





## IN BRIEF

**Driver accused of crushing ACP held**

**New Delhi:** A 28-year-old driver of a mini-truck was arrested for allegedly mowing down an on-duty assistant commissioner of police from the traffic department in Rajokri area, officials said on Saturday. The accused has been identified as Amit Pulami, a resident of Mahipalpur, they said. On the evening of July 25, an accident took place on NH-8 near Rajokri flyover where ACP (traffic) Sanket Kumar Kaushik (58) was hit by an unknown vehicle. Kaushik was taken to AIIMS Trauma Centre where he was declared brought dead, a senior police officer said. The statement of Kaushik's driver was recorded who said that the ACP was walking through the service lane near Rajokri flyover when a goods carrier vehicle came from Gurgaon side, hit him and sped away, police said. "On Friday, the vehicle was traced in Rangpuri, Mahipalpur, and the driver was apprehended from the parking," deputy commissioner of Police (southwest) Devender Arya said.

**Man held for stealing friend's mobiles**

**New Delhi:** A 29-year-old man was arrested for allegedly stealing his friend's bag containing three mobile phones in Malviya Nagar area, the police said on Saturday. The accused has been identified as Abid Khan, a resident of Malviya Nagar, it said. On Tuesday, one Aman Raj lodged a complaint where he reported that his friend had allegedly stolen his bag from his car in Malviya Nagar and fled, a senior police officer said. "The police analysed the CCTV footage of the area.

Technical surveillance revealed that one of the mobile phones was being used by Abid Khan. His location was zeroed in and later the accused was arrested," DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said. During interrogation, the accused disclosed that the complainant was his friend. The complainant planned to buy a mobile phone from Moti Bagh and the duo went there, Mr Thakur said. After purchasing a new mobile phone, the complainant stopped his car near a 24/7 outlet in Malviya Nagar to buy water. When the complainant went out of the car, Khan took the bag and fled from the spot, he added.

**Woman rams BMW into stall, 3 injured**

**New Delhi:** A 29-year-old fashion designer allegedly rammed her BMW car into a roadside ice cream stall and injured three persons standing near the stall in Southeast Delhi area. The incident took place at around 9.30 pm on Friday night. The accused has been identified as Roshani Arora, a resident of East of Kailash. A video of the incident also went viral on social media. In the CCTV footage it can be seen that a navy blue BMW car rammed into the ice cream stall and dragged the people standing near the stall on the roadside for a short distance. "The woman fled from the spot after the incident. The trio injured in the incident were taken to the National Heart Institute hospital, where they are undergoing treatment," said a senior police official. "A case under relevant section of Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been registered and the woman was later released on bail," said a police official privy to the investigation.

**Meat transporter attacked by mob**

**Gurgaon:** A 27-year-old man transporting buffalo meat was waylaid by a group of men and thrashed publicly before the police came to his rescue in Haryana's Gurgaon district, officials said on Saturday. The incident took place on Friday morning and one of the accused has been arrested after an FIR was lodged in the case, a police official said. Videos of the incident also surfaced on social media, purportedly showing the group of men kicking and dragging the pick-up driver, while one of them used a small hammer to hit the victim multiple times. One of the videos showed a policeman standing next to the victim, dressed in a T-shirt and track-pants, while several people were seen witnessing the violence unfold on the road as mute spectators. — P/TI

# Dy-CM to Shah: Allow hotels, weekly bazaar

*Govt to send its proposal to L-G again on Tuesday***AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday urged Union home minister Amit Shah to direct lieutenant governor Anil Baijal to allow hotels and weekly markets in the national capital to reopen under Unlock 3.

It is beyond comprehension what the Centre wishes to achieve by keeping hotels and weekly markets shut in Delhi when they have been allowed to open in states with high Covid-19 caseload, Mr Sisodia said in a letter to Mr Shah.

The deputy chief minister's letter comes a day after L-G Baijal rejected the Arvind Kejriwal government's decision to allow reopening of hotels and weekly markets in the city under Unlock 3, saying the Covid-19 situation continues to be "fragile" and the threat is still "far from over".

Unlock 3 is the third phase of easing of restrictions imposed across the country as part of the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Mr Sisodia said the Delhi government will again send its proposal to the L-G on Tuesday.

"I request you to ask the L-G not to stop the proposal. If traders start their businesses, jobs will be generated, and the condition of the economy will improve," said Mr Sisodia, who also holds the finance portfolio. The Delhi government had on Thursday

## No. of Covid containment zones down to 496 in Delhi

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

The number of Covid containment zones has come down to 496 in Delhi after an extensive review by the government, providing relief to thousands of people living in such restricted areas. The number of containment zones was 715 in Delhi by the end of July, affecting nearly 3.5 lakh people. With the number going down to 496, the movement of only about one lakh people will be affected, revenue minister Kailash Gahlot said in a statement on Saturday.

The review of the containment zones by the AAP government comes after a Union health ministry

memorandum earlier this week, allowing all states and Union territories to de-notify a containment zone 14 days after the discharge of the last Covid patient, officials said. Earlier such a de-notification could be done 28 days after the discharge of the last patient.

"As desired by Honble CM @ArvindKejriwal all the containment zones in Delhi were extensively reviewed in last 2 days with each District DM and surveillance Team," Mr Gahlot said in a tweet.

A locality is declared a containment zone by the district authorities in Delhi if three or more persons there test positive for Covid-19.

decided to allow hotels, street hawkers to resume operations and do away with the night curfew from 10 PM to 5 AM as part of Unlock 3. It had also decided to allow weekly bazaars to reopen on a trial basis for a week with social distancing and all necessary coronavirus-appropriate measures in place, but the L-G intervened before the government could issue an order.

In his letter, Mr Sisodia accused the Centre of adopting a "dual policy".

"Hotels and weekly markets are open in the whole country, even in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, etc. Which have reported the highest number of cases. It is beyond comprehension what the Centre wishes to achieve by keeping hotels and weekly markets shut in Delhi," he said.

He said the Covid-19 situation in Delhi has been "quite under control" over the past one month and things are gradually heading towards normal.

## 36 cops suspended for failing to report for duty on time

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

Thirty-six Delhi Police personnel, including three assistant sub-inspectors, were suspended for failing to report for duty on time on the occasion of Eid al-Adha on Saturday, officials said. They were posted in the northwest district, they said.

"On the occasion of Eid al-Adha, the police officers had to report by 5 am but they did not report till 6.30 am, following which they have been suspended," deputy commissioner of police (northwest) Vijayanta Arya said.

▶ **ON THE occasion of Eid al-Adha, the police officers had to report by 5 am but they did not report till 6.30 am, following which they have been suspended**

The suspended personnel include three assistant sub-inspectors, constables and head constables, the police said.

They were briefed about their duty beforehand but did not report on time, they said. The personnel have been suspended till further orders. They will report to district police lines, a senior police officer said.

## 2nd sero-survey begins in city, 1,118 new Covid cases in 24 hrs

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

The second round of sero-survey began in Delhi the national capital on Saturday, with the five-day exercise set to cover all districts and various demographic segments. The exercise is being undertaken for a comprehensive assessment of the Covid situation in the city.

As many as 1,118 new cases and 26 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours. Of the total 1,36,716 cases in the city, 10, 596 are active and 1,22,131 patients have recovered. The virus-

related fatalities have gone up to 3,989.

The survey has begun and samples will be collected from four districts, including North Delhi and Northwest Delhi, to start with on Saturday.

A senior government official said 15,000 samples would be collected from August 1 to 5 as part of the exercise, spanning different areas and age groups. Representative samples will be taken from all the 11 districts. A sero-survey involves testing the blood serum of individuals to check for the prevalence of antibodies against infection.



People offer namaz on the occasion of Id-ul-Zuha at Jama Masjid in Old Delhi on Saturday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

## Police head constable succumbs to coronavirus

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

A Delhi Police head constable has died due to novel coronavirus at a hospital, officials said on Saturday.

Leela Dhar, who was posted at the Defence Colony police station, died on Friday.

Dhar had reported about mild fever on July 11. He was taken to Nehru Homeopathic College and Hospital, where he had tested positive for Covid, deputy commissioner of police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

He was later admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital. He was shifted to ICU on July 19 and was given plasma therapy. On Friday, Dhar passed away, the deputy commissioner of police said. More than 2,500 Delhi Police personnel have been infected with Covid so far.

Of these, more than 2,100 have recovered and resumed their duties, while over a dozen succumbed to the disease, police said.

## Furious passenger thrashes immigration official at IGI

**SUNIL THAPLIYAL**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

Irked over a long queue and an equally long wait at the immigration clearance, a passenger allegedly thrashed an immigration official at the IGI airport on July 23.

The accused alleged that the immigration officials did not perform their task with efficiency. He, along with his parents, was returning from Dammam. He was booked by the Delhi police.

"On July 22, at about 11.10 pm, a passenger identified as Aadab Ali along with his parents arrived from Dammam to Delhi on a GoAir flight. They were standing in an immigration queue when suddenly the accused started to shout that the immigration officials were not performing their duty with efficiency which was causing delay in the immigration clearance process.

"An immigration official, identified as Vijayant Kumar Khatri, who was posted at immi-

▶ **AADAB ALI along with his parents arrived from Dammam to Delhi. They were standing in an immigration queue when suddenly the accused started to shout that the immigration officials were not performing their duty with efficiency which was causing delay in the immigration clearance process**

gration (Arrival), tried to pacify the accused. However, he remained furious and continued to create nuisance at the immigration counter," said a Delhi police official.

A few minutes later, his mother complained of chest pain and sat down on a chair. Vijayant Kumar Khatri rushed to her chair and offered her a bottle of water. However, the incident took an ugly turn when the accused allegedly thrashed him badly without any provocation, the official added.

"The Industrial Security

Force (CISF) and airline officials intervened and took control over the accused and brought the situation under control. The Delhi police rushed to the spot soon after getting a call and nabbed the accused for further legal action," the official said.

Later, Mr Pal filed a police complaint against the accused.

"The accused has obstructed government officials from performing their duty and has allegedly beaten him. He has been booked under Sections 186 and 353 of the Indian Penal Code," said a Delhi police official.

The accused is a resident of Zakir Nagar in Delhi.

Meanwhile, air passengers are irked as they have to wait for long periods during security checks at both the domestic and international terminals. Many irate passengers have repeatedly posted pictures of long serpentine queues they have to stand in and asked why there is no respite from this problem.



Vehicles ply on road during heavy rain at Delhi-Gurugram border on Saturday. — P/TI

## Umar Khalid questioned by Delhi Police in riots case

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

Delhi Police on Friday seized mobile phone of former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) scholar Umar Khalid for forensic examination after interrogating him for several hours in connection with the Delhi riots.

According to the sources, Khalid was quizzed and interrogated on Friday by special cell and after interrogation his mobile phone was seized and it will send for forensic examination.

The First Information Report (FIR) registered against Khalid in April had stated that the Delhi Riots were a preplanned conspiracy that was hatched by the JNU scholar and his associates.



Umar Khalid

"As part of the conspiracy, Umar Khalid gave provocative speeches at two different locations and appealed to people to take it to the streets during the visit of US President Donald Trump, so that the propaganda that minorities are oppressed in India can be internationalised," stated the FIR.

"Delhi riots accused Tahir Hussain was also in touch with Umar Khalid and his close aide Khalid Saifi," a chargesheet filed

▶ **The FIR registered against Khalid in April had stated that the Delhi Riots were a preplanned conspiracy that was hatched by the JNU scholar and his associates**

in July for the murder of IB official Ankit Sharma stated.

In the chargesheet, filed in the murder of IB officer Ankit Sharma and Tahir Hussain's role in the riots, it is mentioned that Tahir Hussain hatched the plans for the riots in January when Hussain had met the JNU scholar and Khalid Saifi at Shaheen Bagh. "Khalid Saifi had also met with Zakir Naik to raise funds for the riots," stated the chargesheet.

## Noida gets female scooter-borne patrol units

**Noida, Aug. 1:** The Gautam Buddh Nagar police on Saturday launched their new all-female scooter-borne patrolling units with an aim to provide safety to women in Noida and Greater Noida, officials said. Police Commissioner Alok Singh flagged off the "SwayamSiddha" patrol units, which would frequent locations like metro stations, shopping malls, schools and colleges, auto stands and other places that witness female footfall in large numbers, the officials said. Fifty such units were flagged off on Saturday and a total of 100 scooters have been made available for the newly-crafted patrol unit.

There would be one rider per scooter, which could be a police sub-inspector, a head constable or a constable. The uniformed personnel will be equipped with a body-worn camera, a baton and "hidden arms and



Gautam Buddh Nagar police commissioner Alok Singh flagged off 'SwayamSiddha' patrol units in Noida on Saturday.

ammunition", as they go around crucial spots and road stretches in the district, the officials said.

"It's an initiative by deputy commissioner of police (Women Safety) Vrinda Shukla. Her department has been coming up with initiatives on women safety in the past also which have shown positive results," police commissioner Alok Singh said. "Today, 50 such units have

been launched. The initiative has been done after adequate research. About 163 hotspots were identified across the district where women felt need for more police security. Route charts have been prepared accordingly for the patrolling units," he said. Additional commissioner of police (Crime) Shriparna Ganguly and DCP Shukla, among other officers, were present dur-

ing the launch of the all-women patrolling unit.

The district police chief said these personnel will carry batons and body-worn cameras along with "hidden" arms and ammunition.

Initially, these units will be deployed during daytime but depending on the feedback, changes can be made later both in terms of their duty timings and equipment, he added.

He said women safety has been a key focus area for the police commissionerate of Gautam Buddh Nagar ever since its inception in January this year.

The police have started initiatives like "mahila chaupal", set up dedicated units for women at each police station in the district and also started a family dispute resolution clinic for providing legal and mental counselling in cases of marital discord, he added. — P/TI



## SHORT TAKES

**Post hails Dharavi's fight against Covid**

**Mumbai:** After the WHO, the *Washington Post* has also lauded the Dharavi-model that helps contain the spread of Coronavirus. The largest slum in the country saw rapid transmission of the deadly virus during the initial days of its outbreak. The American daily newspaper has appreciated the BMC for the way Dharavi has beaten back the virus against all odds. Earlier, it had also praised Mumbai's data transparency vis-a-vis other major cities of India in the fight against Covid-19. In the article titled 'How a packed slum in Mumbai beat back the coronavirus, as India's cases continue to soar,' in its Friday (July 31) edition, the *Post* has stated that Dharavi's turnaround offers both lessons and promise for other dense neighbourhoods, particularly in parts of the developing world battling the pandemic."

**Rare chameleon found in Bengal**

**Jhargram, West Bengal:** A chameleon of rare species was found in a house in West Bengal's Jhargram district on Saturday, forest department officials said. The reptile, which was spotted in the house of a school teacher in Sankrail village, was seen changing colours frequently, they said. The school teacher, Jhaleswar Pradhan, spotted the chameleon on the wall of his house and informed the neighbours. While they were busy netting the animal without hurting it, personnel of the Forest Department arrived at the spot and took it away, locals said. The department was ascertaining to which of the 202 species of distinctive class of Old World lizards the chameleon belonged, officials said.

— PTI

**Sonu Sood reaches out to 3 orphan kids**

**Hyderabad:** Help is pouring in for three children in Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district of Telangana who lost their parents, with actor Sonu Sood and also a state minister reaching out to them. Sonu Sood, who has been helping people hit hard by the COVID-19 induced lockdown and recently donated a tractor to a farmers family in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, has promised to take up the responsibility of the children. "They are no longer orphans. They will be my responsibility," Sood tweeted after a twitter user brought the plight of the trio to his notice. According to sources, their father had passed away earlier, while their mother died recently. They have a grandmother who is very old. — PTI

**110-yr-old woman wins Covid battle**

**Bengaluru:** In a cause for cheer, a woman, said to be 110 years old, has recovered from Covid-19 and was discharged on Saturday in Chitradurga district of Karnataka. According to health officials, Siddamma, who stays in the police quarters, has five children, 17 grand children and 22 great grandchildren. On July 27, she tested positive for coronavirus along with a few other family members and accordingly she was brought to the Covid designated hospital in Chitradurga where she completely recovered from the disease. The frail woman walked out of the hospital with the support of four people to be greeted by a team of doctors and paramedical staff. When she was asked whether she was scared after testing positive, Siddamma said, "I am not afraid of anyone." — PTI

**MMRDA official falls to death**

**Mumbai:** A senior Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority official died here after allegedly falling from his fourth-storey apartment, the police said on Saturday. It was being probed if Kulwendra Singh Kapur committed suicide, said an official from the Bandra Kurla Complex police station. Kapur was director (systems) at the MMRDA. The MMRDA said that he was found unconscious on Friday night by a security guard of the building where he lived in official quarters. "Immediately he was rushed to Hinduja hospital but hospital authorities declared him brought dead," it said. — PTI



Rescue operations underway after a heavy-duty crane collapsed at the Hindustan Shipyard Limited in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. As many as 11 people have been killed in the accident so far while one person is injured. — PTI

**Angry Rajnath Singh sets up panel to probe collapse 11 die in Vizag shipyard crane mishap**

**Visakhapatnam, Aug. 1:** A massive 70-tonne crane under trial run in the Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) came crashing down on Saturday here, crushing 11 victims to death in the first such mishap in the public sector ship-building company's 75 year old existence.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh said that a departmental inquiry committee has been instituted to establish cause behind the collapse that left 11 people dead. "Extremely anguished by the loss of lives due to an accident at HSL facility in Vishakhapatnam (AP). My thoughts are with the bereaved families. May the injured recover quickly," said Mr Singh. All the deceased who came under the falling iron mass, rail-

ducting a trial run of the crane when its cabin and base snapped and collapsed as a dead-weight load was being tested, Visakhapatnam District Collector V Vinay Chand said. There were no other casualties in the incident, he added.

Chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy spoke to Vinay Chand and enquired about the incident. Mr Reddy directed the collector and Visakhapatnam city commissioner of Police R K Meena to take required follow-up action.

Four of the victims were employees of HSL, including a supervisor, while the other seven were workers of three contracting agencies, the Collector told reporters after inspecting the accident site.

— Agencies

**Tilak made our freedom struggle Indian, says Shah**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

Describing Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak as a multifaceted personality who linked Indian culture, thoughts, history, pride and languages with the Independence struggle and who believed that "true nationalism can be built only on the old foundation" and that "culture should be the foundation of Swaraj," Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday said Tilak made India's freedom struggle truly Indian.

Mr Shah said Tilak's slogan "Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it," will be remembered till eternity as only few can sacrifice everything including their life for a cause like Tilak did for the freedom struggle.

In his inaugural address to observe the 100th death anniversary of Tilak at a webinar session organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Research — 'Swaraj to Atmanirbhar Bharat,' Mr Shah said if one wants to understand India, its freedom struggle and its growth, one must read about the life of Tilak and his contributions to the freedom movement and ideas for the country's growth and development which are relevant even today.

"Tilak's personality, his work, ideology are relevant even today...he was someone who understood India, its people who based freedom struggle on Indian culture and laid

**Tilak continues to inspire people: PM**

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to one of the icons of India's freedom struggle Bal Gangadhar Tilak on his 100th death anniversary, saying his intellect, courage and idea of "swaraj" continue to inspire people. Mr Modi shared a brief video of one of his *Mann Ki Baat* programmes in which he had referred to Tilak's efforts to unite people against the British rule. "India bows to Lokmanya Tilak on his 100th punya tithi (death anniversary). His intellect, courage, sense of justice and idea of Swaraj (self-rule) continue to inspire," Mr Modi tweeted. — PTI

the foundation for development on culture...who believed that nationalism can be built only on the old foundation and one should accept all good new things that come in the future," said the Union minister.

"Tilak turned Shiv Jayanti and Ganeshutsav into people's festival to give a direction to the freedom struggle."

Mr Shah said if Tilak is known for leading the freedom movement he is also known for leading campaigns for social causes against cow slaughter, untouchability and for bringing out Kesari and Marathi newspapers and for his revolutionary ideas for freedom struggle.



Union home minister Amit Shah during the webinar Lokmanya Tilak: Swaraj to Atmanirbhar Bharat in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

**5 killed in boiler blast in Nagpur**

**Nagpur:** Five workers were killed in a boiler explosion at Manas Agro Industries and Infrastructure Ltd in Maharashtra's Nagpur district on Saturday afternoon, the police said. The incident took place near a biogas plant of the company at Bela village in Umred tehsil around 2.15 pm.

The deceased were identified as Mangesh Prabhakar Naukarkar (21), Liladhar Wamanrao Shende (42), Vasudeo Ladi (30), Sachin Prakash Waghmare (24) and Prafull Pandurang Moon (25), all residents of Wadgaon village.

Sachin worked as a welder while others were helpers. — PTI

**States not taken into confidence, says Bengal minister Stalin steps up attack against NEP**

**Chennai, Aug. 1:** Stepping up his attack against the Centre's new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, DMK president M.K. Stalin on Saturday said it was an attempt at "imposition" of Hindi and Sanskrit and vowed to fight against it by joining hands with the like-minded political parties and the chief ministers of other states.

The sweeping reforms were not new education policy but "a glossy coat on the old oppressive Manusmriti," he alleged. The Congress and the Left parties had on July 30 criticised the BJP-led government at the Centre for "bypassing" the Parliament on NEP.

**Staff swindles ₹2cr from A/C of Kerala collector**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 1

An official at the sub treasury here allegedly siphoned off ₹2 crore from Thiruvananthapuram collector's account. The treasury director has ordered an inquiry into the embezzlement.

Sources in the treasury department said the accused, a senior accountant in the department, used the user name, password of a sub treasury officer who retired from service on May 31.

Several transactions amounting to a total of ₹2 crore were made during the period up to July using the login name and password of the retired official. Subsequently, the transaction details were deleted.

The fraud came to light when officials found a difference of ₹2 crore in the day book noting.

Many say the department's failure to cancel the retired official's account, including login name and password came handy for the staffer to carry out the fraud.

Normally the user name and password of officers are scrapped the day they retire from service.



M.K. Stalin

WITH THE education placed in the State List, the Centre will assume the remaining rights of the states and take in its control (aspects ranging) from syllabus to university, DMK president M.K. Stalin said

In a letter to partymen, Stalin said the party was committed to the struggle against such policies of the government, and recalled it (also) moving the Madras High Court on the issue of OBC reservation in All India Quota (AIQ) in medical admissions.

There was an "undeclared emergency" in the country, he said referring to detention of political

figures in Jammu and Kashmir among others.

On the NEP, he questioned why the "successful" 10+2 system was being replaced with 5+3+3+4 and described the vocational education for children as a "psychological attack" on them.

He further said "with Education placed in the State List, the Centre will assume the remaining rights of the states and

**Apple, Samsung line up with ₹11L cr proposals, says Prasad**

**New Delhi, Aug. 1:** As many as 22 domestic and international firms, including iPhone maker Apple's contract manufacturers as well as Samsung, Lava, Dixon and so forth, have lined up with proposals for mobile phones production worth ₹11 lakh crore over the next five years, Union Telecom and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Saturday.

The minister said these proposals under the government's Rs 41,000-crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for mobile phone manufac-

turing are expected to create around 12 lakh jobs, 3 lakh direct and 9 lakh indirect employment opportunities, in the country.

"There will be huge (mobile phone) production of around Rs 11 lakh crore, huge export of around ₹7 lakh crore and great employment opportunity for 3 lakh direct and 9 lakh indirect people. I personally thank all the companies that have applied," Mr Prasad told reporters.

The minister said that a total of 22 companies have filed applications

take in its control (aspects ranging) from syllabus to university."

A senior minister of the Mamata Banerjee government has said it was formulated without being passed in Parliament and the states were not taken into confidence.

Mr Chatterjee, who was speaking to newsmen on Friday night, claimed that the NEP, 2020 is a "copy paste of the western model".

"I wonder how come they (Centre) thought of enforcing it without any discussion in Parliament and with the state government. This is unilateral," said Mr Chatterjee, who is also the TMC secretary general. — PTI

**AYODHYA Both will be invited via phone calls After snub, Advani, Joshi to get invite**

New Delhi, Aug. 1:

Veteran BJP leaders L.K. Advani and M u r l i M a n o h a r Joshi will "definitely be invited" to the ground-breaking ceremony for building of the Ram temple in



L.K. Advani



M.M. Joshi

Ayodhya on August 5, reports quoting sources in the trust, set up to oversee the construction, said on Saturday, hours after it seemed that neither would receive such an invitation.

Both will be invited via phone calls, as all other leaders have been too, sources added.

Former Union minister Uma Bharti and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh, who told a news channel that he had no regrets over the events of December 6, 1992 — when the Babri mosque was destroyed — and that he had already paid the price, got their invitations on Saturday.

They have said that they will be at the event, for which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also been invited and will attend.

Last week Mr Advani appeared before a special CBI court in Lucknow via video link to answer questions relating to the mosque's razing. Mr Advani, 92, who is among the accused in the case and was asked more than 1,000 questions over four-and-a-half hours, has denied all charges, according to his lawyer. — Agencies



Ram Ki Paidi illuminated ahead of the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Saturday. — PTI

**Bharti gets invite for 'bhumi puja'**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
BHOPAL, AUG. 1

Two senior BJP leaders of Madhya Pradesh — former chief minister Uma Bharti and ex-minister Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya — have been invited to attend the "bhumi puja" for Ram temple in Ayodhya on August 5.

Incidentally, both the saffron leaders are currently facing trials in the Babri mosque demolition case.

They are the only leaders from MP who have received an invitation to attend the ceremony by the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas.

Ms Bharti on Saturday made public the invitation extended to her to attend the ceremony in a Twitter post.

According to her, the invitees have been asked



Uma Bharti

to reach the venue on August 4 and leave not before August 6.

Ms Bharti, who played a major role in Ram temple movement, said she felt elated when she received the invitation to attend bhumi puja event.

She was one of the accused in the Babri mosque demolition case.

Another BJP leader from MP who received an invitation to attend the occasion was former minister Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya.

Mr Pawaiya had also played a role in Ram temple movement and is an accused in Babi mosque demolition case. He had earlier served as national president of Bajrang Dal.

**Schools, colleges in Assam may open Sept. 1**

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 1

Assam education minister Himanta Biswa Saram on Saturday announced that his government has decided to set up a 40-member committee to suggest measures to implement the new education policy while releasing a broad guideline for opening of educational institutions from September 1.

Informing that panel headed by principal secretary education will submit its recommendations by December 31, Mr Saram told reporters that they have started this exercise to prepare the blue-print of implementing the policy from January next year.

Pointing out that implementation of New Education Policy may require a lot of structural reforms, the minister said, "The panel will be divided into several sub-groups to study and analyse the various facets of the new policy."

"The Assam government welcomes the new policy, which is a historic step as it will bring about integration of different streams, art, culture and languages, particularly the regional languages," he said, adding that the state is all set to thoroughly peruse the National Education Policy 2020 and modifications, if required, will be discussed at the Cabinet.

**Khadi items in paramilitary canteens soon**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

In a bid to further promote Prime Minister Narendra Modi's push of "vocal for local" all para-military forces will soon get into an agreement with Khadi and Village Industries Commission to see their products at CAPF canteens. The move comes close on the heels of ITBP finalising an agreement with KVIC.

Earlier, the home ministry had decided that all

CAPF canteens will sell only indigenous brand.

Officials claimed that the plan eventually was to ensure that items produced by the Khadi Commission are sold across all the canteens of para-military forces in the country. The move, officials added, will not only promote small local manufacturers associated with KVIC but promote indigenous products.

"The entire plan is in line with the basic thought of the govern-

ment and Prime Minister which is vocal for local and Atmanirbhar Bharat which is to promote indigenous products. Now initiative is being taken by our para-military forces which will be encouraged

further," a senior paramilitary official said.

The Central paramilitary forces have a massive network of 1,700 canteens across the country with a whopping turnover of ₹2,800 crore and is thus a huge market for indigenous products. These canteens cater to 50 lakh family members of 10 lakh police personnel of central para-military forces who are deployed on various internal security and border guarding duties across the country.



## SHORT TAKES

## Army jawan killed in LoC firing by Pak

**Jammu:** An Indian Army jawan was killed when Pakistan opened heavy fire on forward posts along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Saturday, a defence spokesperson said. He said the Pakistan Army violated the ceasefire agreement by opening fire along the LoC in Rajouri sector. "Indian troops responded strongly to the enemy fire," the spokesperson said. In the incident, Sepoy Rohin Kumar was critically injured and he later succumbed to his injuries, he added. Kumar, a resident of Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, was a brave, highly motivated and a sincere soldier, the spokesperson said. He said that the nation will always remain indebted to him for his supreme sacrifice and devotion to duty. A Hamirpur district official said Kumar, 25, was supposed to get married in November. — PTI

## Former Malla royal shoots himself dead

**Bankura:** A 62-year-old member of the former Malla royal family of West Bengal's Bishnupur shot himself dead on Saturday. Salil Singh Thakur shot himself in the head with his licensed pistol in the royal palace in Bankura district's Bishnupur in the morning. He died on the spot, they said. Hearing the gunshot, the housemaid rushed to Thakur's room and found him lying in a pool of blood and informed the other members of the family, an officer of the Bishnupur police station said. Thakur's neighbours claimed he was suffering from depression due to his physical ailments. A probe is underway to ascertain the reason behind the suicide. Thakur is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter. The Malla kings of Bishnupur ruled over the Mallabhum kingdom and were instrumental in constructing terracotta temples in the region. — PTI

## Heavy rains likely in Mumbai Aug. 3-5

**Mumbai:** Mumbai and some other districts in Maharashtra are likely to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall in a few places from August 3 till August 5, said the India Meteorological Department on Saturday. The places likely to get heavy to very heavy rainfall during this period, apart from Mumbai, are Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Pune, Kolhapur, Sangli, Beed, Latur and Osmanabad districts. Places in Nanded, Hingoli, Parbhani, Jalna, Sangli and Aurangabad are likely to receive light to moderate rain till August 5, the IMD forecast added. As per IMD classification, "heavy to very heavy rainfall" means precipitation ranging from 64.5 mm to 204.4 mm in a period of 24 hours. — PTI

## 2 more die in Bihar floods, toll now 13

**New Delhi:** The death toll in Bihar floods climbed to 13 on Saturday after two fresh casualties were reported, while floodwaters of the overflowing rivers in Uttar Pradesh affected 331 villages and about 1.90 lakh people following heavy rains. The India meteorological department has issued yellow alert for 10 districts in Kerala for the next four days, and heavy to very heavy rainfall for Mumbai and some other districts from August 3 to 5. The Met Department has forecast heavy rainfall for Uttar Pradesh and gave a fresh yellow weather warning for heavy rains in Himachal Pradesh for August 4 and 5. Heavy rains are expected over central plains and western coast on August 6 due to a low pressure area, ministry of earth sciences secretary M. Rajeevan said. — PTI

## College student stabs mom to death

**Bengaluru:** Irked by his mother rebuking him for staying out with his friends late in the night, a college student stabbed her to death in Mandya town, following which he has been arrested. The student was arrested on July 30, a police official said on Friday. He said the woman was upset over her son frequently spending time with his friends till late in the night. On Wednesday, she scolded him for not listening to her advice, following which he stabbed her to death. — PTI

## Veterans may seek action against Singhar Tribal neta accuses seniors of destroying Cong in MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, AUG. 1

Senior Congress leader and former minister Umang Singhar, known for his proximity to former AICC president Rahul Gandhi, on Saturday accused the party veterans of destroying the Congress to further their interests.

Mr Singhar's comment has triggered a row in the party with several senior leaders mulling to move the party leadership in Madhya Pradesh, seeking disciplinary action against him.

In a Twitter post, Mr Singhar said many leaders and Congress workers as well as the Nehru-Gandhi family have made many sacrifices since freedom movement in the country. But, some Congress leaders are now out to destroy Congress and its youth leadership to further their interests.

Mr Singhar had posted the message, targeting veterans in the party, on the occasion of Id.

His comments sparked a huge row in the Congress here with several senior party leaders deciding to take up the matter with the MP Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief Kamal Nath for action.

## 2 docs jailed for attacking journalist, Odisha cop

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 1

Two doctors of a private hospital in Odisha have landed in a jail for allegedly attacking a working journalist and a police official. The arrested doctors were identified as Debasish Sahoo and Sibasish Sahoo, both brothers by relation.

According to reports, journalist Sunil Mohapatra of Kendrapara town working with a web portal visited a nursing home in Kendrapara town on Friday evening to cover a story. While he was capturing video of the nursing home on his mobile phone, the doctors objected to him.

When the scribe continued his job, the doctors asked their nursing home staff to chase and beat him up. Even, they snatched away the journalist's phone and motorcycle.

An official of the district administration who was passing by the nursing home, found crowd in front of the nursing home. He immediately informed the local police about violation of Covid-19 guidelines.

On receiving information, Kendrapara Town Police station assistant sub-inspector Soumya Ranjan Jali rushed to the spot. During investigation into the incident, the police official asked the nursing home authority to return the mobile phone and motorcycle to the journalist. However, the doctors who had attacked the journalist declined to return the items.

When the police ASI wanted to verify the CCTV footage to find the exact incident that occurred in the evening, the doctors allegedly heckled him and misbehaved with him.

One of the main

## Do not discredit your own legacy: Veterans to young netas

**New Delhi, Aug. 1:** Amid an ongoing tussle between the young and old guard in the Congress, party veterans urged their colleagues on Saturday not to discredit their own legacy and said by doing so, they would only be aiding the BJP's designs to undermine the party in the public eye.

Advising restraint in airing grievances in public, several former Union ministers cautioned party colleagues, saying such tendencies divide the Congress at a time when unity is needed.

Rising in defence of the Congress-led UPA, the performance of which was questioned by young leader Rajiv Satav at a

"Mr Singhar is trying to drive a wedge between the youth and the senior leaders in the party by giving such comments which may prove detrimental to the interest of party ahead of byelections to 27 Assembly constituencies in MP. We are going to take up the matter with Mr Nath for action," a senior Congress leader here said requesting not to be quoted.

Mr Singhar, a key tribal leader of Congress in Madhya Pradesh, had a few months ago set off a storm in the Congress when he called former chief minister Digvijay Singh a "blackmailer".



Villagers make a temporary crossing with bamboo above a river after the bridge over it washed away in floodwater following incessant rain at Baksa district's Jartaluk, Assam, Saturday. — PTI

## Religare case: SC stays bail given to Shivinder Singh

**New Delhi, Aug. 1:** The Supreme Court has stayed the bail granted to former Fortis Healthcare promoter Shivinder Mohan Singh in a money laundering case related to alleged misappropriation of funds at Religare Finvest Ltd (RFL).

A bench comprising justices Arun Mishra, B.R. Gavani and Krishna Murari on Friday passed the direction on a plea moved by the Enforcement Directorate against a Delhi high court judgement granting bail to Mr Singh.

The apex court order came after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the ED, submitted that the high court did not consider the grounds raised by the agency.

Until further orders, status quo with respect to release from jail be maintained and impugned judgment (of HC) not to be treated as a precedent for any other case.

Reply, if any, be filed in the meantime, the apex court said.

The high court on July 23 granted bail to Singh, saying it does not perceive any grave threat to the interests of the society or the public at large with his release.

One of the main

recent meeting of the party's Rajya Sabha MPs, former Union minister Anand Sharma said no one discredits their own legacy.

"Congressmen must be proud of the UPA's legacy. No party disowns or discredits its legacy. Nobody expects the BJP to be charitable and give us credit, but our own should respect and not forget," he said.

"In Congress, unfortunately, some ill-informed would rather take swipes at Dr Manmohan Singh led UPA govt than fight NDA/BJP. When unity is required they divide," former Union minister Manish Tewari wrote on Twitter. — PTI

leader of Congress in Madhya Pradesh, had a few months ago set off a storm in the Congress when he called former chief minister Digvijay Singh a "blackmailer".

The party high command had taken strong exception to his comment and referred the matter to the disciplinary committee of the party. The matter was still pending with the committee.



Shivinder Mohan Singh

grounds raised by the ED's special public prosecutor Nitesh Rana before the HC was that Singh smuggled and used a mobile phone while in custody.

The high court had granted the bail on furnishing a personal bond of ₹1 crore and two sureties by family members of ₹25 lakh each, while imposing various other bail conditions on him, including that he shall not tamper with the evidence or influence witnesses, directly or indirectly.

The trial court had earlier denied bail to Singh in the matter, after which he approached the HC.

He was arrested in the money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and in the fraud case by Economic Offence Wing of Delhi police on December 12 and October 10 last year respectively. He has not been granted bail in the EOW's case yet. — PTI

## Mumbai police cooperating in Sushant probe: Bihar DGP

Top cop rules out CBI probe demand, says our men capable enough

**Patna, Aug. 1:** The Mumbai police is assisting the sleuths from Patna visiting the metropolis to probe the death of Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput, Bihar's director-general of police (DGP) Gupteshwar Pandey said on Saturday, dubbing the allegations of misbehaviour as "rumours".

Speaking to reporters, he said the Bihar police is capable enough to investigate the matter and has recorded statements of a number of persons.

Our team is camping in Mumbai. It has already examined and recorded the statement Rajputs close friend Mahesh Shetty. It also recorded the statement of his former girlfriend Ankita Lokhande, his sister Mitu Singh, cook Ashok, Niraj, and Dr Chavda (Dr Kersi Chavda), who treated Sushant for depression, Pandey said.

Some more persons will be examined in connection with the alleged suicide, he added.

Mr Pandey said the Bihar police wants all medico-legal evidence related to the case handed over to it, asserting that it will bring out the truth at the earliest.

A four-member team of the state police is in Mumbai to probe the suicide after it registered an FIR at the Rajiv Nagar police station here on July



Fans of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput stage a protest demanding the CBI inquiry into the case in Patna on Saturday. — PTI

25 based on a complaint lodged by Rajput's father K.K. Singh.

Our team had a meeting with Mumbai's deputy commissioner of police (Crime) on Friday evening. The DCP assured of cooperation... Initially, there was some confusion and non-cooperation, Mr Pandey told reporters here.

Stating that the allegations of Mumbai police's misbehaviour with the Bihar police personnel were "rumours", Mr Pandey said the local police there helped the sleuths from the eastern

state reach its destinations. He said that the Mumbai police did so as probably it did not want the Bihar police to encounter the media.

Mr Pandey said the Bihar police wants the forensic science laboratory reports, inquest report, post-mortem report and relevant CCTV footage in order to facilitate the probe.

The Bihar police also wants details of those who were examined by the Mumbai police and what they have said in their statements, the top police chief said. — PTI

## Therapist 'He was suffering from depression'

**Mumbai:** Late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's therapist has finally broken her silence and spoken to journalist Barkha Dutt about the later actor and his severe condition and how Rhea was his biggest support during the tough time.

Dr Susan Walker said Sushant was suffering from depression and bipolar disorder. "In light of the misinformation and conspiracy theories currently raging on social media about Sushant Singh Rajput and Rhea Chakraborty, I have decided it is my duty to make a statement. In my capacity as a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, I met Sushant and Rhea on several occasions in November and December 2019 and communicated again with Rhea in June of this year." — Agencies

The four-member Bihar police team arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday to probe the "abatement to suicide" case registered against Chakraborty and others in Patna.

On Saturday the team visited the Bandra police station in connection with the investigation.

When asked whether Chakraborty would be interrogated, an official of the Bihar police said, "It is not required as of now. But she is under our watch."

Another member of the visiting team said they have sent notice to

## Actor Rhea 'under watch' of Bihar police

**Mumbai, Aug. 1:** The Bihar police which is in Mumbai to investigate an "abatement to suicide" case related to the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput said it was keeping a watch on his friend and actress Rhea Chakraborty.

The four-member Bihar police team arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday to probe the "abatement to suicide" case registered against Chakraborty and others in Patna.

On Saturday the team visited the Bandra police station in connection with the investigation.

When asked whether Chakraborty would be interrogated, an official of the Bihar police said, "It is not required as of now. But she is under our watch."

Another member of the visiting team said they have sent notice to



Rhea Chakraborty

He also said that the Mumbai police was cooperating with them in the investigation of the case.

Krishna Kumar Singh (74), Rajput's father, had lodged a complaint against Chakraborty and six others, including her family members, for alleged abatement to suicide, in Patna on Tuesday.

The case was registered under various IPC Sections, including 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement), 380 (theft in dwelling house), 406 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating) and 306 (abatement of suicide). — PTI



Army band members perform to honour the Covid-19 warriors as they take part in the 74th Independence Day celebrations at Tipu Sultans summer palace in Bengaluru on Saturday. — PTI

## FM: GST Council to discuss AG view on compensation

**New Delhi, Aug. 1:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the attorney-general's view on GST compensation was sought after consultation with the states and a meeting of the GST Council would be held to discuss the legal opinion.

The finance minister was responding to a question on apprehensions raised by certain states about the reported AG opinion on GST compensation.

"This matter was discussed in the GST Council meeting when it met last time. Members expressed their views on the matter and it was decided that legal opinion should be taken from AG," Ms Sitharaman told reporters here.

The GST Council, chaired by the finance minister and comprising state counterparts, had in March decided to seek views from the AG, who is the chief legal officer of the government, on the legality of market borrowing by the Council to make good the shortfall in compensation fund.

"The opinion has come...we will hold an exclusive GST Council meeting on the issue of compensation," Ms Sitharaman said, adding that the date of the meet-

## Rajput sister writes to PM, says justice must prevail

**Mumbai, Aug. 1:** Actor Sushant Singh Rajput's sister Shweta Singh Kirti on Saturday made an appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding justice for her brother who died last month.

Shweta posted a brief note on her social media handles, requesting the PM to look into the death case of her brother and ensure that there is no tampering with the evidences.

"We are from a very simple family. My brother had no Godfather when he was in Bollywood nor do we have anyone right now."

"My request to you is to immediately look into this case and make sure that everything is handled in a sanitised way and no evidences are tampered with. Expecting justice to prevail," she wrote.

In her post on Instagram, Shweta also said that she believes in the judicial system and expects "justice at any cost".

Ankita Lokhande, who dated Sushant for over six years till 2016 after working with him on hit TV soap *Pavitra Rishta*, commented @satyamevjayate on Shweta's post.

On Friday, Ankita told a news channel that she stands with Sushant's family in these testing times and wants to know the reason behind his death. — PTI

## July GST collections drop to ₹87,422cr

**New Delhi:** The country's GST collections declined to ₹87,422 crore in July from ₹90,917 crore in the previous month, a finance ministry statement said on Saturday.

The July collections, however, are higher than ₹62,009 crore GST mopped up in May and ₹32,294 crore in April.

Year-on-year, the July 2020 collections are 86 per cent of the revenues mopped up in the same month last year.

ing will be decided shortly. According to sources, the attorney-general has opined that there is no obligation on the Central government to pay the GST compensation shortfall to the states.

The payment of GST compensation to states became an issue after revenues from imposition of cess started dwindling since August 2019 and the Centre had to dive in to the excess cess amount collected during 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Under the GST law, states were guaranteed to be compensated bi-monthly for any loss of revenue in the first five years of the GST implementation from July 1, 2017. — PTI

## Grant to Waqf Council almost dries up in NDA rule

ANIMESH SINGH NEW DELHI, AUG 1

The Central Waqf Council (CWC), an autonomous body under the minority affairs ministry, which receives annual grant-in-aid from the Centre for development of various properties across country which fall under its jurisdiction, has received the fund only twice in the last six years since May 2014, when the BJP-led NDA government came to power.

According to the official

data of the ministry, the CWC received the annual grant-in-aid regularly between 2009-10 and 2014-15. However, since 2014-15 it has received the funds from the Centre only once, i.e. for the year 2015-16, and that too on the second last day of that financial year (March 30, 2016 to be precise, which was an amount of ₹13.50 lakh).

The NDA government under Narendra Modi had assumed power at the Centre in May 2014, and after that CWC received

▶ IT HAS been more than four years since the last grant-in-aid amount was received by the Central Waqf Council

the grant on December 31, 2014 ₹2.98 crore (for 2014-15) and then again for the fiscal 2015-16, which is mentioned above.

It has been more than four years since the last grant-in-aid amount was received by the autonomous body. Though sources aware of

the developments said that CWC is not entirely dependent on funds from the Centre as it generates a lot of internal revenue of its own through several properties which fall under its jurisdiction all over the country, the central funds, though they keep on varying depending on the requirement of the organisation, do help in meeting its requirements.

During the UPA regime, CWC had been receiving the grant-in-aid regularly

between 2009-10 and 2014-15. As per the ministry's own data, it received ₹1.27 crore for 2009-10, ₹1 crore for 2011-12, ₹2.88 for the year 2012-13, and for the fiscal 2013-14 it received three separate amounts of ₹2.6 crore, ₹39 lakh and ₹23 lakh.

In 2014-15, the year NDA came to power at the Centre, the CWC received ₹2.98 crore and then ₹13.50 lakh for the year 2015-16. Ever since then, the grants have ceased to arrive.



## THE ASIAN AGE

2 AUGUST 2020



Shreevatsa Nevatia

Off the beaten track

## When Covid hits too close to home

I now live in the same house in which I was raised. From the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of a 16-storeyed high-rise, the monuments of Kolkata — Victoria Memorial, St Paul's Cathedral, Vidyasagar Setu — all seem a stone's throw away. The vista makes the city intimate. When developers started selling the building's 64 flats in the mid-1970s, buyers were, of course, enamoured by the perks of a Central Kolkata lifestyle, but it was the view, I'm told, that took their breath away. Over the years, pigeons have come to make our windowsills their homes, while crows have grown accustomed to sharing some of our breakfast. Until recently, this avian proximity had been nothing but charming, but of late, when I stand by my window at dusk, looking at bats circle our apartment complex, I've started to think they portend greater doom.

Barely a month after the country had gone into lockdown on March 25, we heard our neighbour on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor had passed away. The story of his death was harrowing. As his three children found their father gasping for breath, they tried hard to find him a ventilator. After being denied admission by two hospitals, my neighbour, a garrulous man in his late 60s, died while on his way to the third. His final rites didn't have much of an audience, but a few hours after he had cremated his father's body, my neighbour's son tested positive for Covid-19. As he recovered in hospital, I noticed his sisters were barely turning on their lights anymore. From my bedroom window, I saw them quarantine in the dark.

With their panic sometimes bordering on hysteria, residents of our apartment complex came to fear an infestation. Sudden death is a cause of



From the 13th floor of a 16-storeyed high-rise, the monuments of Kolkata — Victoria Memorial, St Paul's Cathedral, Vidyasagar Setu — all seem a stone's throw away. The vista makes the city intimate.

tragedy, yes, but it is also invariably a whodunnit. Those who had come in contact with the Covid-infected father and son were now doubting their every stray cough, while others busied themselves with the impossible task of trying to deduce how the virus had reached the building in the first place. Once all forms of amateur detective work had failed, one hoped that the municipality would help. Dressed in hazmat suits, they came looking the part, but, sadly, there were no nasal swabs or lengthy interviews. Seeing only our front gate being sealed felt anti-climactic.

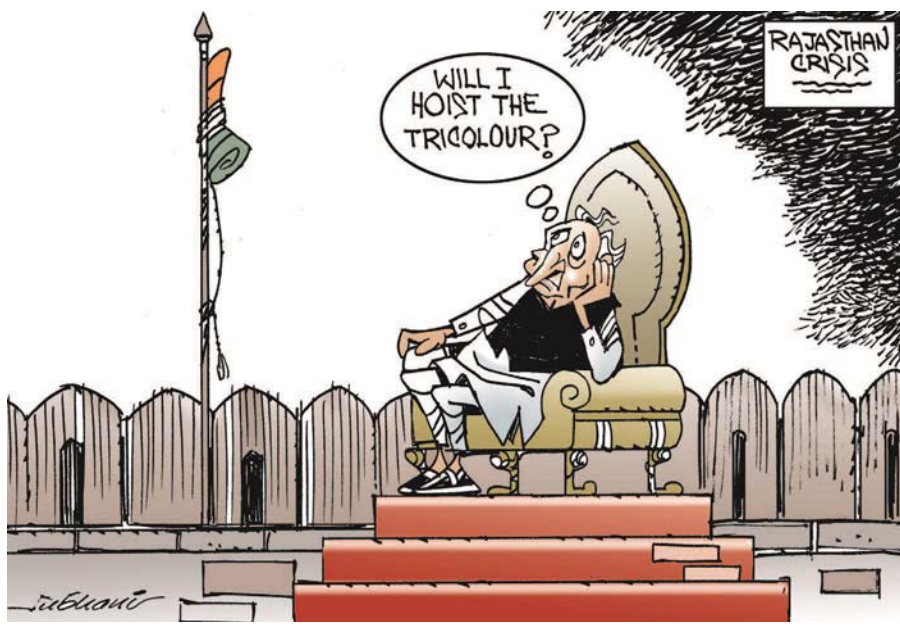
Finding us desperate to 'unlock' with the rest of the city, the constables posted outside our building turned a blind eye when we surreptitiously started using the back gate to visit our friends and barbers. When the Amazon parcels and Swiggy deliveries started coming back in, we felt free. Our prolonged isolation, we'd come to contrarily believe, had given us antibodies we did not have. Then, without warning, it happened again. Having resumed her evening walks at the Victoria Memorial, a middle-aged woman on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor is said to have returned with dengue one day. When tested, we're told, she was Covid-positive, too. Last week, a man with a heart ailment passed away in his second-floor home. Covid-19 had exacerbated his condition as well, and by the next day, his sister and help had also tested positive.

Strangely, these new cases haven't caused much panic. With flats having become their own islands, my neighbours now seem inured to tragedies that unfold next door. The consensus is simple: life, or what's left of it, must go on. Even the municipality this time is letting us be. When I reduce the impact of Covid-19 on my building to numbers — two deaths and three active cases — I feel oddly comforted. I tell myself things haven't gotten out of hand, yet. But I am deeply aware that this numeric reduction doesn't begin to encompass the dread of mortality I think I've seen in the eyes of some I've ridden the elevator with recently. You can reduce death to a number but its imminence is a lot harder to quantify.

My building has a WhatsApp group that swings into action every time a family finds itself in crisis, or when someone badly wants a special bread. Residents also organise Zoom calls to discuss what action they should take to protect themselves better. I sometimes feel these digital interfaces don't allow for a commiseration that can feel authentic. My neighbours who have died recently deserve better obituaries. Regrettably, however, I only know they'd smile when they'd see you in the elevator. They were large, tall men, who wore their shirts tucked in. I hear they tried their best to provide for their families. I know that when they died, their children were near them. Denied a chance to bid them a proper farewell, I imagine their relatives will find it hard to process their grief. But most importantly perhaps, I'm sure they'd have been happy with the purchase of their flats. The view here is truly great.

Shreevatsa Nevatia is a Kolkata-based journalist and the author of *How to Travel Light: My Memories of Madness and Melancholia*

Subhani



## The Women's Party: An opening manifesto



Sucheta Dasgupta

No More Mansplaining

What are women's issues? Contrary to common place belief, they are not necessarily LPG subsidies, or women's coaches and CCTVs. But they could be women's freedom of independent movement or mobility, access to schooling, food and birth control, and visibility within the workforce insofar as their identity as workers are concerned instead of being stereotyped as 'housewives plus' so that they, too, can avail what the government holds out to their male cohorts by way of livelihood opportunities. They could also take the form of evaluating the economic value of the service most of them perform in terms of domestic labour and instituting for it a fair remuneration.

Experience shows that our policymakers do not notice these issues. So how about an all-women party to push forward the cause? After all, it's only honourable that women take responsibility for their own well-being, growth, rights and quality of contribution to society.

There are three ways of ensuring equality of opportunity between the sexes — free access, affirmative action and reservation of seats. The case for an all-women party becomes all the more urgent seeing as the women's reservation bill has been hanging fire for 12 years and at the panchayati raj level, where 33 per cent reservation has been implemented, many of the elected are being seen as stooges of their husbands, or worse, more malevolent forms of patriarchy. Clearly, whether equity of outcome or equality of opportunity is the goal, reservations are not the final answer.

Say, we form a women's party. Luck (sortition), and not election experience or 'winnability', will be the criterion for handing out tickets within this women's party (it will perhaps make for grooming of many good leaders and save it from the trap a certain young Delhi-based, and now Delhi-confined, party has fallen into). Turncoats may avail party membership but will be barred from this draw of lots. The left/right nature of electoral politics excludes perspectives and concerns falling outside particular party agendas — these are deliberately kept out for fear of misperception of ideological dilution on the part of the electorate. One advantage of sortition over intra-party elections will be that, not being partisan in the old sense of the word, new members will bring to the table many more of these perspectives and concerns.

Just as a dalit party is not anti-brahmin, and a Dravidian party, outside of domicile issues, does not necessarily militate against north and east Indians, so also a women's party by definition will not be an anti-men party. Men are expected to trust the party enough to vote for it — if they do not it is their loss, but they do have the option of changing their mind after five years. In any case the women's party manifesto, and hopefully a five-year term, will have brought many of the real women's issues into the general policy agenda.

What are these issues? What will the (imaginary) manifesto look like? Take a sneak peak.

Identity cards for female farmers. In terms of sheer numbers, women's best productivity is in the field of agricul-

ture. Arguably, they number slightly more than male farmers. Yet only 12.7 per cent of them actually own land and hence miss out on the fruits of all the schemes the government provides for the *kisan bhai*.

Reasonable minimum support price for forest produce and forest rights. Women constitute a majority of forest workers. Yet they are being evicted from their places of livelihood in the name of development. A speedy hearing of their lawsuits will also go a long way towards ensuring their right to livelihood.

Universal service income to cover cooking, cleaning and chores performed by family members (of any sex) and domestic labourers.

Gender-neutral laws. This puts paid to fears of a woman's state denying men their rights. If laws are well-implemented, the interests of everyone, including women, will be protected. Women do not need additional safeguards.

Law reforms. According to the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956, the husband of a married female minor is her guardian, even if minor himself and having a guardian in his father. The same law stipulates that the natural guardian of a Hindu minor is "the father, and after him, the mother". Then again, the Special Marriage Act provides sanction to disinherit from ancestral wealth any Hindu who resorts to a civil marriage, which is an option available to those who wish to marry outside the community (without con-

**How about an all-women party to push forward the cause? After all, it's only honourable that women take responsibility for their own well-being, growth, rights and quality of contribution to society.**

verting the spouse). The list goes on.

Bar on the face veil. In the name of so-called multiculturalism/diversity, women cannot be denied identity, rights and agency.

A special law against honour killings because it holds back society in deeply normative ways.

Abolition of the women and child ministry. Because it is not as if women are a real minority and for democracy's sake, men who run the government needs must deign to accept the consensus developed within this group regarding various issues pertaining to their interests and cause. It is women and men who together created the social contract and together they must reform or refine it.

Educating the mother. Mothers are the honorary patriarchs of the family. It is they who perpetuate patriarchy, by not letting daughters travel independently and expecting daughters-in-law to do the housework. While it is time for feminists to reclaim the roles of the *behenji* and the 'aunty', it is moms who must face social pressure, not only to teach their sons to cook and 'respect women' but to teach them by example.

Inclusion of women in RWAs and local recreation clubs. This will lead to more sporting and artistic pursuits and possibly pave the way for the end of the institution called arranged (forced, or coerced) marriage.

There is already a women's party in existence; it's called the Women Empowerment Party. But it does not have this manifesto and it has male members. It also does not contest the general election.

There is also the newly launched National Women's Party that has among its goals women's safety and 50 per cent reservation of seats for women in parliament. Women's safety is frankly not a priority for this party. Because freedom is.

Would you vote for the new women's party?

## LETTERS

### REGULATE MEDIA

The defence ministry has asked the Central Board of Film Certification and I&B ministry to advise filmmakers to obtain a "no objection" certificate from it before the telecast of any film, documentary or Web series on Army themes. Some "concerned citizens" and ex-servicemen's associations have reportedly lodged FIRs against a production house. Our TV channels often telecast reports comparing the military power and inventory of our armed forces with those of the enemy. This and the practice of telecasting "special reports" from militarily sensitive places at the borders and elsewhere must also be banned. These channels made a disproportionate and ugly noise on the delivery of Rafale jet-fighters to India and indulged in ridiculous, empty bragging.

M.C. Joshi  
Lucknow

### PARTISAN EX-PREZ

**THE MOVE BY** Donald Trump to postpone the November election had a precedent in the electoral history of India. The year was 1991 when the first half of the poll schedule was completed that a tragedy struck the country on May 21 when Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. The then President R. Venkataraman postponed the next half of the election to allow a sympathy wave to be generated in favour of the Congress. Factually speaking, Rajiv Gandhi was not the Prime Minister in office at that time, but just the head of the GOP. Nobody at that time dared to question this highly partisan action by the then Rashtrapati. As expected, the next round of voting showed a distinctly pro-Congress tilt.

Arun Malankar  
Mumbai

### CATCH LANDSHARKS

**AS A MUMBAIKAR**, I welcome the decision of the BMC to conduct aerial surveys of the city with planes or drones to identify illegal structures. The move comes in the wake of failure on the part of ward staff to take action against illegal construction activity. As a result, building collapses have resulted in loss of lives. Now that the surveys will take place it will be easier for courts to rule against land mafia. This data must be kept online to deter them.

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

### MIND GAMES

**THIS REFERS TO** Aussie wicket-keeper Mathew Wade's comments that Indians' pace bowling will not be as effective as New Zealand speedster Neil Wagner's. There is no surprise in such comments by Australian players, as they are famous for these tactics just before start of a Test series. We are sure Kohli and his boys will not be a prey. I have a feeling that Hardik Pandya would be the game changer during our tour Down Under. The presence of Smith, Warner or Labuschagne is not going to deter the Kohli boys.

N. Mahadevan  
Chennai

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

# J&K statehood: Will it be announced from Red Fort on Aug. 15?

### I-Day buzz

What might be the singular big announcement in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech from the ramparts of Red Fort in New Delhi? With the Ram Temple inauguration done many speculate that it may have something to do with Jammu and Kashmir, where the resumption of the democratic process has been long overdue. However, there is a catch. Post the abolition of Article 370, the state was bifurcated and reduced to two Union territories. It is not just the Abdullahs but many political players from Jammu region are also less than enthusiastic about Jammu and Kashmir's UT status. The big question doing the rounds is whether Mr Modi and his deputy, home minister Amit Shah, will think out of the box and do course correction?

### Churning in Congress

There is renewed disquiet in the Congress party over Sonia Gandhi's stepping down as party chief and Rahul Gandhi taking over the mantle of leadership. The absurd replay of son taking over from mother is not bizarre enough. There is an intense tussle between those considered loyal to Sonia and the members of team Rahul. Thus if the edifice of Sonia's preeminence is to end, it requires a dismantling. In this context, the Congress' internal tussle for supremacy may yet produce some jarring notes.

### MPhil envy theory

What is it about the Masters of Philosophy degree (MPhil) that it has been dropped in the draft New Education Policy? The MPhil was introduced as a programme to train research students for more serious and rigorous postgraduate work.



By WAQYANAWIS

The MPhil was considered important because many decorate (Ph D) scholars were found wanting in research skills. A political

explanation might be that two young Gandhis — Rahul and cousin Varun — are MPhil holders, both in developmental economics from Cambridge University and the London School of Economics, respectively.

### Veteran in a spot

Janardan Dwivedi must be ruing the moment he decided to attend a meeting in memory of the late Sheila Dikshit, held by the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee. A motley gathering, after paying lavish tribute to the former Delhi chief minister, turned its attention to the Congress crisis in Rajasthan and the leadership issue. The former AICC general secretary was caught in the middle when someone asked Dwivedi to raise a banner of revolt from within the party. With his son already in the BJP, Dwivedi, who once took pride in being Sonia Gandhi's Hindi speechwriter, decided to flee instead of getting bogged down by the

rebellious deliberations.

### The other Shah

The appointment of Hardik Satishchandra Shah in the Prime Minister's Office has taken many by surprise. Shah was promoted to the IAS in 2010 and is now PM Narendra Modi's private secretary. His rise has been spectacular. After doing his MTech, Shah was drafted into Gujarat's environment and forest department sometime in 2004. A fellowship abroad was followed by an appointment as member secretary in the Gujarat environment board. Shah arrived in Delhi soon after Narendra Modi became Prime Minister and was working closely with successive environment ministers.

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



## IN BRIEF

**Hurricane Isaias lashes Bahamas**

**San Juan:** Hurricane Isaias ripped shingles off roofs and blew over trees as it carved its way through the Bahamas early on Saturday and headed toward the Florida coast, where officials in Miami said they were closing beaches, marinas and parks. Miami Mayor Carlos Giménez said on Friday that 20 evacuation centers were on standby that could be set up with Covid-19 safety measures. "We still don't think there is a need to open shelters for this storm, but they are ready," he said. Authorities in North Carolina ordered the evacuation of Ocracoke Island, which was slammed by last year's Hurricane Dorian, starting Saturday evening.

**Afghanistan flood leaves 16 dead**

**Kabul:** Flash flooding in eastern Afghanistan killed at least 16 people after heavy rains swept parts of a mountainous area, an Afghan official said on Saturday. Heavy floods hit the Khewa district, said Attaullah Khogyan, spokesman for the governor of Nangarhar province. He added that four others were wounded in the incident. The majority of the victims are children, said Khogyan. He added that a team has been sent to the area to help with emergency services following the foul weather. The flash floods damaged dozens of homes, the spokesman added. Summer often brings heavy rainfalls in eastern Afghanistan.

**UAE starts up first Arab reactor**

**Dubai:** A nuclear power plant in the United Arab Emirates successfully started up its first reactor, authorities said on Saturday. The Barakah nuclear power plant in the Emirates' far western desert near the border with Saudi Arabia reached what scientists called its "first criticality" on Friday. That's when the nuclear chain reaction within the reactor is self-sustaining. The nuclear reactor ultimately will generate electricity and be connected to the country's power grid. The \$20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant was built by the Emirates with the help of South Korea. It's the first nuclear power plant on the Arabian Peninsula.

**Indian dancer bags UK PM's award**

**London:** An Indian-origin dancer who transformed his dance classes into free Bhangra sessions online to help people stay fit during the Coronavirus lockdown has bagged a Points of Light honour from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Rajeev Gupta, who believes bhangra offers an "upbeat, energetic and infectious" way of exercising, began the lockdown with a mission to stay active and positive through the traditional Indian dance form and went on to share that spirit through social media live streams. Last month, it resulted in earning him the honour of being a Point of Light, an honour conferred every weekday by the UK prime minister to outstanding volunteers and people making a change in their community.

**US ASTRONAUTS PACK UP FOR RARE SPLASHDOWN**

**Cape Canaveral, Fla., Aug. 1:** Two US astronauts about to make the first splashdown return in 45 years said on Friday they'll have seascak bags ready to use if needed. SpaceX and NASA plan to bring Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken back Sunday afternoon in the company's Dragon capsule, aiming for the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida Panhandle. Flight controllers are keeping close watch on Hurricane Isaias, expected to stick to Florida's east coast. Hurley said if he and Behnken get sick while bobbing in the waves awaiting recovery, it won't be the first time for a crew. Astronauts returning in the early 1970s from Skylab, NASA's first space station, did not feel well following splashdown, Hurley noted. Feeling sick "is the way it is with a water landing," he said during the crew's final news conference from the International Space Station. This will be SpaceX's first splashdown with astronauts on board.

**Protest for justice**

Black Lives Matter protesters rally at the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse on Saturday, in Portland, Ore. Following an agreement between Democratic Gov. Kate Brown and the Trump administration to reduce federal officers in the city, nightly protests remained largely peaceful without major confrontations between demonstrators and officers.

— AP

**China ready to push close ties with Nepal**

**Xi says both countries have written new chapter of friendship**

**Beijing, Aug. 1:** Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday said he wants to push for a continued advancement of ties with Nepal amidst Beijing's sustained forays to shore up pro-China Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's grip on power in the backdrop of intra-party feud in the ruling communist party. In an exchange of congratulatory messages with his Nepalese counterpart Bidhya Devi Bhandari on the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Xi asserted that he was ready to work to bring greater benefits to the two peoples of the two neighbouring countries. The Chinese President said that he attaches great

importance to the development of China-Nepal relations and is willing to work with his Nepali counterpart Bhandari to push for the continued advancement of the bilateral relationship. Xi, also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China, said that since the establishment of the diplomatic ties, the two countries have always respected each other, treated each other as equals, enhanced political mutual trust and deepened mutually beneficial cooperation. Xi said the two sides have stood together through thick and thin in the fight against the Covid-19 and have written a new chapter of friendship between China and Nepal. — PTI

**Trump says will ban TikTok app from US**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** President Trump said on late Friday he plans to ban Chinese-owned TikTok from operating in the United States, the latest sign of the administration's increasingly strident stance on China and its tech companies. "As far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them from the United States," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. Earlier on Friday, Trump was considering signing an order forcing China's

ByteDance to sell off the US portion of TikTok over national security concerns, according to people familiar with the talks, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss them publicly. One of the individuals confirmed Microsoft was in the lead to acquire the popular platform's US service. Trump said he could use emergency economic powers or an executive order to ban TikTok. — AFP

**Biden eyes major foreign policy change if he wins****Foreign threats loom ahead of Prez polls**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** Should former Vice President Joe Biden win the White House in November, America will likely be in for a foreign policy about-face as Biden reverses, dismantles or severely curtails many, if not all, of President Donald Trump's most significant actions.

From the Middle East to Asia, Latin America to Africa and, particularly, Europe, and on issues including trade, terrorism, arms control and immigration, the presumptive Democratic nominee and his advisers have vowed to unleash a tsunami of change in how the US handles itself in the international arena.

With few exceptions, Americans could expect Biden to re-engage with traditional allies. Where the iconoclastic Trump has used blunt threats and insults to press his case, Biden, a former senator, would be more inclined to seek common ground. Historically, US foreign policy hasn't changed drastically as the presidency shifted between Democratic and Republican administrations. Allies and adversaries stayed the same and a non-partisan diplomatic corps pursued American

**New York, Aug. 1:** As the November 3 presidential vote nears, there are fresh signs that the nation's electoral system is again under attack from foreign adversaries.

Intelligence officials confirmed in recent days that foreign actors are actively seeking to compromise the private communications of "US political campaigns, candidates and other political targets" while working to compromise the nation's election infrastructure. Foreign entities are also aggressively spreading disinformation intended to sow voter confusion

heading into the fall. There is no evidence that America's enemies have yet succeeded in penetrating campaigns or state election systems, but Democrat Joe Biden's presidential campaign confirmed this week that it has faced multiple related threats. The former vice president's team was reluctant to reveal specifics for fear of giving adversaries useful intelligence. Because of such secrecy, at least in part, foreign interference largely remains an afterthought in the 2020 contest. — AP

**Don, GOP soften on opposition to \$600 unemployment benefit**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** With political pressure rising, talks on a huge coronavirus relief measure resumed on Saturday, focused on restoring a newly expired \$600-per-week supplemental unemployment benefit, a fresh \$1,200 direct payment to most Americans, and hundreds of billions of dollars in other aid to states, businesses, and the poor. President Donald Trump is eager for an agreement but talks so far have not yielded progress. The administration is willing



Donald Trump

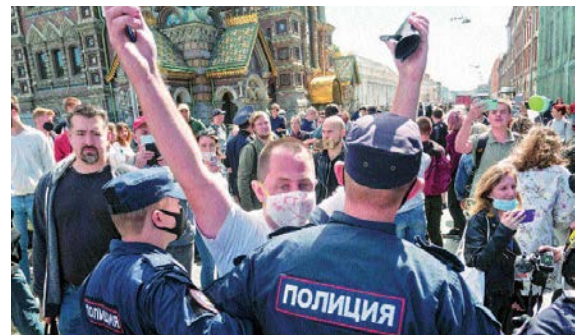
to extend the \$600 jobless benefit, at least in the short term, but is balking at other demands of Dem-

ocratic negotiators like aid for state and local governments, food stamp increases, and assistance to renters and homeowners. Unemployment insurance is a principal element as the Covid-19 relief bill is expected to grow considerably from a \$1 trillion-plus GOP draft released this week. The \$600 per week jobless benefit officially lapsed on Friday and Democrats have made it clear that they will not extend it without securing other relief priorities. — AP

**3 CHARGED IN TWITTER HACK, BITCOIN SCAM**

**Miami, Aug. 1:** A British man, a Florida man and a Florida teen hacked the Twitter accounts of prominent politicians, celebrities and technology moguls to scam people around globe out of more than \$100,000 in Bitcoin, authorities said Friday. Graham Ivan Clark, 17, was arrested on Friday in Tampa, where the Hillsborough State Attorney's Office will prosecute him as adult. He faces 30 felony charges, according to a news release.

Mason Sheppard, 19, of Bognor Regis, UK, and Nima Fazeli, 22, of Orlando, were charged in California federal court. In one of the most high-profile security breaches in recent years, hackers sent out bogus tweets on July 15 from the accounts of Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Mike Bloomberg and a number of tech billionaires including Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Tesla CEO Elon Musk. — PTI



Police block protesters during a rally supporting Khabarovsk regions governor Sergei Furgal in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Saturday.

— AP

**Russians protest the arrest of Gov.**

**Moscow, Aug. 1:** Thousands of demonstrators rallied on Saturday in the Russian Far East city of Khabarovsk to protest the arrest of the regional governor, continuing a three-week wave of opposition that has challenged the Kremlin. Khabarovsk Krai Gov. Sergei Furgal has been in a Moscow jail since his July 9 arrest on charges of involvement in murders that occurred before his political career started. He has denied the

charges. Protesters in Khabarovsk see the charges against Furgal as unsubstantiated and are demanding that his trial take place in his home city, 6,100 kilometers (3,800 miles) east of the Russian capital. His supporters have held daily protests, with the largest turnouts on weekends. The latest demonstration attracted about 10,000 people, according to some news reports. — AP

**US may use China, Russia vaccine as virus cases rise**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** America's top infectious diseases official has raised concerns over the safety of Covid-19 vaccines being developed by China and Russia as the world scrambles for answers to a pandemic the WHO warned will be felt for decades.

Six months after the World Health Organisation declared a global emergency, the novel coronavirus has killed at least 6,79,000 people and infected at least 17.9 million, according to an AFP tally. As countries across Western Europe announced new lockdowns and reported historic economic slumps, the UN health body said the pandemic was a "once-in-a-century" crisis and its fallout would be felt for decades.

Several Chinese companies are at the forefront of the race to develop an immunity to the disease and Russia has set a target date of September to roll out its own vaccine.

But US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said it was unlikely his country

● **AS COUNTRIES** across Western Europe announced new lockdowns and reported historic economic slumps, the UN health body said the pandemic was a "once-in-a-century" crisis and its fallout would be felt for decades.

would use any vaccine developed in either country, where regulatory systems are far more opaque than they are in the West. "I do hope that the Chinese and the Russians are actually testing the vaccine before they are administering the vaccine to anyone," he told a US Congressional hearing on Friday. "Claims of having a vaccine ready to distribute before you do testing, I think, is problematic, at best."

As part of its own "Operation Warp Speed," the US government will pay pharma giants Sanofi and GSK up to \$2.1 billion for the development of a Covid-19 vaccine, the companies said. — AFP

**MEXICO NOW AT NO. 3 IN WORLD FOR VIRUS DEATHS**

**Mexico City, Aug. 1:** Mexico has become the country with the third most Covid-19 deaths in the world, behind the United States and Brazil.

Mexican health officials said on Friday there were 688 deaths for the latest 24-hour reporting period, pushing the country's total to 46,688. That put Mexico just ahead of the UK, which has 46,119, according to the tally by Johns Hopkins University. The health officials also said Mexico now has had more than 4,24,000 confirmed Coronavirus cases during the pandemic.

Also on Friday, nine state governors from opposition parties criticized what they call the federal government's "confusing messages" on measures to curb the spread of the Coronavirus. — AP



Kayleigh McEnany

**US CONDEMNS HK DECISION TO POSTPONE POLLS**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** The US on Friday condemned the Hong Kong government's decision to postpone its legislative council elections by one year in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, saying the move undermines democratic processes.

The government invoked an emergency ordinance to delay the polls. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the government will hold the polls in September 2021. "We condemn the Hong Kong government's decision to postpone by one year its legislative council elections and to disqualify opposition candidates," White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany told reporters at a news conference here.

"This action undermines the democratic processes and freedoms that have underpinned Hong Kong's prosperity. And this is only the most recent in a growing list of broken promises by Beijing which promised autonomy and freedoms to the people of Hong Kong until 2047 in the Sino-British Joint Declaration," she said, responding to a question on the Chinese government-backed administration's decision to delay elections. — PTI

● **HONG KONG** leader Carrie Lam said the government will hold the polls in September 2021.

## INTERNET | SENSATION

**The couple began modelling from clothes left behind in their laundrette**

**Taiwan grandparents become Insta stars**

**Taichung, Aug. 1:** Taiwan's trendiest couple these days are neither young celebrities nor teen influencers — they are an octogenarian duo who run a mom-and-pop laundry service and have become an online sensation by modelling abandoned clothes. Chang Wan-ji, 83, and his wife Hsu Sho-er, 84, have racked up nearly 6,00,000 followers on Instagram over the last month as their attitude-filled fashion portraits went viral.

laundry for decades in a small town near the central city of Taichung. Over the years, customers have either forgotten or failed to collect reams of clothing that the couple never felt able to throw away. Grandson Reef Chang, 31, hit upon the idea of using the clothes to allevi-

ate the couple's boredom. "My grandpa and grandma were staring blankly at the streets because business wasn't good," he said. "I wanted to find something new they could enjoy doing." The pair were naturals in front of the camera. "Modelling these clothes makes me feel 30 years younger," beamed Chang. "Many people are telling me 'You are famous now and you look younger.'" Hsu felt so, too. "I am old in age but my heart is not ageing," she said. "I like to put on pretty clothes and go out to have some fun." It was while modelling

other people's garments, Hsu came to remember that she also had many forgotten outfits in her closet which she has since rediscovered. "I even found some clothes I bought 30 years ago and I can still wear them. It's a happy surprise," she said. The couple's Instagram account — @wantshowasyoung — is managed by grandson Reef. Chang currently only uses the Line messaging app to make free phone calls but Reef says his grandfather is keen to learn how to make the perfect Instagram post. — AFP



Chang Wan-ji, 83, and his wife Hsu Sho-er seen posing for a picture with their outfits. — Credits: Instagram



## OUR CRITIC'S RATING

Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

## A feminist tale in a sexist frame

## Shakuntala Devi

**CAST:** Vidya Balan, Jisshu Sengupta, Sanya Malhotra, Amit Sadh, Prakash Belawadi**DIRECTOR:** Anu Menon**RATING:** ★★★**PLAYING ON:** Prime Video

SUPARNA SHARMA

Writer-director Anu Menon's biopic, *Shakuntala Devi*, starring the effervescent and talented Vidya Balan, tells two stories simultaneously.

One story is of a girl, Shakuntala, who has had no schooling, no mentor, no formal training, but has a brain that loves figuring out numbers and how they play. A girl who grows up to become a mathematical genius with sparkling eyes and bright sarees with happily contrasting borders.

The second story, of equal prominence and significance, is of mothers and daughters, and their often fraught relationship.

This story of affection, expectation, disappointment, of troubled mothers and their angry daughters spans three generations. It's the story of how mothers and daughters struggle with each other, each wanting the exact same things — acceptance, love and some praise. And how life often comes a full circle, when daughters become mothers themselves and finally begin to understand and love their mothers.

*Shakuntala Devi* tells the story of a fiercely feminist, independent, successful woman who, in 1977, calculated the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in 50 seconds, but it sets it in a sexist, homely frame. A lesser actress would neither have been able to claim the character as her own nor redeem the film the way Vidya Balan does.

*Shakuntala Devi* opens in London on a pretty artificial note. A woman in a grisly wig seems rather miffed as she walks into a meeting with a lawyer. Anupama (Sanya Malhotra) wants to sue her mother, *Shakuntala Devi*, for destroying her financially. "Your mother could get a jail sentence," the lawyer says. "My mother has taken from me everything I loved," Anu says and the film cuts to 1934 Bangalore where, in sepia glow, a five-year-old in pig-tails with gajra, casually does a calculation involving a 10-digit number. And then she does another one.

To young Shakuntala's father (played by Prakash Belawari with his trademark mixture of perfidy and obsequiousness), having a mathematical genius at home means a source of income. He immediately starts taking bookings for shows.

As Shakuntala, herded by her father, turns into a "performer", she starts resenting the fact that she doesn't go to school, that her mother never stands up for her, that she has been deprived of a childhood, that though she runs the house, she doesn't really have a life.

Shakuntala grows up accepting the transactional nature of her relationship with her family. She internalises the

fact that she is on her own, and that she has a skill which will always take care of her. So she orders her dad around, drinks, has an affair and shuts up men with her prompt, correct answers when they think they are throwing challenging mathematical equations at a woman in a saree.

Soon she moves to London, leaving behind a story that speaks less of her appetite for violence, and more about her attitude — she will not settle for less than what she thinks she deserves.

In London, a man, impressed with her genius, watches how her crude style and broken English make people laugh and be dismissive of her talent. He decides to give her and her stage shows a makeover, to make them more engaging, entertaining, spectacular.

The film keeps toggling between *Shakuntala Devi's* past and present, the personal and the professional. As Shakuntala the genius impresses the world, away from public accolades is familial dysfunction.

She's called the "human computer" because she can do cube roots, give answers in reverse, reel off the dates of all Sundays of any year in seconds. But in the whirlwind that is her life, men don't stay because they don't feel "need-

**Shakuntala Devi tells the story of a fiercely feminist, independent, successful woman who, in 1977, calculated the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in 50 seconds, but it sets it in a sexist, homely frame. A lesser actress would neither have been able to claim the character as her own nor redeem the film the way Vidya Balan does.**

ed".

But Paritosh Banerjee (Jisshu Sengupta) is different. He's confident and doesn't want her to change. They marry, have a kid, Anu, and for a while Shakuntala is just a mother and wife. But the pull of the stage is too much. So she grabs little Anu and returns to tour the world.

They meet Nelson Mandela, *Shakuntala Devi* enters the Guinness Book of World Records, but Anu misses her father, having a home, and begins to see only her mother's flaws. She fights and breaks free, but years later, when a grown-up Anu says she wants to marry the boy she loves, Ajay (Amit Sadh), *Shakuntala Devi* disapproves, repeating the cycle of her own life. *Shakuntala* doesn't want Anu for money. She wants her as a companion, to keep circling in the orbit assigned to her. Because otherwise, in her empty home, there is no beholder of her genius.

It's not easy to write an engaging, full-length film where the protagonist's great skill and performance is rattling off numbers. So writers have to find an "in", they have to figure out how to frame the story. And this usually takes them home. Especially in the case of women.

The film, written by Anu Menon, Nayanika Mathani and Ishita Moitra, treats us to the thrilling, impressive genius of *Shakuntala Devi*, but pretty soon it begins to view her only through the eyes of her daughter. There's a purpose to this, of course.

Along with *Shakuntala Devi's* dazzling mind, it wants us to also see the warts and ugliness of this "amazing" woman. It wants us to embrace her with her flaws.

Finding a viewpoint, a voice that tells a story helps create a neat narrative, a clear plot-line which shines light on those aspects of a personality which may otherwise remain hidden.

My problem is not so much with the familial framing, but with the fact that it ends up dominating the story. As the film progresses, the frame gets

tighter, simplistic, and *Shakuntala Devi's* playground shrinks.

Biopics of men also often venture into the personal, but they are not contained within that one narrative, one point of view. There are more voices, more points of view.

Imagine if the story of Sachin Tendulkar was told primarily through the eyes of his son? Or the story of Ram only through the voices of Luv-Kush?

That just won't happen. And yet, in the case of women, it often does.

This is why research and writing are important.

In *Shakuntala Devi*, the stuff that's shown about her public performances is what you'd get with half-a-day's research. What's missing are moments of solitude with her. For example, how did she prepare for the Guinness Record? Or, what did she read, when did she practice, how did she teach herself cube root, calendar tricks... or, how did she progress from playing with a 10-digit number to the 201-digit miracle?

In her personal space too we get to see *Shakuntala Devi's* relationships with her mother, father, husband and daughter, but all interactions are whittled down to convey nothing more than the timeline of her life: Missed having a childhood. Moved to London. Was successful. Then they met. Got married. Loved. Separated. Toured the world with Anu. Fought. Estranged.

Each one conveys an event, but offers little insight. The perspective, if we can call it that, comes via Ms Balan as she waltzes in and out of rooms, throwing feminist vibes with oodles of self-love.

*Shakuntala Devi* the movie plays a lot with time, jumping between the past and present. To make these transitions easy on us, it gives us places and dates. But there's a tackiness in the construction of scenes which comes from using cinematic clichés rather than coming up with something original. Even stock scenes can be lifted, but there's very little detailing here. The few scenes that do stand out involve the chutzpah of *Shakuntala Devi*.

Thankfully, Vidya Balan's 1,000-watt presence, along with a very competent ensemble of supporting actors, especially Jisshu Sengupta, Sanya Malhotra and Amit Sadh, overrides most of these flaws.

Ms Balan has a big, radiant personality that crackles with an attractive inner cosmos. And yet she repeatedly inhabits real-life characters, bringing them to life with warmth and ease.

It's quite difficult to carry off a character where the high-points are rattling off numbers, repeatedly.

Ms Balan got very little to work with here. So she grabbed the few things that stood out — the south Indian accent, the chirpy "Am I correct?" refrain, and a feminist worldview. And she meshed all this with her own moxie.

Vidya Balan ages almost 50 years in the film as she goes through the various stages of life of a woman who passed away at the age of 83. We see her as young and old, drunk and sober, genius and happy, troubled and lonely, each one crafted as a separate, distinct entity. And that's why, henceforth, whenever *Shakuntala Devi* is mentioned, it's these images of Vidya Balan which will pop up in heads.

To construct these many avatars of *Shakuntala Devi*, Ms Balan is ably assisted by costume designer Niharika Bhasin. With just sarees, earrings, hairstyles and a few accessories, Ms Bhasin manages to create not just distinct looks, but infuses them with a palpably different spirit — the rustic girl who arrives in London, the confident woman who falls in love and marries, the busy, working mother who buys a house close to Hyde Park, and the aging, bespectacled woman who is lonely, sad, bitter, but rich.

Throughout the film a lot of attention is paid to *Shakuntala Devi's* head, her hair. Cinematographer Keiko Nakahara often aims his camera lens on the back of Ms Balan's head — serenading the gajra dangling from her pigtails, staring in awe at the elegant French bun, smiling at the simple jooda with a piece of bling, or following the bounce of her short hair.

It makes sense. That's the part of *Shakuntala Devi* which baffled psychologists and scientists who ran tests on her brain to figure out how she could do complicated calculations so fast. They couldn't.

It held mystique then, and it holds mystique even now.



## The Fight documents the ACLU in the age of Trump

JAKE COYLE

*The Fight*, Elyse Steinberg, Josh Kriegman and Eli Despres' documentary about the American Civil Liberties Union, opens with the inauguration of Donald Trump. His oath rings out like an opening salvo. In just seven days, protests will be amassed at JFK Airport in New York where ACLU attorneys rush to counter the Trump's administration's travel ban from seven Muslim-majority nations.

*The Fight*, which debuts on-demand Friday, works from that moment forward, trying to keep pace with the ACLU in a ceaseless battle over civil rights. It's a perpetual and frantic struggle, with workaholic lawyers always racing to court and seeking injunctions on the fly. *The Fight* zeroes in on four prominent Trump-era cases for the ACLU.

The directors last made the 2016 Anthony Weiner documentary *Weiner*. That film began as a fly-on-the-wall portrait of an up-and-coming New York politician, only to turn into a front-row seat to political disaster as Weiner's career self-immolated in a sexting scandal.

*The Fight*, timed to the 100th anniversary of the ACLU, bears no such arc. It begins with a warm impression of the ACLU and concludes with one. It is, some would say, a glossy advertisement for the historic nonprofit organization, even if the film, like its characters, doesn't shy away from the divisive role that the ACLU plays in American life for some. Their attorneys dutifully read their own hate mail. *Obviously most of you are pedophiles*, says one caller. But just as in *Weiner*, the filmmakers have a gift for capturing colorful personalities in high-pressure political environments. Our characters here include the perpetually rumbled Lee Gelernt, who's representing an immigrant woman separated for months from her young daughter;

Brigitte Amiri, who's defending a teenage immigrant woman who, after being raped, is barred from an abortion in Texas; Dale Ho, a fastidious lawyer arguing against a citizenship question on the U.S. census; and Josh Block and Chase Strangio, who oppose the Trump administration's ban on transgender soldiers serving in the military. Tracking these cases for nearly three years, *The Fight* burrows into life at the

ACLU. In a guided tour of their New York offices, Ho acknowledges it's a unique culture. *There are probably more tattoos and piercings here at the ACLU than there are at the DOJ*, he says. Part of the film's pleasure is in how the directors juxtapose the weighty, righteous causes of its attorneys with their humbler, eminently human lives. A win in the abortion case is celebrated by the commuting Amiri with a glass, she exclaims, of *Train wine!* In the midst of a dramatic turn in the family separation case, Gelernt is helplessly unable to charge his phone. When a younger colleague hands him a charger and directs him to his computer's USB port, she might as well be giving him instructions on how to reach Neptune. Still, the stakes are always present. While *The Fight* concentrates on the ACLU's legal crusaders, the few glimpses it affords to those the attorneys are representing are powerful. Perhaps it could use more of people outside the courtroom. But the few scenes, for example, of immigrant parents talking about their children being taken away from them are devastating.

Sometimes, *The Fight* could cry more closely. When the ACLU supported the First Amendment rights of white supremacist marchers in Charlottesville, Virginia, it prompted soul-searching throughout the ACLU. Here, legal director David Cole makes the case: *It's not a right for people you agree with. It's a right for everybody*. But *The Fight* would be a better documentary if it had captured the dialogue within the ACLU as it happened.

What most vividly comes across in *The Fight* is the never-ending nature of freedom and democracy.

— AP

## The Fight (Documentary)

**DIRECTOR:** Eli Despres, Josh Kriegman, Elyse Steinberg**RATING:** ★★★

## A sweet tearjerker set in WWII

## Summerland

**CAST:** Gemma Arterton, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Lucas Bond, Dixie Egerickx, Sian Phillips**DIRECTOR:** Jessica Swale**RATING:** ★★★

LINDSEY BAHR

*Summerland* might look like something you've seen before: A scenic story about a schoolchild who must leave London during the war and take up shelter with a reluctant caregiver. But while it is comfortably familiar in many ways, and a little cliché and overwrought in others, it also has a modern edge and bite to it that keeps it novel enough to sustain interest. That modernity is credit to writer-director Jessica Swale, a British theater director and playwright, who with *Summerland* makes a noteworthy entry into the world of film. With well-drawn characters and a surprising scope, the story feels like

it's been adapted from a novel (a compliment). And along with cinematographer Laurie Rose, *Summerland* captures three eras in a small seaside town with breathtaking beauty. The film opens in the 1970s on Alice Lamb (Penelope Wilton), scolding some local children for interrupting her work. Alice has not just aged into a person who is unsympathetic to children, though. *Summerland* quickly cuts back some 30 years to Alice (now Gemma Arterton), in the same house, at the same typewriter and still yelling at children who disturb the quiet. A few scenes later, she even takes some candy away from a local kid. (Technically she buys it when the child and her mother don't have enough, but the comically heartless act leaves the mother and storekeeper shocked and the child in tears.)

Suffice it to say, it comes as a shock when to a young schoolboy, Frank (Lucas Bond), shows up at her steps expecting shelter after being evacuated from London. Alice demands that different accommodations are made for the boy, whose father is fighting and whose mother remains in London. It will come as no surprise



that the two start to develop a bond soon enough, over his model planes and her academic work in mythology. Alice, it turns out, is a bit like a child herself, dreamy and naively selfish, making her a perfect companion to

Frank. The viciousness displayed at the beginning dissipates pretty quickly, which might come across as inauthentic to some, but the story does start to reveal why children annoy her so.

*Summerland* occasionally (and somewhat clunkily) cuts back a few years before the war, to show that Alice wasn't always a loner. In fact, she had a very picturesque romance with a woman, Vera (Gugu Mbatha-

Raw), who breaks Alice's heart when she leaves to have children. The flashbacks allow the production design and hair and makeup team to dabble in some jollier looks than wartime invites, and Arterton and Mbatha-Raw look especially fabulous in their flapper wares. The director's affection for the pair is clear: Both actors starred in the title role in Swale's play *Nell Gwynn*. Here, Alice naturally gets more to do - it's her story - but you do come away wishing for more Mbatha-Raw as well.

That's all very nice, but what's it got to do with Alice in the war and in the 70s? Well, fair warning, the threads do come together and far too neatly. But the charms of *Summerland* aren't in its plot. They're in the sentiment, which is too good-hearted to be cynical about, and the characters.

*Summerland* even felt a little resonant in the current moment. Quarantine doesn't compare to wartime sacrifices in the least, of course, and yet there is something undeniably moving about watching a hopeful and kind film like *Summerland* right now.

— AP



## SHORT TAKES

## Botham member of House of Lords

**London:** Legendary England all-rounder Ian Botham has been made a member of the House of Lords of the British Parliament.

The 64-year-old Botham, a former captain, was among 36 new peers announced by the government to join the unelected House.

Botham, who played 102 Test matches for England between 1977 and 1992, is a prominent Brexit supporter. He was knighted in 2007 in recognition of his services to charity and cricket. He will sit as a crossbench — independent — peer. He is the first cricketer to be awarded a peerage since former England women's team captain Rachael Heyhoe-Flint in 2011. David Sheppard, Colin Cowdrey and Learie Constantine were the others who were honoured with House of Lords seats earlier.

Botham's most famous moment on the cricket field came in 1981 when he inspired England to a sensational win over Australia in the Ashes.

— PTI

## TNPL postponed for second time

**Chennai:** The fifth edition of the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL) has been postponed for the second time due to the COVID-19 pandemic with TNCA now hoping to host the T20 event either in November this year or March next year. The popular T20 league tournament, which was initially scheduled to run from June 10 to July 12, was put off by the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association in May.

The TNCA was looking to conduct the event between July-end and September but will not be in a position to host.

"The TNCA was looking at a window between end July/August to end September as a possible window for playing the 5th edition of the TNPL tournament. However, due to the ongoing Covid related issue in the State of Tamil Nadu, TNCA will not be in a position to host the tournament in this window," TNCA Honorary Secretary R S Ramasaamy said in a press release. — PTI

## Golfer Stanley in lead at PGA event

**Los Angeles:** American Kyle Stanley eagled the par-five 12th hole as he grabbed the lead after the second round of the PGA Tour's Barracuda Championship.

Stanley leads the field with 22 points in the event in Truckee, California which uses a modified Stableford scoring format. Players receive eight points for albatross, five for eagle, two for birdie, zero for par, minus-one for bogey and minus-three for double bogey or worse.

Robert Streb, Austria's Matthias Schwab and South Africa's Branden Grace are tied for second with 20 points each at the Tahoe Mountain golf club.

Maverick McNealy and Troy Merritt share fifth place at plus-19.

First round co-leader Adam Schenk, Peter Uihlein, Argentina's Emiliano Grillo, Australia's Cameron Percy and Russell Knox are tied for seventh at plus-18. — AFP

## RELIEF FOR BOSTON RUN BOMBER

**Boston:** A federal appeals court on Friday threw out Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's death sentence in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, saying the judge who oversaw the case did not adequately screen jurors for potential biases.

A three-judge panel of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered a new penalty-phase trial on whether the 27-year-old Tsarnaev should be executed for the attack that killed three people and wounded more than 260 others. "But make no mistake: Dzhokhar will spend his remaining days locked up in prison, with the only matter remaining being whether he will die by execution," Judge O. Rogerie Thompson wrote in the ruling, more than six months after arguments were heard in the case. — AP

## PSG on French high

## Paris side claim another domestic treble

**Paris, August 1:** Pablo Sarabia scored the winning penalty in a shoot-out as Paris Saint-Germain warmed up for their assault on the Champions League in Lisbon by defeating Lyon in Friday's French League Cup final to claim another domestic treble.

The Spaniard's successful kick came after Keylor Navas saved from Bertrand Traore and allowed PSG to win 6-5 on penalties after the game at the Stade de France finished 0-0 at the end of extra time.

The victory comes a week after they beat Saint-Etienne 1-0 in the French Cup final, the first competitive match on French soil since the Coronavirus shutdown.

They had previously been awarded the Ligue 1 title by virtue of being top when the season was ended in April with 10 rounds of matches unplayed because of the health crisis.

Before penalties, Thomas Tuchel's team had the better of a terse final on a sweaty night, but they badly missed the injured Kylian Mbappe. The masked France superstar watched from the stands as Lyon kept PSG at bay for two hours before having Brazilian defender Rafael sent off for chopping down Angel Di Maria on the edge of the box late in extra time.

Mbappe was injured in last week's French Cup final, suffering a sprained ankle that looks likely to rule him out of the Champions League quarterfinal against Atalanta in Lisbon on August 12. PSG are desperate for tangible success in Europe but on this evidence they still have some rust to shake off before being ready for that test.

"We suffered but it's beautiful to win at the end. We will celebrate this and then tomorrow we will start to think about another big match," the excellent Marco Verratti told *France 2* television.



PSG players celebrate after defeating Lyon 6-5 on penalties, after their final ended in a stalemate at the end of extra time, to win French League Cup at Stade de France stadium, in Saint Denis, north of Paris, on Friday. — AP



PSG's Neymar (from left), Kylian Mbappe and Marco Verratti celebrate on the podium after winning the French League Cup in Saint Denis on Friday.

This is the Qatar-owned club's fourth treble in the last six years, but the League Cup, an unloved competition, will be discontinued next season.

It was the Parisian contingent who were celebrating at the end, as their team lifted the trophy for

the ninth time in total, denying Lyon a first trophy since 2012.

Both of these teams must fear being at a disadvantage in the latter stages of the Champions League though after France opted against restarting its league sea-

son, unlike the other major European leagues.

As a consequence, the two cup finals are the only competitive match practice PSG will have managed in five months before facing Atalanta. Meanwhile, this was Lyon's one and only competitive game since early March before they make a daunting trip to Turin to play Juventus in their Champions League last 16 second leg next Friday.

At least they have a 1-0 lead to defend, but they will still need to do better than they fared here.

PSG created almost all the notable chances, despite Mauro Icardi looking sluggish up front. Neymar looked sharper, fresh from scoring the

winner in the French Cup final.

He had the first chance of the game when he drilled a first-time shot just wide from a Thiago Silva lay-off in the eighth minute, and he also saw a header tipped over by Lyon goalkeeper Anthony Lopes late in normal time before going on to coolly net in the shoot-out.

In between, Lopes also made a spectacular save to turn an Idrissa Gueye piledriver over late in the first half.

Verratti's performance in midfield was a major positive for Tuchel.

Here, left-back Layvin Kurzawa was needed on the right but hobbled off hurt midway through the second half. — AFP

● **Paris Saint-Germain have won the French league, French Cup and French League Cup this season, claiming their fourth treble in last six years.**

## BRITISH GRAND PRIX

## Lewis smashes record for pole

**Silverstone, August 1:** Lewis Hamilton smashed the track record twice on Saturday to grab a record seventh British Grand Prix pole position with a stunning performance in a tense qualifying session.

Hamilton, who on Sunday seeks a record-increasing seventh Silverstone victory, finished ahead of his Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas by more than three-tenths of a second after the Finn had been fastest in final practice and then again in both Q2 and Q3 when he also set lap records.

The defending six-time champion and current series leader bounced back from a ragged performance, including a spin, in the first parts of qualifying to claim his 65th pole with Mercedes and the record-increasing 91st of his career.

It was also a record eighth successive Mercedes pole success in Britain on a day when they were clear of their nearest rivals Red Bull by a full second, Max Verstappen taking third place on the grid ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

Rising British star Lando Norris, 20, was fifth for McLaren ahead of Lance Stroll in Racing Point's 'pink Mercedes', Carlos Sainz in the second

## Live on TV

## FORMULA ONE

**British Grand Prix**  
Main race from 6.35 pm on  
Star Sports Select 2, HD

McLaren, Daniel Ricciardo and his Renault team-mate Esteban Ocon and Sebastian Vettel, who was 10th for Ferrari.

"This track is awesome! But it is tough out there - with the winds, it is like juggling balls on a moving plate," said a delighted Hamilton.

"I had a spin and as you know qualifying is all about confidence and I was struggling in the first sectors of every lap, but I took some deep breaths, composed myself and in Q3 I had a clear lap and the second one was even better!" the reigning champion added.

He added that it was strange to drive without any fans in the circuit. "Usually, it's all sirens, flags and smoke and the atmosphere is buzzing — you get out of the car and have a different energy so I miss them, but I hope everyone is safe and happy at home," the Brit added.

Earlier, Bottas posted the fastest time in third and final practice ahead of Hamilton and Verstappen. — AFP

## Giannis powers Bucks to victory

**Los Angeles, August 1:** Giannis Antetokounmpo shook off the rust of a long layoff by scoring 36 points to power the Milwaukee Bucks to a 119-112 victory over the Boston Celtics in their first game of the NBA's restarted season.

Milwaukee, who are trying to win their first NBA title since 1971, boasted the best record at 53-12 when the league was shut down in mid-March due to the global pandemic.

"We just got the stops. We tried to play hard, make the right play and hit open guy," said Antetokounmpo after starring in the team's first game post the Pandemic.

In the late game, James Harden scored 49 points and the Houston Rockets outgunned the Dallas Mavericks 153-149 in a high-scoring Western Conference contest that went into overtime.

The Bucks trailed by two points at the half, then built a big lead and held on in the fourth quarter to beat the Celtics in the battle between the two Eastern Conference powerhouses.

The 25-year-old Antetokounmpo also had 15 rebounds, seven assists and five fouls. He almost fouled out with 88 seconds to go but after a video review the officials overturned a sixth foul call, allowing him to stay in the game and lead the Bucks to victory.

Khris Middleton scored 18 points and added eight assists, while Brook Lopez

● **Giannis Antetokounmpo's 36 points helped Milwaukee Bucks go past Boston Celtics 119-112 in their NBA game.**

● **Before the league was shutdown due to the Pandemic, the Bucks boasted a record of 53-12.**

tallied 14 points and made six blocks for the Bucks, who came into the game holding a 6 1/2 game lead over second place Toronto.

Both teams did a good job of acclimating themselves to their new surroundings, which includes playing without fans at the Disney World complex that is acting as the "bubble" venue for the 22 teams taking part in the restart.

## HARDEN SHINES AS ROCKETS TRIUMPH

In the late game, Harden scored 23 of his game high 49 points in the first quarter and Russell Westbrook chipped in 31 points for Houston after arriving late to Orlando because he tested positive for the coronavirus.

"It was tough to be home for 18, 19 days no working out," said Westbrook.

Kristaps Porzingis had 39 points and 16 rebounds for Dallas, and Luka Doncic had a triple-double with 28 points 13 rebounds and 10 assists.

— AFP

## What a delivery!



Indian allrounder Hardik Pandya holds his newborn son in this photo uploaded on Saturday after his fiancée Natasa Stankovic delivered a baby boy on July 30.

## Stage set for IPL GC meet

**New Delhi, August 1:**

The IPL governing council will be updated on the status of necessary government approvals for hosting the T20 league in the UAE when the members meet on Sunday apart from deliberating a foolproof SOP on health safety along with a discussion on the Chinese sponsorships.

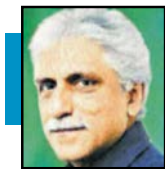
While the BCCI is all set to shift the league to the United Arab Emirates, it is learnt that status of government's clearance is top-most in the 10-point agenda of the Brijesh Patel-led governing council.

It is expected that president Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay

Shah, both of whose "cooling off waiver" case is in Supreme Court will be attending the meeting as permanent invitees along with treasurer Arun Dhumal and joint secretary Jayesh George.

"We have a meeting tomorrow (Sunday) but everyone is awaiting the clearances from the Home Ministry as well as the External Affairs Ministry for the tournament to be shifted to the UAE," a senior BCCI official abreast with GC developments said.

It is learnt that the fate of VIVO, the Chinese mobile company which pays ₹440 crore for title sponsorship will also come up for discussion. — PTI



**Ayaz Memon**  
**Over The Top**

The Test series between England and West Indies has given international cricket a flip-flop. There were several trepidations about resumption of matches in the time of Covid-19. But barring Joffra Archer's foolhardiness in breaking the bio-secure bubble, which cost him a place in the second Test, everything else went near-perfectly.

The matches were engaging, and till the West Indies faded away dramatically in the third Test, closely fought. In fact,

England had to dig deep to overcome the stiff challenge posed by Jason Holder and his team. After winning the first Test and losing the second narrowly, the West Indies sadly lost focus and resolve.

That, of course, is one side of the picture. The flip side bespeaks England's deep ambition to come from one Test down to clinch the series. This is never easy against any side, more shwn playing at home when everybody expects you to win. The pressure this creates can cause loss of morale and

panic within the team.

England benefited primarily from the fantastic exploits of two players: Ben Stokes and Stuart Broad. The former is unrugably the world's best player currently and his all-round performances in this series enhanced his stature further. If he is not already there, Stokes is surely on the cusp of all-time greatness.

However, Broad's performances were the more compelling in my opinion, in the context of the series, as well as his own career. In the second and third Tests — which England won — he put in fiery spells that changed the trend of the match, and also had a lusty half century in the last Test that completely demoralised the West Indies.

Broad's prowess in

English conditions is well known. His ability to swing the ball both ways, and the height from which he delivers the ball put batsmen to severe hardships. His 500 Test wickets, even without big success in the sub-continent is testimony to his ability.

His partnership with Jimmy Anderson, with almost 1100 wickets between them, puts them among the great fast bowling pairs in the history of the game. Importantly, from the 2019 Ashes series Broad has been the highest wicket-taker in Tests, reiterating that he is riding a marvellous second wind.

I've dwelt on Broad at length as the circumstances this time were different, which is what makes his performances even more fantastic. He was dropped from the first

Test. That is never a good signal. Smarting from this decision, Broad proved the selectors wrong in the most dramatic way possible.

Assessing careers of even established players in the mid-30s, is always a dilemma for selectors, subject of unending debate in the media and cricketing fraternity. This usually leaves the player concerned on tenterhooks and vulnerable. The only way out of this, as Broad showed, is by winning matches.

Beyond individual performances, the series was hugely significant on two counts. One, it provided a template on how international cricket will be played as long as the Covid threat lasts. Two, it showed that not having spectator at the ground is

not the serious impediment, as was feared, to intensity of performance.

Apart from Archer's recklessness mentioned earlier, the series was incident free. Players were tested regularly for Covid, as prescribed by the ICC protocol, and errors by players in using saliva on the ball (banned for now), or celebrating without maintaining social distancing, were very few.

This is encouraging. It shows players are seized of the situation and are willing to change time-held habits when needed. More importantly, the quality of cricket that was played allayed concerns whether players would be as pumped up without spectators in the stands. How this unravels in the medium-to-long-term is to be seen, but for the present

players look happy to be back on the field.

The major concern that remains is of cost. Creating a bio-secure bubble is not cheap. On flights to get the West Indies players to England, close to half a million pounds was spent.

The number of players needed for a series also goes up to provide for Covid setbacks (substitutions are allowed), which adds to the expenses, not to mention maintaining the bio-secure bubble with medical experts et al.

While cricket boards of countries like England, India and Australia (though not if their current dire financial state continues) can afford these expenses, other boards can't. This could create an undesirable class system which can't help the sport.