

SHORT TAKES

SCBA refutes claims on farewell to Mishra

New Delhi: Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Dushyant Dave, on Tuesday, described as “mischievous” a statement attributed to SCBA that it has decided not to give customary farewell to Justice Arun Mishra on his retirement on September 2, 2020. Referring to the statement circulating in the lawyers circle, Mr Dave said, “No such statement has been issued by the executive committee and in fact this matter has not been considered by the EC in any meeting.” “The press release being attributed to the executive committee of SCBA is not genuine and is strongly denied by me on behalf of the EC. I strongly condemn the same as being mischievous and an attempt to malign the SCBA,” said Mr Dave in a statement.

Civic bodies launch anti-dengu campaign

New Delhi: The BJP ruled civic bodies on Tuesday launched a mega campaign against dengue, chikungunya and malaria in view of the Monsoon season and the mosquito breeding. The North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash accompanied by former Union minister Vijay Goel and BJP national vice president Shyam Jaiu started the campaign with fogging on Flagstaff Road where Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal resides. For South Delhi Municipal Corporation, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta and South Delhi mayor Anamika launched the campaign by flagging off 16 auto mounted with PA(Public address) system, four power spray tankers, 10 motorized power sprayers mounted on Trucks. East Delhi mayor, Nirmal Jain launched an awareness campaign in East Delhi Municipal Corporation jurisdiction. The North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash said that the corporation has started the mega campaign in all its wards which will continue till September 30.

40-year-old man hangs self to death

New Delhi: A 40-year-old man ended his life by allegedly hanging himself from the ceiling fan of a room of his house in south Delhi's Tigri area on Tuesday, police said. The victim has been identified as Ajit Singh, a resident of Tigri's JJ Camp, they said. Singh was found hanging from the ceiling fan of his room, a senior police officer said. “The deceased was working as driver. A suicide note was found in which Singh has written that some men had dismissed him from his job due to which he is taking this step,” Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said. His wife had died two years ago due to tuberculosis. Singh, who has four children, was not doing any work for the last three months, the DCP said. The body has been preserved at AIIMS mortuary and the post-mortem will be conducted after Covid test, police said, adding that proceedings under section 174 of CrPC has been initiated.

Teen killed, 1 hurt in firing by miscreants

New Delhi: A 15-year-old boy was killed and an 18-year-old suffered injuries after a group of miscreants allegedly resorted to firing and stabbing in south Delhi's JJ Camp Tigri late on Monday night. The boy was declared brought dead at the Trauma Centre. Amman alias Mohd Ali, a resident of resident Camp Tigri, who suffered injuries in the incident has been shifted to Safdarjang Hospital, where he stated that a group of boys attacked him, the police said. Two cases including murder and attempt to murder have been registered by the Delhi Police. Police also said that Amman's statement has been registered and using the details and physical descriptions of the attackers that he gave, the investigating team are looking for the suspects and conducting raids to nab them. “One boy aged 15 was declared brought dead at the AIIMS Trauma Centre. He had suffered injuries in the attack. The other injured person, Amman alias Mohammad Ali, 18, was fired upon and stabbed by the group of attackers. He is undergoing treatment,” said DCP Atul Kumar Thakur.

Second survey shows 29.1% Delhiites have antibodies Covid: Kids from 5-17 yrs most exposed

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Finding of a serological survey conducted in the city this month revealed that minors aged between 5 and 17 are most exposed to the novel coronavirus. Conducted between August 1 and August 7, the survey, second in the city, showed that 29.1 per cent of the population in the national capital has now developed antibodies against SARS CoV-2.

As many as 1,544 new cases and 17 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours. Of the total 1,64,071 cases in the city, 11,998 are active and 1,47,743 patients have recovered. The virus-

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The active cases tally on Tuesday rose to 11,998 from 11,626 the previous day. On June 23, the national capital had reported the highest single-day spike of 3,947 Covid cases, till date

related fatalities have gone up to 4,330.

As many as 15,000 people from four age groups participated in the survey — around 25 per cent of them below 18, 50 per cent between 18 and 50, and the rest aged above 50. The survey shows prevalence rate of 34.7 per cent was found among the participants aged between 5 and

17. As many as 31.2 per cent of the people aged above 50 have recovered from Covid. Among those in the 18-50 age group, 28.5 per cent of people have developed antibodies against the virus. Indian Council of Medical Research data suggests that people aged between 21 and 50 accounts for 61.31 per cent

of the Covid cases recorded in India till August 21. Experts say children could be contracting the infection from adults in their family and domestic help.

Head of a Delhi government committee tasked with strengthening the preparedness of hospitals to battle coronavirus Dr Mahesh Verma, said, “It is difficult to keep children and youngsters home-bound. Even if they are not going to school, they might be going out to play... or they might have contracted it through an indirect route. But it's just a prediction and needs to be studied.”

“It's still very complex how people are getting infected. I know a couple

of families that are not stepping out but their members have still contracted Covid,” he added.

Seventeen fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department.

On Monday, the daily cases count was 1,061 and 13 deaths were reported.

The active cases tally on Tuesday rose to 11,998 from 11,626 the previous day.

On June 23, the national capital had reported the highest single-day spike of 3,947 Covid-19 cases, till date.

The death toll from coronavirus in Delhi stood at 4,313 on Monday.

City BJP chief faces criticism from party over letter to Anna

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Within a fortnight of facing criticism over joining of 50 anti-CAA Shaheen Bagh protesters in BJP, party's local unit president Adesh Gupta is now facing criticism within the party over his letter to social activist Anna Hazare seeking support for launching a movement against corruption in the national capital.

Mr Gupta invited Mr Hazare to join the movement against the AAP government. A group of party leaders feel that invitation to Mr Hazare raises serious questions over the BJP leadership in the city.

Questioning the letter seeking support of Mr Hazare against the AAP government, a senior party leader said that this shows the preparedness of the Delhi BJP leadership to fight the AAP.

“The party, which also used to boost its cadres, has surrendered in front of the Kejriwal government in absence of strategy and now sought support of Mr Hazare for its ‘public movement.’ Will Mr Gupta explain to the workers about the public movement started by Delhi BJP under his leadership during his tenure since June first week?”

Number of senior leaders termed the ‘letter bomb’ an act of betrayal to the party workers.

“Asking Mr Hazare to

Man arrested for occupying vacant land with fake docus

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Delhi Police arrested a 65-year-old man on Tuesday for allegedly cheating people after occupying their vacant land using forged documents. Police said that the accused is also found previously involved in 17 cases of cheating and forgery. The accused has been identified as Abhay Veer Batra, a resident of Hari Nagar. Police said that Batra, along with his associates, would illegally grab a plot of land using forged documents. He would either sell it or put pressure on the real owners to extort money from them.

According to R.P. Meena, additional DCP (Dwarka), the matter came to light on August 11 after one Kishore Chand Agarwal complained in Dwarka police station that his vacant plot of land at Sector-13 was occupied by Batra using forged documents.

The complainant told police that when he visited his property on August 5, he saw bricks and sand at the periphery of his piece of land and later got to know that Batra was claiming himself to be its owner,” said the additional DCP.

During the investigation, both Agarwal and Batra produced documents claiming ownership of the land, he said. “Batra's documents were found to be forged,” the additional DCP added.



Adesh Gupta

lead a movement shows the bankruptcy of the leadership and doing so they also betrayed lakhs of BJP workers who are fighting tooth and nail against AAP,” they added.

Some Delhi BJP leaders also questioned Mr Gupta's choice to lead the movement saying how could Mr Gupta ask Mr Hazare to lead a movement who criticised PM Modi.

In February 2019, Mr Hazare had said that the government led by Mr Modi “is only misleading the people of the country and leading the country to autocracy.”

Reacting angrily to the letter, some leaders said that it shows that Mr Gupta has no faith in the leadership of PM Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, party president J.P. Nadda, and other senior leaders.

“Why do we need Mr Hazare to start a movement against the Kejriwal government when we have leaders like Mr Modi, Mr Shah, and Mr Nadda?” they asked.

Delhi BJP media department head Ashok Goel did not respond to calls to get his reaction.

Chained woman rescued from her home

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

A 32-year-old woman, who was held captive and bound in iron chains for several months in the national capital's Trilokpur area, was rescued on Tuesday by the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW).

The woman was held captive in her own house by her husband and was beaten and tortured by him.

The room in which the woman was kept had no fans and had a terrible smell as she was made to lie in her own excreta. She was tortured and beaten so brutally that it took a toll on her mental health.

It was on the basis of a tip off that Delhi Commission for Women chief Swati Maliwal along with other mem-



DCW rescued a woman from Trilokpur area in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI

bers of the team reached the spot and rescued the woman. When the team reached the spot, they saw that the woman was lying on the floor with her feet bound in iron chains.

The victim told the team that she had been married for the last 11 years

and her husband used to beat her brutally. The victim said she had been kept chained for the last six months.

Upon investigation, it was found that the victim's husband owns a flour mill and that the victim was perfectly fine before the brutal treat-

ment meted out to her. The woman has three children, who said their father often used to beat them and their mother.

“The woman is even suffering from mental health issues now. We have rescued the woman and have started working on her rehabilitation. We will try and provide her with the best possible treatment and at the same time also ensure the strongest action against the perpetrators of the crime,” Ms Maliwal said.

Starting Metro or local trains would be a big challenge for the authorities since they attract a huge footfall in terms of passengers. Strict instructions will be issued to security personnel at entrance and exit points to allow only a limited number of passengers inside.

Phased resumption of Metro trains likely on select routes

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Even though the home ministry could allow the state to identify the routes for “gradual and phased” reopening of Metro from the next month, the states will have to strictly follow the guidelines for the same which will be drafted by the home and health ministries. According to the home ministry, states will not be permitted to have their own guidelines or standard operating pro-

cedures for Metro services, particularly on the limited number of passengers to be allowed.

“Even if Metro are partially resumed, only a limited number of commuters will be allowed inside the stations and allowed to use the services in the initial phase. Maybe only those from essential services will be allowed initially and that too only after stringent screening and health checks.

“Though states can decide which routes to be allowed to open for

resumption of Metro, all other security and protocols will be decided by the home ministry in consultation with the health ministry,” a senior home ministry official said.

Starting Metro or local trains would be a big challenge for the authorities since they attract a huge footfall in terms of passengers. Strict instructions will be issued to security personnel at entrance and exit points to allow only a limited number of passengers inside.



Screengrab of a video showing a policeman assaulting a boy in New Delhi.

Cop suspended over video of him beating up boy

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Delhi Police on Tuesday initiated an inquiry against a constable after a video surfaced purportedly showing him beating up a youth with a baton in southwest Delhi as another policeman stood nearby. The incident occurred at R.K. Puram area.

In the video that went viral on social media, the constable, who was on night duty, can be seen beating up the youth with a stick as another cop stood watching the act.

“On the intervening night of August 22-23, the beat officials on area patrolling near Ekta Vihar, J.J. Camp, saw four or five boys sitting around a public toilet. The boys were asked to leave the place immediately by the beat officials who were briefed about

repeated concerns raised by women living nearby J.J. Camp, who had been using the public toilet especially at night,” said the senior police official.

“But during beat official's second round around 3 am, they saw the boys again sitting there but they were chased away,” he said.

Meanwhile, Devendra Arya, DCP (Southwest district) said that an inquiry had been ordered into the conduct of the constable, shown in the video and departmental action would be taken against him based on its outcome. Earlier, the officer had said the constable had been suspended.

Police said that Amit Kaushik, additional DCP (Southwest) has been asked to conduct a fact-finding inquiry and appropriate action will be taken based on his findings.



An aerial view of swollen Yamuna River following heavy rains in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI

Ghaziabad man shot dead, BJP MLA's hubby, 7 booked

Ghaziabad, Aug. 25: A 29-year-old man was shot dead outside his home in Modinagar here, and an FIR was registered against eight people, including the local BJP MLA's husband, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Monday night when victim Akshay Sangwan was celebrating his birthday at his Krishna Kunj Colony residence in Tibra village, SHO Modinagar Jai Karan Singh said.

Around 8 pm, the assailants arrived at the spot, called him on his phone and asked him to meet them outside, the police said, adding that once Sangwan stepped out of the house, they fired indiscriminately at him and fled. He was immediately rushed to a private hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead, the police said.

The family of the victim had briefly blocked the Delhi-Meerut highway around midnight, demanding that the killers be arrested without delay.

An FIR was registered against Ashwani, Vikas, Sapoo Gurjar, Amit, alias Chuiya, Aditya, alias Vasu, Ruby, BJP MLA Manju Shivach's husband.

Devendra Shivach and Ashish, husband of the village head of Tibra, under section 120B of the Indian Penal Code based on a complaint by the father of the deceased, the police said. The SHO said the number of bullet injuries sustained by the victim would be ascertained after the autopsy report was received.

An investigation is underway and police teams are looking for the accused, he added.

— PTI

| Haryana Public Service Commission Bays No. 1-10, Block-B, Sector 4, Panchkula | | |
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| ANNOUNCEMENT | | |
| It is hereby announced for the general information of the candidates who have been declared qualified for the Main Written/Competitive Examination for recruitment to the posts of Assistant Engineer (Civil/Mechanical) (Class - II) in Public Health Engineering Department, Haryana (Advt. No. 5 / 2015) that due to administrative reasons, the Commission has now decided to conduct said Examination at Multipurpose Hall of Tau Devi Lal Stadium, Sector-3, Panchkula from 01.09.2020 to 03.09.2020 . | | |
| The Date Sheet-cum-Time Table of all the papers, is as under:- | | |
| DATE SHEET-CUM-TIME TABLE | | |
| Date and Day | Time | Subject |
| 01.09.2020 (Tuesday) | 03:00 PM to 05:00 PM | General Ability Test (Objective type) |
| 02.09.2020 (Wednesday) | 09:30 AM to 12:30 PM | Civil/Mech. Engineering Paper - I (Conventional type) |
| | 03:00 PM to 05:00 PM | Civil/Mech. Engineering Paper - I (Objective type) |
| 03.09.2020 (Thursday) | 09:30 AM to 12:30 PM | Civil/Mech. Engineering Paper - II (Conventional type) |
| | 03:00 PM to 05:00 PM | Civil/Mech. Engineering Paper - II (Objective type) |
| This announcement is in continuation of earlier announcement dated 15.08.2020 | | |
| Dated: 25.08.2020 PRDH/82443 | | Sd/- Secretary, Haryana Public Service Commission, Panchkula. |

SHORT TAKES

State bus services resume in Bihar

Patna: To facilitate smooth running of public transport in Bihar, the state transport department has allowed resumption of bus services from Tuesday, an official said. Buses — both government and private — will follow the guidelines prescribed to curb the spread of Covid-19, a transport department notification said. The notification was issued on Monday evening after a decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of Crisis Management Group which was chaired by chief secretary Deepak Kumar and attended by Transport Secretary Sanjay Kumar Agarwal and senior officials of other departments. Bus service was suspended following the enforcement of lockdown by the state government on July 16, in view of the rising number of cases of Covid-19 in the state. — *PTI*

PMAY supervisor caught taking bribe

Ahmedabad: A site supervisor of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in Gujarat's Banaskantha district was caught while taking a bribe of ₹10,500 from a scheme beneficiary, the Anti-Corruption Bureau said on Tuesday. The complainant, a resident of Palanpur town in Banaskantha, submitted an application to the local municipality in 2018 to get financial assistance for building a house under the scheme. The accused, Nirmal Gadwhi, was hired on contractual basis by the Palanpur municipality as site supervisor of the scheme. He visited the site and gave his approval, following which the complainant received a financial assistance of ₹1,30,000 in three instalments, the ACB said in a release. However, Gadwhi then allegedly started demanding a bribe of ₹10,500 from the complainant to release ₹1 lakh. — *PTI*

Letter reveals 'plot' to kill J'khand MLA

Dhanbad: Jharkhand BJP MLA Raj Sinha on Tuesday said that he received an anonymous letter informing him that he is being followed by contract killers hired to eliminate him. The BJP demanded that the government increase Mr Sinha's security as a local party leader, who was close to the MLA, was shot dead only six days ago. "I have handed over the letter to Saraidhela police station for investigation," said Mr Sinha, the MLA of Dhanbad Sadar constituency. The authenticity of the letter, posted from Hazaribagh and apparently written by a woman, is being verified, Saraidhela police station officer-in-charge Kishore Tirkey said. — *PTI*

Two ITBP jawans 'drown' in Sutlej

Kinnaur (HP): Two Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawans are feared drowned after their vehicle fell into the Sutlej river in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district on Tuesday, a district official said. The vehicle was on its way to Duvling post from Reckong Peo when it fell into the Sutlej at around 10.30 am. Kinnaur Superintendent of Police, S.R. Rana, said that the ITBP vehicle fell into the river near Spillover on national highway number five. The vehicle driver Pradeep of HP's Ghumarvin in Bilaspur district and Rifleman Neema Dandoob of Arunachal Pradesh are missing. Police and ITBP jawans from the 17th battalion are trying to trace the missing jawans. An Insas rifle and some documents were found from the spot. — *PTI*

Ludhiana: Want gun licence, plant trees

Ludhiana: Anyone wanting an arms licence will have to plant 10 saplings, according to a scheme launched by the authorities in Ludhiana on Tuesday. Patiala Divisional Commissioner Chander Gaiand launched the "Tree for Gun" scheme, aimed to check depleting groundwater by planting saplings. He said those wanting an arms licence or the renewal of the existing one will have to plant 10 and five saplings, respectively. People will have to submit a selfie with each sapling at the time of filing of the application, said Gaiand. — *PTI*



Assamese singer Babu Barua, music director Ajoy Phukan and other artists who actively took part in the anti-CAA protests, join the Congress in presence of Assam chief Ripon Bora in Dispur on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Artists in Assam desert anti-CAA stir to join BJP

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, AUG. 25

In what may be called an attempt to insulate the party from the impact of anti-CAA movement in the forthcoming Assembly polls early next year, the Assam Bharatiya Janata Party on Tuesday roped in at least 28 noted artists who were the part of the massive movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act in Assam.

This has come when anti-CAA forces including Opposition political parties are trying to revive the anti-CAA movement which was suspended following the outbreak of Covid pandemic.

The artists who joined the BJP in presence of Assam BJP president Ranjit Dass told reporters that the anti-CAA movement inflicted heavy losses on Assam and claimed the lives of 5 innocent youth. Prominent among the artists who joined the BJP included flutist Deepak Sarma, singer Simanta Shekhar, actor Pranjit Das, Reba Phukan, Pranjana Dutta, Pankaj Ingri (Choreographer), Birina Pathak (Singer), Joy Chakraborty (Singer), Dreemly Gogoi (Bihu dancer) and others.

This started with the return of popular Assam actor Jatin Bora who had left the party to join anti-

THIS HAS come when anti-CAA forces including Opposition political parties are trying to revive the anti-CAA movement which was suspended following the outbreak of Covid pandemic.

CAA movement, back to party fold.

Mr Bora said that he was misguided during that time. He termed his opposition to CAA as an emotional issue. "I had never seen such a terrible time. The CAA movement inflicted heavy losses on Assam," said Mr Bora.

"I joined BJP in 2015 with no political intention. I have joined the BJP for the sake of doing something good for the artists and for the culture of Assam. The goodwill of the government is definitely required for the good work of the artists. It's the BJP who can lead and take forward the cultural arena of the state," said Mr Bora who was the chairman of the state's film finance development corporation.

Assam actress Asha Bordoloi, who was one of the most prominent faces of the anti-CAA movement has also joined the BJP. Several other artists also entered the fold of the ruling party at the high-profile induction ceremony in the run up to 2021 Assembly elections.

JITAN RAM MANJHI CALLS LALU YADAV 'ANTI-DALIT'

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, AUG. 25

With Assembly elections slated to be held in October-November this year, political rumblings have started in Bihar. Former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, who recently created a flutter in Bihar politics by announcing his departure from the Mahagathbandhan, on Tuesday termed RJD



Jitan Ram Manjhi

chief Lalu Yadav "anti-Dalit". "It is a fact that he (Lalu Yadav) is a real villain as he cannot see any dalit leader growing. "He played a key role in my removal as chief minister in 2015. He is anti-dalit," Mr Manjhi said in a statement on Tuesday.

Govt amends CSR norms, corona fight to 'get boost'

New Delhi, Aug. 25: The government has amended the corporate social responsibility rules under the companies law that is likely to help boost funding for developing new vaccines, drugs and medical devices related to the coronavirus pandemic.

With the latest amendments, companies engaged in research and development (R&D) activity of new vaccine, drugs and medical devices in their normal course of business have been allowed to undertake R&D activity of new vaccine, drugs and medical devices related to Covid-19 under the CSR ambit.

This would be applicable for three financial years — 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 — subject to certain conditions. This means that money spent on such activities would be considered as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending under the Companies Act, 2013.

Under the Act, certain categories of profitable companies are required to shell out at least 2 per cent of their three-year annual average net profit towards CSR activities in a particular financial year.

The corporate affairs ministry, which is implementing the Act, issued two notifications related to

CSR on August 24. Changes have been made to Schedule VII of the Act that pertains to CSR activities. Now, contributions to incubators or R&D projects in the field of science, technology, engineering and medicine, funded by the central or state governments or public sector undertaking or any agency of the central or state government would be considered as CSR.

Contributions to public funded universities, Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), national laboratories would also come under the CSR ambit, according to a notification.

— *PTI*

Maoist leader turns Odisha jail into a green zone

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 25

Udaya Pulari Ramarao alias Shyam, a Maoist leader presently lodged in Odisha's Nayagarh Sub-jail after being sentenced for life in connection with the 2008 killing of Hindu seer Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati has turned the five-acre prison campus green with his magical skill and

expertise in horticulture activities.

Along with his close friend Prakash Behera, another prisoner who also serves a life sentence on a murder case and a few other inmates; the rebel leader has been producing a huge volume of vegetables and flowers that not only help the jail authorities meet the nutritional requirement of the inmates but also fetch good sums of remunera-



Udaya Pulari Ramarao alias Shyam

tion for the prisoners. Son of P. Lachaya of Pedalimbupgaon under Mandasa police limits in

MP POLITICS

Congress dares BJP to name its newly joined workers

BJP membership drive 'rattles' Cong

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 25

The just concluded membership drive by BJP in poll-bound Gwalior-Chambal region in Madhya Pradesh that wooed 76,361 Congress workers, mostly loyalists of Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia, into its fold has "rattled" the grand old party.

Congress has however put up a brave front daring the ruling party to make public the list of Congress workers in the region who joined the saffron outfit.

"The BJP has hyped its whole exercise of membership drive in Gwalior-Chambal region. The party showed its existing members as new members. I challenge BJP to come out with a list of Congress workers who joined BJP", senior Congress leader and former minister P.C. Sharma told reporters here on Tuesday.

Mr Sharma said that the Congress continued to enjoy a mass base in the region and it would be reflected in the upcoming Assembly by-elections in the area.

BJP however countered

CONGRESS has however put up a brave front daring the ruling party to make public the list of Congress workers in the region who joined the saffron outfit

Mr Sharma saying that the party was ready to provide addresses and names of the Congress workers in Gwalior-Chambal who joined BJP.

"Congress is rattled by the mass exodus of party workers in Gwalior-Chambal to join BJP. The membership drive by BJP has totally wiped out Congress in the region.

Earlier Congress leaders joined BJP. Now, ground level workers of Congress crossed over to BJP", BJP spokesman here Rajneesh Agrawal said.

Eighteen of 27 Assembly constituencies that are going to by-elections in MP in coming days fall in Gwalior-Chambal region.

Twenty two former Congress MLAs, all are Mr Scindia's loyalists, had resigned from the Assembly in March this year to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government.

They later joined BJP following in the footsteps of Mr Scindia.

Later, three Congress legislators resigned from the House and then from the party to join BJP.

Two MLAs, one from Congress and the other from BJP, have recently passed away necessitating by-elections in their constituencies.

The Congress workers who joined BJP were from the Lok Sabha constituencies of Gwalior, Morena, Guna and Bhind.

The Gwalior and Guna LS constituencies are said to be pocket boroughs of Scindia family.

Mr Scindia however lost the last LS elections in Guna.

India in talks

with Russia

for Covid-19

vaccine use

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Even though the trials for the Covid-19 vaccines are on track in India, the government is simultaneously engaging with Russia on the possible use of its Sputnik-V vaccine.

"India and Russia are in communication on SputnikV. Some initial information has been shared. Some detailed information is awaited," said Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan on Tuesday.

The government may not be in a real hurry to import the Russian vaccines given the fact that three vaccine candidates are already in the advanced stages of clinical trials in India. However, since the two countries are also strategic partners, the possibility of having SputnikV vaccine to boost the vaccination drive for the huge Indian population cannot be ruled out.

"The Serum Institute of India (Oxford University trials) vaccine studies consisting of 1700 persons are in phase 2 and 3, the one by Biotech has completed phase 1 with 375 persons while that of Zydus Cadilla has entered Phase 2 with about 50 persons being tested. These are two dose vaccines and antibody response is checked after two to four weeks," said Dr Balram Bhargava, chief of ICMR.

As per Union health ministry, the total number of cases of novel coronavirus in India so far reached 31, 67, 323 till Tuesday morning with nearly 61,000 fresh cases being detected. The death toll was 58, 390 out of which 848 fatalities were recorded in the last 24 hours.

Directorate files chargesheet against Salahuddin, 11 others

Terror funding: ED indicts Hizb chief

New Delhi, Aug. 25: The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday filed a chargesheet before a Delhi court against Pakistan-based Hizb-ul-Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin and 11 others for allegedly laundering money for financing terror activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

The agency said that the chargesheet is also related to blasts carried out by the terror group in Jammu and Kashmir in 2011 in alleged connivance with the Pakistani government and its spying arm ISI.

The prosecution complaint, ED's equivalent to chargesheet, has urged the court for confiscating

THE AGENCY said that the chargesheet is also related to blasts carried out by the terror group in Jammu and Kashmir in 2011 in alleged connivance with the Pakistani government and its spying arm ISI.

attached assets totalling to ₹1.22 crores in the case, besides other punishment under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The case is likely to be taken up by the court soon.

The central probe agency had filed a criminal case of money laundering after taking cognisance of a National

Investigating Agency (NIA) chargesheet filed against Salahuddin, Mohammad Shafi Shah and others under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and other sections of the Indian Penal Code.

The ED chargesheet filed before a special court under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) named Mohammad Shafi Shah

Doctor/Dawood/Nisar, Talib Lali alias Talib H u s s a i n Lali/Waseem/Abu Umer, Mohd Yusuf Shah alias Syed Salahuddin, Gulam Nabi Khan alias Amir Khan, Umer Farooq Shera alias Mehboob-ul-Haq,

Manzoor Ahmed Dar alias Masroor Dar, Zaffar Hussain Bhat alias Khursheed, Nazir Ahmad Dar alias Shabir Ellahi/Khalid, Abdul Majeed Sofi alias Majeed Bisati/Shahen, Mubarak Shah, Muzaffar Ahmad Dar/Gaznavi/Mohd Ali and Mushtaq Ahmad Lone alias Mushtaq Aalam.

The agency said it took over probe in the case after taking cognisance of a 2011 FIR of the NIA in which Mohammad Shafi Shah and his associates were alleged to be involved in execution of sensational blasts in Jammu and Kashmir and huge quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives were recovered from them. — *PTI*

Petition filed in Odisha HC for Durga Puja fest

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 25

A petition was on Tuesday filed in the Odisha High Court seeking permission to organise the festival in Cuttack city. Cuttack Balu Bazaar Puja Committee, which is one of the oldest Puja committees in the city, has filed the petition in the HC and urged the court to allow the festival in order to preserve the 500-year-old tradition.

The committee members have assured the court that the festival will be celebrated with strict adherence to social distancing and other safety guidelines in force in view of the pandemic.

The petitioners have cited the example of Rath Yatra which was allowed this year to preserve the centuries-old tradition.

Ex-supercop joins BJP to bring 'nationalism in TN'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Former IPS officer K. Annamalai, popularly referred as "Singham(lion)" during his posting in Karnataka, on Tuesday joined the BJP to bring the "nationalist spirit to Tamil Nadu," a state where assembly polls are scheduled next year and the BJP is trying to shed the "Hindi Heartland party" tag.

A native of Karur in Tamil Nadu, Mr Annamalai, who got the moniker "Singham" during his stint in Karnataka for being a "tough cop," recited a verse from the classic Tamil language text Thirukkural on 'The Greatness of a King' after joining the saffron party fold and said he finds all four qualities — fearlessness, courage, sharing nature and knowledge as mentioned in the verse —



K. Annamalai

in Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that he will work as a loyal soldier to strengthen the movement which the BJP stands for and claimed that the party has been misrepresented in Tamil Nadu.

While the BJP asserted that the former IPS officer will be a "very important asset and addition" to the party in the southern state, where it is yet to dent the Dravidian parties dominance, Mr Annamalai said he has joined the party without

any condition. The 36-year-old former police officer has been associated with social works since quitting and speculation is rife that the BJP could field him in the assembly polls scheduled next year.

Mr Annamalai joined the BJP in presence of party's national general secretary P. Murlidhar Rao and party's state unit chief L. Murugan. The former IPS officer later met BJP president JP Nadda.

Welcoming him in the party fold, Mr Rao, who is also the party's in-charge of Tamil Nadu, said the BJP as a political party is becoming more and more popular across the country and in all social segments and Mr Modi has a greater connect with the people, including in Tamil Nadu where Dravidian parties — AIADMK and DMK — have been dominating the electoral scene.



A replica of Mumbai old chawl using recycled material made by Parag Sawant at Lalbaug to celebrate Ganeshotsav. — *RAJESH JADHAV*

HC: Only 1st wife of man entitled to lay claim on his money

Mumbai, Aug. 25: The Bombay high court on Tuesday said as per law, if a man has two wives and both lay claim to his money, only the first wife would be entitled for it but his children from both marriages would get the money.

A bench of Justices S.J. Kathawalla and Madhav Jamdar made the above observation orally after the state government submitted that there existed a previous full bench judgement of the high court's Aurangabad bench that gave a similar direction.

The bench led by Justice Kathawalla was hearing a petition filed by the second wife of Suresh Hatankar, an assistant sub-inspector in the Maharashtra railway police force who died of Covid-19 on May 30. As the state government's resolution promises a compensation of ₹65 lakh to police personnel who die of Covid-19 while on duty, two women, both claiming to be Hatankar's wives, had laid a claim to the compensation amount.

Later, Shradha, Hatankar's daughter from his second wife, approached the Bombay high court, seeking that

she be given a proportionate share of the compensation amount to save her and her mother from "starvation" and homelessness.

On Tuesday state's counsel Jyoti Chavan told the bench that the state would deposit the compensation amount in the court for the time that HC takes to decide who is entitled to the amount.

Chavan also informed the court about the judgement of the Aurangabad bench.

The court then said, "The law says that the second wife might not get anything. But the daughter from the second wife, and the first wife and the daughter from the first marriage will be entitled to the money."

Hatankar's first wife Shubhada and the couple's daughter Surbhi, who were present before the court through video-conferencing, claimed they were not aware that Hatankar had "another family".

However, Shradha's counsel Prerak Sharma told the court that Surbhi and Shubhada knew about Hatankar's two marriages and they had contacted Surbhi on Facebook on previous occasions. — *PTI*

SHORT TAKES

Maken will visit Raj for feedback

Jaipur: AICC general secretary in-charge for Rajasthan Ajay Maken would visit Jaipur this week to take feedback from party leaders and workers, state's Congress unit chief said on Tuesday. Rajasthan PCC president Govind Singh Dotasra said Maken would take feedback from the division and district-level leaders and workers. He said after the ground level feedback from party workers, the new executive for the party's state unit would be decided. The final programme has not yet been received but he is scheduled to come here this week. We will hold discussions with him on organisational issues. The discussion will be helpful in the improvement of the party organisation, he told reporters on Tuesday. Dotasra, who is also the state's education minister, was appointed as the new chief of the state unit of the Congress last month after Sachin Pilot was sacked as the PCC president. — *PTI*

Monsoon session in Maha from Sept. 7

Mumbai: The Monsoon Session of Maharashtra state Legislature would be held for two days from September 7 owing to Covid-19 pandemic. All members of the assembly and council will undergo RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) test on September 6 for detection of coronavirus and only legislators who test negative will be allowed to attend the session. The decision to hold the two-day session was taken at a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the legislature on Tuesday. A senior Congress legislator, who attended the meeting, said, "A total of seven bills along with the supplementary demands would be tabled in the two-day session of the state legislature".

Postpone NEET & JEE, says Naveen

Bhubaneswar: Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday urged the Centre to take steps for postponing the Joint Entrance Examination (Main) and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) as it will be unsafe for students to physically appear in the exams in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation. The National Testing Agency (NTA) has scheduled to conduct the medical and engineering entrance exams — NEET and JEE (Main) — in September.

NIA charges

■ **Continued from Page 1** — all absconding, local Kashmiris Shakir Bashir, Insha Jan, Peer Tariq Ahmed Shah, Waiz-ul-Islam, Muhammad Abbas Rather, Bilal Ahmed Kuchay and Muhammad Iqbal Rather (all of them already arrested) and absconders — Pakistani national Muhammad Ismail and locals Sameer Ahmad Dar and Ashaq Ahmed Nengroo. Besides suicide bomber Adil Dar, the other accused in the case who have been killed since are Pakistani nationals Muhammad Umar Farooq, Muhammad Kamran Ali and Qari Yasir and locals Sajjad Ahmed Bhat and Mudassir Ahmad Khan.

The NIA said that investigation revealed that the Pulwama attack was a result of "a well-planned criminal conspiracy hatched by Pakistan-based leadership of JeM which has been sending their cadres to the militant training camps of Al Qaida-Taliban-JeM and Haqqani-JeM in Afghanistan for receiving training in explosives and other militant tactics".

SC to Bhushan

■ **Continued from Page 1** system will suffer all this? I am retiring in a few days. Will it be okay if you or others start attacking me? You should apply balm if you have caused hurt." Apparently softening its earlier tough stance, Justice Arun Mishra, said, "Who is our spokesperson? Should we go to the press? We can't go. We are bound by our oath and norms. Sword of justice can't be used to kill each other. We are not here to punish people." "We are in pain and agony," Justice Mishra added. Mr Bhushan's lawyer Rajeev Dhavan also argued that an apology cannot be coerced.

Moily stresses need for rejuvenating, restructuring Cong 'Sorry if we hurt Sonia's feelings'

RAMNATH SHENOY
BENGALURU, AUG. 25

"If we have hurt her (Sonia Gandhi's) feelings, we are sorry for it," M. Veerappa Moily, one of the 23 senior Congress leaders who sought urgent organisational reforms, said on Tuesday, asserting they never questioned her leadership.

At the same time, the former Union minister defended being a signatory to the letter addressed to the interim Congress president, as he stressed the need for rejuvenating and restructuring the party.

Mr Moily also disapproved of the media leak of the letter and called for an internal party enquiry to find out those behind it and wanted them to be punished.

CBI to conduct lie-detection test on SSR's friend Pathani

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

The CBI, probing the death case of Sushant Singh Rajput, is likely to conduct 'lie-detection' test on Siddharth Pathani, flatmate of the late actor, as he is allegedly giving conflicting statements and hiding crucial information.

Sources said the agency may also conduct 'lie-detection' test on Sandip Singh, friend of Sushant Singh. "Investigations have revealed that Sandip was not in touch with Sushant Singh Rajput, who was found dead on June 14, for the last 10 months. Suddenly, he exchanged a phone call with the driver of the ambulance, which was used to transport Sushant's remains, on June 14 and June 16", sources said. His call after two days of Sushant's death raises serious questions, sources said adding investigators are exploring the possibility of subjecting him to a 'lie-detection' test. The CBI took over the Sushant Singh Rajput case after the Supreme Court's order on August 19. The actor was found hanging at his Mumbai home on June 14.

As far as Pathani's claim is concerned, sources said, "Whatever his (Pathani's) statement that is coming out in media reports that the body of Sushant was brought down on the request of family members, is a lie". He may also be subjected to lie-detection test as he is hiding certain crucial information, sources alleged. "Investigators will first seek their consent as legal provisions entail that such a test cannot be conducted without the permission of the persons. After that the agency will have to seek permission from the court," sources clarified.

Delhi-Mumbai eway by 2023, says Gadkari

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 25

While laying the foundation for 45 highway projects in Madhya Pradesh online involving an investment of ₹11,427 crore, Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said the Centre has set a target to complete the ambitious Delhi-Mumbai Expressway by 2023.

Mr Gadkari said the ₹one lakh crore-Delhi-Mumbai corridor, the longest expressway in the world, would help cover the distance between the financial capital of India and national capital in 12 hours.

"We could save around ₹15,000 crore during land acquisition for the project", he said.

The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway that spans several states comprises



Soniaji is like a mother to the party. We revere her even now. There is no question of any intention to hurt her feelings. If we have hurt her feelings, we are sorry for it

— **M. Veerappa Moily, Senior Congress leader**

The former Karnataka chief minister asserted that none of 23 leaders have any intention to leave the Congress.

"We have never questioned the leadership of Soniaji," Moily told PTI in an interview, a day after the Congress Working Committee in a meeting prompted by the letter unanimously resolved to strengthen the hands of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in every possible way.

The party's top decision-making body also made it

clear no one will be permitted to undermine or weaken the party and its leadership.

"Soniaji is like a mother to the party. We revere her even now. There is no question of any intention to hurt her feelings. If we have hurt her feelings, we are sorry for it," Moily said. In her concluding remarks at the CWC meeting, Sonia had agreed to continue but said this arrangement cannot remain "open ended", as the new party chief has to be selected soon. — *PTI*

China aggression issue discussed in meet India, Vietnam to add 'new momentum' to ties

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

India on Tuesday held its 17th Meeting of the Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation with its close friend Vietnam in which both nations discussed their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) and "agreed to add new momentum to the economic and defence engagement between the two countries". New Delhi said the Indo-Vietnam CSP "ensures peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific", a comment seen as a veiled indication towards China. Both India and Vietnam are understood to be already in constant touch with each other regarding their concerns over the aggressive Chinese military behaviour on various fronts in the past few months and the issue may have also been discussed on Tuesday. While India is facing Chinese military transgression in the Ladakh sector, Vietnam is

■ **WHILE INDIA** is facing Chinese military transgression in the Ladakh sector, Vietnam is facing tensions with China in the South China Sea where it has a maritime territorial dispute with Beijing

facing tensions with China in the South China Sea where it has a maritime territorial dispute with Beijing. Both countries have fought border wars with China in the past and they continue to have military tensions with Beijing.

The India-Vietnam meeting through video-conference on Tuesday was co-chaired by external affairs minister S. Jaishankar while Vietnam was represented by its Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh. After Tuesday's meeting, EAM Jaishankar tweeted, "Our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership keeps growing. Ensures peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific."

Vietnam is also the current chairman of the 10-

Sonia, Rahul will finish Cong: Sakshi

Nagpur: Uttar Pradesh BJP leader Sakshi Maharaj on Tuesday said Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi are "enough to finish" the Congress party. "The Congress is sinking", Maharaj said after meeting RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at the Sangh headquarter here. The BJP leader said it was a "courtesy visit". Responding to a query, he said the Congress is "sinking because of its deeds and we need not do anything". "Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are enough to finish the Congress and there is no need for anyone to do anything," he said.

'Internet restrictions in J&K digital apartheid'

Collective punishment on people, says JKCCS

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, AUG. 25

An amalgam of human rights groups and activists in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday said that the internet 'siege' in the erstwhile state is a form of collective punishment unleashed on its people.

The amalgam — Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) — in a report released here said, "The ongoing internet siege enacts a 'digital apartheid', a form of systemic and pervasive discriminatory treatment and collective punishment".

It asserted that it is a violation of international human rights law as well as the laws of armed conflict for the same "is a means of political repression that serves as a deliberate means of severing social, economic and political connections between Kashmiris, while also isolating them from the world".

The report said, "For the already vulnerable people of J&K, who live amidst a state of perpetual war and permanent emergency, this siege is enforced by various modes of network disruption and state control over access to the

■ **LAST WEEK**, the authorities restored high-speed 4G internet service on "experimental basis" in two districts of the erstwhile state, Udhampur and Ganderbal

internet. These disruptions disproportionately target essential civilian supplies and services, adversely impact human rights and preemptively silence all forms of online speech."

Last week, the authorities restored high-speed 4G internet service on "experimental basis" in two districts of the erstwhile state, Udhampur and Ganderbal, more than a year after a complete communication blackout was enforced in both Jammu and Kashmir Valley regions ahead of the Centre abrogating Article 370 and bifurcating the state into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019.

Though the landline and mobile phone and 2G bandwidth internet services were restored in a phased manner across what is now called the Union Territory of J&K, 18 out of 20 of its districts continue to be deprived of the high-speed 4G internet.

The recent judgments and observations of the Supreme Court have failed to end what the JKCCS calls J&K's "digital siege". Its report said, "Instead they (J&K authorities) have inaugurated a new legalised regime of mass surveillance, filtering, and internet-speed throttling through expansive executive orders". It said that these orders are issued every two weeks, and from January 2020 until now a total of 17 such extension orders have been issued.

"Alongside routine extensions of internet restrictions, frequent complete suspensions of mobile internet connectivity through emergency police orders have also continued unabated," the report said adding that since January this year, when partial 2G internet connectivity was first restored, 70 such temporary suspension orders have been issued.

Talking about the livelihood consequences of the post-August 5, 2019 shutdown, the report said that these were severe and losses suffered during the first five months alone were estimated at ₹178.78 billion, with more than 500,000 people having lost their jobs.

EASTERN LADAKH

Troops equipped with shoulder-fired air defence missiles

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Indian Armed forces have deployed troops equipped with shoulder-fired air defence missiles on the crucial heights in Eastern Ladakh to keep in check the activity of Chinese attack helicopters in the sector.

India had already deployed quick reaction air defence missiles including the Akash missile system in June in Ladakh which can take down fighter jets and armed drones in few seconds. It was modified to make it suitable for deployment in the high mountainous terrain.

After this now Indian troops armed with the Russian-origin Igla air defence system have been deployed on the crucial heights along the border to take care of any enemy aircraft trying to violate the Indian air space there. The Russian-origin air defence systems are used by both the Indian Army and the Air Force and they can bring down enemy fighter jets or choppers which come close to Indian locations or deployments during hostilities.

The air defence systems of both Indian Army and the Indian Air Force have been deployed in Ladakh to take on any aerial

■ **THE RUSSIAN-ORIGIN** air defence systems are used by both the Indian Army and the Air Force and they can bring down enemy fighter jets or choppers which come close to Indian locations or deployments during hostilities

threat. India has also filled in its surveillance gaps to ensure that no enemy aircraft would be able to go undetected from the eyes of its defence forces.

Meanwhile, Indian Army chief General M.M. Naravane said on Tuesday that Indian Armed Forces would have to pay adequate emphasis on the available disruptive technologies that have dual use and are being driven by commercial entities and innovations. He said that an overarching national mission to identify the needs and congruence of products into military applications must form part of armed forces modernization strategy. He highlighted the impact of disruptive technologies in warfare and war fighting and emphasized that the current modernization drive was focused on upgrading existing weapon systems and platforms.

Soren shifted to Gurgaon for Covid treatment



Jharkhand Mukti Morcha Chief (JMM) chief Shibu Soren being taken to Gurgaon's Medanta Hospital by a special medical ambulance for further treatment of Covid-19 in Ranchi on Tuesday.

— *PTI*

UP scribe murder: Police officer suspended, 6 held

Lucknow/ Ballia, Aug. 25: A police officer was suspended while six people arrested in connection with the murder of a journalist in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia.

Ratan Singh (45), who worked with a Hindi news channel, was shot dead on Monday night in the Phephana police station area of the district.

The incident has drawn flak from the opposition, which has alleged "poor" law and order and accused the state government of failing to curb crime.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced an ex gratia of ₹10 lakh to the family of the deceased and offered condolences.

An official spokesperson in Lucknow said the chief minister has directed officials to ensure strict action against the accused. Ballia Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Sanjay Yadav said on the complaint of the journalist's father, six

■ **UP GOVERNMENT'S** attitude towards the "security and freedom of journalists" is condemnable, says Priyanka Gandhi

people— Sushil Singh, Dinesh Singh, Arvind Singh, Suneel Singh, Vir Bahadur Singh and Vinay Singh—have been arrested. He said the complaint was lodged against 10 people. The Phephana police station in-charge, Shashi Mauli Pandey, has been suspended and efforts are on to nab the remaining accused, the ASP said.

The ASP said the journalist's father, Vinod Singh, alleged that Sonu Singh of their village had called his son to his house around 8 pm where the accused were waiting with lathis and a revolver and they killed him.

Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar had stated on

Monday night that Ratan Singh had a property dispute with his neighbour and after a fight between the two, he was shot dead.

Accused Dinesh Singh is the parcerer (pattidar) of Ratan Singh. An old enmity and a property dispute with the neighbour led to the journalist's murder, a senior police official said.

He said Ratan Singh's killing had nothing to do with his being a journalist. "Action under the National Security Act and the Gangster Act will also be ensured against the accused," he said.

Local journalists in Ballia have demanded an ex gratia of ₹1 crore and a government job for the wife of the deceased.

Reacting to the incident, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said in a tweet that the UP government's attitude towards the "security and freedom of journalists" is condemnable.

— *PTI*

China sees India as a partner: Envoy

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 25

Chinese ambassador Sun Weidong has said recently that both India and China "should abandon the old mindset of drawing lines by ideology, and get rid of the old game of 'one's gain is another's loss' and 'zero-sum game'", adding that his country wants to put its boundary dispute with India "at an appropriate place" and "push bilateral relations back on track at an early date". The Chinese envoy to India also claimed that "China sees India as a partner instead of a rival, and an opportunity instead of a threat", adding further that both countries should "treat each other's differences in a mature and rational manner" and "properly handle differences through dialogue and consultation". The

comments were released by the Chinese Embassy only on Tuesday but were made a week ago at a "China-India Youth Webinar". It comes amid reluctance by Chinese PLA troops to move back from their positions in the Ladakh sector despite several rounds of talks at senior diplomatic and military levels between the countries, much to the dismay of India. The Chinese envoy also said China was the "first major country to achieve economic recovery in this (Coronavirus) pandemic".

The Chinese ambassador said, "As two rising major neighbours, China and India should abandon the old mindset of drawing lines by ideology, and get rid of the old game of "One's gain is another's loss" and "zero-sum game". Otherwise, you would be led astray and go down a wrong path."

THE ASIAN AGE

26 AUGUST 2020

Restore democracy to reinvent Congress

The meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) held on Monday evoked only the usual interest among the people, party workers and in political circles. The CWC, once one of the most powerful and representative bodies in the pre- and post-Independent India, has of late ceased to make news when it meets. There are two important reasons for it. One, the body filled with nominated people reflected the loss of democratic moorings in the party and symbolised the sycophancy that runs in the organisation from top to bottom; the last proper election to the CWC was conducted in 1991. Second, the committee with its elected president used to control the affairs of the nation as the ruling or a major Opposition party at the Centre and in most of the states; it no more holds such power strings now. It has been reduced to such a position that its leader in the Lok Sabha cannot legitimately lay claim to the post of the leader of the Opposition for he lacks the support of one tenth of the total members of the house as mandated. The party has only four chief ministers now.

An elected leadership is a pre-condition if the party were to regain its legitimacy and popularity and the Congress president must set in motion the process aimed at that; the easy way out of foisting string-pullers under the garb of 'consensus' must be jettisoned

The sudden interest in the CWC meeting has its origin in the letter 23 senior leaders wrote to the party leadership seeking a change at the helm. The letter created heartburn in the circles close to the party high command but the party will do well to seize the opportunity the letter-writers have offered. It is highly unlikely that they will launch an open revolt against Sonia Gandhi who has been retained as president until a new incumbent arrives or former president Rahul Gandhi, though they have succeeded in stopping Mr Gandhi from returning as party chief for now. Ms Gandhi who has said she has no plans to initiate disciplinary action against them

must do more and accommodate them in the new committee which will be formed to help her run the party. Ms Gandhi must resist the temptation of the coterie around her which would want every crisis to end with a declaration that the "hands of the leadership must be strengthened". Such self-serving exercises are unlikely to help the party sustain the interest of the party workers and the people.

An elected leadership is a pre-condition if the party were to regain its legitimacy and popularity and the Congress president must set in motion the process aimed at that; the easy way out of foisting string-pullers under the garb of "consensus" must be jettisoned. The AICC has been talking of making itself an elected body for decades, and this crisis gives it a golden opportunity, what with Ms Gandhi, who commands respect among all sections of the party, at the helm. It is important that the grand old party of Indian politics reinvents and renovates itself and makes itself a worthy Opposition party this nation deserves. Shortcuts and courtroom dramas are not the way to achieve it; returning to basic democratic practices is.

No state for journalists

What was the egregious misdeed of 42-year-old television reporter Ratan Singh for which he was beaten up by villagers at the home of the panchayat head in Ballia, eastern UP, before being shot dead? Why was there no deterrence of note in the face of this flagrant crime? Instead, the police, who should be in the dock for birthing this culture of impunity by repeatedly failing to do their job, are now busy playing down the murder as one that occurred as a result of a property dispute, a conjecture denied by none other than the family of the victim.

Sadly, this is the second murder of a journalist in about a month's time in the state of Uttar Pradesh. In July, Vikram Joshi was shot in Ghaziabad for reporting the harassment of his niece to police who waited and then effectively watched the crime take place. And in June, Shubham Mani Tripathi, a newspaper reporter from Kanpur, was shot in Unnao at the behest of a local real estate and sand lord after his reports led to the demolition of an illegal structure and he shared it on Facebook.

Tripathi's killing coincided with the Varanasi police's hounding of Scroll's executive editor for reporting that people in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency had gone hungry during the Covid-19 lockdown. This time, the police acted with alacrity. Indeed, 60 journalists from all over India, including some prominent names, have been arrested in this period, or booked or been confronted with other tactics of intimidation for simply doing something the police aren't — which is their own job of reporting on the pandemic and how the people have suffered through it.

As the coronavirus lockdown and recession affect millions of jobs nationwide, journalists, too, have come under financial stress and distress. But some of them have continued to face down both the virus and crime, as also an uncooperative and very often vindictive government, in order to report, investigate and be the first to get the news. The government, in its turn, has clanged kitchen utensils in their honour, and then promptly turned a blind eye even as police blithely brushed crimes under the carpet.

The headline, therefore, is an ironic one. As for the police-mafia-state crackdown on news and commentary, it is not completely successful.

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Audit service is unhappy over Murmu as CAG

The appointment of former lieutenant governor of Jammu & Kashmir G.C. Murmu as India's Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has not been welcomed by the Indian Audit & Accounts Service (IA&AS) officers. It is being seen as yet another instance of the dominance of the IAS cadre over other all-India services. Not that it's been known to make any difference to this Sarkar, once it's made up its mind!

Sources say that in becoming CAG, Mr Murmu who is from the 1985-batch Gujarat cadre of the IAS, has superseded at least six IA&AS officers. But he is not the first IAS officer to become the nation's top auditor. Mr Murmu's immediate predecessor, Rajiv Mehrishi, was from the 1978 IAS cadre, and he too had followed Shashikant Sharma, who belonged to the 1976 batch. Many would also remember CAG

Vinod Rai, a 1972-batch IAS officer. Apparently, the last IA&AS officer to become CAG was A. Bakshi whose tenure ended back in 1978.

Since then, CAGs have been from the tribe of the "heaven-born", but clearly the IA&AS officers who have lost the race to become CAG are unwilling to accept the IAS "outsiders". Will the current resentment subside "naturally" or will Mr Murmu face rough weather? We'll have to wait and see.

ASTHANA IS NEW BSF CHIEF
Two years after his highly publicized ouster from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), its former special director Rakesh Asthana has been named director general of the Border Security Force (BSF).

Interestingly, he continues to hold additional charge of director general, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). Checking narcotics smug-

gling remains a big concern and in the BSF, which patrols the borders, Mr Asthana as DG is back in a position where he can play a more active role.

Mr Asthana has served both in the state government and at the Centre, where he served twice in the CBI. The 1984-batch IPS officer from the Gujarat cadre also did a low-profile stint at the Bureau of Civil Aviation and Security.

At the CBI, he was involved in investigating many high-profile cases. During his first stint in the agency, he investigated the fodder scam, which resulted in the conviction of former Bihar chief minister Lalu Yadav. He also achieved signal success in building a water-tight case for the extradition of escaped liquor baron Vijay Malviya from the UK. He led CBI's case in the UK courts. In Gujarat, he served in crucial posts such as Vadodara's police commissioner

under then chief minister Narendra Modi.

TELL-ALL TALES

The arrival of "tell-all" books by Viral Acharya and Urjit Patel has whetted the curiosity of many who are looking to find some skeletons tumble out.

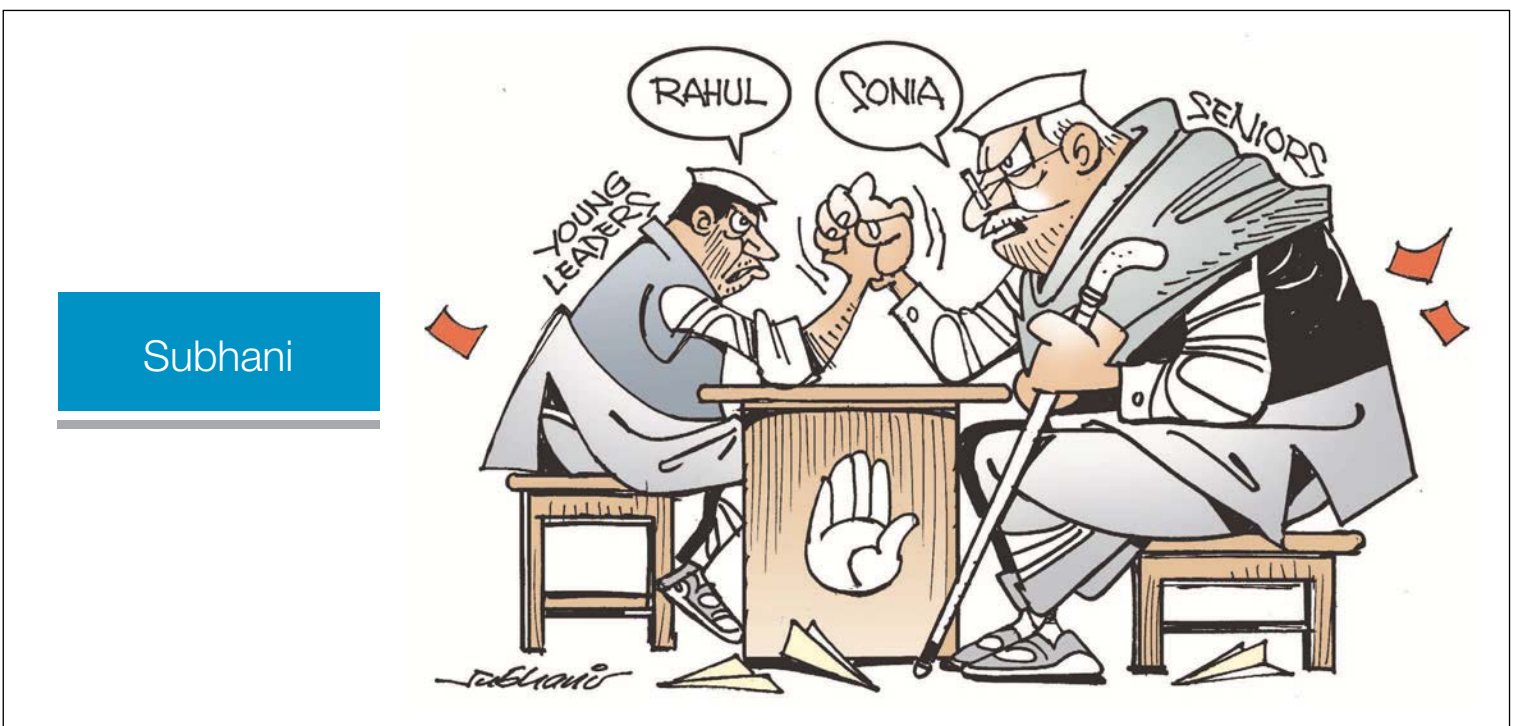
Both economists did stints at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and left in more or less similar circumstances — before the end of their terms. While Mr Patel was RBI Governor, Mr Acharya is a former deputy governor of RBI, who quit six months before his tenure ended in 2019.

According to Mr Acharya, Mr Patel quit because of several attempts to undermine the autonomy of the bank by the government. It was something that was widely discussed in the media at the time. However, Mr Patel had claimed that he had resigned for "personal rea-

sons", although it was widely speculated that one reason he disagreed with the government was on the issue of parting with the central bank's reserves. However, he seems to have mended fences now as he has been appointed as Chairman of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy.

Mr Acharya, too, quit after a series of spat with government officials. His book was published close on the heels of Mr Patel's own book which provides a glance into how India's bankruptcy code was weakened by several stakeholders within the broader banking system. Mr Acharya has argued that numerous policies "regressed" the economic climate in the country while he was deputy governor between early January 2017 and mid-July 2019.

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Subhani

Dawood, D-Company & Pakistan's terror links



Syed Ata Hasnain

In the early 1970s the name Haji Mastan used to trigger much fear in India. He was among the early smuggler kings who lived by crime and exploited criminal networks — gold, some drugs, electronics and liquor, which mainly formed contraband those days. There were vast smuggling networks to evade the authorities, but their main effect was a marginal negative impact on the economy and a few inter-gang shootouts. These were people who did what they did for self-enrichment, and the power that went with it.

Smuggler kings usually invested in the urban property market. As India progressed, these holdings began to emerge as virtual gold. The Bollywood film *Deewar* captured this very well in 1974. It was n't until 1993 that crime syndicates involved in running contraband across borders went beyond the ordinary. They got involved with terrorism, as Mumbai saw in the 1993 bombings, when a series of 12 bomb explosions on March 12, 1993 resulted in 257 fatalities and 1,400 injuries. The bombings were ascribed to Dawood Ibrahim, leader of a Mumbai-based international crime syndicate called "D-Company". Dawood was assisted by subordinates Tiger Memon and Yakub Memon. D-Company became a well-known name across India as it deeply involved itself with Pakistan-sponsored transnational proxy terrorism in India. Dawood Ibrahim, who had lived in the UAE since 1986, found a safe haven in Karachi too. Since then, he has been behind several high-profile terror acts in different parts of India outside Kashmir. He is listed as an "international terrorist" by the UN and the United States and carries a bounty of \$25 million on his head.

The recent Financial Action Task Force (FATF) pressure on Pakistan has led to the partially admitted presence of Dawood in Karachi. However, his networks continue to flourish in India despite the marked success of India's intelligence agencies.

What is the linkage between crime syndicates and transnational terrorists? To comprehend this, take the example of Pakistan. In 1989 it chose to target India through what is called asymmetric or sub-conventional war. Terrorism forms the core of this, with many other domains forming part of the low-intensity conflict spectrum. Pakistan chose to launch its strategy in Kashmir and over a period of time established an efficient network of local underground workers from different segments of society. The network covered civil society members, lawyers, businessmen, politicians, media persons, members of the clergy, faculty and students of universities, and much more. Due to the prevailing sub-nationalist trends in J&K it was not difficult doing this. However, Pakistan's strategy desired extension of the hand of proxy conflict to hinterland areas and important cities of India to give substance to its chosen strategy of "war by a thousand cuts". It was not easy doing this. Finding reliable proxies, creating networks, embedding sleeper agents, transporting warlike material, having access to large-scale finances and creating empathy in some elements of society is never a simple set of tasks. It takes years to build these through networks. In search for the means to take the proxy war into the rest of India, Pakistan got a shot in the arm with the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 and the communal riots that fol-

lowed; both acting as facilitators for the extension of its strategy. Its target was not difficult to choose, as Mumbai offered itself due to its strategic significance as India's financial capital. Mayhem by violence would disrupt investments, lead to serious suspicions of the minority community, create cleavages in society and cultivate a resultant trust deficit that would assist Pakistan to exploit at will. However, the other major consideration for the selection of Mumbai as the target was the pre-existence of criminal networks, with the D-Company leading them. A foreign hand could ride on these networks for a cost. With networks on its side, Pakistan thus had available human resources, weapons, finances, communications and local knowledge. With explosives supplanted, it was a ticking bomb. Criminal networks got their first major experience of terror that did not differentiate between targets; every incidental target is justified in the rationale of terrorists, especially those with ideological orientation. People of all faiths died or were maimed in the acts on March 12, 1993 and thereafter.

Dawood Ibrahim, who evaded the hand of Indian law, managed to create a reported network of 5,000 criminal elements with an annual turnover of \$2 billion. The D-Company is suspected of having provided the logistics for the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba's terror attack on Mumbai on November 26, 2008, besides a host of other attacks in 2002, 2006 and 2011. A total of 600 people died in these various attacks in Mumbai. With each event, Dawood

Ibrahim's criminal-cum-terrorist profile enhanced a couple of notches and he has been known to keep the company of international terrorist outfits like Al Qaeda and the Taliban. In 2006, India submitted a list of 38 most wanted terrorists, including Dawood Ibrahim, to Pakistan, but the latter continued to play a hedging game knowing that the D-Company and its head was an invaluable asset for it.

With the FATF investigation against Pakistan, India in recent months has mounted pressure at the UN. On August 6, 2020, India highlighted the nexus between international terrorism and organised crime, quoting the case of UN-designated terrorist Dawood Ibrahim, who has been living in Pakistan ever since his involvement in the 1993 Mumbai blasts. India went on to state: "If the international community can successfully defeat the Islamic State, a similar focus on addressing threats posed by proscribed individuals and entities such as Dawood Ibrahim and his D-Company, the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad will serve humankind well."

The continuous Indian diplomatic campaign to highlight Pakistan-sponsored criminal and terrorist links which have acted as its proxies in India is apparently bearing fruit, with Pakistan reportedly admitting the existence of Dawood Ibrahim in Karachi. However, Pakistan is a past master at subterfuge and evasion of responsibility. Its admission on one day and denial the next is part of an old strategy which it continues to play with the FATF. With international success against the ISIS and Al Qaeda, a renewed and energetic Indian campaign to nail Dawood Ibrahim is the call of the hour so that the FATF can effectively take note and place Pakistan on notice to deliver or perish on the blacklist. But only time can tell if it will happen this time.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

With international success against the ISIS and Al Qaeda, a renewed and energetic Indian campaign to nail Dawood Ibrahim is the call of the hour so that the FATF can effectively take note and place Pakistan on notice

LETTERS

RETURN TO DYNASTY

Though some dissidents were courageous enough to demand a change in the leadership in the grand old Congress, the Gandhi family has successfully cornered them with the accusation of collusion with BJP. This has forced them to dial down their voices and toe the line. It is a well-known fact that the public is fed up with the Gandhi family's reassurances. After all, the party doesn't work for the Gandhis, but for the people. As for the Gandhis, they, too, work for the party and it is time they wake up and smell the coffee.

Capt. N. Viswanathan
Coimbatore

JOB OF THE GOVT

OUR RESPONSIBILITY towards daily wagers is growing rapidly as the duration of the coronavirus lockdown grows longer than was planned for. While citizens have played a praiseworthy role in feeding the needy when they were stuck in cities, they cannot replace the role of the government. Many workers lost their lives while returning to their homes. Others are dying of hunger or are faced with a slow and painful end after losing their employment. Suicides are rising. It is the local government's responsibility to look after them. Won't it rise to the occasion?

Shaheen Ahmed
Mumbai

UNSAFE MUMBAI

MAHAD'S SIX-STORY building collapse is a cause for concern. As Mumbai continues to reel under a persistent monsoon, such problems go on unabated even as more and more rain-related issues continue to haunt the city. First it was the pothole menace and now the city is reeling under tree falls and building collapses. The government of Maharashtra must act to save the lives of people dying on this account in view of the fact that there are thousands and thousands of such buildings in Mumbai and suburbs which remain unsafe for occupation. Unauthorised constructions, too, are something to be looked into. It is time to investigate the builder and crack down on the real estate mafia.

Gundu K. Mani
Mumbai

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

IN BRIEF

Pakistan arrests two militants

Lahore: Pakistan's counter-terrorism officials have arrested two militants of the banned Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a splinter terrorist group of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, in the country's Punjab province, the police said on Tuesday. According to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab Police, an intelligence-based operation was conducted in Sahiwal city, some 175 kms from here, on Monday. The terrorists were carrying weapons and explosive material as they had planned to attack the personnel of the law enforcement agencies in the city. The CTD team raided and arrested them, the police said.

Philippines ultra leader 'killed'

Manila: Abu Sayyaf militants may have staged suicide bombings that killed 14 people to avenge the death of a Filipino leader of the Islamic State group in the southern Philippines following a clash with troops last month, the army chief said Tuesday. Army commanding general Cirilito Sobejana said Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan was wounded in a July 6 gunbattle in a jungle near Patikul town in Sulu province and most likely died a few days later. Troops have been searching for his buried remains, he said. Two Islamic militants blew themselves up in suicide attacks Monday that killed at least 14 people, including soldiers.

\$424 mn surplus in July: Pak

Islamabad: Cash-strapped Pakistan has shown a surplus of \$424 million in July after posting a deficit of \$100 million in June, the country's central bank has said. The State Bank of Pakistan said "this is the fourth monthly surplus since last October". The SBP said that the strong turnaround in the remittances and exports is achieved "with support from several policy and administrative initiatives taken by the bank and the federal government, the *Express Tribune* reported. The export of goods increased to \$1.89 billion in July compared to \$1.58 billion in June. It was, however, 14 per cent lower than \$2.22 billion export in July 2019.

FB blocks group on Thai monarchy

Bangkok: Facebook has blocked in Thailand a group with more than a million members that engages in open discussion about the Thai monarchy, an institution that is staunchly protected from criticism by strict laws. The Facebook group, "Royalist Marketplace", was blocked late Monday after the social media giant bowed to pressure from the Thai government. Facebook said that it is still available in other places, adding that the company plans to "legally challenge" the government's request. "After careful review, Facebook has determined that we are compelled to restrict access to content which the Thai government deemed to be illegal," the company said.

ACTOR SABA SAHER SHOT AT, CRITICAL

Kabul, Aug. 25: A roadside bombing killed a police officer while a policewoman and her driver were wounded when unknown attackers opened fire on them in Kabul, said Ferdaws Faramarz, spokesman for the Kabul police chief. The police-women, Saba Saher, is also a well-known actress, and she was said to be stable.

A wave of attacks across Afghanistan on Tuesday left at least 17 people dead and scores more wounded, officials said, including a Taliban truck bombing that targeted a commando base for Afghan forces. The bomber struck in Balkh province, killing three people, including two Afghan commandos and a civilian. According to Hanif Rezaie, the spokesman for the Afghan army corps in the north, initial military report said at least six commandos and around 35 civilians were wounded in that explosion, which also destroyed or damaged dozens of nearby houses.

In a separate attack in Balkh, gunmen shot dead five people, including former warlord Abdul Raouf, two of his sons ages 10 and 11 and two other men. Also on Tuesday, an attack on a checkpoint of pro-government forces in western Ghor province killed eight troops and wounded five.

Haley: US not racist, reject Dem's 'fashion' statement

Will speak at GOP meet that will renominate Trump as poll candidate

Washington, Aug. 25: Describing herself as a proud daughter of Indian immigrants who wore a turban and a saree, top Republican politician Nikki Haley has narrated her story to the American voters, urging them to strongly reject the Democratic Party's "fashionable" statement that "America is racist". The 48-year-old former US Ambassador to the United Nations, Haley is the only Indian-American listed so far to be speaking at the Republican National Convention which on Thursday would formally re-nominate President Donald Trump as its candidate for the November 3 presidential election. President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence will be challenged by the Democratic Party's presidential nominee Joe Biden and his Indian-American running mate Senator Kamala Harris.

Twice elected as the Governor of South Carolina, Haley said, "In much of the Democratic Party, it's now fashionable to say that America is racist. That is a lie. America is not a racist country."

"This is personal for me. I am the proud daughter of Indian immigrants. They came to America and settled in a small southern town. My father wore a turban. My mother wore a sari. I was a brown girl in a black and white world," she said on Monday at the mostly-virtual four-day convention during which she fully backed President Trump and his policies.

Born as Nimrata Randhawa in South Carolina, she is the daughter of Ajit



Delegates cheer as US President Donald Trump (L) and Vice President Mike Pence stand on stage during the first day of the Republican National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina on Monday. — AFP

Singh Randhawa and Raj Kaur Randhawa, who emigrated from Amritsar in Punjab. Haley said her family faced discrimination and hardship but her parents never gave in to grievance and hate.

"My mom built a successful business. My dad taught 30 years at a historically Black college. And the people of South Carolina chose me as their first minority and first female governor," she said. "America is a story that's a work in progress. Now is the time to build on that progress, and make America even freer, fairer, and better for everyone," Haley said.

— PTI

Trump lauds India after American pastor released

Washington, Aug. 25: US President Donald Trump has appreciated India for listening to his request to release an American pastor who was arrested last October on charges of carrying \$40,000 of undeclared currency. Tennessee pastor Bryan Nerven, who was released by India after intervention from Trump this May, attended a round table with the President in the Oval Office of the

White House along with several other American citizens who were released from overseas abductions and detentions.

"India responded very well to my request. Appreciate that," Trump said as he appeared in a taped meeting with a group of US citizens who were abducted or detained overseas and the Trump Administration helped them to return home. The taped round-

table was broadcast during the first night of the four-day Republican National Convention on Monday. In his brief remarks, Nerven explained that he had been arrested by the Indian officials while travelling in the country.

Nerven from the International House of Prayer Ministries was arrested in Bagdogra, West Bengal last October.

— PTI

False plasma data: US health official sorry

Washington, Aug. 25: Dr Stephen Hahn, the commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration, apologised Monday after misrepresenting a key statistic on how effective blood plasma is for treating Covid-19 when announcing an emergency approval measure. The US on Sunday issued emergency approval for plasma taken from recovered Coronavirus patients, so that more people can get access to the exper-

imental treatment.

But Hahn and other senior health officials came under fire from experts after repeating a claim made by President Donald Trump that blood plasma from recovered Covid-19 patients reduced mortality rates by 35 per cent.

"What that means is — and if the data continue to pan out — 100 people who are sick with Covid-19, 35 would have been saved because of the administra-

tion of plasma," Hahn said Sunday, after Trump had called it "a tremendous number". Health secretary Alex Azar added: "I just want to emphasise this point, because I don't want you to gloss over this number. We dream in drug development of something like a 35 per cent mortality reduction. This is a major advance in the treatment of patients. This is a major advance." Such a reduction would indeed be a game

changer in the fight against the pandemic — but the statistic is false.

The officials said these results came from a study of 35,000 patients conducted by Mayo Clinic, but Dr Scott Wright, the study's leader, told *AFP* it did not come from his institution's research. He said he believed it might be an "integrated analysis" the FDA had arrived at by looking at both Mayo's work and other studies.

FDA spokeswoman Emily Miller later tweeted that 35 percent referred to the relative difference in mortality risk between those patients in Mayo's study who received a high level of antibodies against those who received a low level of antibodies.

"I have been criticized for remarks I made Sunday night about the benefits of convalescent plasma," said Hahn in a tweet thread on Monday. — *AFP*

Postpone NEET, JEE exams: Greta

London, Aug. 25: Swedish teen climate change campaigner Greta Thunberg on Tuesday threw her weight behind postponing the NEET and the JEE exams in India in view of the Coronavirus, saying it is "deeply unfair" that students are asked to appear in the tests during the pandemic.

Several students and political leaders across the country, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and DMK President M.K. Stalin, have urged the central government to postpone the examination until the spread of the Covid-19 was brought under control.

Voicing her support to the calls for the deferment of the key national examinations, Thunberg took to Twitter, saying it is deeply unfair for the students. "It's deeply unfair that students of India are asked to sit national exams during the Covid-19 pandemic and while millions have also been impacted by the extreme floods. I stand with their call to #PostponeJEE, #NEETinCOVID," she said in a tweet.

Thunberg, 17, has become a leading voice for action on climate change, inspiring millions of students to join protests around the world. She was named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year for 2019. Two years ago, she started missing lessons most Fridays to protest outside the Swedish Parliament building, in what turned out to be the beginning of a huge environmental movement.

● THE JEE (Main) is scheduled to be held between September 1 and 6, while the JEE (Advanced) on September 27. The NEET will be held on September 13.

The chorus for postponing the various examinations, including NEET and JEE, grew louder on Sunday with over 4,000 students observing a day-long hunger strike to press for the demand in view of the rising Covid-19 cases. The protest came on a day Gandhi said the government must listen to the 'mann ki baat' of students and arrive at "an acceptable solution" and his party demanded that the NEET and the JEE be deferred. According to the leftist All India Students Association (AISA), over 4,200 students observed the day-long hunger strike at their respective home demanding that CBSE compartment exams of Classes 10 and 12 be cancelled and entrance exams such as the UGC-NET, CLAT, NEET and JEE be postponed. Aspirants appear in the JEE for admission into the premier engineering colleges and the NEET for undergraduate medical courses.

The JEE (Main) is scheduled to be held between September 1 and 6, while the JEE (Advanced) on September 27. The NEET will be held on September 13. With 60,975 people testing positive for the Coronavirus infection in a day, India's Covid-19 tally on Tuesday rose to 31,67,323. — *PTI*

Kenosha protesters, cops clash again after man shot

Kenosha, Aug. 25: Anger over the shooting of a PoC by police spilled into the streets of Kenosha for a second night Monday, with police again firing tear gas at hundreds of protesters who defied a curfew, threw bottles and shot fireworks at law enforcement guarding the courthouse. The southeastern Wisconsin city became the nation's latest flashpoint in a summer of racial unrest after cellphone footage of police shooting Jacob Blake — apparently in the back, as he leaned into his SUV while his three children sat in the vehicle — circulated widely on social media Sunday.

The 29-year-old was hospitalised in serious condition. The shooting drew

condemnation from Democratic Gov Tony Evers, who also called out 125 members of the National Guard on Monday after protesters set cars on fire, smashed windows and clashed with officers in riot gear the previous night.

Police first fired tear gas Monday about 30 minutes after the 8 p.m. curfew took effect to disperse protesters who chanted, "No justice, no peace" as they confronted a line of officers who wore protective gear and stood shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the courthouse entrance.

But hundreds of people stuck around, screaming at police and lighting fires, including to a garbage truck near the courthouse. Tensions had flared anew earlier Monday after

a news conference with Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian, originally to be held in a park, was moved inside the city's public safety building.

Hundreds of protesters rushed to the building and a door was snapped off its hinges before police in riot gear pepper-sprayed the crowd, which included a photographer from *The Associated Press*. Police in the former auto manufacturing centre of 100,000 people midway between Milwaukee and Chicago said they were responding to a call about a domestic dispute when they encountered Blake on Sunday. They did not say whether Blake was armed or why police opened fire, they released no details on the dispute. — *AP*

NZ survivor to mosque gunman: 'You are the loser'

Christchurch, Aug. 25: A man who was shot and wounded in the New Zealand mosque attacks had a simple message for the mass-murderer responsible: "You are the loser, and we are the winners." Mirwais Waziri was among the survivors and family members who spoke on the second day of a four-day sentencing hearing for white supremacist Brenton Harrison Tarrant, who killed 51 worshippers at two mosques during the March 2019 attacks. Waziri said Tarrant had not shown any remorse during the hearing and so instead of giving a victim's impact statement he wanted to deliver the gunman a message.

Coming from Afghanistan, Waziri said, he was sometimes associated with terrorism but now he'd been freed. "You took that name from me," Waziri said.

"Today, you are the terrorist." His comments elicited spontaneous applause from other victims in the courtroom. Others told Tarrant during their statements that he was a coward, a monster, a rat. Tarrant broke his impassive facade a

couple of times to smirk at survivors when they made fun of him — one told him he should read the Quran during his plentiful free time, another said he was still alive because Tarrant didn't know how to shoot, except from point-blank range. The 29-year-old Australian gunman in March pleaded guilty to murder, attempted murder, and terrorism, reversing an earlier not guilty plea. He could become the first person in New Zealand to be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, the toughest sentence available. Tarrant is noticeably thinner than when he was first arrested.

At the current hearing, he hasn't shown the brazenness he did at his first court appearance the day after the attacks, when he made a hand gesture sometimes adopted by white supremacists. During Tuesday's hearing, relatives and survivors described how more than a year after the attacks, they were still having trouble sleeping, enjoying life and providing for their families.

— *AP*

Navalny poisoning blame just 'empty noise', says Kremlin

Moscow, Aug. 25: The Kremlin on Tuesday rejected accusations of involvement in an alleged attack on Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny who is in a coma in a German hospital, a day after doctors said tests indicated that he was poisoned. The politician's allies say the Kremlin is behind the illness of its most prominent critic, with some demanding an investigation into whether Russian President Vladimir Putin was involved.

"These accusations absolutely cannot be true and are rather an empty noise," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday. "We do not intend to take it seriously."

Peskov saw no grounds for launching a criminal investigation into Navalny's condition, saying that it could have been triggered by a variety of causes, and determining one should come first. "If a substance (that caused

the condition) is found, and if it is determined that it is poisoning, then there will be a reason for an investigation," Peskov said. Navalny, a politician and corruption investigator who is one of Putin's fiercest critics, fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Thursday and was taken to a hospital in the city of Omsk after the plane made an emergency landing.

Over the weekend he was transferred to the Charité hospital in Berlin, where doctors on Monday said they have found indications of "cholinesterase inhibitors" in his system. Cholinesterase inhibitors act by blocking the breakdown of a key chemical in the body, acetylcholine, that transmits signals between nerve cells.

Navalny is being treated with the antidote atropine. Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, has been visiting her husband daily and made no comment.

— *AP*

Imran wants Nawaz back immediately

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 25

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday while directing to review the legal aspects said that former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) supremo Nawaz Sharif should be brought back to Pakistan immediately.

The meeting of the federal cabinet was held in Islamabad with Prime Minister Imran Khan in chair. During the meeting, matters pertaining to the country's current political situation came

under discussion. Sources said that the meeting discussed bringing back PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan and the recent political activities of party vice president Maryam Nawaz.

Federal Minister for Water Resources Faisal Vawda while expressing concern for failing to arrest Maryam Nawaz, said that she should have been arrested for what she did outside the National Accountability Bureau office, adding that no matter what happens, Maryam Nawaz will not be allowed to leave the country.

UNDER | WATER

Officials yet to reveal why vessel came so close to the island

Ship behind Mauritius oil spill sunk

Port Louis, Aug. 25: The broken stem of a Japanese-owned ship which ran aground causing a devastating oil spill in pristine waters off Mauritius, has been successfully sunk in the open ocean.

Nagashiki Shipping, which owns the MV Wakashio, said on Tuesday (Aug 25) it had completed scuttling of the front part of the vessel at sea on Monday as instructed by local authorities.

The bulk carrier ran aground on a coral reef off the Indian Ocean island on Jul 25 and began leaking

oil two weeks later, prompting a race against the clock to pump all the fuel off the bulk carrier before it broke in two.

The operation was successful and two tugboats last week began towing the larger, forward section of the vessel some 15km out into the open ocean, where it has been sunk to a depth of 3,180m.

The smaller section remains wedged on the reef where the shipwreck occurred.

"The planned sinking of the stem (forward) section of the casualty has been

completed and at around 3.30pm was no longer visible on the sea surface," read a statement on Monday from the Mauritius crisis committee.

Greenpeace opposed the plan, warning last week that sinking the vessel would "risk biodiversity and contaminate the ocean with large quantities of heavy metal toxins".

More than 1,000 tonnes of oil spilled into the pristine waters that have long been a major draw for honey-mooners, and contain precious mangroves and coral reefs. Last week a team of

British scientists arrived to co-ordinate an impact assessment on what damage has been done to the island and how to help the eco-system recover.

International experts from Japan and France are also on the ground assisting the archipelago nation in the wake of the spill.

Senior British marine monitoring scientist Dr Sue Ware told *AFP* the team would help "determine the footprint of the oil both on the shoreline and ... whether it has managed to reach any areas of

the seabed" and how it has impacted mangroves, coral reefs and different marine species.

She said efforts by Mauritius to place booms in the water appeared to have been successful in preventing oil from reaching the protected Blue Bay wetlands area.

The captain of the ship and his second-in-command were arrested last Tuesday. Officials have yet to reveal why the ship, which was making its way from Singapore to Brazil, came so close to the island. — *Agencies*

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|--------|
| Sensex | 38,843.88 | 0.12 |
| Nifty 50 | 11472.30 | 0.05 |
| S&P 500* | 3,428.93 | -0.07 |
| Dollar (₹) | 74.33 | -0.01 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 97.27 | -0.02 |
| Euro (₹) | 87.83 | -0.02 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 51,081*188 | 0.37 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 45.92 | 0.79 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.157 | -0.065 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.700 | 0.054 |

* As of 9:30 PM IST

LIC Housing rises eight per cent after Q1 results

Shares of LIC Housing Finance Ltd (LICHFL) on Tuesday closed with 8 per cent gains after the company reported a 34 per cent jump in its net profit for the quarter ending June. The stock rose by 8.06 per cent to close at ₹299 on the BSE. On the NSE, it jumped 8 per cent to close at ₹298.95. In volume terms, 21,07 lakh shares were traded on the BSE and over 4 crore shares on the NSE during the day.

Flipkart to shift to 100% Electric Vehicles by 2030



Walmart-owned Flipkart on Tuesday said it will transition completely to the usage of electric vehicles (EVs) by 2030 as part of its sustainability efforts, and has joined the Climate Group's global electric mobility initiative, EV100. EV100 brings together companies committed to accelerating the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) and making electric transport the new normal by 2030.

Satyam investor relations head fined by Sebi

Sebi on Tuesday levied a fine of ₹10 lakh on Satyam Computer Services Ltd's head of investor relations for indulging in insider trading in the firm's scrip. The head of investor relations of Satyam Computer Services Ltd, T.A.N. Murti, violated Prohibition of Insider Trading norms, Sebi order said adding that he had dealt in shares of SCSL while in possession of unpublished price sensitive information.

ICICI Bank uses satellite data to assess agri loans

For the first time in domestic banking, ICICI Bank is deploying satellite data to power farm credit assessment, which it claims will reduce cost for both farmers as well as the lender. The second-largest private sector lender on Tuesday said it has been piloting the project in a few select villages for the past two years and is extending the same to 500 villages in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat now.

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RBI stops printing ₹2,000 notes

■ No ₹2,000 note printed in 2019-20; ₹2,000 notes in circulation are on decline

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 25

Without announcing a formal demonetisation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) appears to be phasing out ₹2,000 currency notes from circulation if one goes by data published in the RBI Annual Report 2019-20, which was released by the central bank on Tuesday. In its report, the RBI said the ₹2,000 denominated currency note, which was launched after the demonetisation in November 2016, has not been printed in financial

year 2019-2020. The number of ₹2,000 currency notes in circulation is also gradually coming down since 2018. At the end of March 2018, there were 33,632 lakh pieces of ₹2,000 currency notes in circulation. This number came to 32,910 lakh pieces at end-March 2019 and further down to 27,398 lakh pieces at end-March 2020. The ₹2,000 denominated notes constituted 2.4 per cent of the total volume of notes at the end of March 2020, down from three per cent at the end of March 2019 and 3.3 per cent at the

VERY CLEARLY without demonetisation, the RBI maybe phasing out ₹2,000 currency notes. We are not getting any new supply of ₹2,000 notes.

SENIOR BANKER

end of March 2018. In value terms also, the share has come down to 22.6 per cent at the end of March 2020, from 31.2 per cent at the end of March 2019 and 37.3 per cent at the end of March 2018. The share of ₹2,000 notes was

50 per cent in 2017, as the major focus was on remonetising the economy. On the other hand, the circulation of currency notes of denomination of ₹500 and ₹200 has gone up substantially, both in terms of volume and value over the three years beginning 2018. Bankers believe that the RBI is gradually withdrawing ₹2,000 notes from the circulation by not printing notes afresh. Unlike demonetisation, the method would gradually withdraw the notes while allowing them to remain a lender tender.

A senior banker told *Deccan Chronicle*, "Very clearly without demonetisation, the RBI maybe phasing out ₹2000 currency notes. We are not getting any new supply of ₹2,000 notes." A former banker said, "There may be some people who are hoarding ₹2,000 currency notes but the number may not be large. Banks are not reissuing ₹2,000 notes; maybe banks have been told by the RBI not to reissue ₹2,000 notes. It is also easy to calibrate the ATMs with lower currency notes such as ₹500."

Jack Ma's Ant offers world's biggest IPO

Hong Kong, Aug. 25: Billionaire Jack Ma's Ant Group filed for an initial public offering (IPO) in Hong Kong and Shanghai to bankroll its expansion in financial services and bolster its lead as China's largest online payments platform.



The Hangzhou-based company will issue no less than 10 per cent in new shares of its total capital, according to its filing with the Shanghai exchange. Ant generated 72.5 billion yuan (\$10.5 billion) in revenue in the first half, after full-year sales of 120.6 billion yuan in 2019, it said. The firm posted a profit of 21.2 billion yuan in the first half.

The crown jewel of the sprawling Alibaba empire, Ant has been accelerating its evolution into an online mall for everything from loans and travel services to food delivery, in a bid to win back shoppers lost to Tencent Holdings Ltd. With data from a billion users of its Alipay app at its back, Ant is pushing broadly into financial services, delivering technology such as artificial intelligence, robo investing and lending platforms.

The simultaneous listing could mark one of the biggest debuts in years, and even top Saudi Aramco's record \$29 billion IPO, a person familiar has said. The firm is targeting a valuation of about \$225 billion, based on an IPO of about \$30 billion if markets are favourable, people familiar with the matter have said. The company will use the proceeds to expand cross-border payments and enhance its research and development capabilities.

ties, according to the filing, which didn't provide a share price range or the amount it intends to raise in the IPO. Unlike Chinese tech giants such as Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., Ant decided against listing in the US at a time of increased scrutiny by the Trump administration of Chinese companies and warnings to US endowment funds to offload their stakes in US-listed Chinese businesses. Ant's Shanghai listing marks a victory for the city's exchange, and is part of an effort by China to establish its own capital markets as tensions with the United States escalate. Alibaba is Ant's largest shareholder, with a 33 per cent stake. Hangzhou Junao, an entity that is owned by key Ant and Alibaba executives, owns 20.66 per cent, while Hangzhou Junhan, which holds shares on behalf of Ant employees, owns a 29.86 per cent stake. — *Bloomberg*

SHAKY GROUNDS

THE RBI'S ANNUAL REPORT SHOWS THAT THE INDIAN ECONOMY WAS ON A SHAKY GROUND EVEN BEFORE THE CORONAVIRUS DEALT A SEVERE BLOW.

- The general government fiscal deficit of 25 states and the central government has increased from 5.4 per cent of GDP in 2018-19 to 6.5 per cent in 2019-20. The revised figure is expected to deteriorate further to about 7.5 per cent in 2019-20.
- On a year-on-year basis, direct tax collection has declined by 7.7 per cent in 2019-20 as against a 13.4 per cent increase in 2018-19.
- Outstanding liabilities rose to 70.4 per cent of GDP in 2019-20 (revised estimate) from 67.5 per cent in 2018-19.
- Estimates for gross tax revenue in 2019-20 were brought down by ₹ 4.51 lakh crore vis-a-vis budget estimates.
- Indirect tax growth has slowed to 1.7 per cent from 2.9 per cent a year ago.

RBI foresees higher food prices despite surplus crop

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs HYDERABAD, AUG. 25

The country's headline inflation is expected to firm up further in the coming months largely due to disruptions in food and manufactured items' supply chains, the RBI said in its annual report for 2019-20. In the same report, the central bank also claims that surplus foodgrain management has become a major challenge for the country. One hand, the RBI said headline inflation picked up strongly during the closing months of 2019-20 and the short-term outlook for food inflation has turned uncertain. On the other hand, the RBI claims that the total production of foodgrains has

ONE HAND, the RBI said the short-term outlook for food inflation has turned uncertain. On the other hand, the RBI claims that the total production of foodgrains has reached a record 296.65 million tonnes in 2019-20.

reached a record 296.65 million tonnes in 2019-20, while total horticulture production — accounting for about 40 per cent of gross value added (GVA) in the farm sector — also reached an all-time high of 320.48 million tonnes. India is now among the leading producers of milk, cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits, cotton, sugarcane, fish, poultry and livestock in the world. But the RBI claims that disruptions in the supply

chains of food and manufactured items could amplify sectoral price pressures, thus posing an upside risk to headline inflation. The RBI also stressed on agricultural exports that expose the Indian farmer to international terms of trade and technology; and public and private capital formation in the farm sector. Experience shows that in periods when the terms of trade remained favourable to agriculture, annual average growth in agricultural GVA exceeded 3 per cent. Otherwise, the main instrument of incentive has been minimum support prices, but the experience has been that price incentives have been costly, inefficient and even distortive, the RBI report added.

Bank frauds double to ₹1.85 lakh cr in 1 year

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 25

Bank frauds of ₹1 lakh and above have more than doubled in the previous year to ₹1.85 lakh crore from ₹71,543 crore in 2018-19 period, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its Annual Report 2019-20 released on Tuesday. The number of such cases increased by 28 per cent to 8,707 in 2019-20 from 6,799 in 2018-19 said the RBI report. "Frauds have been predominantly occurring in the loan portfolio (advances category), both

in terms of number and value. There was a concentration of large value frauds, with the top 50 credit-related frauds constituting 76 per cent of the total amount reported as frauds during 2019-20. Incidents relating to other areas of banking, like off-balance sheet and forex transactions, fell in 2019-20," said the RBI said in its report. However, the date of occurrence of these frauds are spread over several previous years and are accounted for in the financial year when they are reported. — *PTI*

NIPPON INDIA RAISES ₹720CR FROM FIRST NFO

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 25

Nippon India Mutual Fund has collected ₹720 crore through its first new fund offer (NFO) after the rebranding of its fund house. The NFO which was conducted digitally and saw a large participation with over 80,000 applications. Nippon India Multi Asset Fund is a unique fund which allows investors to take exposure to four distinct asset classes — domestic equity, foreign equity, commodities and fixed income. The NFO closed on August 21, 2020 and would reopen for subscription from September 2, 2020. "This was the first open ended actively-managed NFO after the brand change, launched under Nippon India Mutual Fund. The overwhelming response strongly reflects our strong distribution capabilities, sound digital infrastructure and trust in newly established brands," said Saugata Chatterjee, co-chief business officer, Nippon India Mutual Fund. "Over 80,000 investors spread across 370 locations invested in the NFO through both digital & offline mode. The fund also received 25,000 SIP applications," it said.

TERI for ₹40L cr green stimulus

New Delhi, Aug. 25: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) has proposed to revive the Indian economy by exploiting potential of around ₹40 lakh crore in clean energy projects over the next 10 year through government policy interventions but with minimum public spending. TERI has released a discussion paper on 'A Fiscally Responsible Green Stimulus' to revive the Indian economy by creating demand and jobs with policy and regulatory interventions using minimal government spending.

a TERI statement said. The Green Stimulus proposed by the TERI is about ₹40 lakh crore (or \$540 billion), spread over this decade by 2030. TERI suggested to incentivise cleaner transport, which has the investment potential of ₹1.6 lakh crore per annum. It suggested to subsidise fleet modernisation of existing vehicles to BS-VI, use of electric vehicles and provision of buses for public transport. The Institute has also pitched for producing renewable energy from agricultural residues which

have an investment potential of ₹22,470 crore per annum. TERI suggested that the government should announce a commercially viable procurement price for the next five years for briquettes made from crop waste. It has also asked for creating renewable energy from animal husbandry waste, which has investment potential of ₹88,000 crore per annum. The study suggested to introduce a commercially viable feed-in tariff for purchase of electricity generated from animal

husbandry waste (excreta from cattle, poultry, pigs, etc.) by power distribution companies. The institute also says that promoting solar generation in rural India has an investment potential of ₹27 lakh crore. It made a case for a commercially viable feed-in tariff for purchase of electricity generated from rural areas in the kilowatt range by power distribution companies. Supporting MSMEs to become more green and competitive has savings potential of ₹15,000 crore every year. — *PTI*

POST | LOCKDOWN

Lower demand for API and normalisation of operational expenses expected

Pharma sector's profitability likely to decline

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 25

Pharma, which has been one of the very few sectors that have performed well in the past quarter, may not be able to sustain the performance in the coming quarters. While domestic sales will improve with lifting of the lockdown, moderation in API demand and normalisation of operational expenses will affect profitability. The quality performance of Q1 FY21 is attributed to the strong revenue

growth in the API business and lower operating expenses. The API business revenue grew 31 per cent year-on-year basis and 18 per cent q-o-q in Q1FY21 as demand from global and Indian formulation players remained robust, aided by higher pricing opportunities, according to India Ratings and Research. Indian API players benefited due to the thrust on supply chain continuity from customers and better inventory management in view of supply disruptions

from China and the run up in the prices of API. Increased stocking by different channels also supported growth. However, the growth in the API business will taper off in the near term as companies normalise their buying patterns. India also expects a price correction as the sudden demand normalises. Further, operating expenses, primarily led by the 19 per cent q-o-q decline in the selling expenses, too would normalise. The restricted movement

of medical representatives and other cost savings like lower promotional expenses due to the lockdown led to the operating expenses declining 8 per cent y-o-y and 19 per cent q-o-q in Q1FY21 and had aided profitability. According to Fitch Ratings, focusing on optimising direct costs and reducing fixed costs, including those related to travel and sales and marketing, helped many companies report resilient margins in Q1FY21. Post-lockdown, as com-

petitive pressures rise, companies will eventually revert to in-person engagement with prescribers. Though the companies had cut some expenses with manpower rationalisation and expense curtailment, the overall sustainable cost reduction is unlikely to exceed 10-20 per cent finds Ind-Ra. However, Fitch Ratings believes that sales will rise after a gradual easing of the lockdown measures that caused disruptions across most markets in

April-June. The gradual easing has led to a rise in doctor visits and elective procedures since May in key markets. This will benefit sales, particularly in acute therapy areas. Nevertheless, sustained price erosion in the US generic pharmaceutical market continues to weigh on profitability. "Focus on conserving cash by limiting capex and R&D spending in the near term will support their financial flexibility in the current environment," finds Fitch.



SHORT TAKES

Man U captain to be tried for crime

Thessaloniki, Greece: The trial of Manchester United captain Harry Maguire on charges of “assault”, “bodily harm”, “verbal abuse” and “attempted bribery” opened on Tuesday in the criminal court on the Greek island of Syros, according to a judicial source. According to some British and Greek media on the spot, Maguire’s lawyers raised procedural issues which could lead to the trial being postponed. The international defender was not present, but was simultaneously named in Gareth Southgate’s England squad for matches against Iceland and Denmark next month. Maguire’s lawyers told local media that he had left the Cyclades last week. He could face a maximum prison sentence of seven years, Greek radio station *Skai* said. The 30 million (88 million euros) defender was arrested late on Thursday after a fight with another group at a nightclub in Mykonos. Greek media reported that the fight started when someone in the other group hurt Maguire’s sister. — *AFP*

Ronaldinho out after five months

Asuncion, Paraguay: Retired Brazilian football star Ronaldinho was released from house arrest after spending five months detained in Paraguay for entering the country with a false passport. Paraguayan judge Gustavo Amarilla handed down a suspended sentence of two years in prison for Ronaldinho and his brother Roberto de Assis Moreira, and granted their release. The brothers will also have to pay a fine of \$200,000 between the two of them. Both were arrested last March for possession and use of false Paraguayan passports with which they entered the country to conduct business activities. The retired soccer star was earlier released from a high-security jail in Paraguay but ordered to serve house arrest at a luxury hotel while he was investigated. Ronaldinho will be able to return to Brazil immediately. Defense attorneys Tarek Tuma and Alcides Ceres said their clients will establish residence in Rio de Janeiro. — *AP*

Afghans fail to arrest sex abuser

Kabul: Supporters of the former head of Afghanistan’s football federation, who is accused of sexually assaulting and harassing several players on the women’s national team, prevented Afghan special forces from arresting him, officials said. FIFA imposed a life ban and a fine of 1 million Swiss francs (\$1.06 million) on Keramuddin Karim last year, and Afghan authorities issued an arrest warrant, but he remains at large. The inability to arrest him reflects the lingering power of local warlords and authorities’ failure to uphold women’s rights nearly two decades after the U.S.-led invasion that toppled the Taliban. Amin Sediqqi, the deputy governor of the northern Panjshir province, said the arresting forces were met with a reaction by armed men. He said provincial authorities were not aware of the operation and are now working through local elders to calm the situation. — *AP*

JUDOKA GIVEN 22-MONTH BAN FOR DOPING

New Delhi: Indian judoka Deepanshu Balayan has been handed a 22-month suspension by NADA’s Anti Doping Disciplinary Panel for consumption of prohibited substance Furosemide, which is a diuretic medicine. Balayan had tested positive for the banned substance after his sample was collected during trials held in Bhopal in June last year to select the national team for the junior Asian Judo Championship. He had won the trials in 90kg category. Since NADA failed to establish that Balayan’s dope offence was intentional, the panel shot down agency’s recommendation of a harsher punishment which is 4 years as per clause 10.2.1 of the rule book. — *PTI*

ASH STOKES FIRE

Seals details of ‘Mankad’ talk with Ponting

Dubai, Aug. 25: Ravichandran Ashwin says he has spoken to his IPL coach Ricky Ponting on the contentious issue of running out batsmen who back up too far at the non-striker’s end but will reveal the contents of the telephonic conversation only next week.

The issue became a talking point when Ponting, head coach of Ashwin’s team Delhi Capitals, said he would have a discussion with Ashwin on the controversial manner of getting a batsman out ahead of the IPL starting September 19 in the UAE.

Ashwin ran out England batsman Jos Buttler at the non-striker’s end last season when he backed up too far, drawing criticism for his act as many called it against the ‘spirit of the game.’ While Ashwin has reached Dubai, Ponting is set to arrive next week and the two will talk in person before the Indian reveals what transpired between them.

“Ricky Ponting hasn’t yet reached (Dubai). After he comes, we will sit for a chat with him. He said he wants to have a conversation. We have already talked over the phone. It was a very interesting chat,” Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

Ashwin said it’s better to have a face-to-face conversation since the message of the heavily-accented Australians can get lost in translation. “What happens sometimes is Australians’ messages in English get lost in translation and reach us with a different meaning. Even some of their jokes become news. That’s what it is and next week I will reveal a bit more about my conversation with Ricky.”

Ashwin on Monday suggested the introduction of a “free ball” for bowlers if non-strikers back up too far, saying there was nothing wrong with running such batsmen out. “Make it a free ball for the bowler. If the batsmen gets out of that ball, the batting team will be docked five runs. Free hit adds to the drama for a batter, let’s give a chance to bowlers too,” Ashwin had tweeted. — *PTI*

Jimmy first pacer to 600 Test wkts

Southampton, Aug. 25: England paceman James Anderson cemented his place in cricket history by taking his 600th Test wicket when he dismissed Pakistan captain Azhar Ali (caught by England captain Joe Root) in the rain-marred third and final Test at Southampton on Tuesday.

The 38-year-old struck with his 14th ball of the day. And there was enough time left in the day for England, 1-0 up in the three-match contest and on the brink of a first series win over Pakistan in a decade, to press for victory.

Anderson is only the



Ravichandran Ashwin of Delhi Capitals in this file photo.

Rahul banks on coach Kumble

Dubai, Aug. 25: K. L. Rahul expects head coach Anil Kumble to do bulk of the planning, which he feels will help him immensely in his debut as captain of Kings XI Punjab in the IPL, beginning in UAE on September 19.

Like the other seven teams, KXIP players are undergoing a six-day mandatory quarantine in the UAE.

The squad is heavy on players from Karnataka including the captain himself, Mayank Agarwal and Karun Nair. The head coach too is from Karnataka.

“To have someone like Anil *bhai* around helps

To have someone like Anil *bhai* around helps me immensely this season. I think he (Kumble) will make my life as captain very easy. I know that he would be doing most of the planning and I just have to go out there and carry out the plans.

— **K. L. RAHUL**
Kings XI Punjab captain

me immensely this season. I share a very good relationship with him off the field, coming from the same state,” Rahul told the IPL website.

“I think he (Kumble) will make my life as captain very easy. I know that he would be doing most of the planning and I just have to go out there and carry out the plans,” said the 28-year-old.

Rahul was in red hot form in the past two seasons while batting alongside Chris Gayle, scoring 659 and 593 and in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

“Maxi has been with Kings XI before and has had a successful run with the team. He was one player we were very clear we needed going into the auctions.

“On a given day, he will

9-MAN TEAM WILL CONDUCT DOPE TESTS

New Delhi, Aug. 25: Three high-ranking National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) officials, along with six empanelled Dope Control Officers (DCOs), will be travelling to the UAE for sample collection during this year’s Indian Premier League, which starts on September 19.

According to sources in the NADA, the agency is targeting collection of at least 50 samples during In-Competition (IC) and Out-of-Competition (OOC) testing during the 60-match event which will run till November 10.

“NADA will have nine people in UAE and they will also take help of the UAE’s National Anti Doping Organisation if they require further manpower, in this case chaperones who help in sample collection,” a senior BCCI official confirmed.

The National doping agency will have three teams with one official and two DCOs at each of the three venues along with local NADO staff in each of the units.

— *PTI*

take down any bowling attack and we’ve felt that the last couple of seasons we have missed that impact player in the middle order,” said Rahul.

In Rahul and Gayle, KXIP make one of the most destructive opening pairings in IPL. The captain expects the West Indian to keep winning games for the team.

“I have played for several years with him and share a great friendship with him. He’s a great guy to have in our team. He will be part of our core group and with the kind of experience he has, he will definitely be somebody that wins a lot of games for us,” he added. — *PTI*

Bolt tests Covid+ after B’day party

Kingston (Jamaica), Aug. 25: Jamaica’s Minister of Health says legendary sprinter Usain Bolt has tested positive for the novel Coronavirus.

Minister Christopher Tufton said Bolt was aware of the results and his recent contacts were being traced.

“It is now public knowledge that Mr Bolt has tested positive. He has been formally notified, I’m told by the authorities,” Tufton told reporters.

“It triggers an approach to questioning, interrogation if you will, which we follow through with contact tracing,” he added.

According to reports, a surprise birthday party was thrown for Bolt by his family and friends when he turned 34 on August 21, with Manchester City star Raheem Sterling and Bayer Leverkusen winger Leon Bailey in attendance. Cricketer Chris Gayle is also said to be present at the event, which was described as a “big, mask-free” gathering that failed to observe health safety measures.

In some videos that surfaced, Bolt was seen dancing with his visitors as they seemed to disregard proper social distancing.

Jamaica’s Prime Minister Andrew Holness also said police are investigating the circumstances surrounding Bolt’s birthday party. “There are reports of an activity related to Usain Bolt. These matters are all being thoroughly investigated and the police will give a report on these matters in near future,” Holness told a virtual news conference.

Bolt said on social media on Monday that he was awaiting the result of a Coronavirus test and was quarantining himself as a precaution.

The 34-year-old retired sprinter who won gold in the 100 and 200 metres at the last three Olympics posted a video on social media to explain the situation. “Good morning everybody. Just waking up. Like everybody, checked social media and saw that social media says I’m confirmed of Covid-19. I did a test Saturday, because I



Usain Bolt

● **According to reports, a surprise birthday party was thrown for Bolt by his family and friends when he turned 34 on August 21, with Manchester City star Raheem Sterling and Bayer Leverkusen winger Leon Bailey in attendance. Cricketer Chris Gayle is also said to be present at the event, which was described as a big, maskless gathering that failed to observe health safety measures.**

work. I’m trying to be responsible, so I’m going to stay in and stay here for my friends,” he said.

Bolt, who appeared to be lying in bed in the video, said he has no symptoms. “Just to be safe, I’ll quarantine myself and just take it easy,” he said.

Jamaica has had fewer than 1,700 cases, a relatively low number in a country of nearly 3 million.

On the track, Bolt was known for his poses — his “Lighting Bolt” became iconic — and of course his post-race celebrations. His speed and charisma made his sport can’t-miss viewing whenever he lined up in the blocks.

Bolt set the world records in the 100 and 200 metres at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin. He last competed internationally at the 2017 World Championships in London. Bolt and partner Kasi Bennet welcomed the birth of a daughter, Olympia, in May. — *Agencies*

FORMULA ONE ADDS FOUR RACES TO 2020 CALENDAR

Paris, Aug. 25: Four Grand Prix races, in Turkey, Bahrain (two) and Abu Dhabi, have been added to the 2020 Formula One calendar, but the postponed Chinese GP has been cancelled, F1 organisers said.

The addition of the four races and the elimination of the Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai bring the race total to 17 for the Coronavirus-affected season.

Formula One returns to Turkey for the first time since 2011, with the Turkish Grand Prix to be run at Istanbul Park on November 15. That is followed by a back-to-back double header in Bahrain, with the Bahrain Grand Prix on November 26 and the Sakhir Grand Prix on December 6. The season-concluding Abu Dhabi Grand Prix will take place at the Yas Marina Circuit on December 13. — *AFP*

Ostapenko pulls out of US Open

New York, Aug. 25: Jelena Ostapenko, the 2017 French Open champion, pulled out of the U.S. Open, citing a change of schedule.

She is the latest woman with a Grand Slam title or high ranking to withdraw from the tournament that begins next week amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Six of the top eight women in the WTA rankings already were out, including No.1 Ash Barty, the reigning champion at Roland Garros, and No.6 Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 winner at Flushing Meadows.

DJOKOVIC BATTLES NECK PAIN FOR A WIN

World number one Novak Djokovic battled through neck pain on the way to a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 victory over Ricardo Berankis at the Western & Southern Open, where second seed Dominic Thiem crashed out. Djokovic made it through to the Round of 16 despite the sore neck, for which he received treatment on court.

Djokovic twice went down a break in the second set, but broke back both times.

He let out a roar when he

broke for a 5-4 lead then calmly served it out.

Djokovic next faces American Tennys Sandgren, a 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) winner over 15th-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The upset of the day was at the opposite end of the men’s draw, as 32nd-ranked Filip Kratinovic of Serbia topped Austria’s Thiem 6-2, 6-1.

Kratinovic lined up a meeting with Hungarian Marton Fucsovics, who ousted 14th-seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 4-6, 6-2.

Meanwhile, Andy Murray also notched an upset, surprising world number seven Alexander Zverev 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 for his first win over a top-10 player in more than three years.

SERENA MADE TO WORK HARD FOR VICTORY

In women’s action, third-seeded Serena Williams bucked the upset trend that saw top seed Karolina Pliskova and number two Sofia Kenin ousted on Sunday. Serena battled back from the brink against qualifier Arantxa Rus to win 7-6 (8-6), 3-6, 7-6 (7/0). — *Agencies*



Khaleel Ahmed (below) and Siddharth Kaul of the Sunrisers Hyderabad pose for a photograph outside their rooms at a Resort in Dubai on Tuesday.

Kashyap questions training selection

New Delhi, Aug. 25: Former Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap on Tuesday questioned his omission from the ongoing national badminton camp in Hyderabad, saying that restricting it to just eight Olympic hopefuls is “illogical”.

The 33-year-old, a former World No.6, insisted that he too has an outside chance of qualifying for the Tokyo Games but he has no way to pursue it as he can’t train at the camp. “I have a couple of questions regarding the camp. I find it illogical to allow only eight people to train. Also, how are these eight, Olympic hopefuls because I think only three have almost confirmed their slot and rest have an outside chance including Srikanth and the women’s doubles pair,” Kashyap

said. “I am ranked 23rd in the world ranking after Sai (B. Sai Praneeth) and (Kidambi) Srikanth, then why haven’t I been considered,” he asked.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) had allowed resumption of training at the SAI-Pullela Gopichand Academy from August 7 following the Telangana government’s approval on August 1.

Kashyap, who along with wife and fellow shuttler Saina Nehwal, has been training at a separate facility near the academy, said he shared his thoughts with SAI but didn’t get a satisfactory response.

“Gopi *bhaiya* (Pullela Gopichand) advised me to speak to SAI as they made the list. So I spoke to SAI DG and asked him what is the logic behind it? Why

I find it illogical to allow only eight people to train. Also, how are these eight Olympic hopefuls, because I think only three have almost confirmed their slots and rest have an outside chance including Srikanth and the women’s doubles pair.

— **PARUPALLI KASHYAP**
World No.24 badminton player

am I not in the camp? Who decided that we don’t have a chance to qualify when seven-eight tournaments are still left,” he said.

“A day later, a SAI assistant director called me and said this is a directive which has come from higher officials and they have spoken to BAI and SAI, who believe only

these people have a chance to qualify which I found to be strange,” he added.

“I was told that only eight people will train till the Tokyo Games to keep the Olympic hopefuls safe. Now no one is staying at the centre, all are using gyms at different centres, they are meeting people outside, so I don’t understand their explanation of keeping them safe.”

Kashyap reiterated that the SAI-Pullela Gopichand academy is equipped with enough courts to accommodate more players.

“The national centre has nine courts and currently only four people are training. There are nine coaches and two physios for four players who are training for a maximum of two and a half hours.

“So rest of the time the court is empty. Why can’t

other players train for the rest of the time? It makes no sense to me,” he said.

“Everywhere else all are training together, in Bangalore, Lakshya (Sen), who also has an outside chance like me, is training with the rest. If I can’t train at the camp, how will I pursue Olympic qualification?”

World champion P. V. Sindhu, along with Praneeth, former world No.1 Srikanth and women’s doubles player N. Sikki Reddy have resumed training under strict safety protocols at the Gopichand Academy, ending a four-month-long forced hiatus.

Among other Olympic hopefuls, the men’s doubles pairing of Chirag and Satwiksairaj are wary of the Covid-19 threat and have decided to wait.

— *PTI*