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WEATHER

Max: 31.8°C
Min: 22.7°C
RH: 71%
Rainfall: 3.3 mm

Forecast: Cloudy sky, light to moderate rains likely.
Max/Min temp. 30/23 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+60,972)	(+833)
23,25,026	46,185

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,896)	(+8)
TS: 82,647	645
(+9,024)	(+87)
AP: 2,44,549	2,203

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,03,83,329

DEATHS

7,41,704

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Shravana Bahula Ashtami till 11.14 am

Star: Kritika till 3.24 am (Thursday)

Varjyam: 2.09 pm to 3.55 pm

Durmuhurtam: 11.56 am to 12.47 pm

Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Zulhijja 21, 1441 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.54 am

Zohar: 12.31 pm

Asar: 4.47 pm

Maghrib: 6.49 pm

Isha: 8.00 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.44 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM

MOONRISE TODAY NA

MOONSET TOMORROW 12.03 PM

COUNTER POINT

He is unable to understand online classes... let's arrange online tuitions!

IN BRIEF

EX-PREZ HEALTH WORSENS, STILL ON VENTILATOR

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

Former president Pranab Mukherjee's health worsened on Tuesday and he continues to be critical, on ventilatory support, at the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi. Officials said Mr Mukherjee had not shown any improvement since Monday, when he was operated upon for a brain clot.

"The former president, who underwent life-saving emergency surgery for brain clot on 10 August 2020, has not shown any improvement and his health status worsened. He remains on ventilatory support," the hospital said.

Russia claims it developed Covid vaccine

Putin says his daughter too was vaccinated and is safe

Moscow, Aug. 11: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday announced that his country has developed the world's first vaccine against Covid-19 that works "quite effectively" and forms a "stable immunity" against the deadly disease as he disclosed that one of his daughters has already been vaccinated.

"A vaccine against Coronavirus has been registered for the first time in the world this morning," Putin said during a meeting with members of his government.

"I know that it works quite effectively, it forms a stable immunity," the official Tass news agency quoted Putin as saying.

Putin's claim has come amidst concerns raised by experts about the speed of Russia's work, suggesting that researchers might be cutting corners.

Reacting to Putin's announcement, US health secretary Alex Azar said the goal of developing a Coronavirus vaccine is not to be first, but to have one that is safe and effective. "The point is not to be first with a vaccine — the point is to have a vaccine that is safe and effective for the American people and the people of the world," Azar said told ABC News.

"We need transparent data, and it's got to be Phase-3 data that shows that a vaccine is safe and effective," Azar, currently on a historic visit to Taiwan, said.

Danny Altmann, Professor of Immunology at Imperial College London, told the *Science Media Centre* that there were concerns about releasing a vaccine before it was fully tested.

Amid fears that safety could have been compromised, the World Health Organisation (WHO) urged Russia last week to follow international guidelines for producing a vaccine against Covid-19, the BBC reported.

Putin said that one of his daughters had tested a Russian COVID-19 vaccine on herself and that she is feeling well.

"I know this very well, because one of my daughters got vaccinated, so in this sense, she took part in testing," Putin said.

The vaccine has been named Sputnik-V. The name is a reference to the surprise 1957 launch of

DATA LACKING, EXPERTS DOUBT RUSSIAN VACCINE

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

There is no data available on pre-clinical trials and no scientific input in peer-reviewed journals about the development of the vaccine by Russia, which is creating doubt about its development.

An indigenous vaccine development will require at least eight to 12 months and there must be some trial results on animals and humans available for assessment to understand its efficacy.

None of these has been provided by Russia which has only said that the vaccine was tested on 38 people and they have completely recovered.

CCMB director Dr Rakesh Mishra said, "It is a very unreliable vaccine as there is no data available on how and in what manner trials have been carried out. For any vaccine development, apart from time, there are thousands of people who have to be tested. How have they tested the number that they have provided to the world without a cure? When we inject a virus in the body, there has to also be a cure available. But there is no definite cure for Covid-19 yet. There is no clarity on this. Till these questions are answered, no country will be willing to take the vaccine from Russia."

■ **Page 2: Some experts remain optimistic**

the world's first satellite by the Soviet Union. The treatment is yet to go through crucial Phase 3 trials where it would be administered to thousands of people. President Putin noted that after the first vaccine shot, his daughter had a 38°C fever, and on the next day, a fever slightly higher than 37°C. "And then, after the second shot, she had a slight fever again, and then everything was fine, she is feeling well and has a high [antibody] count," he said.

Russian health minister Mikhail Murashko said medical workers and teachers will be the first to get the vaccine. —PTI

SC upholds daughters' rights

Rules that they will have rights over parental property even if father is not alive

New Delhi, Aug. 11: In a significant judgment, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that daughters have equal right in parental property as sons even if their father died before the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 came into force, and observed that "a daughter always remains a loving daughter".

The top court, while overruling its earlier decision, held that "rights under the amendment are applicable to living daughters of living coparceners as on 9-9-2005, irrespective of when such daughters are born".

A three-judge bench, headed by Justice Arun Kumar Mishra, said, "Once a daughter, always a daughter... a son is a son till he is married... until he gets a wife. The daughter shall remain a coparcener (one who shares equally with others in inheritance of an undivided joint family property) throughout life, irrespective of whether her

father is alive or not... Daughters must be given equal rights as sons... daughter remains a loving daughter throughout life."

The question that urged the top court to make the remarks today was, "Does the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, which gave equal right to daughters in ancestral property, have a retrospective effect."

The verdict makes it clear the amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, granting equal rights

to daughters to inherit ancestral property would have retrospective effect.

The bench, which also included S. Nazeer and M.R. Shah, said on Tuesday the provisions contained in substituted Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, confer the status of coparcener on the daughter born before or after amendment in the same manner as a son with the same rights and liabilities.

The court said Tuesday, "The rights can be claimed

by the daughter born earlier with effect from September 9, 2005, with savings as provided in Section 6(1) as to the disposition or alienation, partition or testamentary disposition which had taken place before December 20, 2004. Since the right in coparcenary is by birth, it is not necessary that father coparcener should be living as on September 9, 2005."

The bench said the pending matters on this issue be decided within six months. —PTI

Last respects



Sushma Sathe pays homage to the mortal remains of her husband, Wing Commander Deepak Sathe (Retd), pilot-in-command of the Air India Express plane that crashed in Kerala last week, during the state funeral at the Tagorenagar crematorium in Mumbai on Tuesday. — RAJESH JADHAV

Test more, trace all Covid +ve contacts in 72 hrs: PM

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday practically put Telangana state — along with a few other states — on notice, saying that it needs to increase its Covid-19 testing. Modi also stressed on the importance of tracing every contact of every single person being identified as Covid-19 positive "within 72 hours".

During a video conference with Chief Ministers of 10 states — those of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, apart from TS — Modi said 80 per cent of all active Covid-19 cases were now in these states.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao attended

● **CHIEF MINISTER K. Chandrashekar Rao made suggestions to the Centre on what it needs to do, in partnership with all states, for ensuring effective healthcare to people and be prepared for pandemics**

the video conference, and explained the steps being taken by the state to control Covid-19 and made suggestions to the Centre on what it needs to do, in partnership with all states, for ensuring effective healthcare to people and be prepared for events such as the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Modi emphasised the need to not just trace all contacts of all Covid-19 cases but also "test all those who had come in contact with an infected

person within 72 hours. This should be followed like a mantra, with the same earnestness as washing hands, maintaining 'do gaz doori', and wearing of masks."

Modi said the roadmap prepared by Union home minister Amit Shah for tackling the pandemic together with Delhi and nearby states, with stress on segregation of containment zones and focus on screening, especially of those in high risk category, has shown results that are there for everyone to see.

The Prime Minister said better management in hospitals and increasing ICU beds also proved very helpful, in Delhi and nearby states.

■ **Page 2: GHMC has given up contact tracing**

4G for two J&K dists after I-Day

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that there would be a "carefully calibrated easing of 4G internet restrictions" on trial basis in two districts of Jammu & Kashmir after August 15, subject to "strict monitoring".

Two districts — one in the Jammu region and the other in Kashmir — that will see the return of 4G services will not be in any area adjoining the border or the LoC, and will be those which have low intensity of terrorist activities.

The lifting of curbs on 4G services — that is in force since March 26 — will be for two months after which it will be reviewed.

Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal told a bench comprising Justice N.V. Ramana, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice B.R. Gavai that the special committee headed by Union home secretary had met on August 10, 2020, felt that in the given "current

security scenario, situation is not yet conducive to restore high speed internet access to mobile phones."

The Attorney General told the court that restrictions on 4G services have not hindered the Covid care, education and business in the State as they are continuing through broadband services through landline.

Senior counsel Huzefa Ahmadi said that they are not pressing their contempt plea as they would not like the sword of contempt hanging on the heads of the senior officials.

Ahmadi appeared for NGO Foundation for Media Professionals which had filed a contempt plea against the Centre for not complying with the court's May 11 order to set up the special committee. The Committee was set up after the filing of the contempt plea. Justice Ramana asked Attorney General Venugopal to respond to the written note in two weeks' time and directed the listing of the matter after two weeks.

Hyd man held for AP tragedy

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 11

The Prakasam police cracked the mystery behind the death of 16 persons due to consumption of hand sanitisers and arrested 10 persons including a Hyderabad-based illegal manufacturer of 'Perfect Gold' hand sanitisers and four others for distributing it.

Five of the arrested were proprietors of medical shops who sold the sanitiser repeatedly to the same persons, knowing fully well that they were consuming it, at Kurichedu in Prakasam district. The victims mostly included beggars, workers and rickshaw-pullers.

The police appointed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by Markapuram officer on special duty K. Chowdeswari to probe the incident along with the SIB.

■ **Full report on Page 5**

Hyderabad airport witnesses 15,000 flyers each day now compared to 60,000 previously

Coronavirus fear makes fewer people travel by air

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

Close to 80 days since domestic flight services resumed across the country, the Covid-19 scare continues to impact air travel what with the footfall of domestic passengers at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA), Shamshabad, standing at a mere 15,000 passengers, including arrivals and departures, per day. Before the pandemic, the airport used to see about 60,000 a day.

Airport sources told

Deccan Chronicle that ever since flight services resumed on May 25, the footfall at RGIA was around 3,000 per day in the first few weeks which rose to around 13,000 passengers till the end of July. Over the last few days, it slightly increased to 15,000.

Air traffic movement has increased by almost 3.5 times from about 40 during the first few weeks of airport recommencement to 150 daily now.

All domestic flyers are being thermally screened for temperature. Those

with fever (temperature above 98.7°F) are referred to the health officials stationed at the airport where they are subjected to further examination.

Based on their assessment, passengers may or may not be allowed to board the flight.

In the case of arrivals, passengers with high temperature and symptoms are being referred to Gandhi or other government hospitals for swab tests. There is no mechanism in place to check whether they visit those

● **THE SERIES of safety measures taken up by the airport post recommencement of flight services has done little to build confidence among the flyers.**

● **MANY PASSENGERS are sceptical about air travel amid reports suggesting that many passengers got infected during air travel.**

hospitals or make their own arrangements once they are outside the air-

port. "Sometimes there are a dozen people in a day who are running high temperature, on other days the number could be more or less. But we cannot say for sure if all of them are Covid-19 positive," they said.

The series of safety measures taken up by the airport post recommencement of flight services has done little to build confidence among the flyers. "Besides frequent sanitisation of the airport on a daily basis and deep cleaning, a significant component of passen-

ger safety is circulation of fresh and safe air inside the terminal building," sources at the airport said.

"As per the latest guidelines issued by the government on the quantity of fresh air requirement, the airport reconfigured the air conditioning systems and the network of air circulation across the terminal building and further enhanced the indoor air quality by doubling the quantity of the treated fresh air requirements," sources said adding that post Covid-19, all regulato-

ry norms for circulation of fresh air flow in the terminal have been doubled to ensure better indoor air quality.

Soon after the flight services had resumed, the airport had put in place several measures like contactless boarding, staggered seating arrangements, disinfectant tunnels for baggage among other measures to ensure passenger safety. Yet, many are sceptical amid reports suggesting that many passengers got infected during air travel.

IN BRIEF

Teachers demand pending salaries

Hyderabad: Congress spokesperson and teachers union president G. Harshavardhan Reddy submitted a memorandum to education minister Sabitha Indra Reddy requesting that the government pay pending salaries to education volunteers. He said the problems of part-time instructors should be resolved.. The contracts of lecturers working in colleges have to be renewed and they must be paid salaries from June, he said.

NO REGULAR COURTS TILL SEPTEMBER 5

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

The administrative wing of the Telangana High Court on Tuesday decided to extend the suspension of regular works at the High Court and sub-ordinate courts till September 5.

Urgent matters, pending admissions and other cases will be heard on videoconferencing, which has been continuing since the third week of March.

The High Court also directed the sub-ordinate courts to hear family matters also through videoconferencing, apart from the criminal and civil cases.

Apart from online filing of petitions, physical filing will be continued. They will be scrutinised after being disinfectected for 48 hours.

26 BASTI DAWAKHANAS TO OPEN ON AUG. 14

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

Twenty six Basti Dawakhanas will be inaugurated on August 14 in the GHMC limits, minister T. Srinivas Yadav said on Tuesday, after a meeting with officials.

The inauguration will be held in the presence of Deputy Speaker Padma Rao Goud, ministers K.T. Rama Rao, Etala Rajendar and Sabitha Indra Reddy apart from Srinivas Yadav.

Srinivas Yadav said, “The Chief Minister wants to deliver quality medical services to the people. There are 170 Basti Dawakhanas now, 95 in the GHMC area, 32 in Ranga Reddy district, 40 Medchal district and three in Sangareddy. With the existing Basti Dawakhanas, 14,000 citizens are being benefited each day.

MOVE TO SPEED UP PUBLIC TOILET WORKS IN TS

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

To speed up construction of public toilets, She toilets and community toilets, the government has authorised collectors to empanel agencies at the district level.

These agencies could take up construction of toilets on the rates prescribed by a committee of engineers at the district level.

This step would prevent the need to float tenders every time and save time.

The committee would consist of the superintending engineers of the roads and buildings, rural water supply or panchayat raj and district headquarter urban local bodies. The cost varies from ₹60,000 to ₹1.5 lakh.

According to the officials, this is the largest drive in public toilets anywhere in the country and Hyderabad will be the only city with more than 10,000 toilets.

So far 3,850 toilets have been completed in 139 urban local bodies in the state and 7,065 in the GHMC. In the GHMC, almost 20 per cent (about 1,500) of new toilets are on build operate transfer basis and rest are on clustering maintenance basis.

The design of the toilets, whether standalone or community toilets (having more than one seat), would be finalised by the collector with the assistance of the municipal commissioners of the ULBs.

These toilets should be equipped with ventilation, water supply and electric connection.

Toilets in commercial areas can be taken up on public private partnership (PPP) mode on the lines of Loo Café in Hyderabad wherein it will be designed, constructed and maintained by the agency at their own cost.

Secretariat gone, barricades remain

Barricades at both the sides of the Telugu Talli Flyover which were put up during the demolition of the Telangana state secretariat buildings still remain though all the structures have been razed causing immense inconvenience for motorists.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

TS percentage of Covid deaths stays unchanged

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

A strange, inexplicable phenomenon is dogging Telangana state ever since it was hit by Covid-19. As part of this, the state health department appears to have been gripped by an inexplicable certitude with respect to the nature of the causes leading to fatalities among Covid-19 patients.

In a peculiar, and uncanny, oddity, the number of people losing their lives after getting infected by the Coronavirus, and classified as ‘deaths due to Covid-19’, and ‘deaths due to comorbidities’ has stayed rock steady since July 27, the date from which the health department began sharing percentages of these two categories that comprise Covid-19 deaths.

As per the bulletin issued on Tuesday, for the 24-hour period ending on Monday 8 pm, Telangana state has witnessed 645 deaths from among the 82,647 persons officially declared as Covid-19 cases since March 2, the day the

● ON JULY 27, the health department, in its daily Covid-19 bulletin, said there were 480 deaths as on that day. It said that of these fatalities, the percentage of deaths due to Covid-19 was 46.13.

first Covid-19 positive case was discovered in the state.

On July 27, the health department, in its daily Covid-19 bulletin, said there were 480 deaths as on that day. It said that of these fatalities, the percentage of deaths due to Covid-19 was 46.13. As for the percentage of deaths due to comorbidities from among the Coronavirus infected people, the department reported they comprised 53.87 per cent till July 27.

Since that day, the number of Covid-19 related deaths rose to 645 as per the health department bulletin issued on Tuesday.

Though 165 more people

lost their lives since July 27, the percentages of the cause of deaths, as far as the health department is concerned even on Tuesday, have remained exactly where they were on July 27 – at 46.13 per cent for Covid-19 deaths, and 53.87 per cent due to comorbidities or other pre-existing health conditions.

Though the department does not provide any further data on fatalities among Covid-19 patients, those losing their lives to the disease to ‘fit into’ an existing data set, raises more questions than answers on the quality and reliability of Covid-19 figures released everyday by the health department.

The health department began issuing a ‘detailed’ Covid-19 bulletin, ranging between 50 and 60 odd pages, after it was repeatedly upbraided by the Telangana High Court for not releasing full data on Covid-19 cases and for withholding critical information from the public, and for largely issuing inaccurate numbers with respect to Covid-19 victims.

Contact tracing totally given up

From Page 1

Though Telangana state did increase testing from about 5,000 a few weeks ago to up to a peak of more than 20,000 a day, Modi’s clubbing of the state with nine others with high positivity rates of Covid-19 cases, along with his call for mandatory contact tracing, and containment measures, are expected to present some challenges to the government.

Though the state had initially enforced containment measures, closing off localities where Covid-19 cases were found, this practice has more or less been given up.

In fact, in the GHMC limits, largely comprising Hyderabad city, the authorities have left it to the local residents to take up Covid-19 control, putting out data on locations of cases being found on the GHMC website and asking residents of such

areas to play a role in disease containment.

It is reliably learnt that the authorities have practically given up on contact tracing of Covid-19 positive persons with officials more than once expressing helplessness in continuing with the process in the face of ever-increasing cases that has stretched available resources beyond their limits.

India, among the world’s top 20 countries in coronavirus cases, however, ranks 17th in conducting tests. It is testing only 18,000 people per million, and only Pakistan, Mexico and Bangladesh are behind it in testing terms. Britain and the US test 2.70 lakh and two lakh people per million. Modi said it was a matter of satisfaction that the average fatality rate in India has been going down and noted that it has been very low compared to the world average.

COVID PATIENT DIES BY SUICIDE IN HOSPITAL

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA T. I | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

A man who tested positive for Covid-19 and was admitted to a private hospital, and a woman who contracted malaria but was convinced she had Covid-19, took their lives in two separate incidents in the city.

The body of the 60-year-old man from Karimnagar was found in the bathroom of an isolation ward at a private hospital in Malakpet early on Tuesday. He had been admitted on August 6.

At around 2 am on Tuesday, a nurse went to the patient’s room and noticed his body in the washroom. The family said that he was in a state of panic after he tested positive.

In Jeedimetla, the police said the deceased, Y. Sujatha, 45, a resident of Shapur Nagar, was suffering from high fever and was taken to a hospital. She was diagnosed with malaria but was afraid that she had contracted Covid-19.

She ended her life on Monday night after all her family members went to sleep. Her son saw her body in the morning.

HC FOR RABIES VACCINE IN VILLAGES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

The Telangana High Court asked the government if it can make available the rabies vaccine in villages which do not have primary health centres (PHC) or medical staff.

The court was dealing a petition from Nalgonda district, which stated that the vaccine for dog bites was not available and the villagers of Kannekal were having to go to a distant PHC at the mandal headquarters of Mudugupalli.

The petitioners urged the court to direct the authorities to make available the vaccine even in veterinary hospitals situated in their village as it did not have a PHC.

India can make 4 billion vaccines**It can be produced by the end of 2021**

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

India is one of the largest producers of vaccines in the world with a capacity of three billion doses. With different vaccines produced and supplied to other countries, India’s capacity is being looked at positively for the mass production of the Covid-19 vaccines.

Capacity-building for Covid-19 vaccine has shown that four billion vaccines can be produced by the end of 2021, according to a study by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).

An alliance to finance and coordinate development of vaccines, it had undertaken a worldwide survey on capacity-building, capabilities and interest of governments to respond to the pandemic. According to estimates

by pharmacologists, India’s capacity will help but making billions of vaccines requires scaling up production and synchronising systems for the particular vaccine. This will mean that other vaccine productions can take a hit during that time.

Dr Sai Kumar Katam, president of Doctors of Pharmacy, explained, “No pharma company can make five billion doses in the next year and it will require all of them to come together. The world will require 4.7 billion doses of Coronavirus vaccine to reach herd immunity levels. It is also very important to note that vaccine administration will be required for the whole world. It cannot be that some countries are vaccinated while others are not. That will not help.”

It will also mean that there will have to be a flow

of monetary capital to scale up the process of production for vaccines.

Distribution of vaccines will also be a point of concern as it will require proper storage in temperatures where the efficacy of vaccines remains intact. Movement of vaccines from one place to another will require government interventions to reach out to the farthest populations of the world.

Experts are looking at the Pulse Polio model of India where the combination of government and non-government organisations helped eradicate the disease by reaching all children.

There are a total of 113 manufacturers in 30 countries of the world and it has been found that India has the largest production capacity for drug substances, vaccines, expression systems and biologics.

1,896 FRESH COVID CASES ERUPT IN TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

Covid-19 cases in Telangana state are being registered without any let up with 1,896 more people found to have been infected by the Coronavirus even as eight more people succumbed to Covid-19. This takes the total cases to 82,647 while the fatalities rose to 645, according to the health department.

It said that as many as 1,788 persons recovered from the disease in the 24-hour period between 8 pm on Sunday and 8 pm on Monday, taking their numbers to 59,374.

There were 22,628 active Covid-19 cases; 15,554 of them were either in home or institutional isolation.

The number of cases in the GHMC limits continued to show a dip with 338 new cases being reported for the 24-hour period, Ranga Reddy district saw an increase to 147 cases from 86 the previous day as did Karimnagar district that witnessed a rise from 73 the previous day to 121, while Medchal-Malkajgiri district saw an increase in cases to 119 from 34 for the same period.

The department said that 2,629 patients were undergoing treatment at its hospitals across the state.

The number of Coronavirus patients in private hospitals was 4,445, it said.

From Page 1

Dr A.V. Ramarao, senior scientist and former director of Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (CSIR-IICT), said, “It is too early to say anything about the vaccine from Russia. There is too much confusion. The numbers presented by them in terms of trials and testing are too few. We have to wait and watch.”

Questions have been raised by scientists as to why the apex body of healthcare, the World Health Organisation, has not been involved in the announcement. Have the results of the trials been reviewed by WHO.

Sanjay Reddy, pharmacologist and member of Telangana State Pharmacy Council, says, “If the vaccine is really what it is claimed to be, it will help the world but we need data in terms of efficacy, safety and trial results to understand its impact on the human race. The number of trials and the number of people are also very important. Take the case of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine where the trial on monkeys and the pre-clinical results are peer-reviewed and the data available for scrutiny. These are confidence-building measures in the scientific world as this vaccine is not for one set of people. It will be required for the world population.”

● QUESTIONS HAVE been raised by scientists as to why the apex body of healthcare, the World Health Organisation, has not been involved in the announcement. Have the results of the trials been reviewed by WHO.

While one section of the medical and scientific fraternity is positive and keenly looking forward to the results of the vaccine, others are sceptical due to the lack of scientific information being given out by Russia.

R. Gangadhar, state convener of Breakthrough Science Society, said, “We have to congratulate Russia for coming out with a vaccine so soon. The results on their human population will now be very important. The real benefit of the vaccine will be judged only when the worldwide populations benefit the same way as the populace of Russia. Due to demographic changes, there is always a concern as it has been frequently noted in the development of vaccines.” Due to the pandemic threat, the vaccine development process which is otherwise 18 months is being cut short. But shortcuts are only for early development and cannot compromise on safety and efficacy, say experts.

Traffic curbs in Army area

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

Roads leading to military establishments in Hyderabad and Secunderabad will remain closed from 4 am of August 14 to 6 pm of August 26.

The decision follows a heightened nationwide alert over the security situation ahead of Independence Day.

Officials from the defence ministry said that military establishments were among the main targets of anti-nationals.

The roads that would remain closed are Residency, Hislop, Amherst, Gurbaksh Marg, Rajendra Singhji, Lake Line Ranges, Barr, Yarpal, Gough, Wellington, AOC, Mornington and Entrenchment. Ambulances, school

buses, police vehicles, government officials on duty, state or district administration officials on duty, medical cases being transported in private vehicles for medical help, funeral processions for last rites within cantonment and essential service vehicles will be permitted.

Defence officials have asked citizens to cooperate with the authorities in this regard.

ONLINE | LEARNING

IT dept has requested DTH operators to offer T-SAT channels in their service packages**Majority kids won’t benefit from T-SAT channels**

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

The state government has decided to begin classes for state board school children later this month by telecasting lessons on T-SAT channels. This strategy could end up excluding a large number of children as most DTH operators still do not offer T-SAT channels in their service packages.

The decision to broadcast lessons was announced by education minister Sabitha Indra Reddy in a review meeting

on Monday evening. She had said that children studying in classes six to 10 would be aired on T-SAT and Doordarshan channels from August 20; lessons for those studying classes three to five would begin on September 1.

T-SAT is run by SoftNET, which falls under the state IT department. It operates four channels – T-SAT1, Disha, Nipuna, Vidya – which can be accessed via T-SAT’s official YouTube channel or mobile application.

● T-SAT is run by SoftNET, which falls under the state IT department. It operates four channels – T-SAT1, Disha, Nipuna, Vidya – which can be accessed via T-SAT’s official YouTube channel or mobile application.

who don’t have access to high-speed mobile or broadband internet.

The education department, as a stop-gap measure, is learnt to have employed Doordarshan channels to air some of

the lessons. However, the sheer number of subjects and lessons that will need telecasting, the success of the department’s strategy depends mainly on T-SAT channels.

R. Shailesh Reddy, CEO of SoftNET, admitted that while T-SAT channels are carried by most cable operators, they are absent from DTH services. “This will indeed be a problem for many children,” he admitted. He explained that the government has been asking the Union ministry of information and broadcasting to per-

mit DTH operators to air its channels for nearly three years.

Reddy explained the logistics of airing the classes: “Education-based channels cannot work like entertainment channels. We only get around 14 hours’ worth of slots – say, from 5 am to 7 pm – to broadcast lessons. Students cannot be expected to join classes in the late evenings. T-SAT already has four channels which can spread out the classes. Doordarshan cannot do this.” Reddy added that T-SAT has the capaci-

ty to start four more channels, if the need arises.

Aware of the problem, the government has reached out to the I&B ministry. On August 4, Jayesh Ranjan, state IT secretary, wrote to Amit Khare, secretary, I&B ministry, asking it to declare education channels such as those operated by T-SAT as “must carry”. Ranjan noted that similar channels operated by the governments of Kerala (KITE-VICTERS) and Gujarat (Vande Gujarat) have been given the “must carry” tag.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Ranjan said that the IT department has reached out to the DTH operators directly and requested them to carry the channels. “A few have already agreed, while others are expected to comply in the next few days,” he said.

Ranjan admitted that things would be a lot easier if there is a national mandate from the I&B ministry to DTH operators. “This is something that is relevant for all states in the country,” he added.

IN BRIEF

Manuu extends application date

Hyderabad: The Maulana Azad National Urdu University has extended the date for submission of online admission applications. The deadline for submission for admission forms to courses based on entrance examinations is now August 24, and for merit-based courses is September 30. The students' body has issued a helpline number for prospective students, 6201100574, for more information.

3 held for illegal activities in a lodge

Hyderabad: Three persons including Ravi, supervisor of Adilabad Lodge at Putlibowli crossroads, were arrested for allegedly renting rooms for illegal activities and two women were rescued at Sultan Bazaar on Monday night. The lodge owner is absconding. The two women were sent to a rescue home for rehabilitation, said the police.

ANOTHER WAKF BOARD EMPLOYEE DIES OF COVID-19

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

One more Wakf Board employee died on Tuesday due to Covid-19. He was admitted to a private hospital last week after suffering breathing problems. His body was buried at the graveyard attached to Masjid Ibaadullah Shah, Chanchalguda. He had retired a few years back as superintendent; his services were obtained temporarily. Earlier, an office attendant at the board died in June due to Coronavirus, while another employee, who was a suspected Covid-19 patient, also died.

MINOR GIRLS KILL FATHER OVER HARASSMENT

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

Unable to bear their father returning home drunk and beating them, two girls, aged 16 and 17, killed him at their house at about 9 pm in Jagadagirigutta on Monday. The girls informed their maternal aunt about the murder before fleeing, said the police. The man was a resident of Seesal Basthi in Maqdhoomnagar of Jagadagirigutta, and ran a flour mill. His wife had died about eight months ago due to ill health. The elder girl completed her intermediate while the younger girl stopped attending school after Class VIII. Based on a complaint from Lakshmi, a case has been booked against the minor girls and search is on to apprehend them, said the inspector.

GOVT ASKED TO PROVE PAYMENT TO MARTYR'S KIN

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

The Telangana High Court directed the state government to furnish evidence that it had deposited the promised amount to the family members of Lance Naik Mohd Feroz Khan who was killed in Pakistani firing on the Line of Control in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir in 2013. The family of the late soldier was awaiting payment of compensation promised by the Union government and the amount to be paid by the Telangana state government. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijayans Reddy was dealing a suo motu PIL taken up by converting a letter of one Pavan Kasthuri, who highlighted the penalty that Lance Naik Khan's family was living in. Santosh, government pleader, on Tuesday informed the court that the government had issued a G.O. in this regard and an amount ₹29,76,750 had been deposited into the account of Lance Naik Khan's wife account on July 31. He could not furnish evidence or details of that transaction, when the court sought proof. With that, Justice Chauhan said the court wants evidence rather than statements. He observed that the court was happy that the government had acted swiftly in depositing the amount after the court had intervened and issued notices. The court sought the evidence of payment by August 19.

Hail Lord Krishna

(Clockwise from top) Kids dress up as Lord Krishna on the occasion of Janmashtami at a small get-together in Hyderabad. B. Padmayathi arranges a collection of idols of Lord Krishna at her residence. A priest offers prayers at the Hare Krishna Golden temple in Banjara Hills for Janmashtami on Tuesday.

— P. SURENDRA, R. PAVAN

HC tells petitioner to name polluting cement mix firms

**VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA I DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

Responding to a petition seeking removal of heavy crushers and cement ready-mix concrete industries in and around Vattinagulapally village in Gandipet mandal in Ranga Reddy district, which was alleged to be causing air and groundwater pollution in violation of G.O. 111, the Telangana High Court on Tuesday made it clear to the petitioners that it also wants to hear the contention of the industries.

G.O. 111 prohibits polluting industries with a 10-km radius of Himayatsagar and Osmansagar. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijayans Reddy was dealing with a PIL filed by one Marri Gopal Reddy contending that the pollution caused by the industries was playing havoc with the lives of people living in the area. The situation was becoming worse with the dumping of waste materials by the industries, the petitioners said. The court refused to

proceed with the petition because of the industries and the Pollution Control Board were not made respondents. Justice Chauhan said, "If, tomorrow, the industries which are alleged to have been creating air pollution and groundwater pollution inform the court that they do possess valid permissions issued by the PCB and other departments, then any orders passed by the court will be futile. Hence, the court directs the petitioner to implead the owners of the polluting industries as respondents to the PIL."

● **A DIVISION BENCH** comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijayans Reddy was dealing with a PIL filed by one Marri Gopal Reddy contending that the pollution caused by the industries was playing havoc with the lives of people living in the area.

● **THE SITUATION** was becoming worse with the dumping of waste materials by the industries, the petition said.

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING UNIT RESCUES 11 KIDS

**JAYENDRA CHAITANYA T. | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of Rachakonda commissionerate rescued the 11 kids hailing from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, who were allegedly confined at a sheepfold, given stinking food and forced to work as labourers. The police arrested three persons and handed over the children to the ChildLine officials. They were acting on a tip-off about the illegal detention of the children at Pasumamula by the accused Ramlal, 41, owner of Mahesh Zyppam Plaster Company. E. Jagan Mohan Reddy, 43, owner of Sri Pavan Putra Plaster Company and its supervisor Pankaj Kumar, 31. The children were aged between eight and 18 years. Seven of the children hailing from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were trafficked by Ramlal and four others children from Bihar by Pankaj and Jagan, after paying meagre amounts to their parents. "The children were confined in a place which appeared like a sheepfold. They were made to work for over 14 hours a day and were paid ₹7 for making one plaster of Paris sheet. The food provided to the children was rotten, and they were treated as slaves by the accused," said the Rachakonda police in a note on Tuesday.

TS not to allow elephant for 'Bibi Ka Alam' rally

**ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

The government is not inclined to allow the use of an elephant for the 'Bibi Ka Alam' procession on Ashoora day of Muharram due to Covid-19 protocols currently in place. Representatives of the Shia community said the centuries-old tradition should be continued. The city police will take a final decision on Saturday. A high-level meeting was held to draw up the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the Ashoora procession, under the chairmanship of minister Koppula Eshwar with the officials of different departments and representatives of Shia community. Home minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali attended the meeting. Sources said both ministers opined that using the elephant to carry the 'Bibi Ka Alam' will attract a huge gathering, which is not desirable in the present circumstances. Mahmood Ali suggested using a camel to carry the alam (standard). The Shia representatives urged the ministers and officials not to stop them using the elephant as this tradition

● **THE SHIA** representatives urged the ministers and officials not to stop them using the elephant as this tradition has been continued for more than four centuries.

● **THE MINISTERS** agreed to hold the central procession on the 10th day of Muharram, which falls on August 30 (depending on the sighting of the moon) with few participants in light of the guidelines issued by ICMR. However, Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar expressed reservations over granting permission for the central procession. Secretary, Shia Companions, Syed Ali Jaffry said that everyone was concerned about the government's stand and its strategy

for the Muharram procession and mourning congregations, but only a few representatives of the Shia community were invited from the city for the meeting. The state has 11,866 Ashoorkhanas. In the rural areas, Sunnis and non-Muslims also participate and organise the ceremonies. Jaffry suggested issuing separate proceedings containing SOPs to all district authorities. The meeting was attended by Wakf Board chairman Mohammed Saleem, legislators Mumtaz Ahmed Khan and Syed Ahmed Pasha Quadri, Legislative Council member Mirza Riyaz ul Hasan Effendi and Deputy Mayor Baba Fasihuddin. A.K. Khan, advisor to the government, Ahmed Nadeem, secretary, minorities welfare, Shah Nawaz Qasim, director minorities welfare, Moulana Syed Nisar Hussain Syder Agha (Shia Usooli), Mohammed Qasim, CEO Wakf Board, Moulana Syed Waheeduddin Hyder Jaffry (Shia Akhbari), Najaf Ali Shoukat, president, Shia Markazi Anjuman-o-Matami Gurohan and Mir Abbas Ali Moosavi, president of Anjuman-e-Mutawallian were present.

State defers Water Board payments**HMWS&SB asked to collect bills from users**

**MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

The one-time settlement of pending bills announced by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) is receiving lukewarm response. Out of the total ₹1,700 crore arrears, government agencies owe the Water Board ₹1,200 crore. Citing fund crunch, the government agencies are in no mood to clear arrears and asked the water body to focus on collecting the bills from consumers. The consumers themselves have largely ignored the scheme.

The government on July 28 had released G.O. No. 307 pertaining to the One Time Amnesty Scheme (OTAS). It ordered a waiver of 90 per cent accumulated arrears on water bills provided consumers clear the principal amounts for financial year 2019-20 with 10 per cent interest on arrears.

The scheme came into effect from August 1 and will end on September 15. Despite vigorous campaigning the HMWS&SB managed to collect just about ₹5 lakh. Asked for the reason, a HMWS&SB official said that lion's share of arrears belong to government organisations including the electricity department, Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority, Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited and several other nodal agencies in the city.

The authorities said that citing the Covid-19 outbreak, several government organisations had been refusing to avail the OTAS which putting ₹1,200 crore at stake. The government has asked the Water Board to focus on residential and commercial consumers to collect ₹200 crore by the end of the scheme against the target of ₹500 crore.

TS to waive interest on arrears of water bills

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

In yet another 'one time settlement' scheme for the citizens of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, the state government will be waiving the interest on arrears of pending water bills.

Municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao released a poster relating to the scheme of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board here on Tuesday. The minister said that the government was providing a golden opportunity to the residents who have pending bills for a long time to pay up.

The residents can pay the actual bill excluding the interest on the arrears under the settlement scheme, said the minister.

● **K.T. RAMA RAO** said that the government was providing a golden opportunity to the residents who have pending bills for a long time to pay up.

● **THE RESIDENTS** can pay the actual bill excluding the interest on the arrears under the settlement scheme, said the minister.

The scheme would be available for 45 days from August 1 to September 15. He asked the officials to strive for clearing the pending bills and increase the revenue of the Water Board.

The minister said that it was the responsibility of the residents to pay the water bills and support the government which has been providing drinking water at nominal rates.

A senior Water Board official requesting anonymity said that the HMWS&SB would go bankrupt if the state government does not come to its rescue by issuing orders to clear arrears for all nodal agencies. He said that the board would lose a major share of revenues if it only concentrates on residential and commercial consumers.

"In their high-level meetings, the government agencies have hinted that the bills would be waived by the year end. On the flip side, the government has decided to regularise all illegal water connections pertaining to residential and commercial consumers. The government is most likely

going to increase water tariff during next financial year to enhance the Water Board's revenues," the official added.

The government has also waived 90 per cent interest on property for the financial year 2019-20 prior to the GHMC elections.

The MA&UD department said that ₹1,477.86 crore arrears with interest of ₹1017.6 crore have accumulated over a period of 15 to 20 years in the GHMC. The civic authorities said that it has been receiving lukewarm response from the taxpayers with the misconception that the government would waive the arrears by the year end.

TEMPLE CANNOT BE BUILT ON LAND IN NAGOLE: COURT

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11**

The Telangana High Court has directed the GHMC Hayatnagar division, revenue department of Medchal-Malkajgiri district and the LB Nagar police to prevent the construction of a temple on public land measuring 1,200 square yards in Survey No. 45 in Nagole. A division bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan directed the authorities to visit the place and submit the report by August 18.

The bench was dealing with the PIL by Vazir Prakash Goud, complaining that the land was being grabbed by private persons in the name of the Mahankalamma Pochamma Garla Devasthanam Committee. Land was being dug for the construction of the temple.

Earlier, the court had directed the authorities to ensure that no construction work is done on the land. The petitioner recently reported that there were attempts to start construction.

Observing that it would be difficult to displace the temple once it is constructed, the court directed the authorities that no work can be carried out on the land under any circumstance.

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SHORT TAKES

MYANMAR NATIONAL HELD FOR INFILTRATION

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

A Myanmar national who illegally entered India, obtained Indian identification cards was apprehended by the South Zone Task Force on Tuesday.

The accused, Md Qadeer, 37, has illegally entered India in 2008, moved to the city from West Bengal and was working as an electrician since then. In 2012, he married an Indian woman.

After marriage, Qadeer obtained a voter identification card with an electricity bill and was arrested by the Rajendranagar police. Later, he managed to get an Aadhaar card, a driving licence, and bought a bike and opened a bank account on his name as an Indian citizen with a Hyderabad address.

Qadeer was apprehended and handed over to Bahadurpura police for further legal action, the Task Force added.

SMART TOILETS BY I-DAY NOT POSSIBLE

PULI SHARAT KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 11

After two months, the promise made by minister Gangula Kamalakar, that around 40 smart public toilets will come up under Karimnagar Municipal Corporation (KMC) limits and 15 toilets would be ready by August 15, is looking impossible for the administration.

The administration decided to construct public toilets in all municipalities in the district and around 40 smart public toilets under KMC limits in association with private parties.

A resolution was passed in a meeting two months ago under Kamalakar's leadership and city mayor Yadagiri Sunil Rao. Kamalakar said that keeping in view the increasing population along with floating people to Karimnagar and for the convenience of the people living in the city, smart public toilets with advanced facilities at public places near the collectorate, bus stand, vegetable market and near shopping malls present under KMC limits would be built.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had said that priority was smart toilets and included it the Pattana Pragathi programme.

The smart toilets will be kept clean and hygienic round the clock. There will be a separate room for mothers who have infants so that they can breast-feed their babies and also for disabled people with special seats for their convenience.

BHATTI DEMANDS MORE FUNDS FOR HEALTH SECTOR

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

Congress Legislative Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Tuesday demanded that the state government allocate sufficient funds to the medical department.

He criticised Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's government for not reviewing the Covid-19 situation in the state. "He is afraid that lack of funds, shortage of doctors and safety kits in the medical department may come into the light," Mallu Bhatti claimed.

Addressing the media along with party leaders D. Sridhar Babu and T. Jagga Reddy at the Assembly here, Mallu Bhatti pointed out that health minister Etala Rajendar had said stringent action will be taken against private hospitals for looting the people. "Why is the government not taking action against private hospitals which are exploiting the people," he said.

"People have been complaining about the lack of testing kits," the Congress leader said.

The CLP leader said that Rao and the Cabinet were saying that Telangana state was the richest in the country but the allocations for the medical department were very poor. "I was surprised to see the state with a budget of ₹82 lakh crore has no concern for the medical staff and the people," Mallu Bhatti said.

He demanded that 50 per cent of private hospitals should be taken over by the government. He wanted the government to fix an appropriate and feasible rate for private hospitals and appoint 17 IAS officers, one for each parliamentary constituency, to monitor the billing in a strict manner.

Step up healthcare facilities, CM tells PM

KCR briefs Modi on Covid situation through videoconference

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to focus on increasing medical facilities by taking lessons from the Coronavirus pandemic. He was speaking at a videoconference held by the Prime Minister with Chief Ministers of 10 states on Tuesday.

Briefing the Prime Minister about the Coronavirus situation in the state, Mr Rao said, "The experience has taught us a lesson that there is an urgent need to step up medical facilities. Visionary outlook and thinking are necessary to take proper measures in the medical sector for a better future. Strategic

planning should be done to create comprehensive medical facilities."

The Centre and the states should jointly implement this comprehensive strategy, he said. "We never had any Corona-like experience in the past. We do not know how many days this pandemic will last.

While dealing with the pandemic, we should focus on how we are going to deal with such a situation in future and how are we going to offer better medical facilities to the people when the need arises," the Chief Minister said.

Mr Rao told the Prime Minister: "We have to initiate measures now so that whenever an emergency medical situation develops, we will be able to face it efficiently. In

● **THE CENTRE and the states should jointly implement this comprehensive strategy, he said.**

the past too, we have seen the emergence of several viruses, and there is every possibility that a Corona-like virus may come up again in future."

Rao said, "we have to take measures now to face any eventuality in future. We have to think about what should be the ideal doctor-people ratio. How many new medical colleges do we need? We have to consult institutions like the Indian Medical Association (IMA), take proper advice and plan the measures." He told the Prime Minister that the

state government had taken all the measures to contain the Coronavirus and the recovery rate was 71 per cent while the death rate was 0.7 per cent. Mr Rao said the government had increased the number of tests manifold and better treatment was being given to Coronavirus-affected patients and adequate number of beds, medicines, staff and other equipment kept ready to tackle the situation.

He said, "we are diligently following the guidelines issued from time to time by the ICMR, Niti Aayog and the Central government. Medical and health staff, police personnel and other government machinery are working round the clock."

VHR detained while on way to Warangal

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

The Warangal police detained senior Congress leader and former MP V. Hanumantha Rao while he was going to visit Kareemabad in Warangal where some persons had vandalised a statue of Mahatma Jyotiba Pule.

The police detained him at Pembarthi and took him to the Lingala Ghanapur police station. Hanumantha Rao said he was disappointed that he had not returned without visiting the statue. He said he was ready to stay in Warangal Central Jail if necessary. He demanded an immediate response from the social welfare minister, collector and com-

● **HE WAS going to visit Kareemabad where a statue of Mahatma Jyotiba Pule was vandalised.**

missioner over the issue. TPCC general secretary and AICC member Bakka Judson condemned the arrest of Hanumantha Rao and alleged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was ruling the state in an undemocratic manner. BC Association's Dasu Suresh said it was undemocratic of the police to arrest Hanumantha Rao, a former Congress MP and senior BC leader. Suresh demanded that the government identify those who had vandalised the statue immediately.

ROW OVER PET LEADS TO DEATH OF A MAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, AUG. 11

Angered over the neighbour's pet entering their house, a couple had a dispute with the neighbours, which led to the death of a man at Talapaya village under Mulakalapally mandal, Bhadradi-Kothagudem district on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Paddam Jogulu, 50 years. A case has been filed on the complaint of Bajaramma and investigation is on.

CONG LEADER PAYS TRIBUTES TO RAHAT INDORI

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

India has lost a great son in the death of renowned poet Dr Rahat Indori, and Urdu and Hindi lovers will never forget him for his mesmerising poetry, said Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) official spokesperson Shujath Ali.

He said Dr Indori's works that spread the messages of love, unity and humanity will remain immortal. His poetic works were unparalleled, as was his skill as an artist. Shujat Ali also recalled how Dr Indori excelled not just in poetry but also in painting. The teacher-turned-poet had been admitted to hospital on Tuesday.

In remembrance of



Mrs. G. JEEVAAMRUTHAM
On her 10th Death Anniversary
Born: 15.05.1938
Passed away: 12.08.2010
Inserted by
Children & Grandchildren.

OBITUARY



Late AMARAM SRINIVAS REDDY
DOB: 11-07-1978 DOD: 03-08-2020
Gandimallamma, Dundigal.
"Missing your presence every moment
May your blessings be there with us"
Inserted by:
AMARAM FAMILY
Gandimallamma, Dundigal.

OBITUARY



Sri Malikarjuna Veeresham Garu
DOB: 30-12-1953 DOD: 11-08-2020
Your sweet Memories will remain in our Hearts Forever
Inserted by: M. Aruna Devi (Wife)
M. Suresh (Elder Son), M. Suresh (Daughter-in-law)
M. Haru (Grand Son), M. Suresh (Daughter-in-law)
A. Suresh (Daughter), A. Suresh (Son-in-law)
Grand Daughters & Grand Sons
M. Yelliah 9000777772

PAGDI



Sri. TEKCHAND BALWANI
Left for his heavenly abode on 10th Aug 2020
PAGDI Ceremony
Dates: 12th Aug 2020 Time: 4:30 to 5:30 pm
Location: Join us as we pray from your own location via Google Meet link
https://meet.google.com/uaa-ecwz-mpg
In Grief:
Santosh & Aditi (Son & Daughter-in-law)
Anup & Bhagini (Son & Daughter-in-law)
Sugil & Poojaram (Son-in-law & Daughter)
Grandchildren: Tanmay, Parth, Naman, Nishak & Kabir, Divyansu Family & Potluri Modala : 9849150095

OBITUARY



Late AMARAM SRINIVAS REDDY
DOB: 11-07-1978 DOD: 03-08-2020
Gandimallamma, Dundigal.
"May his soul rest in peace"
Inserted by:
Management & Staff of
SARANI STEELS & CEMENT
Razole Bazar, Belluram.

SHRADHANJALI



Sri Malikarjuna Veeresham Garu
DOB: 30-12-1953 DOD: 11-08-2020
"We will Miss your Presence,
your memories will always be Treasured"
Inserted by:
Sri Pabba Nanda Kishore
Smt Pabba Renuka Devi
& PABBA FAMILY

SHRADHANJALI



Sri Malikarjuna Veeresham Garu
DOB: 30-12-1953 DOD: 11-08-2020
"We will Miss your Presence,
your memories will always be Treasured"
Inserted by:
Smt Rachakonda Sri Lakshmi
& RACHAKONDA FAMILY

16th ANNIVERSARY



Late. Sri BHAGIRATHI SHANKAR
Deputy Accountant General
DOD: 12.08.2004
"You live in our hearts forever all
your words remain forever a part"
Inserted by: V. Sharda, Grand Children
AND FAMILY Members
Ph: 040-23247429, 9900057429

100th BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

Dr. Bobba Dharma Rao was born on 12th August, 1920 in Kautaram, Krishna District.

After early education in Kautaram and Machilipatnam he completed M.B.B.S and M.D. from Andhra Medical College. He married Smt. Bhanumati Devi in 1947.

Dr. B. DHARMA RAO

He joined Nizam's Health Services in 1948 and worked in Hyderabad, Jangaon & Jagtial.

In 1960, Government of India sent him to Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, USA for his fellowship in Cardiology.

In 1961 he was posted as Superintendent of MGM Hospital, Warangal and became Principal of Kakatiya Medical College, Warangal. He retired in 1975 and passed away in Bombay while recovering from vascular surgery.

He was well regarded and fondly remembered by his patients, colleagues, staff and students.

In fond remembrance of our father.

Krishna Sagar - 8008002878
Vidya Sagar - vbobba@yahoo.com
Ram Sagar - 9848357688
Sarojani - sarojanipotla@gmail.com
Vijaya Lakshmi - 9848917701

Contact: drbdr100@gmail.com

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Shri. Damerla Bala Chandra
Vice President, Sundaram Motors

Sundaram Motors

Mahatma Gandhi Road, Rani Gunj, Hyderabad, Telangana 500003

12.01.1948 10.08.2020

IN LOVING MEMORY

Late AMARAM SRINIVAS REDDY
DOB: 11-07-1978 DOD: 03-08-2020
Gandimallamma, Dundigal.
"May his soul rest in peace"
Inserted by:
AMARAM FAMILY
Gandimallamma, Dundigal.

K. JAYA RAJU
Head Of Director of Marketing
DOB: 10-02-1940 DOD: 12-08-2019
Dad we miss you. It's a year now but you will be in our Heart's forever
Dearly remembered by
Sons, Daughters-in-law & Grand Children

1st ANNIVERSARY

Shri E. M. Subramanian
(Ex NDMC) DOD: 12.08.2019

Your Life was a blessing. Your memory a treasure. You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure... Your thoughts will live on in each one of us forever... Girdling us all our life. Deeply Mourned by:
Sulochana-Wife, Son, Daughter-in-law
Daughters, Son-in-law, Grandchildren
Relatives, Near & Dear
Ph: 9933900017, 9793479319

OBITUARY

Late AMARAM SRINIVAS REDDY
DOB: 11-07-1978 DOD: 03-08-2020
Gandimallamma, Dundigal.
"May his soul rest in peace"
Inserted by:
CHITALA FAMILY
Atul, Belluram

OBITUARY

Late AMARAM SRINIVAS REDDY
DOB: 11-07-1978 DOD: 03-08-2020
Gandimallamma, Dundigal.
"May his soul rest in peace"
Inserted by:
Management & Staff of
VENKATESWARA STEELS & CEMENT
Gandimallamma, Dundigal

SHRADHANJALI

Sri Malikarjuna Veeresham Garu
DOB: 30-12-1953 DOD: 11-08-2020
"We will Miss your Presence,
your memories will always be Treasured"
Inserted by:
Sri Manepally Rama Rao
Smt Manepally Vijayalakshmi
& MANEPALLY FAMILY

5th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Late ACHANTA PHANI GOWRI
W/o Wg Cdr Achant
Nagabhushana Rao (Retd.)
DOB: 28 Jan 1941 DOD: 12 Aug 2015
Deeply mourned by:
Husband, A. Ravi Kumar (Son)
Chintapalli Padma (Daughter)
All Grand Children

IN LOVING MEMORY 10th ANNIVERSARY

SAROJ DEVI SHARMA
DOB: 01-07-1940 DOD: 03-08-2019
Inserted by:
Dr. S.R. Sharma & Family Members

(S2021/000423)

SHORT TAKES

PANEL: FAULTY DESIGN LED TO CRANE TRAGEDY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 11

A faulty design caused the giant crane's devastating crash in the Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) premises that killed 11 persons on August 1.

This was the finding of the five-member committee, comprising Andhra University professors from engineering college, which submitted its report to the Collector on Tuesday.

The crux of the report, according to sources, was that the crane had a faulty design. The crane was designed and fabricated by Anupama Engineering Works, Mumbai. Although the crane was procured two years ago, it could not be installed as Anupama management refused to execute the work without receiving payment of their bills. Even though the company made an effort on two occasions it backed off due to a shortage of HSL engineers at the site.

The management hired Greenfield Engineers for installation but the inquiry report revealed that no agency was certified for the trial run. The bearings of the crane's wheels were also weak because of which the machine was tilting on one side. However, experts opined that the Andhra University professors have no practical experience in cranes and hence their observation may not be correct. They said that the government should have hired experts from navy, shipyard and ports who deal with cranes on a daily basis.

Another inquiry report by the HSL director is yet to be released. The one-man committee was appointed by the Defence Ministry, under which the shipyard functions.

The mishap killed 11 persons on the spot.

SPECIAL TEAMS TO NAB RAMESH HOSPS FOUNDER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG 11

The police have formed special teams to nab the founder of Ramesh hospitals, Dr Pothineni Ramesh Babu, who is on the run to avoid arrest following the fire at a Covid-19 care centre (CCC) being run by him at Swarna palace hotel, killing 10 patients and injuring several others on August 9.

The police say that his arrest is vital to get more information about Ramesh hospitals is admitting patients infected with Covid-19 and providing health care to them at the main hospital and at other branches and also at other CCCs accommodated in private hotels.

Police arrested three officials from Ramesh hospitals on Monday, who were produced before the magistrate who in turn sent them to 14 days judicial remand. They were shifted to the sub jail at Machilipatnam. Meanwhile, the management of Ramesh hospitals issued a statement stating that they had allotted their 30 bedded hospital located at Bandar Road totally to Covid-19 patients to provide treatment after getting permission from the Krishna district collector.

However, as they were getting requests from various sources to admit more number of Covid-19 patients to provide them treatment, they hired the Swarna palace hotel which had all the requisite facilities and converted it into a CCC with government permission.



Fire broke out at the cellar of a furniture shop complex at Dondaparthi in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

FIRE BREAKS OUT AT VIZAG KSR COMPLEX

V.K.L.GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 11

Due to a short circuit in the power supply, a major fire broke out in the city at KSR complex in the city late last night. However, no casualties were reported in the incident as it happened in the cellar of the complex and no one sleeping there at the time.

The short circuit occurred due to the poor maintenance and age-old wiring of the power supply.

Due to the short circuit, the

Rayalaseema lift project gets green nod

TS objects to project, Centre has asked AP to stop work on it; environment ministry gives it clean chit

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC
KURNOOL, AUG. 11

The Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (RLIS), caught in a controversy with Telangana state, has received a breather. The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change (MoEFCC) said that the prima facie requirement of prior en-

vironment clearance is not applicable for the project.

The issue has now gone to the National Green Tribunal for determining the rights of AP in pumping Krishna water from the 800 feet level of the Srisaillam reservoir instead of 854 feet to the RLIS.

Telangana state has moved the Supreme Court against the project, and Union Jal Shakti minister

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat last week asked AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy not to go ahead with the RLIS.

The minutes of the first meeting of the reconstituted EAC for river valley and hydroelectric projects, held on July 29 through video conference, observed that RLIS does not attract the provisions of the Notification of 2006

and hence does not require environmental clearance.

The committee said that as long as Andhra Pradesh restricts itself to drawing its allocated share of water, environmental impact of the availability of water on other users are not in its ambit.

Further, AP in order to ensure that only allocated water of 3 tmc ft per day is drawn, must instal pumps

● **THE COMMITTEE** said that as long as Andhra Pradesh restricts itself to drawing its allocated share of water, environmental impact of the availability of water on other users are not in its ambit.

capable of pumping only that quantity excluding the safety margins.

The committee noted

that the RLIS is not a new project and does not fall under any of the categories listed in the schedule of the Notification of 2006, if there is no variation in the project and if the power generation component is not involved.

The committee observed that RLIS comes under the clause of 'expansion and modernisation of existing project' as these activities

are listed in the schedule to the Notification.

Letters of the schemes to which the project will be feeding water have taken by the state government and a review of the environmental clearance conditions listed reveals that changing from gravity discharge to pumping should not be considered as change in scope of the project, the EAC said.

Long queue for virus tests



People in large numbers queue up to get tested for Covid-19 at Sanjeevini Bus which was set up at the Government ENT Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Hyd man made sanitiser with methanol that killed 16 in AP

PATHRI
RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 11

The Prakasam police cracked the mystery behind the death of 16 persons due to consumption of hand sanitisers and arrested 10 persons including a Hyderabad-based illegal manufacturer of 'Perfect Gold' hand sanitisers.

Five of the arrested were proprietors of medical shops who sold the sanitiser repeatedly to the same persons, knowing fully well that they were consuming it, at Kurichedu in Prakasam district. The victims mostly included beggars, workers and rickshaw-pullers.

The police authorities appointed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by Markapuram officer on special duty K. Chowdeswari to probe the incident along with the Special Investigation Bureau.

According to Prakasam SP Siddharth Kaushal, the SIT collected 69 bottles from different places and concluded that the victims had consumed eight brands of sanitisers and began tracking down the manufacturers.

The SIT grew suspicious of Perfect Gold sanitisers produced by Vandana Pharma and deputed two officers to Bengaluru and Hyderabad, based on the address on the labels, to

School dropout picked up tech from YouTube videos

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, AUG. 11

Prime accused in the hand sanitiser case, Sale Srinivas of Hyderabad, is a school dropout who after studying up to Class VI produced the sanitiser at Jeedimetla in Hyderabad by watching the process on YouTube, though he had little knowledge about chemicals.

The escalation in demand for hand sanitisers during the pandemic led Srinivas, who was working in a petrol bunk, to make and sell hand sanitisers at a cheap rate.

The Andhra Pradesh Special Investigation

Team officials found the supply chain and distribution track of Perfect Gold hand sanitiser manufactured by Srinivas in Hyderabad to Kurichedu where 16 persons consumed it and died last month. The SIT found that one Vimal Agarwal, a relative of Srinivas' associate Kesav Agarwal, sold 200 bottles to one Yasmin Delawala, who sells face masks at Basheerbagh in Hyderabad. He sold them to Kuvvarapu Vikram Dharma of Darsi of Prakasam district who used to buy masks from her.

Vikram sold the bottles to five medical shops at Kurichedu, Darsi and D-

onakonda. They were purchased by the 16 persons who were finding it difficult to purchase alcohol and lost their lives. During the course of investigation, the SIT officials examined more than 50 witnesses related to the case.

Prakasam superintendent of police Siddharth Kaushal, appreciated the SIT comprising Chowdeswary, officer on special duty, Markapur; K. Prakasha Rao, SDPO, Darsi; G. Nageswara Reddy, SDPO, Markapur; V. Sreeram, Podili inspector; M. D. Moin, Darsi inspector; and A. Anjanya Reddy, Addanki inspector.

check the units. The bottles did not have a batch number.

The address of the firm turned out to be fake, but the investigators traced a distributor at Prashasannagar in Hyderabad on the internet. When grilled, the distributor said that one Sale Srinivas of Subhashnagar in Jeedimetla was supplying him the sanitisers. The SIT found large stocks of sanitisers in the premises of the distributor.

The team took Srinivas, who belongs to Siddapuram of Vikarabad district, into

custody. He does not have a licence from the drugs administration nor permission from the government to set up the manufacturing unit at Jeedimetla with the support of his elder brother Sivakumar.

Srinivas took the help of chemical suppliers Mohammed Dawood and Mohammed Hazi Sab of Balanagar, Hyderabad, to produce the sanitisers. They advised him to use the cheaper methanol instead of ethanol for higher profits. While methanol costs ₹30 to ₹35 per litre, ethanol is

priced at ₹180 to ₹200. Srinivas was found selling the product with a fake GST number. Though commercial tax officers in Hyderabad caught him twice, they reportedly let him off after collecting bribes.

Initially, Srinivas started selling sanitisers in an autorickshaw and one Kesav Agarwal, who was introduced to him, took up distribution of the product since the profits are very high. Police said Kesav knew that Srinivas was using dangerous methanol to make the sanitiser.

Jagan seeks Modi's help to boost medical infra

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy dwelling about the measures initiated by the government to contain Covid-19 stated that they had conducted an overwhelming 25 lakh Corona tests till date.

Participating in the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference on Tuesday, Jagan Mohan Reddy sought the cooperation of the Union Government in its efforts to boost medical facilities in the State. He pointed out that unlike the neighbouring states, Andhra Pradesh neither had any metropolitan areas nor did it boast of hospitals with huge infrastruc-

ture. This could be improved substantially if the Centre extends assistance, he said.

The CM assured to keep the Covid mortality rate low with aggressive testing, contact tracing besides timely treatment, particularly if the Centre helps in ramping up medical infrastructure.

He explained, "The State could maintain a low-mortality rate of 0.89 percent as we have been adopting the strategy of aggressive testing in containment clusters, identifying positive cases and providing instant treatment besides removing the social stigma attached to patients. We are spreading awareness with the involvement of over two lakh people in various capacities."

Jagan Mohan Reddy said, "So far we have conducted 25, 34, 304 tests of which 2.35 lakh were positive. Tests per million in our State have logged 47, 459. When the first case was reported in March, we had no virology lab and had to send the samples to Pune and from that stage we have progressively improved infrastructure and now all the 13 districts have testing labs and hospitals for Covid and they are self-reliant. Together with the Rapid Antigen tests, the number of tests has crossed the 70 000-mark and the average is at 60,000 tests per day. Samples are also being taken through 100 mobile labs in at least 1500 areas and we could penetrate into the remote areas."



EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice

e-tender is invited on Behalf of the President of India for the under mentioned work:- **Sl. No. 1. e-Tender No.** ECR-CAO-C-S-ETEN-14-20-21. **Name of work:** Construction of 5 nos Subway in lieu of existing level crossing no 24/C, 26/C, 27/C, 28/B & 29/C in between Gaya - Son Nagar section of Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Division. **Approx cost of the work in (Rs.):** 56,14,89,980.07 **Cost of tender form in (Rs.):** 25,000.00 **Earnest money in (Rs.):** 29,57,500.00 **Period of work completion:** 15 (Fifteen) Months. **Date and time for closing of tender:** 31.08.2020 at 15.30 hrs. Any e-tenders which is sent by Post/Courier/Fax or by hand will not be accepted. All such manual submission of tender even if it is on firm's letter pad or received in time will not be accepted. The above e-tender document alongwith full information is available on website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. **Note:** In case of any discrepancies found in tender notice, English version will be final. Tenderers are requested to visit the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> atleast 15 days before last date of closing, for latest corrigendum/ corrections etc in connection with this e-tender. Any change/addendum/ corrigendum will be published on IREPS website only.

CAO/Con/South
East Central Railway, MHX, Patna
PR/521/CON/ENGG/T/20-21/44

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice

e-tender Notice No. 21 of 2020-21 (Open)-Engg/DDU On line (through e-tendering) for the following work is invited by DRM/Engg/DDU for and on behalf of the President of India from experienced and financially as well as technically sound contractors including those enlisted with the Railway, CPWD, BSNL, MES, PWD and other public sector undertakings. **Tender No.19-DDU-SRDEN-II-20-21 (i) Name of work with its location:** Provision of wharf on abgeela siding at Manpur (MPO) station under ADEN/Gaya. **(ii) Approx. cost of the work:** ₹ 13798122.77 **(iii) Earnest Money:** ₹ 219000.00 **Tender No.20-DDU-SRDEN-II-20-21 (i) Name of work with its location:** Provision of High level platform, surface, provision of PF Shed, water booth and extension of FOB at MPO station under ADEN/Gaya. **(ii) Approx. cost of the work:** ₹ 37404787.28 **(iii) Earnest Money:** ₹ 337000.00 **Tender No.21-DDU-SRDEN-II-20-21 (i) Name of work with its location:** Strengthening of Bridge between Km 516 to 588, JHN to SSG under ADEN/DOS **(ii) Approx. cost of the work:** ₹ 674671.10 **(iii) Earnest Money:** ₹ 134900.00 • **Date & time for submission of e-tender:** 31.08.2020, Up-to 12:00 hrs. • **Website particulars of e-tendering:** www.ireps.gov.in **Divisional Railway Manager East Central Railway, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay PR/517/DDU/ENGG/T/20-21/56**

Department of Atomic Energy

Hyderabad Regional Purchase Unit

Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice

Against NIT No.: **DPS/HRPU/NFC/PT/TPT/CAP/11060**
Last Date for Submission of Online Bid is extended upto **18/08/2020 up to 2.00 PM.**
Visit <https://etenders.dpsdae.gov.in> for details.
[DPS/HRPU/NFC/1920/41C4]

Department of Atomic Energy

Hyderabad Regional Purchase Unit

Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice

Against NIT No.: **DPS/HRPU/NFC/PT/TPT/MIA/2298** (a) Last date for submission of online pre-bid queries: **17/08/2020 upto 2:00 PM** (b) Last Date for Submission of Online Bid is extended upto **07/09/2020 up to 2.00 PM.**
Visit <https://etenders.dpsdae.gov.in> for details.
[DPS/HRPU/NFC/2021/41C5]

COIR BOARD

सूक्ष्म, लघु और मध्यम उद्यम बोर्ड, भारत सरकार
Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of India
COIR BOARD
Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India, M.G.Road, Kochi - 682 016

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Inviting applications for setting up of Coir Pith and coir products clusters under the Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)

Secretary, Coir Board, Coir House, M.G.Road, Kochi-682016 invites applications for setting up of Coir and Coir Pith Clusters under the Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) from the NGOs, Institutions of the Central & State Governments and Semi-Govt. Institutions, Field Functionaries of State and Central Government, Panchayatraj Institutions etc. with suitable expertise to undertake cluster development.

The details of scheme guidelines, application format and other details may be downloaded from the website www.coirboard.gov.in, http://coirboard.gov.in/?page_id=12507.

The filled in application complete in all respect along with supporting documents should reach to Secretary, Coir Board, Coir House, M.G.Road, Cochin-682016 or to the office of respective Regional Offices/Sub Regional Offices of the Board on or before 15th September 2020.
http://coirboard.gov.in/?page_id=276.

For ToR and further details of the scheme visit our web site www.coirboard.gov.in

07.08.2020 Sd/-Secretary
davp 25131/11/0003/2021

कार्यालय संयुक्त संचालक एवं अधीक्षक

डॉ. भीमराव अम्बेडकर स्मृति चिकित्सालय, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

क्रमांक/डॉ. भी. अ. चि./क्रय 12748 रायपुर दिनांक 07.08.2020

"ई-प्रोक्यूरमेंट सिस्टम निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना"

डॉ. भीमराव अम्बेडकर स्मृति चिकित्सालय रायपुर के लिए **NON EDL** औषधियाँ एवं सामग्रियाँ क्रय करने हेतु ऑन लाइन निविदा क्रमांक 66729 आमंत्रित की गई है। इसका विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> पर सिस्टम टेण्डर क्रमांक 66729 में देखा जा सकता है।

Bid Start Date	2020-08-07 17:30:00
Last Date & time of submission of Tender Form through Online at Website https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in	2020-08-25 12:00:00
Physical FDR submission End Date	2020-08-25 12:30:00
Date & time of Prequalification/ Technical bid opening	2020-08-25 13:00:00

संयुक्त संचालक एवं अधीक्षक
डॉ. भीमराव अम्बेडकर स्मृति चिकित्सालय
रायपुर (छ.ग.)

G-82889/1

DECCAN Chronicle

12 AUGUST 2020

Truce in Raj Cong, but rift still needs solution

The defusing of the rebellion within the Rajasthan Congress after former deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot met Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in New Delhi Monday, days ahead of Friday's Assembly session, is welcome news for the party, which feared the loss of yet another state government due to the BJP's mischief. But while the first signs of a possible rapprochement are evident, the rift between Mr Pilot and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot is far from over, and the contours of a peace deal still need to be worked out, for which Congress president Sonia Gandhi has set up a three-member committee. Mr Pilot is said to have demanded he be reinstated as state party chief and made CM in the last year of the current government's term. That is extremely unlikely, given that a large majority of MLAs want Mr Gehlot as CM. The Chief Minister, in turn, who is clearly not happy at these developments, has advised the Congress high command to accommodate Mr Pilot in a Central role in New Delhi. It was suggested he be made an AICC general secretary, but it doesn't seem this will be acceptable to Mr Pilot.

Mr Gehlot, who had an abrasive relationship with his former deputy all through their government's first 18 months, said Tuesday he would listen to the grievances of all party MLAs, including the rebels, and try to address them, but was opaque about whether he would try to repair ties with Mr Pilot, against whom he had used extremely harsh language in the past few weeks, calling him a "*nikamma*", among other things. And while the younger leader can be faulted for much of the friction between the two, the senior leader too should share some of the blame. Political differences, especially in the same party, cannot be resolved by bringing in the police. That said, the CM may have been right to suspect the BJP of plotting with some Congress leaders to bring down his government, but that needed to be handled politically.

For the BJP, the developments in Rajasthan are a wake-up call — that there are limits to its ability to bring down elected governments and come to power through the backdoor. After its successful dislodging of the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh earlier this year, with the help of another Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, and several other such instances in the past, the saffron party had hoped for a repeat in Rajasthan, cashing in on the rebellion by Sachin Pilot (who had always insisted, though, that he had no plans to join the BJP). But Mr Pilot, who initially claimed that 30 Congress MLAs were backing him, finally saw he had no more than 18 legislators in his camp, which was insufficient to dislodge the Gehlot government. State BJP leader and Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who was allegedly caught on tape while conspiring to wean away MLAs, ended up with egg all over his face. The role played by Rajasthan's Governor Kalraj Mishra in the whole affair — including impeding the CM's bid to hold an Assembly session to prove his majority — also clearly shows that the BJP has not given up trying to misuse the Raj Bhavans to further its political ends. The Congress and other Opposition-led state governments need to watch out in the months ahead.

How green is this valley!

With the deadline of India's first commercial coal auction affixed on September 29, the Narendra Modi government is once again well on the path of destroying its own ecological riches and jeopardising its carbon credits. The auction initially put on sale 18 coal blocks spread over Hasdeo Arand's 4.2 lakh acres in Chhattisgarh. Among bidders are the usual suspects — the Adani Group, despite stray contrarian assurances. It is as if a plutocratic insurgency is all set to stamp out the ancient forests, at incalculable human, social and environmental costs. India is the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

Located in the valley of a Mahanadi tributary, Hasdeo forest sits on an estimated five billion tonnes of coal. It is also home to 86 species of trees, 51 species of medicinal plants, 34 species of mammals, 14 species of reptiles, 111 species of birds and 29 fish species. Already, mining operations are on in two coal blocks — Parsa East and Kete Basan, and Chotia — since ministry approval in 2011. Proposals concerning four other blocks are being considered.

The mining has hurt livelihoods of the local population — consisting chiefly of Gondes who subsist on collection and sale of forest produce. That has depleted drastically. Processing of dirty coal, the only kind available here, causes severe air and water pollution, in the absence of regulation, leading to climate and health hazards, including lung cancer. The people now face the nightmare of displacement en masse, in lieu of a meagre, one-time compensation. The Lemru elephant reserve coming up on a small, unmined area of the forest — there have been 325 human and 70 pachyderm deaths due to conflict in the last five years — will cause more displacement. The reserve itself defeats its own purpose — it is to be located safely away from the proposed mines and will act as a veritable prison for the animals. In its eagerness to usher in private investment, the Centre has kept the revenue share of the state governments dramatically low. This was perhaps one reason why at least four states — West Bengal, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh — opposed the auction. Five coal blocks that belong to Hasdeo forest have been dropped from the auction, thanks to the effort of the Chhattisgarh government. It is a short breather.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

ADITYA SINHA
Editor

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Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

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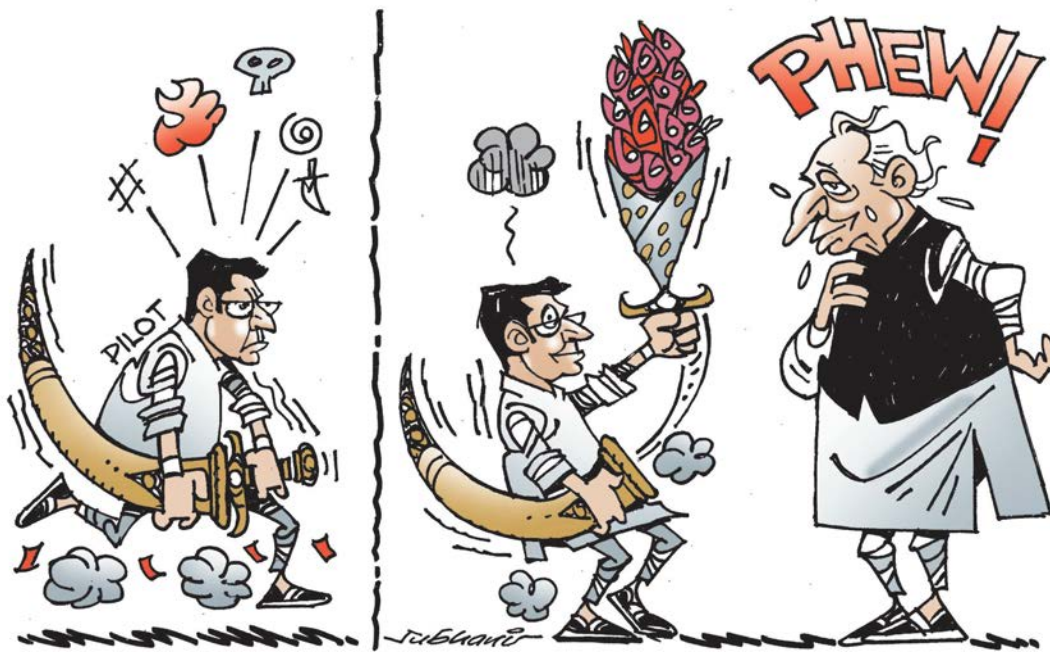
Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycad (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014

Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax : 0495 4019 018

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

Subhani



Afghans face turmoil: Back to a dark future



N.V. Subramanian

Afghanistan is becoming the Balkans of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and there is almost no one of Otto von Bismarck's sagacity and vision to prevent the place from blowing up and damaging the neighbourhood. April 2021 is the last month of the American and allied troops' occupation of Afghanistan and there is little likelihood of a change of plans regardless of whether Donald Trump or Joe Biden wins the US presidential elections in November.

Countries sharing a border with Afghanistan, which include the Central Asian states, Iran, Pakistan and China, have an equal stake in keeping the situation from blowing up, as do countries and big powers that don't like the United States, Russia, India, Turkey and the Arab nations. Afghanistan has never known unbroken central rule as it is usually defined, and it doesn't have a strong centralising army, like another xenophobic state, Myanmar. Tribes and warlords determine the power structure on the ground and this phenomenon often defies the Islamic impulses.

Afghanistan has an excess of local and foreign actors compounding its misery. Its chief local and foreign actors, respectively, are the Taliban and the United States. Afghanistan is America's longest war and next year will be its inglorious 20th anniversary. Although Washington's objectives of its post-9/11 intervention were met with the dislodgement of the Taliban government and the ouster of Al Qaeda from all power structures, the US returned from the distraction of the Iraq War with new nation-building pledges for Afghanistan, in which India has so far spent \$3 billion. The objectives of foreign inter-

ventions amended and enlarged mid-course usually end in stalemate.

The situation with the principal actor opposed to the United States, the Taliban, is equally fraught and troublesome. Although it controls 20 per cent of Afghanistan, contests another 50 per cent with the international coalition and Afghan forces, twice has held populous Kunduz city in the north, and is close to encircling six to eight other cities whose road links it can sever at will, its future still depends on the gains from the February 2020 peace agreement with the US.

The Taliban's hardliners were opposed to the peace deal, which binds it and allies like Al Qaeda, the semi-autonomous anti-India, pro-Pakistan Haqqani Taliban of Sirajuddin Haqqani, etc, from attacking the US and its allies. One of the biggest beneficiaries of disenchantment in the Taliban is the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), originally constituted from leaders of the Pakistan Taliban facing Pakistan Army persecution. In the months leading up to the peace deal, the US and Afghan forces on one side and Taliban on the other decimated IS(K), claiming no collusion. Since the Taliban must sustain violence against the US and Afghan forces and others generally considered "outsiders" to preserve its raison d'être, it has, so to speak, outsourced bloodletting and mayhem to IS(K), with the Haqqani Taliban acting as intermediary. The Jalalabad jailbreak on August 3, while attributed to IS(K), benefited Taliban inmates the most. IS(K) attacks on a Kabul gurdwara and a maternity ward were particularly gruesome but were, however, not meant to help the Taliban cause entirely. IS(K) mirrors its mother organisation, Islamic State of Iraq and Levant,

by making extreme violence an end in itself to gain influence, strength and resources. This has proved a magnet for disenchanted Taliban hardliners. The key test ahead is if the United States leaves a residual counter-terrorism force of upto 5,000 after the April 2021 withdrawal. A sort of guarantee for the peace deal, it can also increase the Taliban's problems with its hardliners to the benefit of IS(K).

Between the Taliban and the IS(K), most states affected by Afghanistan's instabilities prefer the Taliban, which is an insurgent movement with no revolutionary ambitions abroad. These grudging supporters include the leading powers, the US, Russia, China, the Central Asian Republics, Iran, Pakistan, etc. Although Indian agencies have contacts with the Taliban through Iran, it doesn't translate to meaningful political traction, this being scuppered by Pakistan's closeness to the insurgent outfit, and the Taliban's own supportive role in the IC-814 hijack. The Haqqani Taliban through its violent attack on Indian interests and assets in Afghanistan guided by Pakistan's ISI also makes accommodation with the Taliban remote for now.

On the other hand, India's support of the Afghan government and its training of Afghan defence forces makes it anathema to the Taliban. Nevertheless, the IS(K) represents a bigger challenge, with recruits from India and with a chapter dedicated to terrorism in India. Once the US departs, India's non-military investments of \$3 billion in Afghanistan will go up in smoke and India's security interests will come under severe

strain. It is unlikely that the isolated civilian government with a depleted military can withstand Taliban pressure for long. If this is accompanied by an ascendancy of Pakistan, it can provide no comfort to New Delhi. Between a rock and a hard place is what confronts India in Afghanistan.

The situation of other states is, however, only slightly better. The United States has to keep an eagle eye on Afghanistan in the foreseeable future with the possibility of repeat military deployments which are politically controversial. Russia, China and Iran have to tolerate a hardline Taliban in their backyard because the alternative of IS(K) is unacceptable. Having spearheaded the Islamic "revolution" in the 1990s, the Taliban cannot go soft and still hope to retain its radical base which is ever ready to switch to the IS(K). The last of its hardcore 400 fighters in Afghan government captivity are to be released after US threats of aid cuts and this only makes the situation more precarious.

All of Afghanistan's neighbours and near-neighbours have deepened partnerships with one another to manage the new flux after the US withdrawal, except for India whose differences with Pakistan over Kashmir and now China on the border question stand in the way. Once a conduit for humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and quiet manoeuvres with the Taliban, Iran has also moved away over differences over compliances with US sanctions and internal issues related to Muslims and Kashmir. Busy retrenching, the US has nothing to offer except vague promises of protecting Indian interests. The only big player left is Russia, with which India has a defence suppliers' relationship after the United States displaced it as the most valued political partner. All at once, history is being turned back 20 years and the prospects are dark.

The writer is an analyst and journalist based in New Delhi

LETTERS

RAJESH PILOT

Rajasthan rebel Congress leader Sachin Pilot's irresponsible behaviour has disrupted governance at this hour of the pandemic. Due to him, MLAs were running from one state to another seeking asylum. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also had no alternative than to protect the MLAs supporting him, thus throwing the administration to the winds. A rule must be enacted banning such defectors from being MP or an MLA for life.

T.M. Uday Shankar
Hyderabad

MANDIRS, MASJIDS

There are a lot of mandirs in every nook and corner of India and there are lot of masjids too (*Will Ram Raja lead to a more tolerant India?*, DC, Aug. 10). It would have been better if the land given for a Ram mandir and a masjid have been used to make a well-equipped 'Covid-19 Super Speciality Hospital' where people of all faiths use it along with Hindus and Muslims. God is rich and doesn't need silver or gold bricks.

Dr Mohammed Abdul Mujeeb Siddiqui
Hyderabad

HOSPITAL FIRE

This is very unfortunate that 10 Covid-19 patients died because of fire at the Swarna Palace Hotel Covid care centre which occurred early in the morning on Sunday at Vijayawada (*10 Covid patients housed in Vijayawada hotel die in fire*, DC, Aug. 10). I suggest that all state governments while housing Covid-19 patients in hotel or other facilities should thoroughly inspect the place and ensure everything is in order so that innocent lives are not lost.

Dr Shankar Chatterjee
Hyderabad

More powers for Govt. to fix drug prices

NEW DELHI, Aug. 11 Dr. Triguna Sen, Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, told Parliament today that the Government was assuming "further powers" to fix the prices of drugs.

Making a statement on the working of the Drug Price Control

Order, the Minister assured the House that "the Government will not hesitate to exercise these powers to the fullest extent necessary, though certainly with discretion and in overall public interest."

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Ayodhya glory will fade amid Covid tension before long

Nilofar Suhrawardy



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has certainly gone overboard in making a grand show of his presence at Ayodhya. He has proved to be a master strategist, ahead of seniors in his own political camp and, of course, his political rivals. Clearly, he can claim to have achieved what apparently was not visualised and perhaps not even seriously considered by others. True, around a year ago, the apex court's verdict regarding this controversial issue had set the clock ticking speedily in this direction. Apprehension prevailed in certain quarters about the verdict and subsequent developments, including the latest ceremonies, leading to communal tension. Thankfully, Indians at large adopted a mature and secular approach then as well as now (August 5), with there being no report about any major communal disturbance from any part of the country.

And this certainly proves that the Ayodhya-issue can no longer be viewed as a communal bomb that it once seemed to be. Against this back-

drop, what can Mr Modi expect to gain by the grand "religious" show displayed at Ayodhya on August 5? Of course, constitutionally, he has as much a right to be as religious he wants to be. After all, India is a multi-religious, secular country. Besides, most politicians do indulge in display of their religious as well as secular images for political gains. Almost all key leaders, including Mr Modi, flaunt their "secularism" by sending a token symbol to Ajmer Shareef every year. During electoral season, substantial importance is given by most to gain media coverage of their visiting temples and so forth. Well, this is India.

Mr Modi's Ayodhya-show cannot but be viewed as a grand step taken by him in style, to enhance his image, particularly his "religious" credentials in the eyes of Indian voters. Considering that it has been taken at a time when a vicious virus is sending distress signals from all directions, Mr Modi is probably hopeful that this Ayodhya-move will be of some help in distracting the people's attention. Will it? This may be

viewed as a million dollar question.

The nature of comments coming from even his key political rivals suggests that they cannot afford to criticise his Ayodhya-show. This may be viewed as a political "victory" for Mr Modi. There is nothing wrong with politicians of various parties expressing appreciation for the Ayodhya Ram temple ceremony.

Indians have come a long way from December 6, 1992, when communal violence engulfed practically the entire country following the demolition of Babri Masjid, for construction of the Ram temple. Nevertheless, there lurks a fear in certain sections, whether the underlying motive of the ruling party and its leaders is to pay greater importance to their Hindutva-agenda than to the country's Constitution. It is hoped that this is not the case and substantial attention is paid not to provoke communal violence in name of religion, constitutionally.

Mr Modi is apparently well aware that he cannot afford to openly use the communal card for political gains. It is not without reason that

he donned a secular mask when he first chose to come on the national stage by contesting the 2014 parliamentary elections. Also, each time communal frenzy targeting minorities of some nature, particularly Muslims, hits headlines, protests and demonstrations against it do not take long to surface. A greater number of secular non-Muslims (largely Hindus) participate in these demonstrations than Muslims. This suggests that the question of his Ayodhya-show being viewed communally by people in general is as good as non-existent. Even if this were not a Covid year, the prospects of people adding communal fervour to the Ayodhya-show would probably not have prevailed.

It is possible that Mr Modi has his eye on gaining votes in the Hindi belt with the Bihar Assembly election round the corner. He has his right to make political use of religious shows, if he wants to, as long as communal violence and hatred are not provoked. In recent years, some noise has been made about certain leaders hoping for polarisation of vote banks

along religious lines. Perhaps, a motive of the Ayodhya-show is this. It may be, but with Hindus as well as Muslims divided into numerous groups, castes, sub-castes and also regional, the question of there being any Hindu or Muslim vote-bank is as good as non-existent.

So Mr Modi's Ayodhya move may certainly be viewed as a master card as it has helped him gain substantially a positive image that had suffered in recent days because of crises caused by the coronavirus. He hopes to dominate headlines for some time. It cannot be ignored that the virus has left Indians a little too tense to remain distracted by his Ayodhya show for long. Nevertheless, he has once again proved to be a master strategist who knows how to steal a march on his rivals in the political race. He has, for the moment, all the reason to talk about his "56-inch" chest and feel proud!

The writer is a journalist with specialisation in communication studies and nuclear diplomacy. She is also the author of several books.

IN BRIEF

Ban on flights to Kolkata extended

Kolkata: Suspension of pas-senger flights to Kolkata from six metros with high prevalence of Covid-19 cases has been extended till August 31, a senior government official said on Tuesday. Earlier, the temporary restriction on the arrival of flights to Kolkata airport from Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Nagpur and Ahmedabad was extended till August 15, amid the surge in Coronavirus cases in the state.

MAHA WATER MINISTER JOINS SHIV SENA

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, AUG. 11

In a major political move, Maharashtra's soil and water conservation minister Shankarrao Gadakh joined the ruling Shiv Sena on Tuesday.

He was welcomed by Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray at the latter's residence Matoshree. Shiv Sena secretary Milind Narvekar, who played a major role in convincing Gadakh to join the party, was also present on the occasion.

"Shiv Sena is the party that works for the farmers and poor people. I have decided to join Sena due to the loyalty and faith towards CM Uddhav Thackeray. Our ideology also matches with that of the party," said Gadakh.

Thackeray, after coming to power, has taken several good decisions for farmers, entrepreneurs, jobless youths and various other sectors. Even during the difficult times of coronavirus crisis, he is leading the state with aplomb, he added.

The entry of Gadakh (50), two-time MLA, is likely to strengthen the Sena into the politically important Ahmednagar district in the state.

He is expected to fill the party's leadership vacuum in the district created by the death of senior Sena leader and former minister Anil Rathod last week.

With his entry, the Shiv Sena's strength has increased to 57 in the 288-member Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.

Gadakh is an independent MLA from Nevasa in Ahmednagar district and the first to support Sena after the 2019 Vidhan Sabha polls. He became a minister in the state cabinet from the Sena's quota. He was also made the guardian minister of Osmanabad district.

The Gadakh family is known as political heavyweights in Ahmednagar district. Shankarrao's father Yashwantrao was a three-time MP of Congress representing Ahmednagar constituency.

UP WOMAN DIES IN MISHAP, KIN CRY HARASSMENT

Bulandshahr (UP), Aug 11: A 20-year-old student from Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar, who was studying in a US college, died in a road crash here, with her family claiming the accident happened as some motorcycle-borne men were allegedly following her two-wheeler and harassing her, officials said Tuesday.

The incident took place in Aurangabad area here on Monday when Sudiksha Bhati was riding pillion on a motorcycle with her younger brother, a minor, they said.

The two were en route to their maternal uncle's home in Khanpur area here from their house at Deri Scanar village in Gautam Buddh Nagar's Dadri tehsil, the officials said.

The eldest among six siblings, she had an envious academic record. She won a ₹3.8-crore scholarship from Babson College, Massachusetts (US), and was pursuing a graduation course in entrepreneurship. Her father runs a tea shop. Her family members said she had come to India due to the pandemic and was scheduled to go to the US on August 20. They also alleged that while going to her maternal uncle on Monday, she was being harassed by the unidentified persons during the ride which led to the accident, prompting Bulandshahr administration to order a probe.

Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Atul Kumar Srivastava said, "She suffered injuries in the crash and was taken to a community health centre but she died," he said.

ILLEGAL FISH TRADE ACROSS BORDER WITH B'DESH TO FORE

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, AUG. 11

After smuggling of cattle, gold and drugs, a new trend of illegal trade of fish across the India-Bangladesh border has been unearthed by the Border Security Force (BSF) in West Bengal in the past one week.

On Monday, the BSF jawans of 112 Battalion at border outpost Tarali in North 24 Parganas under Sector Kolkata spotted a gang of eight men carrying some plastic drums and approaching towards the Indian side from Bangladesh. BSF (South Bengal Frontier) stated on Tuesday.

When the BSF team asked them to stop, the smugglers fled by taking the advantage of jute field.

However, they left four drums behind.

The drums were filled with Singi fish larvae worth ₹7.20 lakh, the BSF added.

The seized consignment was later handed over to the Customs at Tentulia.

It may be recalled that earlier on August 5, the Border Security Force caught a man for smuggling 126 kgs of Hilsa fish worth ₹11.26 lakh in a truck during a routine vehicle checking at integrated check post in Petrapole in North 24 Parganas.

As many as nine white bags containing the fish were found in the cabin of the truck which was coming from Bangladesh without any Customs clearance.

While the truck was seized, Biplab Shil (35), the truck driver, and consignment were handed over to the police.

Originally from Dinabandhu Nagar in Bongaon of the district he went to Bangladesh on Aug. 4, driving his truck for exports.

While returning, he received the consignment from a Bangladeshi national, Miraj Chaudhary, who asked him to deliver it Khokan, a guard in Lucky Truck parking Naraharipur in Bongaon, in exchange of ₹5,000.

6 Manipur Cong MLAs give up Assembly membership

Imphal, Aug. 11: Six Congress MLAs in Manipur have submitted their resignation from the Legislative Assembly and also quit the party on Tuesday.

The six legislators who had handed over resignation letters to Speaker Yumnam Khemchand Singh the previous night, formally informed the Congress office here about leaving the party.

"Six Congress MLAs of Manipur have submitted their resignation letters to the Congress office," said Hareshwar Goshwami, General Secretary, Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee.

The six are among the eight Congress legislators who had defied a party whip on Monday and skipped the one-day session of the Assembly, in which the BJP-led N. Biren Singh government had comfortably won the confidence vote.

Those giving up their Assembly membership as

On guard



An Indian Army's woman soldier patrol the Sadhna Pass in Kupwara district. For the first time, women soldiers have been deployed along the LoC in order to keep a check on weapons and drug smuggling in the area. — PTI

Sena demands CBI probe in Loya, Munde death cases

BJP says Sushant case not linked to Justice Loya and Munde cases

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 11

Fuming over the Centre's decision to hand over the Sushant Singh Rajput death case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Shiv Sena has demanded that the deaths of BJP leader Gopinath Munde and justice B.H. Loya should also be investigated by the central agency.

Former Union minister and Sena leader Arvind Sawant said, "Even we demand CBI inquiry into the death of Gopinath Munde and Justice Loya. Let their truth come out in these cases."

"Demand for CBI inquiry is not made very often. It's not right to conduct a probe just because someone has demanded it. There is some procedure,

● **FOUL PLAY** was suspected in the death of Loya, who was hearing the Sohrabuddin fake encounter case. Munde had died in a road accident, but a hacker said he was murdered.

which needs to be followed for carrying out a CBI probe. But an attempt is being made to undermine the Constitution, which is based on the federal structure of governance," he said.

Mumbai police was investigating Sushant Singh's death case impartially. But the decision to hand over the case to CBI is an attempt to demoralise them, Sawant added.

Foul play was suspected in the death of Loya, who was hearing the

Sohrabuddin Sheikh fake encounter case.

Munde had died in a road accident in 2014, but a US hacker claimed he was murdered as he was aware of EVM hacking.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrakant Patil has slammed the Shiv Sena saying it's demand of a CBI probe into the deaths of Munde and Loya was due to its confused state.

"There is no connection between the Sushant Singh's case and these two deaths. There is no point in again raking up the Justice Loya issue, which is already over. The entire world knows that Munde had died in a road accident," he added.

Rajput, 34, was found dead in his apartment in Bandra on June 14.

SC reserves order on Rhea's petition

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

The Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved order on whether Mumbai police or the Central Bureau of Investigation will probe the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

The court was hearing a plea by Rhea Chakraborty seeking transfer of investigation in the FIR lodged in Patna by Rajput's father to Mumbai Police.

However, now the investigation in Patna FIR has been taken over by the CBI. Justice Hrishikesh

Roy reserving the order gave the Centre, Maharashtra and Bihar governments, Rhea Chakraborty, late actor's father Krishna Kishore Singh time till August 13 to file written note on their submissions.

The hearing that lasted for over two hours witnessed Mumbai Police raising the issue of jurisdiction, Bihar and K.K. Singh alleging bias against Mumbai Police and Centre contending that there is a strong case for an independent probe by a central agency.

Landslides highlight pathetic living conditions of plantation workers

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG.11

The landslide in Pettimudi Rajamala in Idukki district of Kerala on August 7 which has so far claimed 51 lives, has brought into sharp focus the pathetic and pitiable living conditions of plantation workers.

The cluster houses (layams) in which most plantation workers live are 80 to 90 years old. In other words, these dwelling units are as old as the tea estates in the area.

As many as 30 rooms of the residential cluster or layams of tea estate workers were buried under the debris following the landslide on Friday. Each building comprises ten dwelling units and each unit has a room, a kitchen and work area.

But these dwelling units are in a deplorable condition.

Though it sounds okay,

● **AS MANY** as 30 rooms of the residential cluster or layams of tea estate workers were buried under the debris following the landslide.

● **THE CLUSTER** houses (layams) in which most plantation workers live are 80 to 90 years old.

● **THE ESTATE** owners and companies responsible for maintenance, rarely carry out repair works in the dwelling units.

there's nothing good about these layams. Most residential units are nearly 80 to 90 years old (as old as the estates themselves) and obviously in extremely deplorable conditions.

The estate owners and companies responsible for maintenance, rarely carry out such repair works in the dwelling units.

These workers have been pleading with successive

governments and estate owners to construct new structures replacing the 80-90 year old dilapidated buildings.

Last year the Kerala government announced a special housing scheme for plantation workers under which each family owning land would get ₹4 lakh and apartments would be constructed for workers who do not own land.

Many believe that the scheme which has been included in the government's flagship housing programme – The Life Mission – if implemented in right earnest would ensure safe and livable houses for the workers.

Of the 70,000 plantation workers in Kerala, Idukki district where the tragedy occurred, alone accounts for 50,000 workers. Majority of the workers (more than 60 per cent) belong to the SC/ST category who are landless and homeless.

A recent survey by the

HC SEEKS MAHA GOVT'S REPLY ON PAROLE FOR SAIBABA

Nagpur, Aug. 11: The Nagpur bench of Bombay High Court on Tuesday sought Maharashtra government's response to a petition filed by Delhi University's former professor G.N. Saibaba for emergency parole to attend the post funeral rituals of his late mother in Hyderabad.

Saibaba, who is serving life sentence in the Nagpur Central Prison for links with Maoists, lost his 74-year-old ailing mother on August 1, even as his lawyers were seeking to arrange a video conference between the two.

Last week, the prison authorities rejected Saibaba's application for parole to attend the last rites of his mother.

He then approached the high court through his advocate Mihir Desai, seeking to be released on emergency parole so that he could go to Hyderabad and attend the post funeral rituals of his mother.

On Tuesday, special public prosecutor P.K. Sathianathan sought time from the court to respond to the plea.

A division bench of Justices A.S. Chandurkar and A.B. Borkar issued a notice to the state government and directed it to respond to the plea by August 18.

Saibaba earlier also sought parole from the prison authorities to meet his mother, who was suffering from cancer, but it was rejected.

The former professor, 51, who is wheelchair-bound with over 90 per cent physical disabilities, had also filed a bail plea before the high court's Nagpur bench on the ground that his mother was unwell and his own health was deteriorating.

The high court rejected the bail plea on July 28.

In March 2017, a sessions court in Gadchiroli district convicted Saibaba and four others, including a journalist and a student of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, for alleged Maoist links and indulging in activities amounting to "waging war against the country". — PTI

labour department had pointed out that as many as 32,591 workers in Kerala were homeless as well as landless. Clearly the scheme is crucial for these workers.

Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala who visited the mishap site had stated that the dwelling units were in bad condition and needed to be replaced with strong structure immediately.

The low daily wages of the plantation workers is another problem that needs to be sorted out on priority. At present the daily wages of tea plantation workers is ₹351 which is much less than the prevailing daily wages of ₹600 in Kerala. However, the wages are higher compared to West Bengal and Assam where the workers get ₹150 to ₹160 daily.

Many believe that it's high time the government resolved these issues on priority. Upper House in Assam. It also recommended Inner Line Permit for Assam besides 80 to 100 reservations for locals in group C & D category jobs of central government in the state.

When asked if there will be any legal implication for making the report public, senior advocate Dutta said that it will not have any repercussions. The Union home ministry had in January last year formed the committee.

SHORT TAKES

RENOWNED URDU
POET RAHAT
INDORI NO MORE

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
with agency inputs
BHOPAL, AUG. 11

Noted Urdu poet and Bollywood lyricist Rahat Indori who used to leave his audience in splits with his humorous but biting couplets, died of cardiac arrest in a hospital in Indore on Tuesday. He was 70. He was admitted to Aurobind Hospital in Indore on Sunday after testing positive for Coronavirus.

"He suffered massive cardiac arrest on Tuesday and could not be saved. He was also suffering from pneumonia, diabetes and high blood pressure. He also suffered damages to his lungs", hospital director Vinod Bhandari said.

Indori, who had retired as professor of Urdu literature in Ahilya University in Indore a decade ago, was also a painter.

He had penned many Bollywood songs. With a 50-year career in poetry, Indori was known for the lyrics of songs like "M Bole toh..." from *Munnabhai MBBS* (2003), *Chori Chori Jab Nazrein Mili...* from *Kareeb* (1998), *Koi jaye to le aye...* from *Ghatak* (1996), and *Neend Churai Meri...* from *Ishq* (1997). Earlier this year, his poem *Bulati hai magar jane ka nahi...* went viral on social media, rendering him a sensation among the youth.

Indori did his schooling from Nutan School in Indore and his graduation from Islamia Karimia College Indore.

He passed his MA exam in Urdu literature from Barkatullah University, Bhopal in 1975 and was awarded a PhD in Urdu literature from the Bhoj University in 1985 for his thesis titled 'Urdu Main Mushaira'.

While teaching Urdu literature at IK College, he also became busy with *mushairas* and started receiving invitations from all over India and abroad. He had huge followers across India. He used to sway his audience with his hilarious but sharp couplets reflecting the current social and political situations in the country.

Before being admitted to the hospital, he had informed his followers of his contraction of Coronavirus in a twitter post and appealed to them not to call him or his home to know about his health condition.

One of his popular couplets read, "*Sabhi ka khoon hai shamil yahan ki mitti mein; kissi ke baap ka Hindustan thodi hai*" (This soil is made up of everybody's blood; The country does not belong to any one person).

PREPARATIONS
FOR BIHAR
ELECTIONS BEGIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

A day after the Election Commission rejected the demand of political parties in Bihar to postpone Assembly elections in the state and said that elections in the state will be held on time, sources said that the Union home ministry has started preparations for elections in terms of organising para-military forces and other security arrangements.

The tenure of the current Bihar Assembly will end on November 29, and polls are expected to be held in either October end or November. President's rule has to be imposed in the state if the election process is not completed by November 28.

Political parties in Bihar, including Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), had urged the poll panel to postpone elections in the state. The LJP had written a letter to the Election Commission saying it is not advisable to put the lives of lakhs of people at risk by holding elections at a time when there has been a sharp increase in coronavirus cases in the state.

But Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora reiterated on Monday that elections in Bihar will be held on time, and that the poll panel is making preparations keeping in view the Covid-19 situation.

Gearing up for Independence Day



A woman purchases flag as part of preparations for the upcoming Independence Day celebrations in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

— Satish B.

C'garh to spend ₹20L extra
to make House virus-proof

Safety measures include glass partitions for MLAs in the Assembly

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, AUG. 11

The Chhattisgarh Assembly is all geared up for its monsoon session scheduled to commence on August 25, amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

Some measures taken by the state government to protect the lawmakers during the session include glass partitions, provision of hand sanitizer bottles, and hankies on the desk of the each member of the House, a senior officer of the state Assembly secretariat said on Tuesday.

"The seats of the MLAs will be divided by glass partitions. Periodic sanitisation of the House will be done during the session to protect the members from the virus", Chhattisgarh Assembly secretary C.S. Gangrade said.

"Modalities for holding the monsoon session of the Assembly are still being worked out", sources in the Assembly secretariat told this newspaper.

There would be regulation of outsiders in the Assembly during the period. Only the Assembly staff essential for conducting the proceedings of the House would be allowed to attend office.

"The press and visitor galleries will remain closed during the session", sources said. "It is estimated that the state government would incur an additional cost of ₹20 lakh to make the House virus-proof during the session", a senior officer of the Assembly secretariat said.

Incidentally, Madhya Pradesh Assembly had to cancel its monsoon session convened on July 20 to protect the members from contracting the virus.

Meanwhile, MP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday announced that he tested negative for coronavirus.

Mr Chouhan who tested positive for the virus on July 25 and was later admitted to a hospital here, has been in self-isolation in his official residence since he was discharged from hospital on August 5.

In a twitter post, Mr Chouhan informed that his latest samples tested negative for coronavirus. He was going to end his home quarantine on Wednesday.

Earlier, MP state minister Arvind Bhadoria and state BJP president V.D. Sharma were admitted to a hospital here last fortnight after testing positive for coronavirus.

They were discharged from hospital last week and put in home quarantine for a week.

Madhya Pradesh has recorded 40,020 coronavirus positive cases and 1,015 deaths by Tuesday afternoon. As many as 29,674 Covid-19 patients in MP have so far recovered.

Indore continues to top the charts of coronavirus cases in Madhya Pradesh recording 8,724 confirmed cases. The city has recorded 333 deaths till now.

Indore is followed by Bhopal which reported 7,770 confirmed cases and 220 deaths so far.

Covid-19 -ve certificate
must for Sabarimala visit

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG.11

Pilgrims visiting Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala will have to carry Covid-19 negative certificates during the Mandala pilgrimage season beginning from November 16.

A decision to this effect was taken at a high-level meeting through a video conference, chaired by Kerala Devaswom (temple affairs) minister Kadakampally Surendran the other day. The darshan will be allowed only through a virtual queue system. Covid negative certificates will be mandatory for online registration for the virtual queue system.

The meeting observed that the pilgrimage is going to be challenging this year due Covid-19. Therefore only a limited number of pilgrims would be allowed while strictly adhering to Covid-19 protocol. Social distancing norms and safety protocols will be complied with

● THE DARSHAN will be allowed only through a virtual queue system. Covid negative certificates will be mandatory for online registration for the virtual queue system.

while allowing darshan at the sanctum sanctorum.

The state government and Devaswom Board would seek the cooperation of neighboring states from where a large number of devotees visit Sabarimala, to ensure Covid-19 protocol is implemented strictly.

The meeting convened by the devaswom minister was a preparatory one. Another high level meeting will be held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan later, which will take the final call on arrangements for the pilgrimage season.

In view of the current Covid-19 situation, the health department has decided to scale up medical facilities at Sannidhanam, Nilakkal and Pamba. The govern-

ment will explore the possibility of the taking over Amritha Hospital in the area for arranging emergency medical facilities for the devotees.

Meanwhile, Kerala on Tuesday recorded 1,417 cases of Covid-19 even as 1,426 people recovered from the infection.

The total number of cases in the state has reached 36,568 of which 12,723 are active cases. Of the new cases, 1,242 contracted the infection through contact, source of infection among 105 is not known, 62 came from abroad, 72 from other states and 36 health care workers also got infected.

At a press conference here the chief minister said that seven persons died of Covid-19 on Tuesday taking the death toll in the state to 120.

Thiruvananthapuram district recorded the highest number of cases at 291 followed by Malappuram 242, Kozhikode 158, Kasargod 147, Alappuzha 146, Palakkad 141, Ernakulam 133 respectively.

cases.

The capital city has recorded 45 deaths so far.

More than a dozen areas in Raipur city have been identified as coronavirus hotspots and declared containment zones.

'Promises made to
people were not
being not fulfilled'

After being the cause of rebellion, former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot is back with the Congress. In an interview to *Ashhar Khan* he outlines his issues and reasons for his *ghar wapas*.

Q&A
SACHIN PILOT

What suddenly changed for you that you had to do a ghar wapas?

Well the assertion made by you is wrong. I had never left the party. I had always maintained that I am with the party. There were certain issues that were not being addressed so it was incumbent upon me to raise these issues in a proper party forum and I was just doing that. I had categorically stated that I am not joining any other party.

I have never said anything against the party or the leadership of the party. I did raise certain points that I am entitled to and I feel there is nothing wrong in it.

Then why did the party sack you from the post of Deputy Chief Minister and the state President of the party?

Let's be clear on one thing. I have never hankered for any post. Posts come and go. It's the truth and principles that are important in my scheme of things. For the last six and a half years, I was the state unit chief. Out of these five years we were in the Opposition. We protested against the then BJP government, staged dharnas, held yatras, were arrested, cases were foisted against us. It was not me alone, but the entire Congress was responsible for the ouster of the previous government.

Now when we are in power and our party workers are being ignored, how can I let that happen? They were with us when we were in the Opposition. So it was necessary that I raise their voice in the party.

There have been several allegations against you too. Infact, the Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had some very harsh words for you?

Name calling and ascribing motives is very easy in politics. Mr. Gehlot is a very seasoned leader of the party. I have

R'THAN HC TO
HEAR BSP-CONG
MERGER CASE

Jaipur, Aug 11: The Rajasthan High Court will on Thursday resume hearing the petitions filed by a BJP MLA and the Bahujan Samaj Party challenging the merger of six BSP MLAs with the Congress last year.

The hearing on Tuesday remained inconclusive and the matter was postponed for the next hearing on August 13, a counsel for the Speaker said.

BJP MLA Madan Dilawar and the BSP had demanded a stay on the implementation of an order passed by the Speaker, who recognised the merger last year.

The counsel for the petitioners argued that the merger was against the provisions of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, the country's anti-defection law. — PTI

differences with him on policy issues but not personally. My issues were what we had promised before coming to power and how we were not able to do it as we were not being given the space to do it. Certainly the issues were not addressed and there was acrimony that is why we had to come to Delhi and raise these issues.

What were the issues that you were upset about?

As I said, the workers who were with us were being slighted by the government. The promises that we had made to the people were not being fulfilled and there was no course correction.

I am also sad because of the way a sedition notice was given and then withdrawn within a month. There were several other issues also like lack of communication between the organisation and the government.



Congress leader Sachin Pilot while interacting with the media at his residence in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

MAMMOTH | LOSS

While 463 elephant died from 2000 to 2010, 784 died in next 10 years

Elephant mortality rate very high in Odisha

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 11

As the people across the globe will celebrate the World Elephant Day on August 12, animal protection activists in Odisha on Tuesday feared an uncertain and dangerous future for the pachyderms.

The safety of the National Heritage Animal (NHA) in the state, also known as the land of Gajapati for its rich elephant population, is in peril.

According to state government statistics, there were 2,044 elephants in Odisha in 1979 in the dense forests of Dhenkanal, Deogarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Angul, Sundargarh and Cuttack.

Last counted in 2017, their number has reduced

to 1,976.

According to Dr Biswajit Mohanty, a leading wildlife protection activist, elephants in Odisha have been forced to leave their native forests scattering into smaller populations and spreading out to several other districts. Notably no census has been undertaken since last three years in Odisha.

"Odisha loses more elephants than other elephant-bearing Indian states which register a steady increase in their population. The state also poses all the identified threats and dangers that elephants come across in India and Asia. The devastating changes in Odisha's elephant landscape because of increasing mining and construction activities, electrocution and train accidents have virtually decimated the



Quite a few elephants have been killed in train accidents in Odisha.

elephant habitats and traditional corridors bringing them into frequent conflict with humans and the many threats in and around human habita-

tions," said Dr Mohanty.

Keonjhar district which had 112 elephants in 2002, had just 40 of them in 2017, losing them to large scale mining but Dhenkanal dis-

trict which had 81 elephants in 2002, had 169 in 2017 as elephants got trapped as they could not cross over to other forests on their traditional migration routes cut off by Rengali irrigation canal network.

Today, Dhenkanal witnesses more human-elephant conflict than any other district in Odisha, added Dr Mohanty.

"Similarly, the 60-odd elephants from the Chandaka sanctuary were so affected by development activities that they have now virtually abandoned the sanctuary and migrated to Ganjam and Cuttack districts. In fact, only one elephant was counted in Chandaka sanctuary during the 2017 census," he pointed out.

The elephant mortality rate is rising alarmingly as the average death per

year which was 33 from 1990 to 2000 became 46 per year from 2000 to 2010, but since 2010, the average has become 78 per year.

While 463 elephant deaths were recorded during 2000 to 2010, the number grew sharply to 784 elephant deaths from 2010 to 2020.

"Of the 784 deaths in the last ten years, 281 (36 percent) elephants died an unnatural death and in 160 (20 percent) cases the cause of death could not be ascertained primarily due to finding of bodies in highly decomposed state.

"One could conclude that nearly 50 per cent of the elephant mortality in Odisha is unnaturally caused," said Dr Gouranga Charan Rout, a leading forest conservation activist of Rayagada in south Odisha.

DGCA TO AUDIT
AIRPORTS THAT
SEE HEAVY RAINS

New Delhi, Aug 11: The country's aviation regulator DGCA will conduct a special audit of airports that receive heavy rains, senior officials said on Tuesday, four days after a plane crashed at the Kozhikode airport amid downpour.

"The special audit will be done at airports like Mumbai and Chennai that are affected by heavy rains annually," said a senior official of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

The Airports Authority of India manages more than 100 airports in the country, including the one in Kozhikode. However, major airports like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are managed by private companies.

IN BRIEF

Millennium-old Mexico skeleton

Mexico City: A millennium-old skeleton of a pre-Hispanic man has been unearthed in northeast Mexico, archeologists said Monday, describing it as one of the first of its kind to be discovered complete.

The body of the man, believed to be between 21 and 35 years old, had been placed inside a woven mat with a small mortar as an offering, the National Anthropology and History Institute said. His remains lay untouched for more than 1,000 years and the skeleton and its position were preserved along with a ceramic relic, the institute said.

13 die in Sudan ethnic clashes

Khartoum: Sudan said Tuesday 13 people were killed and 42 injured in days of clashes between rival ethnic groups in its Red Sea port, state media reported. Violence broke out in the eastern city of Port Sudan on Sunday evening, the SUNA news agency said, quoting medics who had treated the wounded. Police sent in reinforcements and have imposed a night-time curfew, the statement added. Fighting began when protesters from the Nuba people, demonstrating against a new governor, entered a district of the Beni Amer group. There is long standing hostility between the groups. The Nuba originate from the South Kordofan region, an area that suffered from the decades of civil war. The Beni Amer people come from eastern Sudan.

Gunmen kill 13 in Nigeria

Lagos: Gunmen have killed 13 villagers in central Nigeria's Benue state following a long-running "chieftaincy" dispute, police said on Tuesday. The attack on Edikwu in the Apa district on Monday, also left several people injured and many houses burnt, said Catherine Anene, the state police spokeswoman. "About 20 armed men invaded the community and shot sporadically at members of the community," she said in a statement. "A team of police officers was deployed to the scene where 13 corpses were recovered," she said. Anene said police had launched an investigation, adding that a dispute over "chieftaincy" matters was to blame for the violence. "Edikwu... was experiencing incessant crises over chieftaincy affairs until May 25 when the Benue government convened a peace meeting, headed by the deputy governor, Mr. Benson Abouanu, to put an end to the rancour," she said. She said peace was restored until Monday when the gunmen invaded. Communal clashes over land rights, water and access to political opportunities are common in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with 200 million people.

MARYAM SUMMONED BY NAB

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUG. 11

Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Tuesday said that it had summoned the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) vice president Maryam Nawaz to hear her stance on the case registered against her. In a statement after a violent clash between PML-N workers and police, he anti-graft watchdog alleged that PML-N workers pelted stones and were involved in hooliganism at the time of her appearance.

The Bureau also said that it will register FIRs against PML-N representatives and leaders for interfering in the legal process. Earlier, clash erupted between outraged the PML-N workers and police as party's vice-president Maryam Nawaz reached NAB office in a case pertaining to illegal transfer of 180 acres of land in Raiwind.

The PML-N workers — who accompanied Maryam Nawaz from Jati Umrah to the NAB office in a convoy — pelted stones at police officials and tried to break the barriers outside the anti-corruption watchdog's office.

In retaliation, the police resorting to aerial firing, shelling and baton charge to disperse the infuriated crowd. Several protesters, including women, were arrested. PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif condemned the incident of pelting stones and teargas shelling on workers on the occasion of party vice-president Maryam Nawaz's appearance before NAB.

Belarus poll challenger safely reaches Lithuania
Protests: Poland ready to mediate

Minsk, Aug. 11: The main challenger in Belarus's disputed presidential election is "safe" in Lithuania, the Baltic state's foreign minister said, after a second night of street clashes between police and opposition supporters left a protester dead.

Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who has claimed victory over authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko in Sunday's vote, "arrived in Lithuania and is safe", Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius said. He did not provide any further details but EU and NATO member Lithuania, which like Belarus was once part of the Soviet Union, has a history of granting refuge to Belarusian and Russian opposition figures.

Tikhonovskaya's whereabouts had been unclear after campaign staff said they had lost contact with her and there had been concern for her safety. Her surfacing in Lithuania came after thousands took to the streets of the capital Minsk for a second night on Monday to contest claims by authorities that longtime ruler Lukashenko had secured a sixth term with 80 percent of the vote.

Tikhonovskaya, a political novice who has energised the opposition, came second with 10 percent and protesters are backing her claim to have won the election. For the second night in a row, police used rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas to disperse demonstrations, though protesters fought back with stones and fire-works and built makeshift barricades, reporters, protesters and witnesses said. "Too many people are against Lukashenko," Pavel, a 34-year-old protester said.

"Our goal is to depose Lukashenko. He is not worthy of being president." Dozens of people have been injured in the violence and the first fatality was confirmed on Monday when police said a man died after an explosive device went off in his hand. Olga Kovalkova, a member of Tikhonovskaya's staff, said she believed the candidate had left the country against her will after meeting with officials on Monday at the Central Election Commission.

"The Belarusian authorities took Svetlana to Lithuania. She had no choice," Kovalkova said. "Before entering the Central Election Commission, she had no plans to leave the country. It was not her decision." Her spokeswoman Anna Krasulina said the opposition movement would continue even if Tikhonovskaya was no longer in the country.

"Her departure does not change anything, she did what she could, raised and

Riga, Aug. 11: Poland is ready to mediate between Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and the opposition, the foreign minister said on Tuesday after a second night of protests following the disputed election.

"Poland is ready to act as a mediator between Belarus opposition and president Lukashenko," Jacek Czaputowicz told a joint press conference in Riga after meeting his Estonian, Finnish and Latvian counterparts. "There is still a place for dialogue but we will have a hard time trying to convince other Western countries not to impose sanctions against Belarus if the violent crackdown on protesters will continue," he said. Poland has called for an emergency European Union summit on Belarus, a former Soviet republic where strongman Lukashenko won a sixth term in office in a vote disputed by opposition challenger

Svetlana Tikhonovskaya. The candidate has now sought refuge in Lithuania. Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics said his country too would be willing to take in "political refugees from Belarus if that will be necessary". But he called for a "cautious approach" to imposing sanctions on Belarus, warning that this "will only enlarge their overall dependence on Russia". Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto also said that any sanctions "should be imposed in a way that they do not hurt regular Belarusian citizens". Estonia's Urmas Reinsal added that since the election in Belarus was not free and fair "we should not recognise the legitimacy of its outcome". The foreign ministers were meeting on the 100th anniversary of the Riga Peace Treaty, which confirmed Latvia's independence from Soviet Russia.

— AFP

Video recorded under pressure, say allies

Minsk, Aug. 11: Belarus election challenger Svetlana Tikhonovskaya appeared in a video published by state media Tuesday urging supporters not to protest, but her allies said it was recorded under pressure.

In the video published by state news agency *Belta*, Tikhonovskaya appeared to read from a prepared statement calling for "respect for the law" and for Belarusians not to take to the streets.

Her head lowered, she was shown sitting on a black sofa in front of a window with the blinds closed. Tikhonovskaya, who says she defeated longtime authoritarian ruler Alexander Lukashenko in Sunday's vote, has left the country to seek

refuge in Lithuania after two nights of clashes.

"We believe that this video was recorded under pressure from law enforcement," Maria Kolesnikova, a key Tikhonovskaya ally, told reporters.

"A person who has been receiving threats and whose husband is in prison can record any video," Tikhonovskaya decided to run for president after the authorities jailed her husband, popular blogger Sergei Tikhonovsky, and barred him from contesting.

Her campaign galvanised the opposition, presenting a historic challenge to former collective farm director Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus since 1994, brooking no dissent.

— Agencies

inspired the people," Krasulina said. "The people will act without her, they are protesting not for Tikhonovskaya but for themselves." Lukashenko's opponents have called for running protests against his regime and there were calls for a nationwide strike. The 37-year-old mother of two decided to run for president after the authorities jailed her husband, popular blogger Sergei Tikhonovsky, and barred him from contesting.

Her campaign galvanis-

ed the opposition, presenting a historic challenge to former collective farm director Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus since 1994, brooking no dissent and earning the nickname of "Europe's last dictator". Western governments have widely condemned the police crackdown, with some in the European Union suggesting it may reimpose sanctions on Lukashenko's regime that were lifted several years ago.

— AFP

China trying to turn Taiwan into HK: FM

Taipei, Aug. 11: China is trying to turn democratic Taiwan into another Hong Kong, the island's foreign minister warned Tuesday as he met with a senior US official making a historic diplomatic trip. A crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong has gathered pace since China imposed a sweeping security law on the financial hub in June, with opposition politicians disqualified and activists arrested.

That has caused alarm in

Taiwan, a self-ruled island of 23 million people that Beijing claims as its own territory and has vowed to one day seize, by force if necessary. Foreign minister Joseph Wu said Taiwan lives under the constant threat of having its freedoms taken away by China, during a rare meeting with US cabinet official Alex Azar in Taipei on Tuesday. "Our lives have become increasingly difficult as China continues to pressure Taiwan into accept-

ing its political conditions, conditions that will turn Taiwan into the next Hong Kong," he said.

"The people of Taiwan are all too familiar with dealing with threats, be it military, diplomatic or the threats of epidemics," Health Secretary Azar is in Taipei for a three-day visit billed as the highest-level visit from the United States since it switched diplomatic recognition from the island to China in 1979. Beijing has ramped up



Police cars block the entrance to Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House shortly after Secret Service guards shot a person who was apparently armed, outside the White House on Monday while US President Donald Trump was speaking to the press in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC.

— AFP

Trump evacuated after man shot outside WH

Washington, Aug. 11: US Secret Service agents shot and wounded a man who was apparently armed outside the White House on Monday, President Donald Trump said, after being briefly whisked away in the middle of a press conference. A 51-year-old male approached a Secret Service officer standing at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, one block from the White House, according to Tom Sullivan, the chief of the Secret Service Uniformed Division. The suspect told the officer he had a weapon and ran "aggressively" towards him, drawing an object out of his clothes, Sullivan said in a statement that was broadcast on Twitter. He then assumed a "shooter's stance" as if he intended to fire, whereupon the Secret Service officer shot him in the torso, Sullivan added.

Officers on the scene administered first aid, and emergency medical services were called. Both the suspect and the officer were taken to hospital. "The Secret Service Office of Professional Responsibility will be conducting an internal review of the officer's actions," Sullivan said, adding the DC Metropolitan Police Department had been contacted.

As the President was speaking to reporters in the White House briefing room, a Secret Service bodyguard abruptly approached him and interrupted, saying in a quiet voice, "Sir, could you please come with me?" Trump and staff members left. Doors to the briefing room, still filled with

Saudi arms sales: Pompeo cleared

Washington, Aug. 11: An internal probe has cleared US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of wrongdoing in a disputed arms sale to Saudi Arabia, a senior State Department official said Monday, although the report on the investigation has not yet been released.

Pompeo was accused of abuse of power after he used an obscure emergency procedure to ram through \$8.1 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other Arab allies in May of last year, despite opposition from the US Congress. The Inspector General's report on the investigation has concluded that the State Department had "acted in complete accordance with the law and found no wrongdoing in the administration exercise of the emergency authorities that are available under

the arms export control act," the senior official told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity. The official did not say when the report would be published, but the State Department released excerpts in a statement.

Congress had sought to block the arms sale in protest against the October 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which was attributed by US intelligence services to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Then-inspector general Steve Linick had been investigating Pompeo's 2019 declaration of an emergency that permitted the Trump administration to sell arms and bypass Congress, where lawmakers have voiced horror at civilian casualties in the Saudi-led offensive in Yemen.

— AFP

TRUMP MOOTS G7 MEET AFTER US ELECTION IN NOV.

Washington, Aug. 11: US President Donald Trump on Monday suggested hosting the Group of Seven summit after the November presidential election, saying he would invite countries generally excluded from the global get-togethers. "I am much more inclined to do it sometime after the election. We were going to do it in September, they'd like to do it," Trump said during his press briefing on the coronavirus pandemic.

"We could do it through teleconference, or we could do it through a meeting, but I sort of am now suggesting, I tell my people yesterday, 'Actually, why don't we do it sometime after the election when things are a bit, you have a little more time to think about it because it's very important,'" he said.

— AFP

EUROPE VISIT: POMPEO IN PRAGUE

Plzen, Czech Republic, Aug. 11: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in Prague on Tuesday, public TV footage showed, to open a five-day visit to central Europe with a hefty agenda, including China's role in 5G network construction.

Pompeo will spend two days in the Czech Republic before moving on to Slovenia, Austria and close

ally Poland, which is eager to welcome some of the US troops leaving Germany to guard against historic adversary Russia.

The focus will be on his campaign for nations to shun Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant considered a threat by Washington as it takes a lead in fifth-generation internet, and to reduce Europe's energy dependence on Russia.

— AFP

WHO to review Russian vaccine

Geneva, Aug. 11: The World Health Organisation said any WHO stamp of approval on a Covid-19 vaccine candidate would require a rigorous safety data review, after Russia announced Tuesday it had approved a vaccine.

President Vladimir Putin said Russia had become the first country to approve a vaccine offering "sustainable immunity" against Coronavirus.

"We are in close contact with the Russian health authorities and discussions are ongoing with respect to possible WHO pre-qualification of the vaccine," the United Nations health agency's spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told reporters in Geneva at an online press briefing.

"Pre-qualification of any vaccine includes the rigorous review and assessment of all the required safety and efficacy data." Russia's Sputnik V vaccine has been developed by the Gamaleya research institute in coordination with the country's defence ministry.

A total of 165 candidate vaccines are being worked on around the world, according to the latest WHO overview produced on July 31.

Of those, 139 are still in pre-clinical evaluation,

COVID-19 CASES RETURN TO NZ AFTER 102 DAYS

Wellington, Aug. 11: New Zealand's dream run of 102 days without locally transmitted Coronavirus ended Tuesday, prompting a stay-at-home lockdown order for the country's largest city.

After receiving global praise for successfully containing the virus, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said four cases had been detected in a single family in Auckland from an unknown source.

"After 102 days, we have our first cases of Covid-19 outside of managed isolation or quarantine facilities..." Ardern said.

— AFP

while the other 26 are in the various phases of being tested on humans, of which six are the furthest ahead, having reached Phase 3 of clinical evaluation.

The Gamaleya candidate being produced in Russia, which is among the 26 being tested on humans, is listed as being in Phase 1.

— AFP

GOVT | CRITIC Family not giving up hope for return of Wanchalearm Satsaksit**Missing Thai activist's kin to 'have faith'**

Bangkok, Aug. 11: The family of a missing Thai pro-democracy activist celebrated his birthday Tuesday, vowing not to give up hope for his return more than two months after he was allegedly abducted in Cambodia.

The disappearance of Wanchalearm Satsaksit was one of the catalysts for a growing pro-democracy movement in Thailand, which has seen thousands turn out to protest the military-aligned administration.

Wanchalearm, a critic of the Thai government led by former army chief

Prayut Chan-O-Cha, was abducted off the streets of the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in early June, according to rights groups.

The self-exiled activist, who runs an acerbic anti-government Facebook page, is wanted by Thai authorities for allegedly breaching the Computer Crimes Act.

Both Thai and Cambodian authorities have vowed to investigate his disappearance. However, sister Sitanan said Tuesday — his 38th birthday — that she was "frustrated" — with the slow

pace the investigations have taken.

— AFP

"Our family is waiting for the truth and clarity from both countries," she said, as she lit candles on a cake in front of the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok.

"I still have faith that he's alive... We cannot give up hope if there is a small chance," she said.

Protesters in rallies across the country have held up posters with Wanchalearm's face to demand answers of his fate. Sitanan said she was "proud" that her brother has become a symbol of the movement, adding that she didn't used to under-

stand why he was so active in the pro-democracy movement.

"On the day he disappeared, that's when I realised we needed to do something about the politics of Thailand," she said. Since a coup in May 2014, Thailand has vowed to track down pro-democracy critics — especially those accused of attacking the unassailable monarchy.

At least eight prominent Thai activists who fled to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam have subsequently disappeared, according to Human Rights Watch.

— AFP



IN BRIEF

Turkish drone kills two Iraqi officers

Baghdad: Two high-ranking Iraqi officers were killed on Tuesday in what the army said was a Turkish drone attack in the autonomous Kurdish region, where Ankara has for weeks been raiding militant positions. The strike killed the two border guard battalion commanders and the driver of their vehicle, the army said. A local official said that the drone had struck as the officers “were in meetings with PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) fighters”. The PKK is listed as a terrorist group by Turkey and its Western allies.

Iran jails 2 over spying for Israel

Tehran: Iran said on Tuesday it has jailed two men over spying for Britain, Germany and Israel, the latest in a string of espionage cases that have led to arrests and executions. Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili told reporters that the two would each serve 10 years behind bars. One of them, Massud Mossaheb, had been “spying for (Israeli spy agency) Mossad and Germany in the guise” of the general secretary of the Austrian-Iranian Society, Esmaili said, quoted by state television’s website. Mossaheb was found to have been providing them with information on Iran’s “missile, nuclear, nanotechnology and medical fields”. The second man, Shahram Shirkhani, had been working for British intelligence, the spokesman added. Shirkhani had been seeking to “corrupt authorities and recruit” people as well as give away information on “contracts related to the central bank, Melli Bank and the defence ministry”.

Turkey to start gas exploration

Ankara: Turkey will step up energy exploration in the eastern Mediterranean, the foreign minister said on Tuesday, vowing Ankara will not “compromise” on its rights despite Greek fury. The search for oil and gas has long been a source of tension between NATO allies Greece and Turkey, which have deteriorated as Ankara resumes exploration activities. Greece called for an emergency meeting of EU foreign ministers on Tuesday, after Turkey dispatched a research vessel accompanied by warships to disputed waters on Monday. Revving up the tensions, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Ankara will issue licences for new areas in the “western part of our continental shelf” from the end of August. “We will conduct all kinds of seismic research, drilling activities. Our determination is absolute,” Cavusoglu told reporters. “We will defend the rights of Turkey... in the eastern Mediterranean and we will not compromise in any way on this,” he said.

UK COPS FACIAL SCAN TECH RULED UNLAWFUL

London, Aug. 11: The use of facial recognition technology by a British police force was ruled unlawful on Tuesday by the Court of Appeal in a case brought by a civil rights campaigner.

Ed Bridges had challenged South Wales Police’s use of the technology after his face was scanned on two separate occasions in Cardiff — once while Christmas shopping in 2017 and at an anti-arms protest a year later.

He said the technology had caused him “distress”.

The judges backed his appeal and ruled there was no clear guidance on where AFR Locate — the technology being trialled by South Wales Police — could be used and who could be put on a watchlist.

It also ruled a data protection impact assessment of the technology was deficient and that South Wales Police did not take reasonable steps to find out if the software had a racial or gender bias.

The court ruled that “too much discretion is currently left to individual police officers”.

Bridges’ case had initially been dismissed at London’s High Court in September which concluded use of the technology was not unlawful, but he appealed that verdict.

Following his victory on Tuesday, Bridges said he was “delighted” and called the technology a “discriminatory mass surveillance tool”.

Windstorm Derecho wreaks havoc

1 dead as hurricane sweeps across Midwest uprooting trees, leaving 10,000 homes without power

Iowa City, Aug. 11: Hundreds of thousands across the Midwest remained without power on Tuesday after a powerful wind storm packing 100 mph winds battered the region a day earlier, causing damage linked to the death of a woman found clutching a young boy in her storm-battered mobile home.

The storm known as a derecho lasted several hours as it tore from eastern Nebraska across Iowa and parts of Wisconsin and Illinois, had the wind speed of a major hurricane, and likely caused more widespread damage than a normal tornado, said Patrick Marsh, science support chief at the National Weather Service’s Storm Prediction Centre in Norman, Oklahoma.

In northern Illinois, the National Weather Service reported a wind gust of 92 mph near Dixon, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) west of Chicago, and the storm left downed trees and power lines that blocked roadways in Chicago and its suburbs. After leaving Chicago, the most potent part of the storm system moved over north central Indiana by late afternoon.



People search for cover as a Derecho storm pushes through the area in Chicago, Illinois. The storm, with winds gusts close to 100 miles per hour, downed trees and power lines as it moved through the city and suburbs. — AFP

“The storm system as a whole is definitely beginning its decay,” said Northern Illinois University meteorology professor Victor Gensini. A Derecho is not quite a

hurricane. It has no eye and its winds come across in a line. But the damage it is likely to do spread over such a large area is more like an inland hurricane than a quick more power-

ful tornado, Marsh said.

He compared it to a devastating Super Derecho of 2009, which was one of the strongest on record and traveled more than 1,000 miles in 24 hours, causing

\$500 million in damage, widespread power outages and killing a handful of people.

“This is our version of a hurricane,” Gensini said in an interview from his

● **SEVERAL PEOPLE** were injured and widespread property damage was reported in Marshall County in central Iowa after 100 mph winds swept through the area, said its homeland security coordinator Kim Elder.

home about 15 minutes before the storm was about to hit. Minutes later he headed to his basement for safety as the storm took aim at Chicago, starting with its suburbs.

Gensini said this Derecho will go down as one of the strongest in recent history and be one of the nation’s worst weather events of 2020. “It ramped up pretty quick” around 7 am Central time in Eastern Nebraska. “I don’t think anybody expected widespread winds approaching 100, 110 mph,” Marsh said.

Several people were injured and widespread property damage was reported in Marshall County in central Iowa after 100 mph winds swept through the area, said its homeland security coordinator Kim Elder. She said the winds blew over trees,

ripped road signs out of the ground and tore roofs off of buildings.

“We had quite a few people trapped in buildings and cars,” she said. She said the extent of injuries is unknown and that no fatalities have been reported. Elder said some people reported their cars flipping over from the wind, having power lines fall on them and getting injured when hit by flying debris. Dozens of cars at one factory had their windshields blown out.

Buildings have also caught on fire, she said. “We’re in life-saving mode right now,” Elder said. Marshalltown Mayor Joel Greer declared a civil emergency, telling residents to stay home and off the streets so that first responders can respond to calls.

MidAmerican Energy said nearly 1,01,000 customers in the Des Moines area were without power after the storm moved through the area.

Reports from spotters filed with the National Weather Service in Des Moines had winds in excess of 70 mph. Roof damage to homes and buildings were reported in several Iowa cities, including the roof of a hockey arena in Des Moines. — AP

S’pore crushes 9 tonnes of ivory haul on World Elephant Day eve

Singapore, Aug 11: Singapore began destroying nine tonnes of seized ivory on Tuesday, the largest such action globally in recent years, including contraband tusks that came from more than 300 African elephants.

The destruction by an industrial rock crusher was held on the eve of World Elephant Day, and aims to prevent the items from re-entering the market and disrupt the global supply chain of illegally traded ivory, Singapore’s National Parks Board said.

A spokeswoman for the board said it would take three to five days for all of the ivory — seized

● **THE DESTRUCTION** by an industrial rock crusher was held on the eve of World Elephant Day, and aims to prevent the items from re-entering the market and disrupt the global supply chain of illegally traded ivory, Singapore’s National Parks Board said.

● **SINGAPORE ALSO** on Tuesday launched a Centre for Wildlife Forensics to “identify and analyse specimens involved in the illegal wildlife trade”.

between 2014 and 2019 — to be crushed, after which the fragments will be incinerated.

“This ivory crushing event, the largest globally in recent years, demonstrates Singapore’s strong determination and commitment to combat the illegal trade in wildlife,” the board said in a state-

ment. The items include 8.8 tonnes of ivory seized last year in Singapore’s biggest haul worth Sg\$17.6 million (US\$13 million), it said.

Singapore also on Tuesday launched a Centre for Wildlife Forensics to “identify and analyse specimens involved in the illegal wildlife

trade”.

By using DNA analysis and other methods to study the specimens, the centre can determine where the items were poached from — a useful tool in the fight against illegal wildlife trade.

Elephant ivory is coveted because it can be fashioned into items like combs, pendants and other exotic jewellery.

The global trade in elephant ivory, with rare exceptions, has been outlawed since 1989 after the population of the African animals dropped from millions in the mid-20th century to about 6,00,000 by the end of the 1980s. — AFP

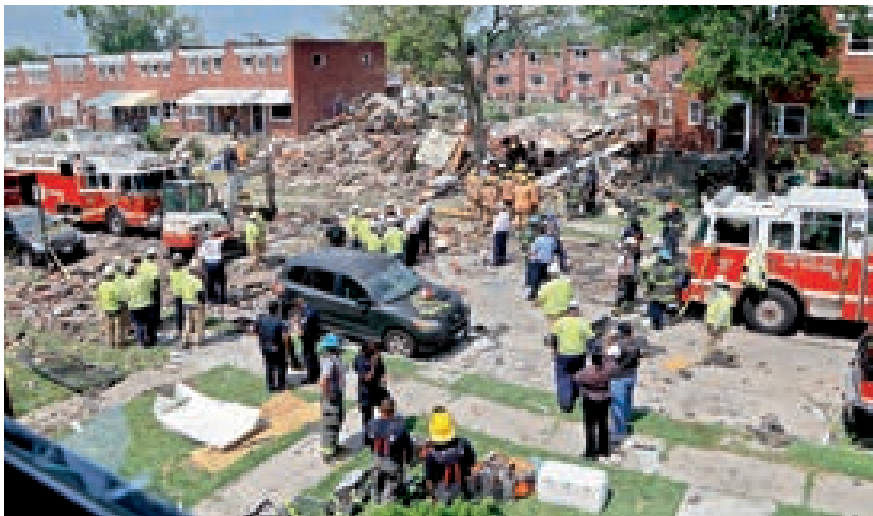
Two dead, seven injured after gas explosion levels Baltimore homes

Baltimore, Aug 11: Two people are now confirmed dead following a natural gas explosion that destroyed three row houses in Baltimore and sent seven people to the hospital, authorities said on Tuesday.

Baltimore Fire Department spokeswoman Blair Adams said at a 9 am news conference that a man was pulled from the debris shortly before 1 am A woman had been pronounced dead at the scene shortly after Monday morning’s explosion. Seven others were hospitalized, five in critical condition, Adams said. The conditions of the other two were still being determined, she said.

More than 200 people in the neighborhood were affected by the blast, and about 30 have utilised temporary shelter since the explosion, she said.

The natural gas explosion on Monday morning leveled three row houses and ripped open a fourth, trapping people in the debris and scattering shards of glass and other



Rescue officials work near the rubble in the aftermath of an explosion in Baltimore, on Monday. Baltimore firefighters say an explosion has leveled several homes in the city. — AP

rubble over the northwest Baltimore neighborhood of Reisterstown Station. Dozens of firefighters converged on the scene to free the injured.

“It’s a disaster. It’s a mess. It’s unbelievable,” said Diane Glover, who lives across the street. Her windows where shattered

and her front door was blown open. “I’m still shaken up,” she said hours later.

The exact cause remains unknown, and the Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. appealed for patience as they investigate. No gas odors were reported before the explo-

sion, and BGE did not receive any recent gas odor calls from the block of homes that were damaged, the utility said in a statement late Monday.

BGE also said it last inspected the area’s gas mains and services in June and July of 2019 and no leaks were found. — AP



Volunteers rescue dozens of dolphins stranded on a beach on Cape Cod, Massachusetts on Sunday morning. — AP

Volunteers rescue dozens of stranded dolphins

Wellfleet, Mass., Aug 11: Nearly 50 dolphins were stranded on a beach on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, over the weekend and needed to be rescued by dozens of volunteers, officials said.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare said some 45 dolphins were found stranded by harbor officials in Wellfleet on Sunday morning.

Stacey Hedman, a manager with the Yarmouth-based group, said many of the dolphins were already unburned and overheating by the time the organization’s Marine Mammal

● **VOLUNTEERS ALSO** gave the marine mammals IV fluids and vitamins, and deployed boats to guide them back to deeper waters.

Rescue and Research team responded to the stretch of beach known locally as The Cut.

She told The Cape Cod Times it appeared the dolphins got stranded sometime overnight as the tides changed. “It was a sad scene to see them out of the water, unable to swim,” Hedman told

newspaper. She said the team of roughly 50 volunteers used beach-ready stretchers to carry nearly a dozen of the dolphins to safety.

They also gave the marine mammals IV fluids and vitamins, and deployed boats to guide them back to deeper waters. Two dolphins, however, were in poor health and ultimately were euthanised, Hedman said. The organisation said teams were on the lookout on Monday to make sure dolphins don’t get stranded again on the Cape’s beaches. — AP

HURRICANE FORMS OFF MEXICO PACIFIC COAST, HEADS WESTWARD

Mexico City, Aug. 11: Elida strengthened into a hurricane Monday off Mexico’s southern Pacific coast, but is expected to head westward and out to sea. No coastal watches or warnings were in effect, the US National Hurricane Centre reported on Monday. Elida had maximum sustained winds of 75 mph (120 kph) and was located about 235 miles (380 kilometers) south-southwest of

the southern tip of the Baja California peninsula.

It was moving west-northwest at 14 mph (22 kph), and is expected to begin weakening by Wednesday or Thursday. The hurricane centre warned that swells generated by Elida could affect portions of the coast of west-central Mexico and the southern Baja California peninsula over the next couple of days. — AP

PAK MAN HELD FOR HAVING WOLF AS PET

SHAFQAT ALI I DC ISLAMABAD, AUG. 11

Pakistan Punjab wildlife department officials on Tuesday detained a Wapda Colony resident in Faisalabad after seeing his videos on social media showing that he had a pet wolf.

It was reported that none of the wildlife officials was ready to hold the wolf’s chain to bring it to the court. The judges then asked the suspect to hold it. However, the wolf fell sick at the court due to hot weather.

The man claimed that he had taken good care of the animal so far, but its health worsened because the cage it was kept inside in the department’s vehicle was too small. The department officials have now taken the animal in their custody to later release it into the wild.

The department said the suspect had not obtained a permit from the department before bringing the wolf to his home, hence, he violated the protocols.

NATURAL | CALAMITY

Most powerful temblor hits North Carolina in more than a 100 years

Quake coincides with Catholic Mass

Charlotte, N.C., Aug 11: The Scripture quite literally came to life for several Catholic churches in North Carolina as a rare earthquake rattled portions of the state over the weekend.

According to a news release from the Diocese of Charlotte, Father Richard Sutter of St. Gabriel’s Catholic Church said the lector in the Sunday service had just reached the 19th chapter of 1 Kings, a Bible passage referring to

the prophet Elijah, which said, “After the wind there was an earthquake but the lord was not in the earthquake.” It was then that parishioners felt the 5.1 magnitude earthquake centered near Sparta, the most powerful to hit the state in more than 100 years.

Monitors said the 5.1-magnitude temblor struck at 8:07 am., following a much smaller quake several hours earlier. There were no reports of serious injuries, but some minor

● **MONITORS SAID** the 5.1-magnitude temblor struck at 8:07 am., following a much smaller quake several hours earlier. There were no reports of serious injuries, but some minor structural damage was reported in Sparta, as well as cracks in roads.

Images on social media also showed items

knocked off of grocery store shelves. The Charlotte Observer reported that while he didn’t feel it himself, Sutter said parishioners came up to him as soon as the service ended. He said the moment can be a lesson for the times. “When there’s fear from an earthquake, when there’s fear from a storm, when there’s fear from a pandemic and uncertainty ... you have to let the Lord speak to us the truth,” he said.

“Let’s keep our eyes on Jesus Christ and not the waves (or even earthquakes) we cannot control,” he said. Father Cory Catron, pastor of the Catholic mission in Sparta, said his church suffered no apparent damage from the quake. “Made for good homily material, though,” the news release said.

In his homily, Catron joked about being worried the next thing would be fire. He called the events a

reminder of God’s presence, adding “we must not be distracted by the noise and problems of the world around us, but listen for His voice in the stillness.” As the 11:15 am Mass in Sparta was ending and Catron offered a final blessing, there was a 1.8 magnitude aftershock.

He said, “The ceiling creaked for like three seconds, and everybody kind of looked up and immediately we knew what it was.” — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,407.01	0.59
Nifty 50	11,322.50	0.46
S&P 500*	3,374.37	0.41
Dollar (₹)	74.77	0.22
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.76	0.02
Euro (₹)	87.83	0.35
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,763	1.317 2.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.16	0.17
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.903	0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.632	0.058

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Embassy looking to monetise warehousing biz

Embassy Group is exploring various options to monetise its warehousing and industrial parks business at an enterprise value of Rs 1,700-2,000 crore, sources said. The Bengaluru-based group, which had in 2015 formed a joint venture with PE firm Warburg Pincus to build industrial parks, is in talks with few potential buyers to monetise completed and under-construction assets of the joint venture.

Medtronic to put in ₹1,200 cr in H'bad R&D centre



Global medical technology major Medtronic plc said it will invest Rs 1,200 crore to scale up and expand its current R&D facility in Hyderabad into a state-of-the-art engineering and innovation center. Medtronic Engineering and Innovation Center (MEIC) will be its largest global R&D centre outside the US. "This investment planned over five years will provide a boost to Telangana's MedTech plans," it said.

Top solar maker raises cell prices by 11%

Tongwei Solar, a unit of Tongwei Co, raised multicrystalline solar cell prices by 11 per cent to 0.6 yuan per watt, according to an Aug. 10 notice on its website. The company, the world's leading cell producer, also increased prices for three types of monocrystalline cells by 0.08 yuan per watt each, about a 9 per cent increase. The hike is the second in less than three weeks after it increased prices on July 24.

Hyundai Creta crosses 5 lakh sales milestone

Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) said its SUV Creta has crossed five lakh cumulative sales mark in India. The model also remains the best-selling SUV for three consecutive months, May-July, this year. Its new version was launched in March this year. "Creta has been the blockbuster model in the Indian automobile industry ever since its launch in 2015," HMIL director (sales, marketing and service) Tarun Garg said.

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The worst seems behind in the long road to recovery Stimulus slows credit downgrades of firms

ANURAG JOSHI AUG. 11

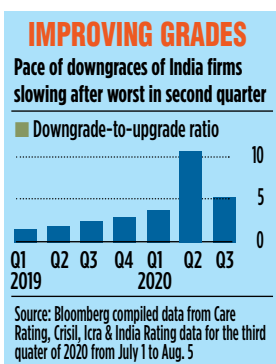
The country's unprecedented stimulus measures to fight the coronavirus crisis seem to have slowed the worsening of corporate credit quality.

There have been around five downgrades for every one upgrade of rupee debt of companies since July 1. That's a major improvement when compared with a ratio of almost 11 to one in the quarter ended June 30, a record rate, according to a review of rating moves by four main credit assess-

sors-Care Ratings, Crisil, Ica and India Ratings & Research.

"The stimulus has brought incremental relief to firms in India, helping them to stay afloat and avoid the risk of closures," said T.N. Arun Kumar, chief ratings officer at Care Ratings Ltd. "The measures have helped corporates tide over cash problems and boosted their short-term credit profiles."

Borrowing costs have declined for local companies due to a barrage of stimulus steps. The central government unveiled \$277



billion of stimulus in May, while the Reserve Bank pumped \$50 billion of cash

UTILITY VEHICLES LEAD REVIVAL

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 11

While the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is still visible in automobile sales, there are some early green shoots.

The sales of passenger vehicles (PV) in July merely declined 3.86 per cent year-on-year at 182,779 units from 200,790 in July 2019.

The numbers hint at a good and quick recovery of the segment, even as it also creates doubts over demand sustenance in the long-term.

"After a few consecutive months of plummeted sales in a post-Covid scenario, there are signs of green shoots in PVs and two-wheelers, where the

YoY de-growth is much lesser than the previous months," Rajan Wadhwa, president at Siam, said.

The sales numbers in August would indicate if this is a sustainable demand or just a pent-up demand, he pointed out.

Similarly, Rajesh Menon, director-general at Siam, said the July sales were significantly better than the preceding months and it instilled some confidence in the industry. "Many original equipment manufacturers have registered improved sales vis-à-vis the past few months, and this brings back a sentiment of resolve to the sector," he noted.

From a month-on-month perspective July seems to

have fared much better compared to June when PV sales had dipped to 105,617 units, thus, marking a 73 per cent growth.

While the passenger vehicle segment has been in the red for all of FY2020, it is the utility vehicles within PVs that have been leading the charge for the entire class of vehicles towards recovery. With sales of 71,384 units in July, utility vehicles registered a 13.88 per cent growth, while PVs posted a 12 per cent decline, with overall sales of 102,773 units.

The two-wheeler sales were down 15.24 per cent in July to 12,81,354 units as compared with 15,11,717 units in the same month last year.

AAI puts GoAir on 'cash and carry' over dues

New Delhi, Aug. 11: The Airports Authority of India has decided to put GoAir on a "cash and carry basis" from Tuesday because of non-payment of dues, meaning the low-cost airline will have to pay charges daily at AAI airports to operating flights from there, an official said.

The official said the AAI issued an order to its regional executive directors on Monday, which said, "The competent authority has approved to put the operation of GoAir on cash and carry basis out of all AAI airports with effect from 0001 hrs of 11th August 2020".

An airline has to pay various charges—air navigation, landing, parking etc.—to the AAI, which works under the civil aviation ministry, to use facilities at any of its more than 100 airports.

The airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are managed by private companies.

"GoAir is engaged in constructive discussions with AAI," the airline's spokesperson said. —PTI

Bira talking to foreign beer makers for stake sale

ADITYA KALRA, ANIRBAN SEN & RITSUKO ANDO NEW DELHI/BENGALURU/ TOKYO, AUG. 11



adding that the company was in the "intermediate stage" of raising funds.

"We've been talking to beer companies that are not competitive in India or have minimal operations in India."

Data provider PitchBook estimates New Delhi-based

Bira was valued at \$210 million in 2018. US-based Sequoia Capital holds a roughly 45 per cent stake in the company, while CEO Jain and his family own around 30 per cent.

Jain declined to name the companies with which it is in talks, but four industry sources said Bira had been in talks with Kirin Holdings, one of Japan's biggest beer makers which has limited sales in India.

A Kirin spokesman said there was "absolutely no discussion at the moment" on taking a stake in Bira.

A Kirin source said the

Cyber threats rise with WFH trend

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH HYDERABAD, AUG. 11



Dipesh Kaura. Kaspersky

With work-from-home becoming the new normal, cyber threats have jumped manifold, as homes lack the kind of cyber-security setup a professional workplace has. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Dipesh Kaura, general manager (South Asia), Kaspersky said the idea of a workplace has changed and so has cyber threats.

"Some employees might be having sensitive information. They have to be sure that the information

they have doesn't fall into the wrong hands," he said, adding, "Working from home has a new kind of discipline; people who are working on a computer need to draw a boundary and restrict their screen time. This kind of discipline might also prevent them falling prey to new kinds of cyber threats."

In the midst of these concerns he said that digital hygiene has become an arsenal for companies and

Foreign flows may dictate market momentum again

Inflows slowing for MFs, insurance firms

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 11



The market may face rough weather again, much like in March this year, and move in the direction of foreign flows, as inflows from domestic institutions have started slowing down, especially from mutual funds and insurance companies, as indicated by June and July monthly data.

In August too domestic institutions have been booking profit and brisk inflows from the foreign portfolio investors are keeping the market momentum intact.

In August so far FPIs have invested Rs 10,420 crore, surpassing the July month investment of Rs 7,563 crore.

On Tuesday domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 1,415.54 crore while the foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 1,013.66 crore.

Whether these are sticky investments from the long only funds or short-term investments by fly by night operators, only time will tell.

India witnessed foreign portfolio investment outflow of \$16.05 billion in March 2020 and \$1.97 billion during April-May 2020, triggered by the Covid-19 fallout on domestic and global economy.

Upcoming US presidential election and continuing threat of Covid-19 are likely to drive investors away from risky asset classes.

Mutual fund flows have

fallen sharply in June and July to Rs 240.55 crore and an outflow of Rs 2,480 crore respectively compared to inflows of Rs 6,212.96 in April and Rs 5,256.52 crore in May 2020.

"Net flows in the open ended equity fund category have been on a downward spiral since April and barely positive at Rs 240 crore in June. In July, the trend continued, leading to net outflows of Rs 2,480 crore. On the positive side, flows through systematic investments plans (SIPs) have sustained around the Rs 8,000-crore mark till June (numbers for July are yet to be released), said a report by rating agency Crisil..

Private life insurance players' premium declined 7.1 per cent in July 2020, similar to the decline in June 2020 while the life insurance industry as a whole posted a decline of 0.3 per cent. The overall decline has moderated considerably from the levels seen over March-May 2020. For FY21 year to date, private players' individual premium received declined 18.1 per cent year-

on-year while for the industry, it dropped 12.6 per cent YoY, said a report by Motilal Oswal.

So far this year, the impact of foreign investors pulling their money out of India did not lead to any macroeconomic instability. Rather, foreign exchange reserves increased to \$517.64 billion (foreign currency assets: \$477.81 billion) on 17 July 2020 from \$476.88 billion (\$442.21 billion) at end-March 2020.

The rupee's strength against foreign currencies remains the key to foreign portfolio investors staying invested in India, said analysts.

"Swelling of foreign exchange reserves in combination with benign oil prices and tepid imports, leading to a current account surplus, has helped the rupee to remain broadly stable since mid-March 2020, despite deterioration in some of the other macro parameters such as retail inflation, fiscal deficits and negative GDP growth," said India Ratings & Research.

HDFC garners ₹10K cr via QIP

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 11



Mortgage lender Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd (HDFC) on Tuesday said that it has raised Rs 14,000 crore through qualified institutional placement of equity shares and secured redeemable non-convertible debentures simultaneously with warrants.

The proceeds of the issue, it said, will be used towards general corporate purposes and financing organic and inorganic business opportunities that may arise.

The Corporation has raised Rs 10,000 crore by issuing 5.68 crore equity shares at an issue price of Rs 1,760 per share to qualified investors, including Government of Singapore and Invesco Oppenheimer Developing Markets Fund.

Besides, it raised Rs 3,693 crore through an issue of non-convertible debentures at par for a tenor of three years carrying an annualised coupon rate of 5.40 per cent per annum.

The lender also allotted 1.7 crore warrants at an issue price of Rs 180 per

warrant, aggregating to around Rs 307 crore under the QIP issue, according to a regulatory filing. The warrants entitle the warrant holder to exchange each warrant for one equity share of the corporation at any time over the next three years i.e. until August 10, 2023, at a pre-agreed price of Rs 2,165 (warrant exercise price). The warrant issue price together with the warrant exercise price represents a premium of 32 per cent to the closing price of the corporation's equity shares on the BSE/NSE prior to the launch of the Issue.

"The equity shares and warrants offered in the QIP have been subscribed to by 326 diverse marquee institutional funds," said HDFC Ltd.

Technology giants join battle against Trump's visa ban

ROBERT BURNSON AUG. 11



Some of the largest tech companies—including Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft—are the latest to join the court battle against President Donald Trump's ban on new visas for temporary foreign workers.

The group asked a court on Monday to be allowed to add the industry's voice to a lawsuit opposing the ban, saying it's causing "irreparable harm on businesses and the nation's economy."

Trump issued a proclamation on June 22 that suspends a host of non-immigrant visa programmes, including H-1B visas for high-skill specialty occupations, H-2B

visas for non-agricultural workers, and L-1 visas for intra-company transfers.

Among the other tech companies seeking to weigh into the federal court case in Oakland, California, are Adobe Inc, GitHub Inc and Intel Corp. The 52 companies separately filed a similar request in a challenge to Trump's actions pending in Washington.

"The president's suspension of non-immigrant visa programmes, supposedly to 'protect' American workers, actually harms those workers, their employers, and the economy," the group said in its friend-of-the-court filing. "Rather than shielding domestic workers from the threat of foreign competition, the proclamation all but ensures that firms will need to hire abroad to fill highly skilled positions, for which the domestic demand far exceeds the available supply of workers."

Separately, Google, Spotify USA Inc and Bloomberg LP submitted a request to add their support for a court order blocking Trump's policy.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

New logo for Hyderabad FC

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 11

The Hyderabad Football Club on Tuesday unveiled their new and updated crest which will be used in all forms of communication with the 2020-21 season onwards.

The club's new logo retains the primary assets of the original crest which showcases a merger between the rich legacy of Hyderabad, it's contribution to Indian football along with the city's rapidly evolving modern identity. "It's a start of the new and exciting era for all of us at Hyderabad FC, and we're happy to share the evolution of the club's logo. Our crest and brand identity has been a bold one, and we felt this upgrade really helps us venture into a lot of things," Hyderabad FC co-owner Varun Tripathi said in a statement.



Hockey camp hit by positive tests

New Delhi: The upcoming training camp for India's male hockey players in Bengaluru looks uncertain after half a dozen of them tested positive for Covid-19 but the women can resume practice after all of them tested negative for the dreaded virus. Six Indian men's team players — skipper Manpreet Singh, striker Mandeep Singh, defenders Surender Kumar, Jaskaran Singh, drag-flicker Varun Kumar and goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak — have tested positive after reaching Bengaluru for the national camp, scheduled to start on August 20. Of these, Mandeep has been hospitalised after his blood oxygen levels dropped on Monday. "The men's camp is in doubt after six positive results, more reports are still awaited from the state government," a SAI source confirmed. "But the women's camp is still on course after all the players tested negative. They are currently under 14-day quarantine period and the light intensity camp will begin once its over," the source added. — PTI

Senior scribe Menon no more

Mumbai: Veteran sports journalist G. K. Menon died in suburban Mumbai on Tuesday morning. He was 93 and is survived by his wife, son and a daughter. He worked with the *Indian Express* and *The Times of India* and ended his freelance career in the early 1990s. Menon played cricket at the club level and also was an active member of the Shivaji Park Gymkhana in Dadar, central Mumbai. He was manager of the 1952-53 Bombay University team which won the Rohinton Baria Trophy by beating Delhi in the final at Bengaluru. That side included future Test players like Chandu Patankar, Nari Contractor, Ramnath Kenny, Naren Tamhane and GR Sunderam. Menon was also instrumental in the emergence of former India pacer, late Ramakant Desai. — PTI

CHAMP TRUMP IS DUMPED AT SNOOKER SHOW

London: Judd Trump suffered a shock exit from the World Snooker Championship as the title holder crashed to a 9-13 quarterfinal defeat against Kyren Wilson on Tuesday. Trump became the last victim of the so-called 'Crucible Curse' which has seen 18 first-time winners of the world title fail to retain the crown since the event moved to the Sheffield venue in 1977. Trump trailed 6-10 from Monday's opening session and fired three breaks over 50 in the first four frames on Tuesday to reduce the deficit to just two. But eighth seed Wilson moved one frame from victory after winning the 21st frame in two visits. — AFP

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BOWL BABY BOWL
CSK, KKR to carry 10 net bowlers for IPL

New Delhi, Aug. 11: The Indian Premier League shifting its base to the United Arab Emirates for the 2020 edition may prove to be a blessing in disguise for at least 50 unheralded cricketers, who are set to travel with the eight teams as "exclusive" net bowlers.

At least three franchises, Chennai Super Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals confirmed that they are preparing a roster of net bowlers.

The list comprises mostly first-class, U-19 and U-23 state level cricketers who will get to bowl to the likes of MS Dhoni, Suresh Raina, Rishabh Pant for close to a month.

The convention all these years has been using local bowlers for nets apart from the junior fringe players but the strict bio-security measures for the tournament means that all franchise will have to arrange for quality bowlers during practice sessions.

While BCCI has capped the squad strength (players) to 24, the franchises have not been specified contingent volume which will vary from team to team.

"If all goes well, we are planning to take around 10 bowlers exclusively to UAE for the practice sessions. They will be accompanying the team and will remain till the tournament starts," Chennai Super Kings Chief Executive Officer Kashi Vishwanathan said.

The Kolkata Knight Riders also confirmed that they will also have 10 net bowlers in their roster, likely to be handpicked by former cricketer Abhishek Nayar.

"It will be a blend of players of who have played Ranji Trophy while some of have played U-23 and U-19 national level tournaments," someone who is privy to developments in the KKR camp informed.

— PTI



Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming (left) speaks with his captain M. S. Dhoni in this file photo.

Maskless Jadeja wife in row with cop

Ahmedabad, Aug. 11: Wife of cricketer Ravindra Jadeja entered into an argument with a police constable in Gujarat's Rajkot after the latter asked her the reason for not wearing a mask, police said on Tuesday.

The cricketer was driving the car at the time of the incident on Monday night. While he was wearing a mask, his wife Rivaba wasn't, a senior officer said.

The cricketer's wife had a heated argument with head constable Sonal Gosai when the latter stopped her car at Kisanpara Chowk after noticing that she was not wearing a mask, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Manoharsinh Jadeja said.

"Our primary investigation has revealed that

MUMBAI CA TO MEET ON RESUMPTION OF CRICKET

Mumbai, Aug. 11: Resumption of cricketing activities in the megalopolis will top the agenda of the Mumbai Cricket Association's (MCA) Apex Council meeting to be held here on August 14.

Cricket in the megalopolis has come to a grinding halt since mid-March due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and Mumbai is one of the worst affected cities in the country.

"We will discuss resumption of cricketing activity and also the Standard Operating Procedures sent by the BCCI to all the state associations in this regard," an Apex Council member said.

Issues related to the formation of Cricket Improvement Committee (CIC) will also be discussed.

The MCA had shortlisted three names — Lalchand Rajput, Raju Kulkarni and Samir Dighe — as members of the CIC. — PTI

Rivaba Jadeja was not wearing a mask. While it is a matter of investigation why the issue escalated, we have learnt that both the parties entered into a verbal spat," the DCP said.

● **Ravindra Jadeja's wife, Rivaba was driving a car without wearing a mask and got into an argument with a head constable at the location while being questioned for not wearing a mask.**

Following the argument, Gosai, the head constable at the location, complained of uneasiness and was taken to a nearby hospital, he said.

The wife of Chennai Super Kings allrounder was discharged after half an hour and is fine now, the officer said, adding that no FIR has been lodged as yet. — PTI

Ref-dad Broad fines son Stuart

Dubai, Aug. 11: England fast bowler Stuart Broad has been fined 15 per cent of his match earnings by referee Chris Broad, who incidentally happens to be the cricketer's father, for using "inappropriate language" after dismissing Pakistan spinner Yasir Shah in the first Test at Manchester.

"The incident occurred in the 46th over of Pakistan's second innings on Saturday, when Broad used inappropriate language after dismissing Yasir Shah," said the ICC in a statement.

According to the release, Broad was found to have breached Article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct, which relates to "using language, actions or ges-



England cricketer Stuart Broad (left) with his father Chris Broad in this file photo.

tures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during an International Match."

In addition to this, one merit point has been

added to the disciplinary record of Broad, for whom it was the third offence in a 24-month period, taking his cumulative demerit points to three.

Broad's previous breaches were on January 27 this year during the fourth Test against South Africa at the Wanderers, and on August 19, 2018, in the third Test against India at Trent Bridge.

"Broad admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Chris Broad of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees and ratified by the ICC Cricket Operations department as per the Covid-19 interim playing regulations," the release added.

On-field umpires Richard Kettleborough and Richard Illingworth, third umpire Michael Gough and fourth official Steve O'Shaughnessy levelled the charge against Broad. — PTI

Kuznetsova pulls out of US Open

New York, Aug. 11: Former US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova withdrew from this year's tournament on Monday citing concerns over the Covid-19 outbreak.

The 35-year-old Russian, who won the first of her two career Grand Slam titles at Flushing Meadows in 2004, joins a lengthening list of players from Europe who have opted to skip the event. "Due to the unfavourable situation due to Coronavirus... I made the difficult decision for myself to refuse to participate," Kuznetsova said in a post on her *Instagram* page.

The world number 32 will also miss the ATP/WTA Western and Southern Open, which is being played in New York this year instead of Cincinnati as a warm-up event for the August 31-September 13 Open.

"I'm sorry as I've been waiting for these tournaments, but the pandemic

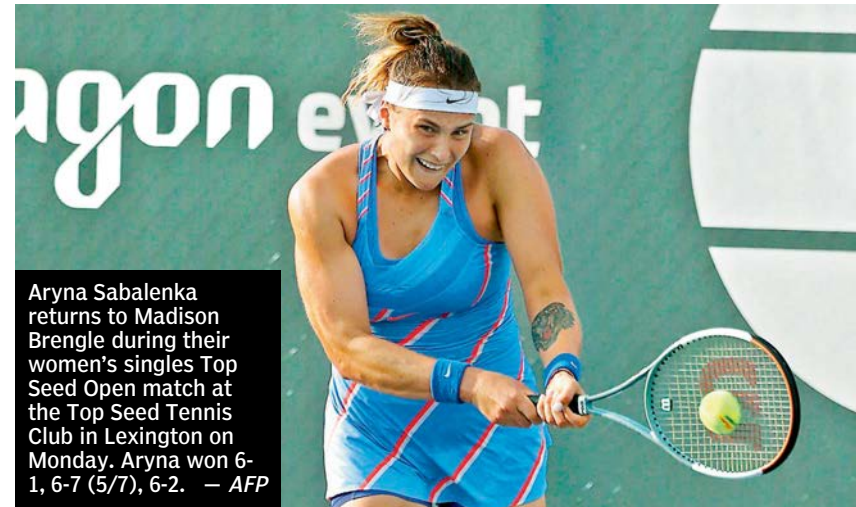
Due to the unfavourable situation due to Coronavirus... I made the difficult decision for myself to refuse to participate. I hope that the situation in the world will become more stable.

— SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA on withdrawing from the US Open

changed all plans. I hope that the situation in the world will become more stable by the next competition," Kuznetsova said.

In a separate announcement on Monday, the US Tennis Association confirmed the Czech Republic's Barbora Strycova had also withdrawn from the US Open, along with China's Wang Xiyi.

The US's Ann Li and Australia's Priscilla Hon have been elevated to the main draw as a result of the withdrawals. — AFP



Gritty Konta goes down

Lexington (USA), Aug. 11: Britain's Jo Konta suffered a health scare as she crashed out of the opening round of the WTA Top Seed Open in Lexington on Monday with a straight-sets defeat to the Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova.

Third seed Konta requested medical attention just a few minutes into her 4-6, 4-6 first round loss to the unseed-

ed Bouzkova. The 29-year-old Briton looked uncomfortable and kept holding two fingers to her neck to check her pulse before eventually resuming play.

Konta later explained that she is prone to sudden palpitations that can send her heart rate soaring.

Other seeded players in action made it safely into the second round, with

Polish sixth seed Magda Linette beating the United States' Lauren Davis 6-2, 6-2, and Tunisia's Ons Jabeur, seeded eight, downing another American, Caty McNally, 6-2, 6-4.

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus was taken to three sets by Madison Brengle before claiming a 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2 win. — AFP

EUROPA | LEAGUE

Fernandes takes United to semis

Cologne (Germany), Aug. 11: Manchester United needed an extra-time penalty from Bruno Fernandes to scrape into the Europa League semifinals after beating Copenhagen 1-0.

In sweltering heat, United's young team controlled the lion's share of possession but had a hard time creating clear chances until Andreas Bjelland brought down Anthony Martial in the penalty area. Fernandes blasted the ball past the otherwise excellent goalkeeper Karl-Johan Johnsson to give United the 95th-minute lead.

Mason Greenwood and Fernandes hit the woodwork with shots during normal time and earlier video reviews cost United two of its best opportunities to score.

First, VAR scratched off a United penalty for offside in the buildup. Just before the break Greenwood put the ball in the net after a lightning break down the right flank but the replay showed he'd been just offside when Marcus Rashford's pass was played.

That decision was a par-

● **Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes scored an extra-time penalty to help his side scrap into the last-four stage of the tourney.**

ticular blow for United after the apparent breakthrough goal came just as the English team had seemed to be getting frustrated and taking increasingly speculative shots against a Danish team playing its first ever European quarterfinal.

LUKAKU STARS AS INTER ADVANCE

Romelu Lukaku scored one goal and set up another as Inter Milan defeated a tenacious Bayer Leverkusen 2-1 to reach the Europa League semifinals.

Lukaku was the driving force from the start, imposing himself on the game and disrupting the Leverkusen defense to keep Inter in the hunt for its first trophy in nine years. Inter last played a European semifinal on its way to the Champions League title in 2010.

— Agencies



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (in red) vies for the ball with FC Copenhagen's Jason Wood (left) during their UEFA Europa league quarterfinal match in Cologne, Germany, on Monday. United won 1-0.

Atalanta brace for PSG strike

Milan, Aug. 11: Atalanta take on Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League quarter-finals on Wednesday with the tournament debutants the surprise standard bearers for Italian football in Lisbon.

Serie A champions Juventus and Napoli were felled in the last 16, leaving Atalanta to carry the nation's hopes of a first major European trophy since Inter Milan's 2010 triumph.

PSG will not have superstar Kylian Mbappe available, but Atalanta look set to be without top scorer Josip Illicic, who found the net 21 times in all competitions, including five in the Champions League.

"We miss Illicic very much," said coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

The 32-year-old Slovenian was on form until the coronavirus engulfed Italy and

Live on TV
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINAL

Atalanta vs Paris Saint-Germain from 12.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2

in particular the team's home city Bergamo, where at one point the army was called in to take away coffins because local morgues could not cope with the number of virus deaths.

Illicic was overwhelmed by personal and psychological difficulties and has been sidelined for the team's final games of the season. But Atalanta's strength has been the number of players who have contributed to their all-competitions tally of 118 goals. — AFP

DEVIN SHINES IN SUNS WIN OVER OKLAHOMA THUNDER

Orlando, Aug. 11: Devin Booker produced another 30-point scoring display as the Phoenix Suns notched six wins in a row since the NBA's restart with a blowout victory over Oklahoma City Thunder on Monday.

Booker scored 35 points with five rebounds and four assists in a 128-101 win that maintained Phoenix's improbable charge towards a place in the Western Conference play-in.

It was the fourth time in six games that Booker has scored more than 30 points in Orlando, where the Suns are a perfect 6-0 since the season resumed inside the NBA's bubble last month.

Booker's latest masterclass included an audacious three-pointer from near halfway late in the third period that extended the Suns' lead to 13 points, and underscored his status as the NBA's form player.

Booker's offensive effort was backed by double-digit scoring from five teammates. — AFP