive, have been removed and fresh deployment has been done after getting them checked for the virus,"



said Dr Umesh Prasad, who is leading the team of doctors looking after Mr Yadav in RIMS.

"Meanwhile, we are keeping a close watch on Laluji, and if any symptoms related to coronavirus is observed in his body, then he will undergo a Covid-19 test," said Prasad. The doctor, however, clarified that the RJD chief has not shown any symptoms of Covid so far.

After being convicted by a special CBI court in Ranchi on December 23, 2017 in the second fodder scam case involving illegal withdrawal of ₹89.27 lakh from Deogarh treasury, the RJD chief was lodged in Birsra Munda Central jail in Ranchi.

— Agencies

Minister asks why state govt took part in airport bidding Puri says Kerala was given fair chance

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 21

In a political response to Kerala opposing privatisation of its Thiruvananthapuram airport, Union civil aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said that if the state government is against privatisation, then why did it participate in the bidding?

Kerala government lost out during the bidding process that was finally won by Adani group.

"The state government was given a fair chance and right of First Refusal (RoFR) if their bid was within 10 per cent below the range of highest bid. However, they bid 19.64 per cent below. Then they approached the Kerala high court which dis-

Ruling CPM to send 2L emails to Modi to protest privatisation

AGE CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG.22

The ruling CPI(M) in Kerala has decided to send 2 lakh letters and e-mails to prime minister Narendra Modi to protest against handing over of Thiruvananthapuram airport to Adani Enterprises.

The decision to send letters was taken at the

state secretariat meeting on Friday.

"We will not allow Adani group to take over the airport. The ruling LDF will turn the protest into a mass movement in the state. People from all sections of the society will be mobilised to oppose the sell out of the airport," CPI(M) state secretary Mr Kodyeri Bala-Krishnan told media persons.

missed the petition in December 2019. Petitioners then filed a SLP in the Supreme Court. The

SC remitted the matter back to the Kerala high court. There is no stay in the case either by the SC

THE ASIAN AGE

22 AUGUST 2020

Democrats' message is clear: Get Trump out

The hoopla may have been missing as the four-day Democratic Party convention had to go virtual in the time of the pandemic but the message rang loud and clear. In just over two months, when the fate of the battle for the White House will be sealed on November 3, it will be most of America versus the Republican President Donald Trump and his running mate who could be his Vice-President Mike Pence. More than seeking votes, the Democratic presidential nominee, Joe Biden, made it a mission to capture the heart and soul of the USA. In a pitch perfect speech launching his bid for the most coveted place in the Oval Office, the seasoned politician and former vice-president to Barack Obama aspired to be the white knight on a charger looking to take back America at a difficult time in its history.

A country overrun by three crises all at one time — the worst pandemic in a century, the harshest economic crisis since the Great Depression and the most compelling need in its society for racial justice since the emancipation — seems ready enough for plucking at what is seen as an inflection point in contemporary history. Mr Biden's appeal for an "American moment" rather than a "partisan moment" could not have been better timed as the Black Lives Matter movement has galvanised USA into examining its racial attitudes and its systemic prejudices against sections of the population that are Black, non-White Hispanic or of Asian descent.

Sharing his Democratic ticket in a changing nation that has become even more of a melting pot of races, cultures and aspirations is the first semi-Black and semi-Indian American senator, Kamala Harris who seems poised to enhance Mr Biden's candidature with her appeal to that section of Americans identified as racial or ethnic minorities. And, with an endearing reference to her aunts as "*chithis*", she may have won over not only 2,40,000 Tamil Americans but also a majority of the 1.8 million Indian Americans with a vote that may count more than ever.

The die is cast but the war is just beginning against a candidate who showed that he would be using every trick in the book, including slowing down the postal service to cast doubts on mail-in voting that Blacks may intend to use more because of their fear of going to the ballot booth. Mr Trump's support for QAnon, an ultra-Right group that believes in far-fetched conspiracy theories like all Democrats are Satanic and into sex trafficking of children, is just the tip of the iceberg as he falls back on his White Conservative vote bank for another term. As Kamala Harris said so pertinently — "There is no vaccine for racism."

Global interest in the coming US elections seems extraordinary already and not only in India because of the presence of a person on the ticket with roots in Chennai. The election may redefine the very fount of modern democracy where deep-rooted covenants with freedom seem to be in peril from the machinations of an authoritarian President. If Mr Obama was withering in putting down a succeeding President, it only showed the extent of the dubious contributions to a nation in crisis of the most divisive leader who is now fanning the flames of racial hostility as an election strategy.

Strong-arming the Opp.

The Bharatiya Janata Party targeting parliamentary standing committee on information technology chairman Shashi Tharoor for speaking publicly on the controversy involving social media giant Facebook betrays its desperation at the whole development. Panel member Nishikant Dubey has written to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla that Mr Tharoor, a Congress leader, runs the affairs of the committee "unprofessionally" and he be replaced with any other member. Both Mr Tharoor and Mr Dubey have moved breach of privilege notices against each other over the issue.

Mr Tharoor had recently announced publicly that the committee would seek the views of the officials of the US company on the report by the *Wall Street Journal* that it turned a blind eye to hate speeches by individuals and organisations associated with the BJP to protect its business interests. The Congress had demanded that a joint parliamentary committee investigate the veracity of the report.

Those who have a stake in Indian democracy can rightly be upset by the allegation that a multinational corporation sought to further its business interests in India with acts that can undermine the nation's political process. Promoting violence and instigating a communal divide are punishable as per Indian laws, too. Facebook is accused of providing a platform for committing such crimes, and hence of being complicit in it.

This is not a BJP versus Congress issue; it's about the survival of India's democratic and political processes, and a proper investigation into the claim is what is called for. The government, however, has been silent on the issue except advancing lame excuses. The BJP and the government must stop targeting leaders who demand investigation into a contention and instead take early steps to ensure that we have systems in place to stop MNCs from manipulating our systems. "Off with his head" does not reflect a democratic mindset, and the ruling party must avoid it.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



In search of Idealistic India: It will rise again



Shobhaa De

Last week, just after listening to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day address, I met a fine young man at a friend's home. Why "fine"? Let's start with the lineage. Impeccable. Education? Top rate. Attitude? Awesome. Not only was he an engaging and impassioned speaker, he made a lot of sense. Representing old money and coming from an affluent South Mumbai business family, the good-looking, stylish young man was exactly the kind one could glibly dismiss as a "dandy" or a "dilettante". At best (and only if one were to be in an exceptionally generous mood), one might have a second glass of wine with such a person, just to indulge him. I did just that and asked idly what he had been doing during the lockdown... did he have any specific plans for the immediate future? Yup, as a matter of fact, he did! He had arrived at an important decision — and he seemed very happy with it. Check out what he did! A few weeks ago he had received a coveted letter of acceptance from Harvard University. He sensibly figured that it was going to be way too much money to spend on virtual classes. But... he still lusted after that Harvard degree. Tough. So, he went ahead and asked if his admission could be deferred by a year — he was certain he'd be turned down. But hey — he wasn't! That left him with another question: what to do during these trying times while waiting for the world to get back on its feet? He applied for and got into a top corporate house, thanks to his impressive academic

credentials. As a passionate environmentalist, civic issues were a top priority. He had put in four slog years teaching underprivileged children in Mumbai. He was not a resident of La La Land — Mumbai's grotty ground realities did not faze this young man. And his new assignment brought him a little closer to what he dreams of doing eventually — working to improve basic living conditions for those with little or zero access to almost every little thing he himself has taken for granted his entire life.

There are many, highly motivated young people like him. They want to use their privileges and education to "make a difference" — even if that is an overused cliché. They are aware of the countless challenges — especially in an increasingly vitiated political environment — but they remain undaunted. This young man has taught himself to understand the system and work with it, not against it. Yes, there are frustrations galore, especially when one is up against bureaucratic hurdles that seem designed to discourage anybody from attempting change. He spoke with feeling about the shrinking space for freedoms, big and small. He

Are we shortchanging this generation of intelligent, capable young people? We refuse to pay attention when they voice their concerns. We are not willing to co-opt them in the decision-making process.

This is the perfect time to reimagine India, with all its fault lines... how does one tell the youth of our country that their dreams do matter? That they matter? That idealism and imagination are what will finally redeem us all?

talked about the power of dissent in a democracy and how it is being systematically stifled. He has realised that the might of the State can silence anybody who does not fit into a grid decided by authority. Despite that, he is full of constructive ideas which aren't OTT. But as in most such matters —where does he find the funding? It's back to boring money! Isn't it always? Then comes the question of infrastructure and getting like-minded people together — he assures me there are hundreds more like him, in his locality alone, who are eager to participate in activities that can transform the city and make Mumbai shine. But for that dream to materialise, he will need to play ball with badudom — and nothing can kill a young man's enthusiasm as much as *sarkari* hurdles.

In a country as young as ours, we are failing to harness our greatest asset — the youth. Most are directionless and adrift, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Those who have put themselves out there and engaged in community work, speak about the immense sense of satisfaction they derive from seeing projects big and small getting off the ground, despite the odds. The common lament is over the absence of moral leadership, and the increasingly authoritarian atmosphere that is being imposed in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Are we shortchanging this generation of intelligent, capable young people?

We refuse to pay attention when they voice their concerns. We are not willing to co-opt them in the decision-making process. This is the time for some long-overdue introspection, when the world has hit the pause button.

Especially in our cities, where we have ample opportunities to motivate people like the young man I met, whose commitment to India cannot be in doubt. He has the brains and the vision to contribute in a meaningful way to remake India. Will we continue to be foolish enough to destroy his idealism? By way of contrast, I am looking at the bold decision taken by a couple in their forties (who are friends of friends), who have relocated to Canada recently and are willing to start from scratch. "We're done with India!" they announced jauntily, and off they went. Come on you two — it's not all that easy to be "done with India"! Instead, this is the perfect time to reimagine India, with all its fault lines. Unfortunately, an idealised "leader" is nowhere in sight. In such a scenario, how does one tell the youth of our country that their dreams do matter? That they matter? That idealism and imagination are what will finally redeem us all?

The vaccine to battle the Covid-19 pandemic may be around the corner. Of course, it will save countless lives. Only then will the real battle to recapture the minds of young India begin. Let's hope someone will also discover a vaccine for hate by then. Through centuries, the pandemic of hate has killed far more people than the coronavirus ever could. Sad, but true.

Jai Ho! All is not lost... Prashant Bhushan has shown the way. Idealistic India lives on... to rise another day.

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

LETTERS

A GREEN CHATURTHI

Festivals in India are celebrated with all frills and frivolity, and the same is true for Ganesh Chaturthi. Right from handpicking flowers and decking up puja rooms and pandals to making modaks filled with coconut and jaggery, people immerse themselves in a host of activities. This year, let's look for ways to celebrate without harming the planet. Avoid purchasing betel nut, haldi-kumkum and so on in plastic packets. Instead, buy the whole betel nut or buy haldi-kumkum in a box. Immersion of Ganesha idols in water bodies harms aquatic life. Hence, symbolic immersion from the comfort of your home is a better option.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

NO JOBS FOR JUDGES

AS A DESPERATE BJP wants to overpower the judiciary, there is a very disturbing disquiet over the slippery slope down which judicial values are slithering. With Narendra Modi all out to corrode and corrupt even the independence of the Judiciary, to ensure the highest standards of judicial independence and to ward off even the faintest trace of governmental influence on the judiciary, there needs to be at least a two year "cooling off period" for retiring judges before they accept any posting after retirement. Former CJI R.M. Lodha had led by example in this regard. Why can't others follow his lead?

Aires Rodrigues
Ribander, Goa

AIADMK'S DILEMMA

IT IS REALLY AMUSING that different groups in the ruling AIADMK are engaged in a war as to who should be their choice for the office of chief minister for the 2021 Assembly elections. More amusing is the open declaration of some of the leaders of the Tamil Nadu BJP that their party would lead the alliance with AIADMK! The fact is if the AIADMK fights the elections without the BJP it might get some face-saving seats but if it aligns with the saffron party, it would be buried fathoms deep by the electorate.

Tharcus Fernando
Chennai

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

In Bihar, JD-U, BJP, LJP pull in different directions

Desertions galore

All is not well in Bihar's JD(U)-BJP coalition. The Lok Janshakti Party has conveyed to its central leadership its reservation about the BJP's Bihar in-charge, Bhupender Yadav. The party complained that both Yadav and deputy chief minister Sushil Modi are biased towards chief minister Nitish Kumar, and they work in favour of the JD(U). The LJP's discomfort is growing with the expected return of former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi back to the NDA fold. Bringing Mr Manjhi back was Nitish Kumar's calculated move to squeeze the LJP out, as Chirag Paswan has been behaving more like an Opposition leader than an alliance partner.

The Bihar poll dates have not been announced but Nitish Kumar and the BJP have unleashed a "demolish Mahagathabandan" campaign. Every day, someone or the other deserts the RJD or the alliance. First it was Jitan Ram Manjhi, then former Union minister and senior RJD leader M.A.A. Fatmi's son Faraz Fatmi; and then Lalu Yadav's *samdhi* Chandrika Rai announced his decision to join the JD(U). Ram Lakhan

Singh Yadav's grandson Jaivardhan Yadav too left RJD. The Congress is also under pressure from its upper-caste lobby to stay away from the RJD's Tejaswi Yadav but Rahul Gandhi is said to be keen to stay on in the Mahagathabandan.

Shah's 'WFH'

The sudden shifting of Union home minister Amit Shah from Medanta hospital to Delhi's AIIMS led to a bout of concern in the corridors of power. Thankfully there was nothing serious or problematic. Shah's wife travelled from Ahmedabad to Delhi to look after her husband who is said to having issue with steroid-based medicines. At AIIMS, the home minister has been given a VVIP room reserved for the Prime Minister, President etc. Last heard, a heavy load of government work was done from the hospital as the minister has been Covid-19 negative.

Old guard vs Turks

It's panic time in the Congress, too. News of La Congress Working Committee over the



By WAQYANAWIS

weekend turned out to be a false alarm. Those responsible for arranging the video calls were not even alerted when a section of the media announced its date and time. The CWC has the crucial agenda to attend to,

which basically amounts to passing the baton of leadership from Sonia Gandhi to Rahul. The seemingly smooth transition has now developed hiccups. The old guard of the party wants Rahul to recognise and establish a functional hierarchy in the CWC and the AICC secretariat. Some want the revival of the Congress Parliamentary Board, which has not functioned since May 1991. The younger lot wants sweeping changes in the organisation. Problem is neither Rahul nor Sonia have authorised anyone to look into these issues.

Divided house

The Pawar clan in Maharashtra is busy immersed in differences. When the Supreme Court sanctioned a CBI probe into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, deputy CM Ajit Pawar's son Parth roared "*Satyamev Jayate*" prompting grandpa Sharad Pawar to publicly chasten him. Patriarch Pawar's patronage to Rohit, a challenger to Parth, is said to have upset Ajit. A photograph of Ajit *dada* sitting in his enclosed chamber with gloves and mask,

and his cousin Supriya Sule sitting more than a normal social distance away, is doing the rounds. In the photograph, Sule is surrounded by others while Ajit Pawar is seen as treating her just as any other person.

Kalraj's dream

Rajasthan governor Kalraj Mishra has a coffee-table book on himself. It has been sent to all who matter in Lutyens' Delhi. The governor's office has reportedly been calling up recipients seeking their response and feedback. Those praising Mishra's ancestry and his past political achievements, have gently been encouraged to send an email or put their appreciation in words. Perhaps a second edition of the coffee table book is on the cards. Or is the Rajasthan governor looking for a career outside of Jaipur's Raj Bhawan ahead of the 2022 vice-presidential nomination?

The writer is a keen observer of the goings-on in backrooms of power

IN BRIEF

Hurricane lashes Mexico's Baja

Cabo San Lucas: Hurricane Genevieve weakened to a tropical storm Thursday after lashing Mexico's Los Cabos tourist resorts with hurricane-force gusts and heavy rains. And two new tropical depressions formed in the Atlantic Basin — both on potential tracks toward the U.S. Genevieve had a been a powerful Category 4 hurricane with winds of 130 mph on Tuesday, but weakened as it pushed past the Los Cabos region, the U.S. National Hurricane Centre said. The centre said the hurricane was expected to stay out in the Pacific while moving northwestward along the Baja coast and weakening on Thursday and Friday. But it was raking the shore with powerful winds and up to 4 to 8 inches of rain, creating the potential for dangerous flooding.

Israel bombs Gaza as firing intensifies

Gaza City: Israeli warplanes bombed the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip on Friday, as Palestinians fired rockets and launched fire bombs into southern Israel, the army said. Parts of southern Israel were partially cordoned off by the security forces. Israeli planes launched raids against Gaza shortly after midnight on Thursday and then again later on Friday morning. Israel said the bombs were in response to seven rockets launched from Gaza, six of which were intercepted by its air defences. Witnesses in Gaza said rockets were launched towards the town of Sderot, just across the border. The rocket that was not intercepted damaged the roof of a house in Sderot, but did not cause any casualties, an *AFP* photographer said.

'Happy hypoxia' in patients decoded

New York: Covid-19 is causing significant dilation of the blood vessels of the lungs, contributing to the very low oxygen levels seen in patients with respiratory failure, according to a new research that may help provide better treatment to those who are severely affected by the disease. The pilot study of 18 patients, published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, helps explain how Covid-19 behaves differently than classic acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) in which lung inflammation leads to leaky blood vessels in the organ. In ARDS, the study noted that the leaky blood vessels in the lungs flood the organ with fluid and make it stiff, impairing oxygenation. According to the scientists, including those from the Mount Sinai Hospital in the US, many patients with Covid-19 pneumonia experience severely low levels of oxygen in the blood that is markedly out of proportion to the degree of lung stiffness.

UK: PRINCE CHARLES MARKS 25th ANNIV OF HINDU TEMPLE

London, Aug. 21: Britain's Prince Charles has issued a special video message to mark the 25th anniversary of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in north London, which prides itself as a "made in India, built in London" grand monument and among the largest temples outside India.

The heir to the British throne, who has made four visits to what is commonly known as Neasden Temple to mark Holi and Diwali over the years, reflected on its role as a place of worship, learning, celebration, peace and community service. "It has given me immense pride to learn of the way in which the Hindu community, including such a large number of BAPS volunteers, have been so active in their support for those in need — providing thousands of hot meals and assistance for the elderly and most vulnerable," said the Prince of Wales in his video message on Thursday.

"I have also been struck by the very special beauty and craftsmanship of the building," added the 71-year-old royal. The temple, as a vision of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, began taking shape in July 1991 and opened its doors to visitors 25 years ago in August. Over the years, it has welcomed several dignitaries from around the world, including most recently UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson ahead of his election in December 2019 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was the chief minister of Gujarat.

Biden vows to end 'darkness' created by Trump presidency

Calls for unity urging voters to punish Don for 1.7 lakh Covid deaths

Wilmington, Aug. 21: Joe Biden promised on Thursday to end the "darkness" of Donald Trump's presidency in a speech accepting the Democratic nomination with an impassioned call for unity and a return to optimism. "The current president has cloaked America in darkness for much too long. Too much anger, too much fear, too much division," Biden said. "If you entrust me with the presidency, I will draw on the best of us, not the worst. I will be an ally of the light, not the darkness," he said.

"It's time for us, for we the people, to come together." Speaking in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, but with an audience almost entirely online or on television, Biden's acceptance speech reflected the enormity of the shutdown that has upended life across the United States in the battle against the deadly Coronavirus.

And Biden, 77, urged Americans in blistering terms to punish Trump for the chaos that has seen more than 1,70,000 deaths and economic calamity.

"We lead the world in deaths," he said in the 22-minute speech, calling Trump's performance "unforgivable." "On day one" of his own presidency, Biden said, he would implement a national Covid-19 plan and mandate mask wearing.

Biden is on his third White House bid after failing to win the nomination in 1988 and 2008. But after months of relentless mockery from Trump and other Republicans who claim Biden is senile, the veteran politician's speech was markedly fluent and always full of passion.

Democrats hope the strong performance, as well as the vice presidential nomination of Kamala Harris — the first woman of colour ever to make it onto the White House ticket of a major party — will deflate those attacks. — *AFP*

CALIFORNIA'S FIREFIGHTERS AT WIT'S END

Santa Cruz, Aug. 21: More than two dozen major fires were scorching California on Thursday and taxing the state's firefighting capacity, sparked by an unprecedented lightning siege that dropped nearly 10,000 strikes over several days.

The fires have destroyed 175 structures, including homes, and are threatening 50,000 more, said Daniel Berlant, an assistant deputy director with the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. In all, 33 civilians and firefighters have been injured.

Most of the activity is in Northern California, where fires have chewed through nearly 500 square miles (1,250 square kilometres) of brushland, rural areas, canyon country and dense forest surrounding San Francisco.

More than 10,000 California firefighters are on the front lines, but fire officials in charge of each of the major fire complexes say they are strapped for resources. — *AP*

RED | FLAG

Additional three million tonnes of water streaming into oceans daily, contributes 40% to rise

Melting Greenland ice sheet increases sea level

Paris, Aug. 21: Greenland's massive ice sheet saw a record net loss of 532 billion tonnes last year, raising red flags about accelerating sea level rise, according to new findings.

That is equivalent to an additional three million tonnes of water streaming into global oceans every day, or six Olympic pools every second.

Crumbling glaciers and torrents of melt-water slicing through Greenland's ice block — as thick as ten Eiffel Towers end-to-end — were the single biggest



Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, his wife Dr Jill Biden, Democratic vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris and her husband Douglas Emhoff raise their arms on stage outside the Chase Centre after Biden delivered his acceptance speech on the fourth night of the Democratic National Convention on Friday. — *AFP*

Joe's elusive quest for 'Biden from Mumbai' continues

Washington, Aug. 21: When Joe Biden was elected as one of the youngest US senators in 1972, one of the first letters that he received was from Mumbai, with the sender having the same last name as his.

About five years ago, the Democratic Party's presidential nominee learned that there are five Bidens living in Mumbai, but is probably yet to make a connection with them.

The "Biden from Mumbai", then known as Bombay, had congratulated Biden on his election as the senator from Delaware and told him that they were related to each other.

Biden, then 29, wanted to follow up on the letter and get in touch with the "Biden from Mumbai". However, his family and

active life in politics meant that this wish remained a wish, something he still wants to fulfil nearly five decades later.

The wish may have remained unfulfilled, but the 77-year-old Biden never misses a chance to narrate the "Biden from Mumbai" story when he meets Indian-Americans and the Indian leaders.

The former vice president assures them that he too has an India connection, however, distant it might be. In his address to the Bombay Stock Exchange, Mumbai, on July 24, 2013, during his maiden visit to India as the Vice President of the US, he went off-script to narrate his story of the "Biden from Mumbai". — *PTI*

Navalny's medevac from Russia to Germany fails

Moscow, Aug. 21: Family and allies of Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny were fighting on Friday to get him moved to a German clinic from the Siberian hospital where he has been in a coma for over 24 hours after local doctors refused to authorize the transfer and amid confusion about what caused the politician's grave condition.

Navalny, a 44-year-old politician who is one of President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, was admitted to an intensive care unit in a coma in the Siberian city of Omsk on Thursday, following what his supporters are calling a suspected poisoning that they believe was engineered by the Kremlin.

A plane with German specialists and all the necessary equipment landed at Omsk airport on Friday morning, prepared to take Navalny to a clinic in Berlin. But doctors at the hospital said his condition was too unstable to transport him.

Doctors have not found any evidence that Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny was poisoned, the deputy head doctor of the Siberian hospital where he was being treated said on Friday.

Navalny's supporters denounced the medical verdict as a ploy by the authorities to "stall and wait" until the suspected poison no longer is traceable in his system.

A chief doctor in Omsk said the physicians treated Navalny didn't "believe the patient suffered from poisoning." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he wasn't aware of any instructions to stop the transfer and that it was purely a medical decision that doctors made based on Navalny's condition.

"It may pose a threat to his health," Peskov said. Navalny fell ill on a flight back to Moscow

from the Siberian city of Tomsk on Thursday and was taken to the hospital after the plane made an emergency landing in Omsk.

His team made arrangements to transfer him to Charité, a clinic in Berlin that has a history of treating famous foreign leaders or dissidents and insisted that the transfer is paramount to saving the politician's life.

"The ban on transferring Navalny is needed to stall and wait until the poison in his body can no longer be traced. Yet every hour of stalling creates a threat to his life," Yarmysh tweeted.

German officials have been in contact with both Russians and a private group that sent a plane to pick Navalny up, and support the initiative. "If Mr. Navalny wants to get treated in Berlin and if he is able to come to Berlin, the Charité hospital is obviously ready," Berlin Mayor Michael Mueller said. — *AP*

DON TERMS BIDEN SPEECH AT DNC AS 'JUST WORDS'

Ld Forge, Pa., Aug. 21: President Donald Trump sought to depict rival Joe Biden as out of touch with the working class as he campaigned near the former vice-president's Pennsylvania hometown Thursday and delivered real-time criticism of the Democrat's speech.

"In 47 years, Joe did none of the things of which he now speaks. He will never change, just words!" Trump wrote on Twitter as Biden spoke.

Biden's campaign has made Trump the central theme of this week's Democratic convention, producing a program that featured a series of speakers offering blistering criticisms of his presidency. — *PTI*



TURKEY DECLARES GAS DISCOVERY IN BLACK SEA

Istanbul, Aug. 21: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said Turkey had made a historic discovery of gas in the Black Sea, but would still speed up contentious exploration in the Mediterranean that has pitted it against Greece and the EU.

Turkey hopes the discovery can help wean it off imported energy, including from Russia, which comes at a high cost at a time when the local currency is weakening and the economy is more fragile because of the Coronavirus.

Erdogan said the 320-billion-cubic-metre deep sea find was made at a site Turkish vessel Fatih began exploring last month. — *AFP*

UN opposes US bid to 'snap back' Iran sanctions

United Nations, Aug. 21: The Trump administration ran into immediate opposition after its top diplomat officially informed the United Nations it is demanding the restoration of all UN sanctions on Iran, with allies and opponents declaring the US action illegal and doomed to failure.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo insisted Thursday that the United States has the legal right to "snap back" UN sanctions even though President Donald Trump pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six major powers that was endorsed by the UN Security Council.

Russia and China, along with European allies Britain, France and Germany, who often disagree, are united in declaring the US action "illegal" on grounds that you can't withdraw from a deal and then use the resolution that endorsed it to re-impose sanctions.

How this dispute plays out in the weeks ahead remains to be seen, but on Thursday's US move set the stage for a showdown in the United Nations that

could lead to a crisis of credibility for the Security Council, its most important and powerful body.

Pompeo came to the UN to deliver a letter to Indonesia's ambassador to the UN, Dian Triansyah Djani, whose country currently holds the rotating council presidency. It cited significant Iranian violations of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, a requirement to "snap back" UN sanctions.

Pompeo said his message was simple: "The United States will never allow the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism to freely buy and sell planes, tanks, missiles, and other kinds of conventional weapons ... (or) to have a nuclear weapon."

And he said UN sanctions will continue the arms embargo on Iran, set to expire on Oct 18, as well as prohibit ballistic missile testing and nuclear enrichment that could lead to a nuclear weapons program — which Tehran insists it is not pursuing. — *AP*

Telegram powers Belarus protests

Moscow, Aug. 21: Every day, like clockwork, to-do lists for those protesting against Belarus' authoritarian leader appear in the popular Telegram messaging app.

They lay out goals, give times and locations of rallies with business-like precision, and offer spirited encouragement.

"Today will be one more important day in the fight for our freedom. Tectonic shifts are happening on all fronts, so it's important not to slow down," a message in one of Telegram's so-called channels read on Tuesday.

The app has become an indispensable tool in coordinating the unprecedented mass protests that have rocked Belarus since August 9, when election officials announced President Alexander Lukashenko had won a landslide victory to extend his 26-year

rule in a vote widely seen as rigged.

Peaceful protesters who poured into the streets of the capital, Minsk, and other cities were met with stun grenades, rubber bullets and beatings from police.

The opposition candidate left for Lithuania — under duress, her campaign said — and authorities shut off the internet, leaving Belarusians with almost no access to independent online news outlets or social media and protesters seemingly without a leader.

That's where Telegram — which often remains available despite internet outages, touts the security of messages shared in the app and has been used in other protest movements — came in.

Some of its channels helped scattered rallies to mature into well-coordinated action. — *PTI*

EU warns Brexit deal looks unlikely

Brussels, Aug. 21: The EU and Britain on Friday traded blame for the lack of progress after the latest round of post-Brexit trade talks, with Brussels warning that a deal looked unlikely.

The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier lodged his warning at the close of the seventh round of trade talks, which again got stuck on key issues, mainly fishing rights and competition rules.

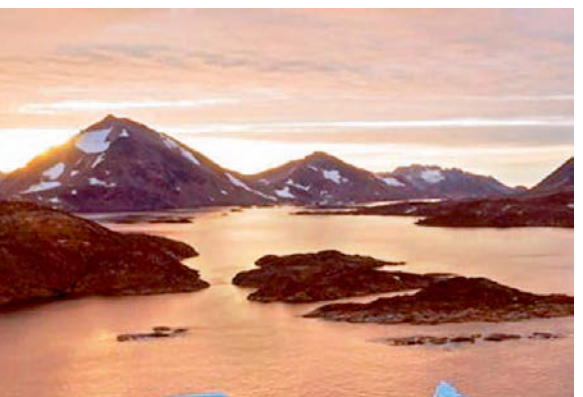
Hundreds of negotiators met over several days in the Belgian capital with both sides acknowledging a sliver of progress on technical issues — but not on the main obstacles.

"Those who were hoping for negotiations to

move swiftly forward this week will have been disappointed," Barnier told reporters after the talks ended.

"And, unfortunately, I too am frankly disappointed and concerned and surprised as well," he added. His UK counterpart David Frost countered that Brussels' insistence that London meet EU demands on state aid and fisheries policy before work on other areas made it "unnecessarily difficult to make progress".

Frost reiterated that he thought a deal remained possible and was Britain's aim but he warned: "It is clear that it will not be easy to achieve." — *AFP*



Representational image.

— *AP*

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,434.72	0.56
Nifty 50	11,371.60	0.53
S&P 500*	3,390.17	0.14
Dollar (₹)	74.83	-1.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.77	-0.68
Euro (₹)	88.45	0.22
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,990▼	0.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.70	-1.20
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.140	0.140
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.643	-0.001

* As of 9:30 PM IST

NTPC gets nod to set up renewable energy biz arm

NTPC said it has received the approval of Niti Aayog and the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management to set up a wholly owned company for its renewable energy business. The development assumes significance because the NTPC targets to generate nearly 30 per cent or 39 GW of its overall power capacity from renewable energy sources by 2032. NTPC is planning to have 10GW of solar energy by 2022.

SBI to issue Basel III bonds, raise over ₹8,900 cr



SBI said its board has approved a proposal to raise Rs 8,931 crore by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds to investors. The committee of directors for capital raising at its meeting held on Friday gave its approval to allot 89,310 Basel III-compliant non-convertible, taxable, redeemable, subordinated, unsecured, fully paid-up debt instruments aggregating to Rs 8,931 crore to bond subscribers on August 21, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

Max Healthcare lists on stock exchanges

Shares of Max Healthcare Institute debuted on the bourses following a demerger scheme and later closed with 5 per cent gains. After listing at Rs 107, the stock rose 5 per cent to Rs 112.35, its upper circuit limit, on the BSE. The listing is the final outcome of the amalgamation of erstwhile Max India into Max Healthcare and demerger of healthcare businesses of Radiant Life into Max Healthcare.

Kia Motors Sonet gets over 6,500 bookings in a day

Kia Motors India said it has received 6,523 bookings on the first day for its upcoming compact SUV Sonet. Prospective customers were able to book the car online and through company's sales network by paying an initial booking amount of Rs 25,000, the firm said. The response to the all-new Sonet proves that there is never a bad time to launch a good product, Kia Motors India MD & CEO Kookhyun Shim said.

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■ Up to ₹31,500 to be paid after 30 days of losing job
Jobless benefit under ESIC doubled to 50%

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 21

Workers who are covered under the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme will now receive 50 per cent of average wages of three months as unemployment benefit if they have lost jobs during the pandemic period of March 24 and December 31 this year. The ESIC has relaxed the norms of Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyana Yojna, which provides unemployment benefits to the workers covered under the ESI scheme. For the pandemic period between March-end and December-end, the unemployment benefit has been enhanced to 50 per cent of average wages, from 25 per cent earlier, payable up to maximum 90 days of unemployment. The payment will be



made after 30 days of unemployment instead of 90 days earlier. The insured person can submit the claim directly to the ESIC Branch Office instead of the claim being forwarded by the last employer and the payment shall be made directly to his bank account. The benefit will be available for those with insurable employment for a minimum period of two years before his/her

unemployment, which means freshers are not eligible for the benefit. S/he should have contributed for at least 78 days in a 'contribution period' (six-month period either during April-September or October-March) immediately preceding unemployment and minimum 78 days in one of the remaining three 'contribution periods' in two years before unemployment. The ESIC also has

extended the recently expired Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyana Yojna for one more year up to June 30, 2021. Post-December 31, 2020, the scheme will be available with original eligibility conditions till June next year. The ESIC provides cover to about 3.49 crore of workers. The ESI scheme covers employees with a monthly salary of up to Rs 21,000. Hence the benefit under the unemployment scheme will be capped at Rs 31,500 per beneficiary. Labour minister Santosh Gangwar said on Friday claims under the scheme will be settled within 15 days from the date of an application. The decision would be helpful to the workers, said Tirupur Export Association president Raja M. Shanmugham, hailing the government decision.

India Inc wage bill sees lowest growth in 18 years

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 21

Wage bill of listed companies has seen the lowest growth in 18 years. Among the worst-hit sectors, tourism saw wage bills declining by 30 per cent and textiles by 29 per cent, indicating huge job losses. The wage bill of 1,560 listed companies analysed by private think-tank CMIE recorded a 2.9 per

cent increase in the June 2020 quarter compared to the same quarter a year ago. This is the lowest growth in wages recorded by listed companies in the past 18 years. While manufacturing companies saw a 7 per cent fall in their wage bill, the services sector was a mixed bag. Within manufacturing, the textile sector has seen the biggest hit with the

wage bill falling by 29 per cent. Being a labour-intensive industry, this sharp fall in the wage bill implies a very sharp fall in employment in textiles. The same holds true for leather, another labour-intensive industry. Leather recorded a 22.5 per cent fall in its wage bill in the June 2020 quarter. Automobile ancillaries reported a 21 per cent decline in its wage bill and

the automobiles' wage bill was down by 18.6 per cent. These are also labour intensive sectors. In the services sectors, the wage bill of the tourism industry was down 30 per cent, hotels and restaurants down by 20.5 per cent, road transport down by 27.6 per cent and education by 28 per cent. Wage bill of the real estate sector was down by 21 per cent.

However, the wage bill of the telecom sector increased by 10.7 per cent. Banks saw a 16.6 per cent increase in their wage bill and securities broking companies saw a 13.5 per cent growth. "What is revealing in this data is the stark difference between industries. A caveat before we discuss these is that these are still preliminary results and a better pic-

ture will emerge only after a month as companies have been allowed time till September 15 to publish their financial statements due to the Covid crisis. Nevertheless, these results indicate a pattern which is worth noting even with these preliminary data," said Mahesh Vyas, managing director of CMIE. The data indicates big job losses in many indus-

tries in the first quarter of 2020-21. Salaried jobs have been stagnating in recent times. In 2017-18 they grew by 1.6 per cent and in 2018-19 they grew by a meagre 0.1 per cent before contracting by 1.8 per cent in 2019-20. As a result, salaried jobs in 2019-20 stood at 86.1 million. This fell to 68.4 million in April 2020. By July 2020, their count had fallen further to 67.2 million.

Healthcare steals Q1 sectoral show

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 21

Healthcare and technology sector stood out in the first quarter (Q1) of FY21, while aggregate performance decline was led by the automobiles, metals and capital goods sector, according to brokerage firm Motilal Oswal. The healthcare sector showed strong revenue and operating leverage along with sharp margin improvement due to cost savings. However, subdued US market performance impacted overall profits of select companies. Among the IT companies, Q1 performance led to upgrades for most of them. The Q1FY21 corporate earnings came in above our muted expectations. Cost control and cash preservation were effectively deployed as tools to offset the headwinds from the lockdown-induced volume declines, Motilal Oswal said in its Q1FY21 result review. Just 6 per cent Ebitda decline in the Nifty-50 companies despite a 30 per cent revenue decline happened on account of the ability of India Inc to drive cost control when needed, the review said. "The healthcare universe had a spectacular run this quarter with profit before tax/profit after tax registering growth of 29 per cent and 27 per cent year-on-year versus our estimated decline of 6 per cent/5 per cent YoY," Gautam Duggad, research analyst, Motilal Oswal, said. "This was largely led by significant cost savings in the domestic formulation segment and market share gains by API companies. However, the benefit was offset to some extent by subdued performance in the US," Duggad said. Healthcare and Technology earnings stood out both in absolute and relative terms – and these sectors would show continued strength ahead, Duggad said. Aggregate US sales of pharma companies declined 8.3 per cent yoy in Q1FY21.

Silver jewellery exports double

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 21

While gems and jewellery exports were down 50 per cent till July this fiscal, silver exports have doubled during the period. Every segment, except silver jewellery, in the pandemic-hit gems and jewellery basket recorded de-growth in exports between April and July this year. Silver jewellery worth \$510.82 million were exported during the four-month period this year against \$252.64 million during the same period last year. Gold jewellery exports were down 73 per cent while gold bar imports declined 83 per cent. According to Prakash Pincha, chairman, eastern region Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, around 30-40 silver jewellery fabrication units were set up in Surat in the past one year and they have been contributing to the increased exports of silver jewellery. "We have started exploring the global silver jewellery market. Hence the growth," he said. A few years back, silver

jewellery exports have been witnessing exponential growth, mainly due to round-tripping. Some of the regulatory measures brought in by the government and exit of a few key players had curbed the round-tripping of silver to almost nil. Industry insiders find that this time genuine exports and not round-tripping is the reason behind the growth of silver jewellery exports. Higher silver jewellery exports helped the Surat SEZ and the Gujarat region clock positive growth while all the other regions and SEZs kept degrowing. Gujarat region grew exports by 101 per cent to \$1236 million and Surat SEZ too grew exports by 43 per cent in April-July period. Cochin SEZ saw the steepest fall of 99 per cent to \$22.45 million against \$2235 million a year ago. This SEZ mainly exports gold jewellery and has been affected by the gloom in the Middle East market. "The jewellery business in Dubai thrives on tourists and the pandemic has brought the businesses to near standstill there," said Pincha.

Personal bankruptcy case against Anil Ambani could set a precedent

UPMANYU TRIVEDI & P. R. SANJAI MUMBAI, AUG. 21

The Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has agreed to hear a petition by the State Bank of India seeking to initiate personal bankruptcy against tycoon Anil Ambani after the former billionaire failed to repay debt. A two-member panel of the NCLT has appointed a bankruptcy administrator to verify a claim by SBI that Ambani offered about \$160 million of personal guarantees while seeking loans in 2016 for his now insolvent Reliance Communications Ltd and Reliance Infratel Ltd, according to an order on the court's website. The tribunal can admit Ambani into bankruptcy process or reject the case based on the report. "The NCLT order directing appointment of the resolution professional does not constitute an admission of SBI's insolvency application," Ambani's spokesperson said in an emailed response. The court also rejected "SBI's request for a restriction on Ambani from dealing or appropri-



Anil Ambani

ating his assets," the spokesperson said. The ruling is the most high-profile insolvency case against a founder who pledged to pay loans on behalf of their companies, which have since been dragged into bankruptcy, and can set precedent for future law suits. Still, the legal case puts a moratorium on attempts to recover dues from Ambani and may hurt a group of Chinese banks' ability to enforce a separate London court's order asking Ambani to pay \$717 million. Ambani is taking advice on challenging the verdict in an appellate court, his spokesperson said. "The order of the NCLT will have no bearing on the operations of Reliance Infrastructure Ltd.,

Reliance Power Ltd. and Reliance Capital Ltd.," Ambani's spokesperson added, listing out the tycoon's other companies. As per the rules, if the Mumbai court admits Ambani into the bankruptcy process, a list of all claims against him will be compiled and a repayment plan will be worked out. Lenders can agree on a plan that may include payouts from his businesses or monetizing his assets. Ambani had also offered a personal guarantee on the banks' loans to Reliance Communications in 2012, Judge Nigel Teare said in a ruling on May 22 in London handing a victory to three state-controlled Chinese banks, including Industrial & Commercial Bank of China Ltd. State Bank of India filed the latest petition on concerns that the Chinese banks will attempt to seize Ambani's assets after the UK court's ruling. "Such action would have an adverse effect on the recovery rights," SBI said, according to the verdict on Thursday. The NCLT ruling can be challenged in an appellate court and then the Supreme Court. —Bloomberg

Pfizer vaccine on track for regulatory review in Oct.

JEFF SUTHERLAND MUMBAI, AUG. 21

Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE said the Covid-19 vaccine they are jointly developing is on track to be submitted for regulatory review as early as October, as they released additional data from an early-stage study. The companies said the vaccine was well tolerated with mild to moderate fever in fewer than 20 per cent of the participants. The companies are continuing to analyse data from the Phase 1 trials in the US and Germany, they said. The confirmation of their October goal, first announced in July, helped lift S&P 500 futures early on Friday as part of a drumbeat of positive news on inoculation efforts that have the potential to end the threat of lockdowns. Johnson & Johnson also confirmed it plans to test its Covid-19 vaccine in as many as 60,000 people, twice the number of other big trials being conducted in the U.S. The company first posted the design for the trial on August 10. —Bloomberg

SKODA MAINTENANCE PACKAGE REVAMPED

Hyderabad, Aug. 21: Skoda Auto India has revamped and re-christened its Ser-vice Maintenance Package as the SKODA SuperCare, which entails preventive maintenance as well as wear-and-tear repair work for four years, or 60,000 km. In addition, Skoda has introduced an extended warranty programme for up to six years or 1,50,000 km, which can be availed of anytime for cars purchased after September 2016. New Skoda Auto customers can avail the SuperCare, which starts at Rs 29,999, among standard, enhanced and comprehensive options, within a timeframe of a year from the date of purchase.

Business NOTE

Near end of rate cut cycle, over to govt: Report

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 21

High inflation could result in a more moderate easing of rates by the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India. The RBI would do well by continuing to resort to unconventional policy measures in the current circumstances to ensure financial stability, a research report from the State Bank of India said. According to Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser at SBI, we are the end of the rate cut cycle and expectations of large rate cuts must be anchored (ideally 25, best case 50) as inflation is unlikely to decline materially from current levels.

"We believe it would better serve the financial markets if RBI continues to resort to unconventional policy measures as it has been significantly able to reduce the long and variable lags of monetary policy (fastest rate transmission and restoring financial stability within a quarter has been the notable achievements in FY21 by RBI in the current rate cut cycle that began from March'20)," said Ghosh. "Fiscal policy should play a decisive role, if we have to nurture any hopes of a fast paced recovery! We believe from here on if fiscal policy does not play an active role, next change in monetary policy decision could throw a sur-



prise whenever it comes by distinctly favouring change in policy stance over policy strategy / liquidity regime. The other monetary policy alternative could be to reduce the width of the asymmetric policy corridor / increase in reverse repo rate when the pandemic subsides," added Ghosh in his report.

The comments come a day after the minutes of the central bank's interest rate-setting panel meeting of August 4-6, published on Thursday, showed its members have turned more hawkish over inflation, ruling out further rate cuts. The minutes revealed the conundrum the MPC was facing in the context of current extremely weak growth impulses and a jump in inflation. RBI governor Shaktikan-ta Das suggested giving it time for past interest rate cuts to take effect. "I also feel that we should wait for some more time for the cumulative 250 basis points reduction in policy rate since February 2019 to seep into

the financial system and further reduce interest rates and spreads. Given the uncertain inflation outlook, we have to remain watchful to see that the momentum in inflation does not get entrenched, which is also dependent on effective supply-side measures," Das said. The SBI economist said that inflation which came at 6.9 per cent for July – could be sticky because his estimates show that the large procurement by the government may have resulted in 0.35-0.40 per cent upward impact. The supply chain disruptions are showing no signs of abating and have played a spoilsport across several states, he added.

SHORT TAKES

No Arjuna for Sakshi, Mirabai

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry on Friday decided against bestowing the Arjuna award on former Khel Ratna winners Sakshi Malik and Mirabai Chanu, pruning the list to 27 but accepted an unprecedented five recommendations for the country's highest sporting honour this year.

Last week, the Justice (retd.) Mukundakam Sharma-led selection committee had recommended 29 names for the Arjuna Award to the Sports Ministry.

The list also included Rio Olympics bronze medal-winning wrestler Sakshi and 2017 weightlifting world champion Mirabai, but the decision on bestowing the Arjuna on them was left to the discretion of Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju. The five Khel Ratna winners for this year would be star cricketer Rohit Sharma, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, Paralympic gold-winner Mariyappan Thangavelu, TT player Manika Batra, and women's hockey team captain Rani Rampal, the ministry confirmed in a formal press release.

— PTI

United captain in jail for assault

Athens: Manchester United captain Harry Maguire has been arrested on the Greek tourist island of Mykonos for an alleged assault and attacking officers, police said Friday. United said in a brief statement they were "aware of an alleged incident involving Harry Maguire in Mykonos last night. Contact has been made with Harry, and he is fully co-operating with the Greek authorities." "At this time we will be making no further comment," the club added.

A police officer in Syros, the capital of the island group that includes Mykonos, confirmed that the suspects are "three British men, including a British football club player" but did not name Maguire. The Syros officer said four Mykonos officers had sustained slight injuries in the fracas. The suspects are also accused of resisting arrest and verbally insulting and threatening the arresting officers, he said. He said Mykonos police had been called to break up a fight between two groups late on Thursday. — AFP

Indians struggle at British Open

Troon, United Kingdom: Indian trio of Aditi Ashok, Tvesa Malik and Diksha Dagar endured a rough start amidst brutal conditions at the Royal Troon on the first day of the AIG Women's British Open.

Strong winds, which went as high as 40 miles per hour, unsettled the golfers which resulted in Ashok (78) tottering at Tied-107 while debutant Malik (79) and Dagar (79) who had an eagle on par-4 18th, were T-125.

With the cut likely at 8-over or even more, the Indians would need a good second round to make the cut. But the predictions for weather say the conditions will be tough once again in the second round.

Scotland's Catriona Matthew (71) rolled back the years on the links, but it was American Amy Olson who led after the opening round. Ashok had two bogeys and one double bogey on the front nine and three bogeys on the back nine in her card of 7-over 78. — PTI

INDIA NOTCHES UP THREE EASY VICTORIES

Chennai: A dominant India notched up three easy wins against Zimbabwe, Vietnam and Uzbekistan respectively in the the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad on Friday.

India defeated Zimbabwe 6-0 and rolled over Vietnam 4-2 but the highlight certainly was win against Uzbeks by 5.5-0.5 margin. Winning each round got India two points taking them on top of the pool with six points while they also have the best game points 15.5 after 18 matches. India is on top of the standings followed by China with an equal number of round points (6) but fewer game points (13.5). — PTI

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Touchdown Dubai
Top sides land in UAE for glitzy league

Dubai, Aug. 21: IPL's star-studded teams including Chennai Super Kings, Royal Challengers Bangalore and defending champions Mumbai Indians arrived in the UAE on Friday for the world's biggest T20 league, beginning on September 19.

All three teams posted their departure photos on social media. The Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led CSK held a brief training camp in Chennai before flying out and was the only team to do so.

RCB skipper Virat Kohli, who made his own arrangements to reach Dubai directly from Mumbai following all BCCI SOP, also posted a photo from the team hotel after touching down.

Both CSK and RCB are based out of Dubai while the Rohit Sharma-captained Mumbai Indians are camping in Abu Dhabi.

The players are not allowed to venture out of their rooms during the six-day isolation period.

The players, who were already tested multiple times before departure, will now undergo a six-day isolation period with testing on day 1, 3 and 6. If they clear all the tests, they will be eligible to enter the tournament's bio-bubble and start training.

Subsequently, the players and support staff will be tested every fifth day of the tournament.

Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Capitals will land over the weekend.

Sixty games will be played over 53 days across three venues — Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. In 2014, UAE had hosted the IPL partially due to the general elections in India. — PTI

JINX'S FOCUS IS ON MENTAL HEALTH

New Delhi, Aug. 21: Ajinkya Rahane is focused on maintaining his physical as well as mental health ahead of a challenging Indian Premier League (IPL) even as Delhi Capitals teammate Prithvi Shaw wants to make the most of training sessions in the next three weeks.

"There is no doubt that it will be a challenging trip for everyone involved. But like everyone else, I've spent these last few months focusing on my physical and mental health, and taking care of my family," he said.

"So the time I've managed to spend with them has put me in a positive frame of mind."

"This IPL will be a very different experience for all of us, and we need to make sure that we are all very positive when we hit the ground running. The key is to take one step at a time," he added. — PTI



Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma (from left) wife Ritika Sajdeh and daughter Samaira pose for a photograph ahead of their departure to Dubai from the Chhatrapati Shivaji International airport in Mumbai on Friday.

No quarantine for Eng, Oz cricketers: RCB CEO

New Delhi, Aug. 21: Cricketers from Australia and England might be able to feature from the start of the Indian Premier League despite a series between their countries ahead of the Twenty20 tournament, according to chairman of the Bangalore franchise.

Top stars including England's Ben Stokes and Steve Smith of Australia will be involved in the limited-overs series that ends three days before the start of the IPL in the United Arab Emirates on September 19.

But Sanjeev Churiwala of the Royal Challengers Bangalore feels the three will already be in a bio-bubble in England.

"For the players landing after the England and Australia series, on September 17, that is very close to our matches," Churiwala said.

"The BCCI have also issued very detailed SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) and procedures to be followed by these players in terms of their participation.

PACER MALINGA SET TO MISS INITIAL MATCHES

New Delhi, Aug. 21: Veteran Sri Lankan pacer Lasith Malinga is likely to be unavailable for the first few games of Mumbai Indians in the upcoming IPL due to personal reasons.

According to a report in *ESPNCricinfo*, the 36-year-old Malinga will not be travelling to the UAE, where the cash-rich league will be played from September 19 to November 10, as his father has not been keeping well for some time and may require surgery in the coming weeks.

The seasoned fast bowler, who has produced match-winning efforts for both Sri Lanka and his IPL franchise, wants to be around his father while training in Colombo.

Malinga, who will turn 37 next week and was the captain of the side that won the T20 World Cup, last featured for Sri Lanka in a T20 International during the home series against West Indies in March this year, with his last ODI appearance coming more than a year ago. — PTI

"What the SOPs say very clearly (is) that they can participate without quarantine, provided they satisfy certain very stringent conditions," the RCB CEO added.

"Right from the biosecurity bubble, they have to go straight to the charter

flight without getting into the extensive migration procedures, and without getting in touch with the general public," he added.

A total of 29 players from England and Australia are part of the eight IPL squads. — PTI

ENGLISHMEN CRAWL OUT OF TROUBLE

Southampton, Aug. 21: Zak Crawley held one end together after Pakistan saw off England captain Joe Root on the opening day of the series finale at Southampton on Friday.

Crawley, 97 not out at tea, took two down to fine leg off Mohammad Abbas before an offside glide off the paceman saw him to a 171-ball hundred, including 11 fours in what was his eighth Test.

This was just the fourth first-class century of the 22-year-old right-hander's career and it was an especially valuable innings, with no other England batsman having made more than Root's 29 as they reached tea on 184-4.

Yasir Shah had interval figures of 2/60 from 19 overs — a fine return for a leg-spinner on the first day of a Test. England, 1-0 up in a three-match contest, need to avoid defeat if they are to win their first series against Pakistan in 10 years.

They suffered an early setback when Rory Burns nicked a ball from Shaheen Afridi. *PTI*
Brief Scores: England 184/4 in 56.0 overs (at Tea) (Z. Crawley 97 n. o., J. Buttler 24 n. o., Y. Shah 2/60) vs Pakistan.

NARINE SHINES AS TRINBAGO KNIGHTS WIN

Tarouba (Trinidad & Tobago), Aug. 21: Sunil Narine's allround display which included a second straight half-century propelled Trinbago Knight Riders to the top of the Caribbean Premier League table with a comfortable seven-wicket victory over Jamaica Tallawahs.

In another rain affected game, St Lucia Zouks beat Barbados Tridents by seven wickets courtesy the Duckworth Lewis method.

After the first set of two matches each, only Trinbago have two wins, while Guyana Amazon Warriors, Zouks, Jamaica Tallawahs and Tridents have one win each and St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots have lost both matches.

Trinbago electing to field had Jamaica Tallawahs struggling from the start as Ali Khan and Jayden Seales and then Narine (1/19 in 4 overs) regularly chipped away at the line-up.

— PTI

■ **Trinbago Knight Riders 136/3 (Narine 53, Munro 49 n. o., D. M. Bravo 14) bt Jamaica Tallawahs 135/8 (Phillips 58, Russell 25, Asif 22, Seales 2/21, Ali Khan 2/25).**

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Maria, Gnabry to highlight title tie

Lisbon, Aug. 21: A couple of lesser-known players could prove decisive in the Champions League final on Sunday.

While most will be watching Paris Saint-Germain forwards Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, or Bayern counterparts Thomas Muller and Robert Lewandowski, the title could come down to the likes of Angel Di Maria and Serge Gnabry.

They don't carry the same hype as some of their teammates, but they have been crucial for their teams this season. Both made an impact in the semifinals, with Di Maria leading PSG over Leipzig and Gnabry helping Bayern get past Lyon.

Di Maria had a goal and two assists in PSG's 3-0 win over Leipzig on Tuesday, while Gnabry scored twice in his team's 3-0 win over Lyon on Wednesday. Both won man-of-the-match accolades for their performances.

The skillful and agile Di Maria has already made the difference in a Champions League final, leading Real Madrid to the title against city rival Atletico Madrid six years ago. The 34-year-old Argentine is among PSG's top scorers this season and is one of the team's assist leaders.

The sturdy and fast Gnabry is less experienced

Live on TV

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Paris Saint-Germain vs Bayern Munich
from 12.30 am (Monday)
on Sony Ten 2, HD

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

St Kitts & Nevis Patriots vs St Lucia Zouks from 7.30 pm; Guyana Amazon Warriors vs Jamaica Tallawahs from 11.45 pm. Both matches on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

NBA PLAYOFFS

Houston Rockets vs Oklahoma City Thunder from 3.30 am (Sunday); Portland Trail Blazers vs Los Angeles Lakers from 6.30 am (Sunday). Brooklyn Nets vs Toronto Raptors from 4 am (Monday); Utah Jazz vs Denver Nuggets from 6.30 am (Monday). All matches on Sony Six, HD

but has been just as crucial for his club this season. The 25-year-old German has nine Champions League goals from nine matches, behind only to Lewandowski's 15. The 24 combined goals scored by them is a record by a duo in a Champions League season.

Gnabry's, who is currently on loan, improvement is visible from a year ago, when he was scoreless in the Champions League and couldn't help Bayern avoid elimination by Liverpool in the Round of 16. — AP



Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar Jr. (left) talks with his teammate Leandro Paredes as they leave the team hotel in Lisbon, ahead of their UEFA Champions League final against Bayern Munich, on Thursday. — AFP

Messi's silence ignites rumours

Barcelona, Aug. 21: For every day that goes by without a word from Lionel Messi, a new rumour surfaces about his future with Barcelona.

Messi hasn't made any public statement since Barcelona's 2-8 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarterfinals last week, putting in doubt his permanence with the struggling Catalan club. He had already shown his discontent earlier in the season, and the humiliation in Lisbon only made it worse.

Messi, who has been with the Catalan club for nearly two decades, has a contract with Barcelona until the end of the 2020-21 season.

There's been speculation about Messi's future from the moment the final whis-

tle blew against Bayern. The doubts increased after a Catalan radio station, *RAC1*, claimed late Thursday that the Argentina great met with new Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman and said he sees himself "more out than in" the club at the moment. Messi allegedly told Koeman that his future was not clear and that he was not happy.

Barcelona is enduring one of its worst crises, coming off its first trophyless season since 2007-08 and dealing with uncertainty about its own future. It went through a coaching change midseason and players — especially Messi — were outspoken about their dissatisfaction with club directors and their recent decisions. — AP

Too young to retire, PM Modi to Raina

New Delhi, Aug. 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi distinctly remembers Suresh Raina's elegant cover drives during the epic 2011 World Cup quarterfinal against Australia in Ahmedabad, something that, he feels, the all-rounder's numerous fans will miss after he followed Mahendra Singh Dhoni into international retirement.

The 33-year-old Raina, a member of the 2011 World Cup winning India team, announced his retirement on August 15, minutes after Dhoni decided to call it quits internationally. The two players, who are close friends as well, will turn up for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL now.

"I do not want to use the word 'retirement' because you are too young and energetic to 'retire'," PM Modi, who also wrote a letter of appreciation to Dhoni, said a two-page note to Raina.

"During your cricketing career, you sometimes faced setbacks including injuries but every time you overcame those challenges, thanks to your tenacity," he said.

Raina, on his part, thanked the Prime Minister.

"When we play, we give our blood and sweat for the nation. No better appreciation than being loved by the people of this country and even more by the country's PM. Thank you @narendramodi ji for your words of appreciation & best wishes. I accept them with gratitude. Jai Hind," the former Indian cricketer put out on his Twitter handle.

In the letter, Modi recollected how much he enjoyed Raina's most famous innings of 34 not out in a tricky run-chase against a formidable Australia in the 2011 World Cup quarterfinal at Motera.



Former Indian cricketer Suresh Raina (from left), Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Raina's wife Priyanka Chaudhary in this file photo.

"India can never forget your inspiring role during the 2011 World Cup especially during the later matches. I saw you live in action at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad,

during the Quarter Final against Australia. Your anchoring innings had a big role to play in our team's victory.

"I can confidently say that most fans will miss

your elegant cover drives, one which I was lucky to witness that day," said the PM, who was back then the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

The PM also described Raina as the perfect team-man who enjoyed others' successes.

"...Suresh Raina will always be synonymous with team spirit. You played not for personal glory but for the glory of your team and the glory of India.

"Your enthusiasm on the field was infectious and we could all witness that you would be among the first and most animated players to celebrate the fall of opposing team's wicket," the PM wrote.

A bonafide IPL legend, Raina was praised by the Prime Minister for his prowess in the T20 format. "As a batsman, you especially distinguished yourself across all mediums and particularly in the

newest form of the game, the T20 cricket. This is not an easy format.

"In tune with our times, it requires quick fixes in double quick time. Again your promptness and speed were assets for this form," the Indian Prime Minister said, lavishing praise on the IPL's most prolific batsman.

His sharp fielding was also acknowledged in the Prime Minister's appreciation letter.

"Your fielding was exemplary and inspiring. Some of the best catches in recent international cricket have your distinctive imprint. It would take days to count the number of runs you saved with your alertness on the field."

The PM also praised Raina for his participation in social initiatives like 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' and the cause of women's empowerment.

— PTI

BUCKS, LAKERS BOUNCE BACK TO EARN WINS

Miami, Aug. 21: The Milwaukee Bucks stepped it up on Thursday, bouncing back from a humbling loss to beat the Orlando Magic 111-96 and knot their NBA playoff series at one game apiece.

Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee with 28 points and 20 rebounds as the Bucks brought the defensive intensity that carried them to the league's best regular-season record.

Meanwhile, Anthony Davis had 31 points and 11 rebounds and the top-seeded Los Angeles Lakers bounced back from an opening loss to beat the Portland Trail Blazers 111-88 on Thursday night in Game 2 of the first-round Western Conference playoff series. — Agencies