



The lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak has disrupted supply chains. One crucial chain is delivery of information and insight – news and analysis that is fair and accurate and reliably reported from across a nation in quarantine.

A voice you can trust amid the clanging of alarm bells.

Vajiram & Ravi and *The Indian Express* are proud to deliver the electronic version of this morning's edition of *The Indian Express* to your Inbox. You may follow *The Indian Express's* news and analysis through the day on **indianexpress.com**



INDIAN
EXPRESS
GROUP



The Indian EXPRESS

JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
SINCE 1932

MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2020, NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 14 PAGES

₹6.00 (₹8 PATNA & RAIPUR, ₹12 SRINAGAR) WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Another BJP man shot at in J&K; militant claims TA soldier killed, buried

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 9

SEVERAL BJP leaders in Jammu and Kashmir resigned in panic on Sunday, hours after suspected militants shot at and critically injured a leader of the party in central Kashmir's Budgam district.

The attack on Abdul Hamid Najar, Budgam district president of the BJP's OBC Morcha, was the third on a leader of the party in the Valley over the past week. The earlier attacks, too, had been followed by resignations from BJP leaders.

Also on Sunday, a man claiming to be a militant said in an audio message that they have killed a Territorial Army soldier who went missing from his home in Shopian seven days ago.

"We are still verifying it (the audio message)," Shopian Superintendent of Police Amrit Pal Singh told *The Indian Express*. Police and the Army have been searching for the missing soldier, Shakir Manzoor Wagay.

Najar was shot at while he was on a morning walk near the railway station in Budgam. He was taken to Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital in Srinagar for treatment.

On August 6, militants shot dead a BJP sarpanch, Sajad Ahmad Khanday, at Vessu in Qazigund in south Kashmir's Kulgam district. A day previously, another BJP sarpanch, Arif Ahmad, had been shot at and injured at Qazigund's Akhran village.

Earlier on July 8, militants had killed a senior BJP leader, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



GRIEF

Tulsi Ram at the cremation of his son Akhilesh Kumar, co-pilot of the Air India Express flight that crashed in Kozhikode, in Mathura on Sunday. **PTI**

PUSH TO ATMANIRBHAR INITIATIVE: RAJNATH Govt bans import of 101 defence equipment items

Negative list from Dec, domestic firms could get orders worth Rs 4 lakh crore

A signal to home defence industry, but commitment faces challenges

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

PURSUANT TO Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement in May to boost the domestic defence sector, the government on Sunday announced a ban on import of 101 weapons, platforms, and equipment.

The negative import list will come into effect from December, and will be progressive, which means the import ban could be extended to more items.

The move is aimed at boosting the defence manufacturing sector in the country, which the government hopes can act as an engine to revive long-term economic growth. An estimated Rs 4 lakh crore worth of orders for the armed forces are likely to be placed with domestic manufacturers over the next seven years. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



'A big step towards self-reliance'

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

SOME ON BAN LIST

- 7.62x51 Sniper Rifle
- Shipborne Cruise Missiles, Short-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles
- Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) MK I A and Light Combat Helicopter
- Fixed Wing Mini UAVs
- Wheeled Armoured Fighting Vehicle
- Light Machine Gun and Assault Rifle 7.62 x 39mm

AS THE rising defence imports bill over the past two decades has constrained India's strategic rise, the goal of making the country self-reliant in defence production has been on the priority list of defence ministers, especially after the 1999 Kargil War. The

Make in India scheme announced in 2014 aimed to develop the indigenous defence industry, but has failed to achieve its targets.

Defence Minister Rajnath **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Ireland to Delhi to Mumbai: Call from Facebook foils suicide bid

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

A CALL from Facebook's Ireland headquarters Saturday night had three DCPs in Delhi and Mumbai, and a police inspector and his wife, on their toes and their phones till early Sunday morning — before they finally managed to pull a 25-year-old man in Mumbai back from the brink of suicide.

On Saturday evening, the man started putting up several 'Facebook Live' videos of him wanting to attempt suicide. At 7:51 pm, DCP (Cyber Cell-Delhi) **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

10 killed in fire in hotel turned into Covid care centre in Vijayawada

SREENIVAS JANAYALA
HYDERABAD, AUGUST 9

TEN COVID-19 patients died following a fire at a hotel-turned Covid Care Centre in Vijayawada early Sunday morning.

Vijayawada Police Commissioner B Srinivasulu said 31 Covid-19 patients were being treated by Ramesh Hospital which had lodged them at Swarna Palace Hotel in Governorpet. "Fire and Police officials rescued 21 patients, two hotel staff and six staff of Ramesh Hospital taking care of the patients," Srinivasulu said. Health Minister A Krishna **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



NDRF personnel at Swarna Palace hotel on Sunday. **PTI**

Srinivas said all 21 patients rescued as well as the hospital staff were taken to Ramesh Hospital and were doing well. None of the patients needed oxygen support. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



THE WORLD

AFGHANISTAN TO RELEASE TALIBAN PRISONERS, PAVING WAY FOR TALKS

PAGE 12

To check post-harvest wastage, PM launches Rs 1-lakh-cr agri infra fund

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

CALLING THE wastage of post-harvest produce "a big problem", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a Rs 1-lakh-crore central financing scheme under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund that is aimed at

helping farmers and agri-entrepreneurs build "post-harvest agriculture infrastructure".

The scheme, which was announced as part of the government's Rs 20 lakh crore Atmanirbhar Bharat package in response to the Covid pandemic in May, was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 8. It will be implemented over 10 years

— from 2020 to 2029.

Under the scheme, Rs 1 lakh crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to farmers, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHG) and others for building "community farming **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



'Can't make transfers to households in Covid because we haven't had an open debate on fisc'

VIRAL ACHARYA
FORMER DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

PAGE 11

INSIDE

11 OF PAK MIGRANT FAMILY DEAD, SUICIDE ABETMENT CASE FILED

PAGE 7



Vajiram & Ravi

Institute for Civil Services Examination

We are happy & proud to announce that over 350+ students have been selected in the CSE 2019 and 5 candidates in the top 10 (1, 4, 6, 8 & 9) ranks and 17 candidates in the top 30 and 27 candidates in the top 50.



Pradeep Singh
AIR 01



Himanshu Jain
AIR 04



Vishakha Yadav
AIR 06



Abhishek Saraf
AIR 08



Ravi Jain
AIR 09



Nupur Goel
AIR 11



Raunak Agarwal
AIR 13



Anmol Jain
AIR 14



Gunjan Singh
AIR 16



Swati Sharma
AIR 17



Lavish Ordia
AIR 18



Shrestha Anupam
AIR 19



Nidhi Bansal
AIR 23



Abhishek Jain
AIR 24



Pradeep Singh
AIR 26



Chandra Jyoti Singh
AIR 28



Pari Bishnoi
AIR 30

CLASSES FOR NEXT YEAR'S CSE WILL COMMENCE AS SOON AS GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS PERMIT IT.

VAJIRAM AND RAVI IAS STUDY CENTRE LLP

Delhi Address: 9-B, Bada Bazar Marg, Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi-110060; Phone: 011-4100 7400, 4100 7500

Chennai Address: No. 43, 2nd Floor, Haddows Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai - 600006; Phone: 044-43302121

www.vajiramandravi.com

DOWNLOAD APP

- VISUAL STORIES
- DAILY BRIEFING
- PODCASTS
- CUSTOMIZABLE NEWS EXPERIENCE

Indian Express
★★★★ 4.6

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE APP



LESSONS FROM 1918 SPANISH FLU: WHEN MASK LAWS TRIGGERED PROTESTS IN US
Then, as today, an intense debate had ensued over the utility and convenience of wearing masks. Citizens neglected the ordinance, showed defiance, and some also organised protests



TECH REVIEW
MACBOOK AIR: NOBODY DOES IT BETTER
Really the device you should look at if need is regular computing



FULL COVERAGE
TELUGU BANDS TAKE TO IN-SYNC CONCERTS
Amid the lockdown, bands have launched virtual concerts

EXPRESS AUDIO

Analyzing the Air India aircraft crash at Kozhikode

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY
In today's episode, we're looking at how locals helped following Friday's crash, what we know about the accident and what could have been done to prevent it.

CISF official asked if I was Indian as I didn't know Hindi, says Kanimozhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, AUGUST 9

DMK MP Kanimozhi on Sunday said a CISF official asked her if she was an Indian as she could not speak Hindi, prompting the parliamentary force to order an inquiry into the incident asserting that it is not their policy to insist upon any particular language.

Kanimozhi, Lok Sabha MP from Thoothukudi, thanked the CISF for an immediate response and their assurance of action.

According to DMK sources, the incident took place when the MP reached Chennai airport to board a flight to Delhi on Sunday afternoon. "Today at the airport a CISF officer asked me if I am an Indian when I asked her to speak to me in Tamil or English as I did not know Hindi," Kanimozhi tweeted after the incident. "I would like to know from when being Indian is equal to knowing Hindi," she said in another tweet with the hashtag '#hindiimposition'.

The CISF sought details from her soon after. It later said it has "ordered an Enquiry into the matter. It is not the policy of CISF to insist upon any particular language."

FROM PAGE ONE

Defence imports

The government also wants to cut its large defence import bill. India has for years been among the world's top three importers of defence equipment.

"The embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 and 2024. Our aim is to apprise the Indian defence industry of the anticipated requirements of the armed forces so that they are better prepared to realise the goal of indigenisation," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said while announcing the policy.

The Defence Ministry, Singh said, is "ready for a big push to Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative", and will "introduce import embargo on 101 items beyond the given timeline to boost indigenisation of defence production".

"Taking cue" from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "clarification call for a self-reliant India", the Defence Ministry has prepared a list of items to be embargoed from import over the next four years, Singh said. It is a "big step towards self-reliance in defence", he said.

The "five pillars" of Modi's self-reliant India are "economy, infrastructure, system, demography, and demand", Singh said. Sources in the Ministry said

orders for items in the list, including those likely to be sought by the three services over the next 5-7 years will be given only to domestic players. In cases where some content is imported, Indian vendors will be encouraged to increase the indigenous content progressively, the sources said.

Singh said the decision had been taken after consulting all stakeholders. "The list was prepared by the MoD after several rounds of consultations with all stakeholders, including the armed forces, public and private industry to assess current and future capabilities of Indian industry for manufacturing various ammunition and equipment within India," he said.

The stakeholders who were consulted before the list was drawn up include the Army, Air Force, Navy, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and private industry.

The list has been prepared by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) headed by Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat. The negative imports list "offers a great opportunity to the Indian defence industry to rise to the occasion to manufacture the items

in the negative list by using their own design and development capabilities or adopting the technologies designed and developed by DRDO to meet the requirements of the armed forces in the coming years", the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

The Minister said that "almost 260 schemes of such items were contracted by the tri-services at an approximate cost of Rs 3.5 lakh crore between April 2015 and August 2020", and the government has estimated that "contracts worth almost Rs 4 lakh crore will be placed upon the domestic industry within the next six to seven years".

Of these, "items worth almost Rs 1,30,000 crore each are anticipated for the Army and the Air Force while items worth almost Rs 1,40,000 crore are anticipated by the Navy over the same period", he said.

The 101 items in the list released on Sunday "comprises not just simple parts but also some high technology weapon systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircraft, light combat helicopters (LCHs), radars, and many other items to fulfill the needs of our defence services", the government said. It includes "wheeled armoured fighting ve-

hicles (AFVs) with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which the Army is expected to contract almost 200 at an approximate cost of over Rs 5,000 crore".

For the Navy, the government is "likely to place demands for submarines with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which it expects to contract about six at an approximate cost of almost Rs 42,000 crore".

For the Air Force, "it is decided to enlist the light combat aircraft MK1A with an indicative embargo date of December 2020, of which 123 are anticipated at an approximate cost of over Rs 85,000 crore".

The government has bifurcated the Defence Ministry's capital procurement budget for 2020-21 between domestic and foreign capital procurement – something that Sitharaman had mentioned in May.

"A separate budget head has been created with an outlay of nearly Rs 52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement in the current financial year," the government said.

Former finance minister P Chidambaram said "the Defence Minister promised a 'bang' on a Sunday morning and ended with a 'whimper'".

"Import Embargo is high sounding jargon. What it means is we will try to make the same equipment (that we import today) in 2 to 4 years and stop imports thereafter!" Chidambaram posted on Twitter.

"The only importer of defence equipment is the Defence Ministry. Any import embargo is really an embargo on oneself. What the Defence Minister said in his historic Sunday announcement deserved only an Office Order from the Minister to his Secretaries!"

Defence industry

Singh's announcement of a negative import list of 101 defence items as a major step towards 'self-reliant India' is in line with this thinking. The list is in some ways a throwback to the licence permit raj of the pre-liberalisation era, but strong feedback from industry has forced the government to intervene in the very complex defence industrial sector.

The major complaint from the domestic defence industry was the absence of a commitment from the armed forces on procuring a defence item developed and produced in India. By putting certain items on the embargo list and creating a separate budget head for domestic capital procurement, the government has sent a signal to indigenous industry.

As this list has been produced by the defence services, they have become an equally important stakeholder in this scheme. If the services handhold the industry, as promised, the indigenous defence producers will have no excuse left to not be able to step up quickly.

However, major challenges remain. The promise of contracts worth almost Rs 4 lakh crore to the domestic industry over the next 5-7 years does appear impressive – but so was the figure of Rs 3.5 lakh crore for projects under the Make in India scheme, all of which got stuck in the pipeline.

The negative list of 101 items has been chosen carefully by the services, and at least a third of the items – including corvettes and frigates for the Navy and multi-barrel rocket launchers for the Army – are already being produced in India. The announcement, while committing to the purchase of these items from indigenous vendors only, did not include any new development or addition of production capacity.

Some items like the 7.62 X 39 mm assault rifle – which is the AK-203 rifle, to be produced by the Ordnance Factory Board in Amethi with Russian collaboration – are stuck over pricing issues. Some other items in the list

are under development by domestic industry, and are not produced by any other country. These include the Light Combat Helicopter and the light transport aircraft – and any Indian demand for these will automatically be met domestically.

The items in the list are of proven technologies, and do not involve any critical or cutting-edge technology for a next-generation weapon system or platform. The BrahMos cruise missile, mentioned in the list, is jointly produced with Russia, and has a significant share of critical Russian components. That is true of the majority of items that are assembled in India by the defence PSUs, rather than being produced entirely in India.

Even this commitment from the government will not address two other fears of the industry: an assurance of enough orders that would make a production line economical, and the strength of the commitment should an indigenously produced item cost more than an imported one.

Against each of the 101 items is mentioned a year when import embargo would kick in, leading to apprehensions that demands will be placed with foreign vendors until then, leaving very little for domestic producers. But this may also provide domestic players time to build capability and capacity to produce the items.

The biggest challenge for the government and the armed forces will be to keep this commitment to domestic producers in the event of an operational requirement. As tensions remain high between India and China in Ladakh, it may be instructive to remember that the agenda of self-reliance was originally set just before the 1962 War by Jawaharlal Nehru's defence minister, V K Krishna Menon.

Vijayawada fire

He said private hospitals were taking advantage of people's fear of the coronavirus and their reluctance to take treatment at government hospitals by charging exorbitant fees in the name of good treatment at private hotels. "It seems Ramesh Hospital failed to check whether this hotel was safe and whether it had taken fire safety measures. The ten patients who were already having breathing problems asphyxiated to death due to thick fumes that engulfed the first and second floors of the hotel," he said.

Ramesh Hospital had taken the five-storey hotel on lease to lodge Covid-19 patients. The patients had taken a package of Rs 5,000 per day including three meals, hot beverages and snacks, until they were discharged, apart from treatment and other charges.

Fire officials said they received a call at 5.15 am and the fire was brought under control 25 minutes later. Officials said that prima facie it appears that a short-circuit in an air-conditioning unit caused the fire in the hotel reception area and quickly spread to the second floor. By the time fire and rescue officials reached the hotel, many patients on the upper floors were screaming from windows to be rescued. Officials said the staircase was on fire when they reached.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy announced *ex-gratia* of Rs 50 lakhs to the kin of the deceased. He also ordered an in-depth probe into the accident and directed authorities to take steps to ensure better medical services to the victims of the accident.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of the lives in the fire mishap and spoke to CM Jagan Mohan Reddy over phone and enquired about the accident.

An FIR was lodged at Governorpet Police Station against the hotel management and Ramesh Hospital owners by the Mandal Revenue Officer of Vijayawada Central. In the complaint MRO P Jaya Sri stated that both the hotel and hospital staff

knew about electrical defects in air conditioning units and wiring and in spite of the danger it posed, did not bother to conduct repairs as it involved a lot of expenditure. "The fire occurred due to a short circuit and the hotel and hospital managements are responsible for it," she stated in her complaint. A case has been registered under section 304 (II), 308 read with 34 IPC.

Agri infra fund

assets" and "post-harvest agriculture infrastructure".

"These assets will enable farmers to get greater value for their produce as they will be able to store and sell at higher prices, reduce wastage, and increase processing and value addition," said an official statement.

"Today, only 30 days after (the) Cabinet formally approved the scheme, the first sanction of over Rs 1,000 crore was made to over 2,280 farmer societies," the statement said.

Launching the scheme, the PM said, "It will help in creating better storage and modern cold storage chains in villages. The scheme will also create employment opportunities in villages."

Saying wastage of post-harvest produce "hurts the farmer and causes a lot of damage to the country", the PM, referring to the recent amendments to the Essential Commodities Act, said, "To deal with this, legal hurdles are being removed on one hand and farmers are being given direct help on the other."

He said the Essential Commodities Act was a reason why good warehouses could not be built in villages and agro-based industries could not get encouragement.

"Today, the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund has been launched so that farmers will be able to create modern facilities for storage in their villages," he said, adding that farmers will get a 3 per cent interest rebate on loans provided under this scheme.

The PM interacted virtually with members of three agriculture credit societies from Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, states that are among the initial beneficiaries of the agri infra fund scheme.

"At the same event, the Prime Minister also released the sixth instalment under the PM-KISAN scheme of Rs 17,000 crore to nearly 8.5 crore farmers," said the official statement.

Suicide bid

Anyesh Roy received the call from Ireland. "It was from a Facebook official who said they had identified suicidal activity on an account belonging to a Delhi resident. The official shared IP logs, the Facebook account, videos the user has posted, and a phone number registered with the account. We immediately started tracking the number...in such cases, time is crucial," said Roy.

The number was traced to Mandawali, an East Delhi locality, and Roy approached DCP (East) Jasmeet Singh. "The Station House Officer of Madhu Vihar nearby rushed across to the address and found a woman who had no clue about the videos. She said the account was registered in her number, but was being used by her husband who had left for Mumbai two weeks ago after a fight with her. She didn't know where he was staying in Mumbai," said Singh.

By 9.30 pm, Dr Rashmi Karandikar, DCP (Cyber) in Mumbai, had been apprised about the case by Roy. "The man's wife gave us his number, and I kept calling but either it was switched off or he wouldn't take the calls...I had one team trying to trace the number and find his location, and Inspector Pramod Khopikar from my unit calling the man and his wife continuously," she said.

Khopikar says he was at home having dinner when he received a call from his DCP. After several un-

successful calls to the man, he asked the wife to "leave him emotional voice notes, photos of their child, and to inform him as soon as she sees a 'blue tick'".

"Around 11:30 pm, she said he had seen her messages. Then I asked her to call him, and guided her on how to add me on a conference call. It didn't work, so I called him and added her to the conversation, while a team traced his location. For over an hour, he cried and argued with his wife and I listened. He kept saying he wanted to end his life and had tried twice already. In the meantime, we found his location in Bhayandar, and asked the local police to rush," said Khopikar.

"He was stressed about money as his salary had gone down considerably since the Covid outbreak; he was also very anxious about getting the virus. The trick was to keep him engaged, and tell him that he is loved and cared for by his wife, and all of us in Delhi and Mumbai Police," he said.

When Khopikar felt his words weren't working, he got his own wife on the call to counsel the couple. "She told him how she and I fight but are still together. He said he feared he might get the virus, so my wife lied to him and said I had already got it and survived. When he said he was facing financial trouble, I told him I have a car registered with Ola and he can drive that. I told him that Mumbai Police is always with him, and asked his wife to come to Mumbai," said Khopikar.

By 3 am, Bhayandar Police personnel reached the 25-year-old and counselled him. "It was only when I was convinced that he was doing okay that I cut the call. On Sunday morning, at 10 am, I called again to check on him. He's doing better and thanked us profusely. But still, I will keep a tab on him," said Khopikar.

BJP man shot at

Sheikh Waseem Bari, along with his father and brother – both of whom were BJP workers as well – in Bandipore.

Later on Sunday, at least four BJP leaders – general secretary of the party's Bandipore unit Avtar Krishan, district president of Budgam Imran Ahmad Parray, constituency president Wali Mohammad Bhat, and Budgam district office secretary Sameer Ahmad Shah – issued written statements announcing their resignation from the BJP.

In Shopian, the purported militant said in the audio that the body of the Territorial Army soldier, Wagay, had been buried in order to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"We have brought him (Wagay) to an end," the militant, who called himself Abu Talha, said. "We can understand the pain of his parents and other family members but because of coronavirus, we couldn't hand over his body to the family so that a crowd doesn't assemble at his funeral."

The refusal to return the soldier's body appears to be retaliation against the government's decision since March to not hand over the bodies of militants killed in encounters, and instead bury them in unmarked graves.

Police have argued that giving the bodies to the militants' families would attract large numbers of people to funerals, and could lead to the spread of Covid-19.

"Exactly in the way the Army clandestinely buries our martyred mujahideen, we have ourselves performed his (Wagay's) last rites and haven't handed over his body to the family," the militant said in the audio message.

The 24-year-old soldier, who was posted at the Territorial Army's Balpora camp, had disappeared soon after leaving his home in Harmain in Shopian on August 2. The car in which he was travelling was found burnt and abandoned at Nehama village in Kulgam some 16 km away that same evening.

The Indian EXPRESS
— JOURNALISM OF COURAGE —

VIPS
योग: कर्मसु कीर्तनात्
IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

presents

The Indian EXPRESS
E-ADDA

WHERE NEWSMAKERS DROP IN FOR A CANDID CHAT.

Express E-Adda hosts

Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal
Union Cabinet Minister for Human Resource Development, Government of India

in conversation with

Vandita Mishra
National Opinion Editor
The Indian Express

Ritika Chopra
Senior Assistant Editor
The Indian Express

By invitation only.

Use #ExpressAdda & join the conversation, exclusively on:

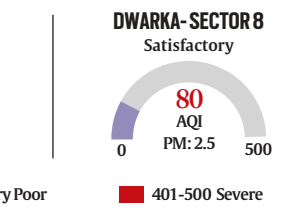
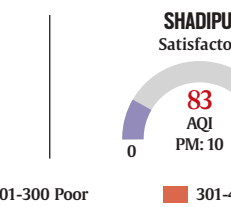
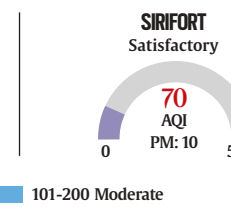
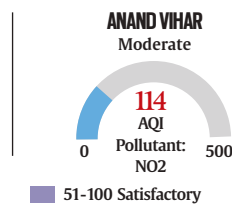
Indianexpress.com
twitter.com/IndianExpress
facebook.com/IndianExpress

Associate Partner
JINDAL
STEEL & POWER

Join us on
zoom



0-50 Good



1,300 FRESH CASES REPORTED ON SUNDAY

Many from outside Delhi getting tested here: Jain on case uptick

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

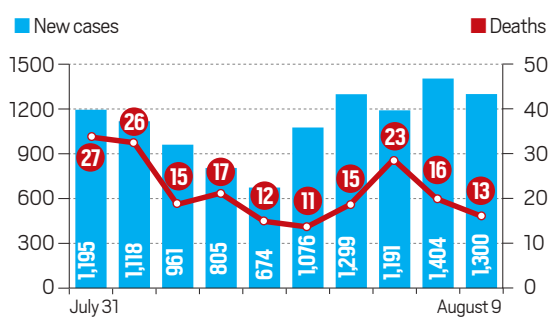
DELHI'S HEALTH Minister Satyendar Jain Sunday attributed the recent uptick in Covid cases in Delhi to people from neighbouring states getting tested in the capital, which he said was also behind bed occupancy at hospitals remaining over 3,000.

On Sunday, the Delhi health bulletin logged 1,300 fresh Covid cases, taking the number of active cases to 10,729. The city recorded 1,225 recoveries from the infection, which claimed 13 more lives, taking the toll to 4,111.

"We have observed that bed occupancy has remained static for some time now. At one point, about 100 beds were getting vacant daily. Upon analysing, we found that out of all the patients admitted to the hospitals on Saturday, 97 were from other states and 224 from Delhi. This has been the trend and that is why hospital occupancy is not reducing," Jain said.

According to the corona dashboard maintained by the Delhi government, of the 13,517

IN THE LAST 10 DAYS



CORONAVIRUS IN THE CAPITAL

	TOTAL CASES	1,54,427	HOSPITAL BEDS	13,517	Vacant	10,430
	VENTILATORS	1,216	815			
	Daily cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests		
	Aug 8: 1,404	1,130	16	24,592		
	Aug 9: 1,300	1,225	13	23,787		
	Total	1,30,587	4,111	11,92,082		

**Total active cases*

beds for Covid patients in Delhi's government and private hospitals, 3,083 are occupied. The break-up shows that 399 out of 1,217 ventilator-equipped beds are occupied and 309 of 952 ICU

beds are full.

Jain also linked the recent rise in daily case count to people "in large numbers from outside Delhi, like Ghaziabad, Noida and Faridabad, getting tested here".



At a testing centre in Darya Ganj on Sunday. Abhinav Saha

"When our teams get in touch with those testing positive, many are found to be residents of other states," he said.

Delhi recorded over 1,000 cases for the fifth day straight on Sunday. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday saw 1,076, 1,299 and 1,192 fresh cases, while Saturday saw 1,404 cases.

Asked about the status of testing, driven largely by the rapid antigen method, Jain said the government was following the ICMR protocol under which only those showing symptoms and carrying medical prescriptions can undergo RT-PCR, which

is a lab-based test considered more reliable in detecting the virus. Sunday's bulletin put the number of rapid tests at 18,085 and RT-PCR at 5,702.

Jain's statement drew criticism from the BJP, with the party's Delhi unit chief Adesh Gupta saying that it reflects the mindset of the ruling AAP's leadership: "Be it migrant labourers or people from outside, they always attempt to evade their responsibilities by passing the buck onto others. They should focus on treating and helping people instead of trying to deceive people."

Ambedkar Nagar gets new hospital, 200 Covid beds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal Sunday inaugurated a 600-bed government hospital in South Delhi's Ambedkar Nagar, with 200 beds dedicated for Covid patients. He said the hospital would be helpful for residents of the locality and nearby constituencies as there was no big hospital in the area until now.

Approved in 2013, the hospital has been built on a budget of around Rs 125 crore. It has a capacity of 600 beds, of which 200 Covid beds have been made operational so far and the remaining, along with an ICU, are expected to be made ready for use in a month.

"Oxygen is available on all 200 beds, as it is the primary requirement in treatment of Covid patients. The corona situation in Delhi is under control to a great extent. All the parameters are good — the recovery rate is improving, the positivity ratio and death rate are decreasing. There are fewer patients who require hospitalisation," Kejriwal said.

"I pray to god that the 200 beds in this hospital are not needed in the future, but we have to be fully prepared... If the (Covid) situation goes out of control again, the Delhi govern-



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Health Minister Satyendar Jain at the inauguration on Sunday. Gajendra Yadav

ment is fully prepared to deal with it," he said.

The CM was joined by Health Minister Satyendar Jain and AAP's Ambedkar Nagar MLA Ajay Dutt at the inauguration. He also inspected the hospital's flu clinic, visited a ward and spoke to doctors.

The hospital was initially meant to be a 262-bed facility, which was later expanded following an announcement by Jain in March 2015. He had then said that a lot of the space in the hospital was not utilised properly and the nod was given to expand it.

Kejriwal said the hospital in

Ambedkar Nagar was scheduled to start a few months later, but was inaugurated on Sunday due to the efforts of engineers and doctors: "We have increased the capacity of beds in Delhi, and the construction of the new Ambedkar hospital is a step in the same direction."

Last month, the Delhi government had inaugurated a 700-bed hospital in Northwest Delhi's Burari, which has 450 beds dedicated for Covid patients. It was commissioned by the Congress government as a 200-bed facility, which was later increased when the AAP came to power in 2015.

Police crack down on manjha, sales hit for kite sellers

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

AHEAD OF Independence Day, kite sellers in the capital are struggling to keep business alive. With some selling kites with banned Chinese manjha, sellers have been trying to protect their business from police and find customers during the partial lockdown period.

On Friday, Delhi Police conducted raids in more than 10 shops in Chand Mohalla and booked five kite sellers for selling Chinese manjha (made of nylon and plastic) and Bareilly ka manjha (coated with glass or metal).

Following a string of accidents in the capital, the Delhi government moved a notification banning Chinese and Bareilly ka manjha in 2017. Last year, six people, including two minors, died in road accidents caused by stray manjha. The strings get entangled around a person's neck and cause severe injuries.

Police said the offenders were booked under section 5 of the Environment Protection Act. The punishment is up to five years of prison and/or a fine of Rs 1 lakh. A senior officer in Shahdara said, "We received information about the kite sellers and sent a team to raid Chand Mohalla, a big market in Shahdara. The offenders said they didn't know about the manjha ban. We have registered a case against them and will probe the matter."

Pradeep Barman, PETA India Advocacy Associate, said, "More than 900 birds died last year due to manjha. The kite string is made of cotton but the glass coating one is dangerous... Despite the ban, people keep selling them."

Meanwhile, kite sellers said they are struggling to sustain



Chinese manjha was banned in the capital in 2017. Archive

their business. Ashwini Rajput (31) has been selling kites for a decade but this year, he has been able to sell only 5-10 kites a day near Lal Kuan market.

"Most of the raw material for the kites comes from UP and Haryana. Due to the lockdown, factories were shut and police didn't allow transport of the material. Now, we have opened a small stall near Lal Kuan because we can't afford the rent for a shop. I remember selling more than 500 kites a day last year. Now people don't come out of their homes, why would they buy kites?" he said. Rajput said he and his family only make kites and don't sell manjha.

Vivek Kumar (27), who opened a stall near Sadar Bazar, said, "There are many Covid cases near the market and most shops haven't opened. I took money from my father to open the stall. I make kites with my elder brother. This year, I have only been able to sell 30% of the kites. We wear gloves and a mask, and clean our stall after every hour. I want to sell kites but people are scared. They look at the kites but don't buy them. I might have to throw hundreds of kites because of this situation."

Man arrested for killing DJB employee in Faridabad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, AUGUST 9

A MAN, who has around 20 criminal cases registered against him in Faridabad, was arrested Friday for the alleged murder of a Delhi Jal Board employee two months ago. The accused, Amit Kumar, and another associate allegedly shot and killed Harish Kumar, after the latter had argued with them over drinking liquor and making a noise opposite his house, police said.

Police said the incident took place at 7.15 am on June 20, in Vijay Nagar. Harish was return-

ing home on his motorcycle after buying vegetables, when two men on a scooter shot him before fleeing. In his complaint, the victim's brother alleged, "In April, my brother had a fight with these men. They were creating a ruckus in the house across ours. The house owner and the others had threatened to him."

"Amit has around 20 criminal cases registered against him, including those of murder, attempt to murder and theft. He has been involved in these crimes for the last eight-nine years and has also served time in prison," said ACP Dharna Yadav, Faridabad Police spokesperson.

OPD services to be restarted at Hindu Rao

ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

WITH THE North MCD's Hindu Rao hospital seeing only 52 admissions since it was converted into a Covid facility on June 27, the Outpatient Department

(OPD) facility will be restarted soon, said Mayor Jai Prakash. As of now, the hospital's 50-bed Covid facility has just 14 patients and has reported five fatalities.

"The decision to withdraw its status as a Covid facility is for the Delhi government to take. But even if they don't, we are think-

ing of separating the Covid ward from the rest of the hospital and resume functioning after holding a meeting next week," said Prakash.

A senior doctor said there is no reason why OPD facilities should not be resumed: "There are just 14 patients now, because

of which we are not allowing hundreds to come for consultation." The doctor said only in cases of emergencies, life-saving treatment is being provided.

Hindu Rao hospital, the biggest under the MCD, has a staff of 600 doctors, 350 nurses and 300 allied workers.

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research
NATIONAL AEROSPACE LABORATORIES
P.B. No. 1779, HAL Airport Road, Kodihalli, Bengaluru - 560 017, India. Ph: 080-25086048 / 49

Advt. No. 7/2020 Date of Publication: 10th Aug. 2020

RECRUITMENT FOR THE POSITION OF SECURITY OFFICER
Closing Date for submission of Applications: 12th September 2020

CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL), Bengaluru, is a premier Research Laboratory under Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), an Autonomous Body in the Ministry of Science & Technology under the Government of India. CSIR-NAL is looking for bright and motivated persons for filling up the following position:

CSIR-NAL invites offline applications for the post of Security Officer from Indian Nationals. Offline applications include payment of application fee wherever applicable along with enclosures of copies of certificates and testimonials etc. To apply, candidates must download the Application Form from CSIR-NAL website: www.nal.res.in.

An application should be filled up carefully. The selection will be based on the details entered in the Application Form only. Details of the Post, Pay Matrix, Age Limit etc., are given below:

Designation	No. of Vacancies	Essential Qualification	Pay Scale
Security Officer	1 Post Unreserved	Ex-servicemen JCO (Subedar or higher rank) OR equivalent rank in other Paramilitary forces with	Level - 7 (₹ 44,900 - ₹ 1,42,400)

minimum of 10 years experience in Security. However, number of years of experience shall be 05 years in case of Short Service Commissioned Officer and Incumbents holding the position of Assistant Commandant in CRPF / BSF / ITBP etc., carrying the pay scale of ₹ 8000-13500 (pre-revised). In the case of Inspector from Para Military Forces, the number of years of experience required shall be 10 years. **Age Limit: 35th Years**

** Upper age limit as on the last date of offline application.

Candidates should go through the full text of the advertisement on our website: www.nal.res.in regarding Qualifications, Experience, Job Requirements and General conditions etc. required for the position. All further announcements/ details pertaining to this process / update / corrigendum / addendum etc., will be published / made available only in CSIR-NAL official website: www.nal.res.in from time to time.

Sd/-
Controller of Administration

Girl hospitalised after sexual assault, 1 held

New Delhi: A 16-year-old girl was hospitalised after she was allegedly sexually assaulted by a man in his house in Northwest Delhi. The girl has sustained injuries to her lower abdomen. The accused was arrested by police on Friday. Police said the accused was known to the victim as they live in the same locality.

Vijayanta Arya, DCP (Northwest), said, "The girl sustained injuries to her private parts but she's stable now. We arrested the accused on Friday from the same area and have booked him under the POCSO Act." ENS

SMU SIKKIM MANIPAL UNIVERSITY
Established under Govt. of India, Act 1978, registered under 33 of the UGC Act, 1956

ADMISSION Ph.D. PROGRAMME
Applications are invited for Admission to Ph.D. Programme

Faculties	Programmes	HOW TO APPLY
Engineering	CSE/ECE/EEE/ME/IT/Civil	Online Application Registration Fee for Ph.D. Programme: Rs 1000/- Candidate should register and apply only through online mode by logging on to www.smu.edu.in .
Computer Applications	Computer Applications	
Management Studies	Management Studies	
Basic Science	Chem/Phy/Maths/Maths	
Medical	Anatomy/Microbiology/Medical Biotechnology/ Biochemistry/Community Medicine/Pediatrics/ Pathology/Physiology/Pharmacology/Pediatrics	
Humanities & Social Sciences	English	

Limited seats are available for full time Ph.D. scholars with scholarship of Rs. 20,000/- per month and free accommodation.

Important Dates:
Last Date for Online Registration Application Form: 25.09.2020 Sd/-
Date of Online Entrance Examination : 30.09.2020 REGISTRAR, SMU

For more details, please visit our website: www.smu.edu.in
Email: lata.sharma@smu.edu.in. Phone: 03592-231745

DELHI POLICE SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

YOU CAN BE... OUR EYES & EARS

AS WE FIGHT CRIME & TERRORISM

JOIN THE DELHI POLICE "EYES & EARS" SCHEME
CALL 1090 TO REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS

YOUR IDENTITY WILL BE KEPT SECRET

E-mail to CP, Delhi at: cp.snsrivastava@delhipolice.gov.in
Write to CP, Delhi at P.O. Box No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112 TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

DP/9244/2020

4 THE CITY

Close to half the academic year gone but students across 714 North MCD schools have no textbooks

ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

FIVE MONTHS into the current academic year, students in 714 schools under the North Delhi Municipal Corporation are yet to get textbooks, it is learnt. This, coupled with several children not being to attend online classes as their parents don't have smartphones, is impacting their education.

The 3.5 lakh students at North MCD schools, in classes I-V, largely come from poor families.

Director of the press and information department, North MCD, Ira Singal said though the process to purchase books was done in March, it was later informed that the price of books had increased and the budget had to be approved again. The file, meanwhile, remained stuck amid the lockdown. "We have initiated the process now and students will get the books soon," she said.

Leader of opposition in the North MCD, Aam Aadmi Party's Vikas Goel, claimed the agenda has not been passed in the standing committee nor has a



The 3.5 lakh students at North MCD schools, in classes I-V, largely come from poor families. Archive

work order been issued: "At this rate, it will take two-three months before students get their books."

Singal, however, said the file has been sent for anticipatory approval: "The minute we get the approval, we will start pickup and delivery."

The South and East MCDs, meanwhile, have procured and either finished the distribution of books or are in the process of doing so.

A senior official of the South Municipal Corporation said the books were purchased by the schools in March-April and were

distributed as and when students and teachers came to collect them. "However, many parents have left the city or did not collect due to the lockdown. But the process has begun again," said the official.

East MCD spokesperson Arun Kumar said books have been procured and distributed through parents or children who came to the schools when the lockdown was lifted.

The EDMC has 365 schools with around 1.75 lakh children while the South body has 581 schools with around 2.5 lakh children.

Eye on civic body polls, AAP begins restructuring effort



Gopal Rai with new office bearers. He said the appointments will be completed by August 20

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9:

THE AAM Aadmi Party has started strengthening its organisation at the MCD level by appointing in-charges down to the ward level, the party's Delhi in-charge Gopal Rai said Sunday.

The AAP had lost the 2017 municipal polls, when it had made the electoral plunged in the municipal level. The next round of civic polls are scheduled to be held in 2022.

The party has been working on restructuring the organisation over the last week, Rai said, adding that the appointments will be completed by August 20. Workers who were active during the 2020 Assembly polls and the

Covid-19 pandemic relief and aid work are being given preference, he said.

"On Sunday, AAP has appointed Lok Sabha in-charges, district in-charges, district communication in-charges and Assembly observers at all the 70 assembly constituencies. In the second phase, in-charges for all the 70 assembly constituencies will be appointed and in the third phase, we will appoint in-charges at all the 272 wards," Rai said.

"In this restructuring process, we are giving priority to the leaders who have worked hard during the 2020 Delhi Assembly Election and also in the difficult time of Covid-19 pandemic. The restructuring process is happening from the top to the booth level," he added.

BRIEFLY

Man held for uprooting ATMs

New Delhi: A 27-year-old man was arrested for allegedly uprooting ATMs across Delhi-NCR, at South Delhi after a brief exchange of fire with police. Police said Arshad Khan is part of an interstate gang of robbers and had allegedly uprooted an ATM from Southwest Delhi's Rajokri on August 5.

Police raid club, 43 held

New Delhi: Police raided a club in Paschim Vihar and arrested 43 people for allegedly not observing lockdown norms by serving alcohol and hookah in the premises and not observing social distancing. The accused were booked under the Excise Act and later released, police said.

Ghaziabad Police hears cop woes

Noida: A grievance session was held for Ghaziabad Police officers by the SSP on Sunday. Police said over 250 issues were resolved, while 200 complaints are being looked into. **ENS**

'NEP to be implemented in MCD schools'

New Delhi: Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta said Sunday the party unit plans to implement provisions of the new education policy NEP on primary education in schools run by the BJP-ruled civic bodies and that consultations to formulate a curriculum for the same have begun. **PTI**

MINISTER SAYS WILL RESTART SOON

Doorstep delivery scheme halted, some staff lose jobs

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

THE DOORSTEP delivery of public services in Delhi has run into rough weather, with VFS Global, the private company managing the project, taking cost-cutting measures, including laying off mobile sahayaks, citing the "unprecedented and unforeseen circumstances" caused by Covid-19.

Mobile sahayaks are the last-mile agents who respond to service requests made by people through the helpline, 1076, for services ranging from issuance of caste certificates to driving licenses under the project.

The services, launched in September 2018, have remained suspended since March 23 due to corona. During the launch, the sahayaks were lauded as being the backbone of the ambitious project.

The Delhi government had signed a three-year contract with VFS global, a popular visa processing firm, in 2018 to run the project, under which 100 types of public services are home delivered. The project had received widespread praise following its launch.

However, since March, the company has had to take cost-cutting measures. Senior officials in the Delhi government also said ties between the two sides have been strained.

Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot, under whom the services come, told *The Indian Express*: "The doorstep delivery of public services was discontinued to contain coronavirus. The services will be restarted very soon with all the precautions and protocols." He added that "mobile sahayaks are not engaged directly by the Delhi government".

Responding to a detailed questionnaire on the number of



A mobile sahayak. The service was launched in September 2018. It has been suspended since March 23 due to the coronavirus situation. Archive

layoffs and scaling down of the project, VFS Global told *The Indian Express* that in light of the pandemic, the doorstep delivery service was fully suspended in Delhi on March 23, and "we are awaiting further instructions from the Delhi government".

"Since this time, we have had to rationalise operational costs in line with reduced project demand and capacity and accordingly, adjust the deployment of a section of the mobile sahayak staff who have been the backbone of this citizen service initiative. We are working closely with our manpower partner to ensure this exercise is done in a responsible manner and in adherence to contractual obligations.

"We are fully cognisant of the valuable contributions and efforts of the mobile sahayaks towards this project, and in that regard, stand committed to meet with our obligations. We con-

tinue to work closely with the Delhi government and assess next steps on an ongoing basis," the VFS Global statement said.

Neither the company nor the Delhi government shared the exact number of mobile sahayaks who have been let go.

Officials also confirmed that VFS Global has pulled out of a contract with Matrix Processing House, which was supplying the mobile sahayaks, who are usually young men paid around Rs 15,000 per month.

VFS Global had told *The Indian Express* on September 22, 2018 that there were 300 mobile sahayaks employed with them at the time.

The Delhi government's last official statement on the services, dated December 13, 2019, said 120 mobile sahayaks, 110 call centre executives, 11 supervisors, 35 dealing assistants and 25 coordinators were working under the scheme.

While the mobile sahayaks

are engaged by VFS Global, the call centre staffers are managed by the Delhi government. Officials confirmed that many sahayaks were laid off even before the pandemic struck.

As much as Rs18 crore was allotted for the scheme in the budget annual for 2019-20. The amount was later revised to Rs 10 crore.

Pressed for a response on the exact number of people let go, VFS Global said in a separate statement that "reorganising the workforce was carried out to the extent of appropriately rationalising the operations keeping in view the unprecedented and unforeseen circumstances".

The Delhi government had in December 2019 said that since its launch, 2.89 lakh service requests were received and 2.64 lakh were disposed of. The top service requests pertain to issuance of OBC certificate (21%), SC certificate (19%) and income certificate (17%).

Ahead of I-Day, cops track calls meant to stir tension

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 10

DELHI POLICE have registered a case of sedition against unknown persons after a resident of Northeast Delhi's Khajuri Khas claimed to have received a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) call, with the caller allegedly trying to incite communal tension.

According to police, the complainant, Chander Mohan, made a PCR call on Saturday evening and claimed that some people were trying to create tension by talking about the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and calling for a disruption of Independence Day celebrations at Red Fort.

"Local police rushed to the spot and the Special Cell was also roped in. On the basis of his complaint, an FIR under IPC section 124-A (sedition) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) was registered at Special Cell police station," a senior police said.

During investigation, police found that similar calls were made with numbers originating from Australia and Dubai. In the calls, a man's pre-recorded message is heard, in which he allegedly tries to create tension and targets the Independence Day celebration.

"We have examined all recorded messages coming to people through VoIP calls and found that the voice is similar in all calls," an officer said, adding that they are also probing if the calls have any links to the ISI.

Meanwhile, security has been beefed up in all vulnerable areas, especially those with a history of communal violence. The Red Fort has also been put under an unprecedented ground-to-air security cover. "The security audit of all local residents, including tenants, has been completed in Old Delhi," the officer said.

Late policeman's daughter cracks IAS, fulfills his dream

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

THREE YEARS ago, Sweety Sehrawat (28) quit her job as a design engineer to fulfill her father's dream of seeing her become an IAS officer. Her father, Delhi Police head constable Dale Ram Sehrawat, died in a road accident in 2013.

On Tuesday, Sweety checked her phone multiple times to see if she had cleared the UPSC exam. Her family sat beside her, trying to calm her down while simultaneously checking their phones to see if the result was out.

Later that afternoon, Sweety found that she had secured All India Rank 187 in the civil services exam. Her mother Kamlesh and brother Harish couldn't contain their excitement and called their relatives, neighbours and friends to spread the news.

"It wasn't easy because the subjects were new; I had different subjects in school and college. I was studying at an institute in Rajender Nagar but that



Sweety Sehrawat

didn't help. After my first attempt in 2018, I quit coaching and studied humanities, geography and world history on my own. Last year, I wasn't nervous because I knew I would clear the exam. It was only on Tuesday that I was nervous because everyone was asking about the results," said Sweety, who used to work as an engineer at NXP Semiconductors in Delhi.

The family said they also received calls from Delhi Police officials, congratulating Sweety. Commissioner of Police S N Shrivastava, when Sweety's result was brought to his notice, said in a tweet that her father

would have been very proud and that the department will contact her and congratulate her.

The family, which lives in Rohini, said Dale Ram (51) was on his way to work when the accident took place. He joined the Delhi Police in 1989.

Harish, a sub-inspector with the CISF posted with the Delhi Metro, said: "My father inspired us to work hard, he wanted us to become IAS or IPS officers. We wanted to make him proud but he died in a road accident. It was a difficult time for our family since he was the breadwinner." Harish had come home last week to meet his family.

After their father's death, the siblings started working to support the family. While Harish joined the CISF in 2014, Sweety completed her graduation and started working too. "She was preparing for the civil services but couldn't concentrate on her studies because of the job. We thought that she wouldn't be able to take the exam... but once she started earning well and saved some money, she left the job," said Harish.

Delhi-NCR will see heavy rain today, traffic snarls, waterlogging expected

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

TRAFFIC DISRUPTIONS and waterlogging is expected in the capital on Monday as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast one or two spells of intense rainfall over Delhi-NCR.

It is forecast that the intensity of rainfall will pick up in the early hours of Monday, and parts of Delhi and NCR towns can expect an intense spell of 40-50mm rain in a short duration, and there's also a possibility of heavy showers of over 65mm at some locations.

Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the IMD's regional weather forecasting centre in Delhi, said the city began witnessing a change in the rainfall pattern Sunday onwards, which is forecast to continue until mid-week with the shifting of the monsoon trough, or the line of low pressure, to the north of the country.

"During this period, moisture-laden south westerly



Delhi-NCR can expect upto 40-50 mm rain in a short duration, IMD officials said. *Gajendra Yadav*

winds from the Arabian Sea and easterly winds from the Bay of Bengal will reach Haryana, Delhi-NCR and western Uttar Pradesh. A cyclonic circulation will also form and persist over Madhya Pradesh and adjoining areas of UP," he said.

"Under the influence of this activity, moderate rain accompanied with one or two spells of intense rain will occur over Delhi between August 9 and 12.

Thunderstorms and isolated heavy rain may also occur over NCR during this period," Srivastava added.

The IMD's impact-based forecast states that on Monday, traffic disruption on roads and water accumulation in low lying areas is expected in Delhi-NCR.

As of Sunday, the IMD's Safdarjung observatory, which is representative of the city, re-

THE WEEK AHEAD

Day	Forecast
Mon	Moderate rain
Tue	Moderate rain
Wed	Moderate rain
Thu	Light rain
Fri	Thundershowers
Sat	Thundershowers



ceived 1mm of rain between 8.30am and 5.30pm. At the Ridge observatory, 7mm of rainfall was recorded as of 5.30pm.

For other states in northwest India, heavy rainfall is expected between August 10 and 12 at isolated locations in eastern and western UP, east Rajasthan, Haryana, northern parts of Punjab, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

'All efforts to check virus spread in jail'

New Delhi: Despite several precautionary measures, coronavirus managed to "enter the jail but the...administration is putting their best efforts and have adopted a multi-pronged approach to fight it and to prevent its spread", DG (Prisons) Sandeep Goel told a High-Powered Committee (HPC) headed by Delhi High Court judge Justice Hima Kohli. Goel also told the HPC that as on July 30, a total of 61 prison inmates and 165 prison staff tested positive for coronavirus. The committee was also told that the jail administration has procured four oxygen concentration machines, out of which two have been installed in the jail hospital at Tihar and one each at Mandoli and Rohini jail complexes. DG (Prisons) also informed the Chair that they have started the Rapid Antigen Testing facility at Tihar jail hospital and Mandoli Jail hospital. The HPC, which took stock of the ongoing process of decongesting prisons, was informed that a total of 4,439 inmates have been released so far, of which 3,211 are undertrial prisoners. **ENS**



A POSITIVE MOVE

LOK SABHA Speaker Om Birla is trying to ensure the Parliament Building is more women-friendly. The Lok Sabha secretariat recently informed that three automatic sanitary pad dispensing machines have been installed in the Parliament House Complex. The service is on payment basis. Apparently, this was a longstanding demand of the women staff working in the complex. Recently, the secretariat also agreed to the MPs' demand on making kadha, a herbal drink considered to be an immunity booster, available in the railway catering outlets in the building in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak.

ISOLATION TIME

AFTER SAD MP Naresh Gujral, who attended the meeting of the Standing Committee of Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice last week, tested positive for Covid-19, the Rajya Sabha secretariat has advised other members who attended the meeting to take precautions and isolate themselves. The meeting was conducted in adherence to social distancing norms and members wore masks. Eleven members, including its chairman and senior BJP leader Bhupender Yadav and former Union Minister Shiv Pratap Shukla, attended the meeting.

ON THE AGENDA

THE MEETING of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology on Tuesday could be interesting. On the agenda is a briefing by the Ministry of Communications on suspension of telecom services and Internet and its impact and India's preparedness for 5G rollout. It is learnt that chairman Shashi Tharoor may seek clarifications from the ministry about the Internet shutdown in Kashmir. The BJP members had objected to discussing this at the last meeting too. The 5G rollout too is a sensitive topic as there are reports that India is going to exclude Chinese companies like Huawei and ZTE. The panel could seek views of the ministry on this too.

Trust vote in Manipur Assembly today

JIMMY LEIVON
IMPHAL, AUGUST 9

THE MANIPUR Assembly is going to vote on a trust motion on Monday to decide the fate of the coalition government led by the BJP.

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh moved the trust motion on Friday in the wake of a no-confidence motion by the Opposition Congress.

A highly placed source said the Chief Minister had convened a meeting of all legislators of the ruling coalition to discuss the strategy for Monday. The Speaker, however, did not attend the meeting, added the source.

The Congress moved the no-confidence motion on July 28 after the state government did not act on the Opposition's demand to hand over to the CBI the high-profile drug seizure case involving former BJP leader Lukhosei Zou.

The Congress chief whip K

Govindas has issued a whip to its legislators, asking them to vote against the trust motion moved by the Chief Minister without fail. Disciplinary action will be initiated under Para 2(1) of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution if any member of the party violates the directive and abstains from voting, says the whip.

The BJP Chief Whip and minister Th Bishwajit Singh has also issued a whip to party legislators to attend the session and vote in favour of the trust motion.

The 60-member House now has a strength of 53, including the Speaker Y Khemchand, after four members were disqualified under the anti-defection law and three BJP MLAs resigned. The Congress has 24 MLAs and the ruling coalition has 29 members, including the Speaker, 18 BJP legislators, four MLAs each from NPP and NPF, one each from Trinamool Congress and Lok Janshakti Party and an Independent MLA.

'Whoever forms govt in Bihar, common minimum plan must'

LJP president **CHIRAG PASWAN** speaks to **DIPANKAR GHOSE** & **HARIKISHAN SHARMA** on why the Bihar elections should be postponed, why he thinks the Nitish Kumar government has not tackled Covid-19 well and the need for a Common Minimum Programme in the next govt. Excerpts



Why are you suggesting delaying the elections? Is there feedback from the ground?

At the end of the day, it is the Election Commission that has to take the decision. Having said that, it is the responsibility of every political party as well, because we are in touch with the masses, to give the correct picture to the EC. Which is why we gave in writing that we cannot put a large population in danger. After the code of conduct is in force... there is election campaigning, nukkad sabhas, rallies. It is beyond my understanding how this can happen with social distancing. Every public representative wants to meet as many people as possible. If in that effort, they do a rally with no social distancing and there is one mistake, then you will be putting a big population in danger...

Have you discussed this with your allies?

Yes, I have discussed this with BJP national president J P Nadda. I told him very clearly that Bihar is not prepared for elections right now.

What did he say to you? JD(U) has said they are for elections, and have said the opposition is running away

Nobody is shying away from elections. Let me say this very clearly that Lok Janshakti Party is 100 per cent prepared on all



243 seats. But yes, we have our concerns...

Do you believe the idea of virtual campaigning disadvantages some parties over others?

It is not about a disadvantage to a party. It is a disadvantage to a huge section of society that is economically backward. If you go to a village in Bihar, how many people have smartphones? How many people have internet access or understand technology?

Lakhs of migrants have walked home, Covid numbers are rising, there are floods to deal with. How has the government tackled this crisis in the last five months?

Could have been much, much better. On floods, we see the same pictures every year. The present Chief Minister has an experience of 15 years, and has been seeing this for fifteen years. What has changed? I have repeatedly written about the linking of rivers that we should bring. I can predict that this time next year, it will be ex-

actly the same. On Covid-19, testing is next to nothing, there were terrible reports from quarantine centres...

What would you have done differently? Would you have brought back returning migrants with more immediacy?

To begin with, on migrant labour, I had said very strongly that you have to bring them back. They are people from our state. You cannot see them walking and dying on the street. Our Chief Minister constantly said that because of the lockdown they are not giving us permission. But at the same time, UP CM Yogi Adityanath was sending buses. Why did our Chief Minister leave people on the streets to die? When he had taken oath fifteen years ago, he had said that his dream was that within four months, every Bihar migrant should come back. Fifteen years later, this was then a golden opportunity.

All of this that you are saying sounds more like an opposition leader, and less like an ally. What is your reading of your alliance with the JD(U) and the BJP?

I have always been saying Bihar first Bihar first... They say I am questioning my own government. First things first, I have no government in Bihar... The LJP is not a part of the government in Bihar. We have no minister in the government. Till there was, I had a platform to make my suggestions reach the cabinet. Since our minister fought the Lok Sabha elections and became MP, we have no minister. Yes I support the Bihar government because I have an alliance with the BJP. At the Centre, I am supporting them. But you have shut all windows. You do not answer the

phone. You don't reply to letters. I am only giving suggestions....

How long has communication been shut with the Chief Minister?

Since I started this Bihar first, Bihar first yatra. I started in October, November last year. Since then, I have not spoken to him. On the Sushant Singh Rajput matter, for the first time after so long I spoke to him for ten minutes. But that was only on Sushant.

So can we see a new CM face in Bihar?

Honestly, I am not looking at who becomes Chief Minister. My concern is that whatever government is formed next, if an NDA government is made, or a government is made where the LJP is part of it, then there needs to be a Common Minimum Programme. This is the tradition of every coalition government. This time it hasn't happened because overnight the Chief Minister left Mahagathbandhan and joined NDA. The agenda is the one of the Mahagathbandhan that is operating. That is a reason to worry for me. If work is happening on 'saat nisachay', then whose agenda is that? An agenda made by Congress, JD(U) and RJD. I want my own agenda... Even on CAA-NRC, whatever the Centre proposed, he (Nitish Kumar) passed a resolution against that in Vidhan Sabha. Tomorrow, in another government if I am ignored, or no agenda of mine is included, why would I be part of that government?

So a Common Minimum Programme before the polls?

Of course before polls, who has been post-polls.

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com



BJP president J P Nadda (left) at the event in New Delhi where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was addressing party workers in Andaman & Nicobar Islands on Sunday. PTI

PM: For new India, govt's work must reach everyone

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

FOR A new India to develop, the entire nation needs to progress and the government's work must reach every person, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told party workers in Andaman and Nicobar Islands on the eve of the launch of high-speed broadband connectivity in the islands.

"For the development of a new India, the entire nation needs to progress. The government may function from a specific point, but its work should reach every one and more importantly, to the person at the end of the row," Modi said while interacting with BJP workers on the islands via videoconferencing.

He said high-speed broadband internet connectivity — scheduled to be launched Monday — will help the residents to connect with other parts of the country.

"Everyone will be able to avail the benefits of all kinds of online services amid the pandemic. Andaman and Nicobar Islands will now face no problem

in connecting virtually to the world," he said.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to inaugurate the submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC), connecting Chennai and Port Blair, on Monday, via videoconferencing. The cable will also connect Port Blair to Swaraj Dweep (formerly named Havelock Island), Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Great Nicobar, Long Island, and Rangat. The foundation stone for the project was laid by Modi on December 30, 2018 in Port Blair.

"India is fortunate that we have various things in different areas to be developed. In Andaman & Nicobar, we are going to lay an emphasis on industries related to seafood, organic products & coconut-based products," said the Prime Minister during the virtual interaction, also attended by BJP chief J P Nadda.

Addressing workers, Nadda outlined the steps taken by the Modi-led NDA government in the country's fight against Covid-19. He also outlined about the activities of BJP workers across the country.

'Will build grander Parshuram statue than the one SP promised'

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 9

IN HER attempt to outdo the Samajwadi Party (SP) and woo the Brahmin community, BSP chief Mayawati said Sunday if voted to power, her party would build hospitals and other infrastructure named after Lord Parshuram and a statue of his grander than the one promised by the SP.

"When the BSP comes to power, modern hospitals and community centres will be constructed especially in the name of Parshuram — considered the symbol and pride of the Brahmin community — as well as an icon of other religions and castes," Mayawati said in a statement.

Claiming that the Brahmins



Mayawati

had reposed their trust in BSP, she said, "Our government, keeping aspirations of the Brahmin community in mind, will construct a statue of Parshuram grander than the one promised by the SP."

She also said if people from the Kshatriya and Vaishya community expressed their desire, their sentiments would also be kept in mind and fulfilled.

A few days ago, the SP had announced that it would build a 108-foot statue of Parshuram, and since then, both the parties have been attacking each other for neglecting Brahmin icons

and leaders. With a four-cornered contest on the anvil in the polls, all major parties are jockeying to bag the lion's share of Brahmin votes.

Opposition parties, including Congress, have derided the BJP government for allegedly targeting Brahmins in the wake of the "encounter" of gangster Vikas Dubey, a Brahmin. Citing the case of Dubey, Mayawati went on to accuse the state government of doublespeak.

Responding to her, SP spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said, "Some of our leaders, under the banner of Bhagwan Parshuram Chetna Peeth, expressed their desire to build a statue of Parshuram, and the party approves it as it is a matter of faith, not a competition."

Year on, Cong yet to get regular president; Sonia remains at helm

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

ON AUGUST 10 last year, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) appointed Sonia Gandhi interim president of the party, "pending the election of a regular president by the AICC", after her son Rahul stepped down from the top post.

A year later, the grand old party is yet to find a "regular" president. At an official briefing on Sunday, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said Sonia's "tenure" is expiring Monday and at the same time, added that it did not mean the seat automatically falls vacant that same day. "Sonia Gandhi is the president... she will continue till such time as a proper procedure is implemented and it

will be implemented in the not too distant future," Singhvi said.

Sources said Rahul's much-speculated return to the helm will depend on the convening of an All India Congress Committee (AICC) session. Those close to Rahul say only an AICC plenary session can re-elect him since he had stepped down. Convening an AICC session now is not possible due to Covid-19, sources said.

In other words, it means Sonia will continue as party chief for some more time, although several party leaders now feel the party should end the uncertainty over its leadership at the earliest. While some leaders speculated that a CWC meeting will now have to be convened to extend her tenure, the party believed the CWC had not mentioned any specific time frame when it asked Sonia to take

over as interim president last year.

In that context, Singhvi's statement evoked surprise. Earlier, PTI quoted Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor saying "it's unfair to expect her (Sonia) carry this burden indefinitely", and argued that the party should arrest the growing public perception, fuelled by a dismissive media, that the Congress is adrift and rudderless.

At the briefing, Singhvi said "there is no point giving simple views".

"Just like nature abhors a vacuum, political parties cannot function in a vacuum. It is true that the tenure is expiring tomorrow, but there is a laid down procedure... if anybody is suggesting that the Congress will become headless on the stroke of midnight on 10th of August I think you have to only ask yourself, is it possible..."

EX-SERVICEMEN CONTRIBUTORY HEALTH SCHEME (ECHS) EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

ECHS Roorkee invites the application to engage OIC on contractual basis at ECHS Polyclinic, Roorkee For 'Terms & Conditions', Application Forms, Contractual Remuneration and other details kindly see our website www.echs.gov.in. Interview will be conducted in first week of Sep. 2020 at Station Headquarter, 'A' Branch Conference Hall, BEG & Centre, Roorkee. Application to be submitted to ECHS Cell, Stn HQ, Roorkee on or before 25 Aug 2020 at 1200 hrs, application received late will be summarily rejected. Please contact ECHS Polyclinic, Roorkee at Tele No. 01332272152. Candidates to bring original documents, PAN Card & Adhar Card on the day of interview. No TA/DA admissible.

HAMARE ESM HAMARI SHAAN

HFCL LIMITED
(Formerly HIMACHAL FUTURISTIC COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED)

CIN: L64200HP1987PLC007466
Regd. Off: 8, Electronics Complex, Chambaahat, Solan - 173 213 (Himachal Pradesh)
Web: www.hfcl.com Email: secretarial@hfcl.com Tel: 91-1792-230644 Fax No.: 91-1792-231902

NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulation, 2015, that a meeting of the Board of Directors of HFCL Limited is scheduled to be held on Monday, 17th August, 2020 at New Delhi, to consider and approve, inter-alia, the un-audited Financial Results of the Company for the 1st quarter ended on June 30, 2020, of the financial year 2020-21, both on Standalone & Consolidated basis.

In compliance of the provisions of the SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015 and the Company's Code of Internal Procedures and Conduct for Regulating, Monitoring and Reporting of Trading in Securities by Designated Persons, the Trading Window for dealing in the securities of the Company for all the Designated Persons including Insiders, had already been closed w.e.f. July 01, 2020, and the same shall re-open on August 20, 2020.

The said Notice is also available on the website of the Company at <http://www.hfcl.com> as well as on the websites of Stock Exchanges - The BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and The National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.nseindia.com.

for HFCL Limited
(formerly Himachal Futuristic Communications Limited)
Sd/-
(Manoj Baid)

Place : New Delhi
Date : 07.08.2020
Senior Vice-President (Corporate) & Company Secretary

RAMNATH GOENKA EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM AWARDS

INDIA'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS AND COVETED JOURNALISM AWARDS

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Acknowledging accuracy, courage, credibility & fairness **2019**

Award Categories

- Print/Digital & Broadcast
- Print/Digital
- Hindi
- Regional Languages
- Environment, Science and Technology Reporting
- Uncovering India Invisible
- Business and Economic Journalism
- Reporting on Politics and Government
- Sports Journalism
- Investigative Reporting
- Reporting on Arts, Culture and Entertainment
- Foreign Correspondent Covering India
- Books (Non-Fiction)
- Prakash Kardaley Memorial Award for Civic Journalism
- Photo Journalism

LAST DATE FOR ENTRIES | OCTOBER 9, 2020
Entries are invited for the year 2019 only.

To apply, log on to www.rngfoundation.com/awards | Write to us at rngf@expressindia.com
Ramnath Goenka Memorial Foundation, Express Building, B-1/B, Sector-10, Noida-201 301, Uttar Pradesh, India.

New Delhi

7 EXPRESS NETWORK



Sushma, the wife of Captain Deepak Sathe, the pilot-in-command of the Air India Express plane that crashed in Kerala, pays tribute after his body was brought to the Mumbai airport. The funeral will take place on Tuesday. Deepak Joshi

KOZHIKODE PLANE CRASH

Survivor recalls horror: Passenger a seat away died

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUGUST 9

KK RIYAS, one of the survivors of the flight mishap at Kozhikode on Friday, said he had resigned himself to the thought that the end was near.

The 26-year-old, now undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Kozhikode, said a passenger sitting a seat away from him died in the mishap, which took place when an Air India Express flight skidded off the tabletop runway and fell into a valley.

"It was sheer luck that I did not suffer any major injury. When the flight touched the runway, I felt the aircraft jolting heavily. I don't remember what actually happened in the few seconds after that. Then I found myself trapped. I could not move my legs or hands. I had got stuck between the front seat and my seat. The overhead console had fallen heavily on my head, trapping me."

"My right hand was across my face and got pressed against my nose. I was struggling to breathe. I heard people crying in panic, particularly children. Many were calling for help. I heard the passenger beside me saying that his relative in the aisle seat was 'over'. He could not move as his legs had sustained serious injury and he



K K Riyas

too was trapped between seats like me," said Riyas.

He said though he was sitting in the window seat, he could not even turn his head, let alone look outside. "After some time, a few people came into the flight and tried to extricate me. They could not, but said that the firefighters are coming."

Riyas said firefighters came and managed to rescue him by separating the seats. He said he reached the hospital in Kozhikode around 11 pm.

Riyas, who is from Velimanna village in Kozhikode, said he went to Dubai six months ago in search of a job as a salesman. "I would have returned much earlier but for the lockdown."

Activist Iliana Sen dies of cancer

New Delhi: Author, activist and teacher Iliana Sen, who spent many years in Chhattisgarh working with trade unions, the underprivileged and tribals, died after a battle with cancer on Sunday in Kolkata. Sen is survived by her husband, Dr Binayak Sen, and two children.

Sen was a fierce critic of alleged human rights violations in Chhattisgarh, loudly voicing her opposition to the government-backed anti-

Naxal militia Salwa Judum, which was later declared illegal by the Supreme Court. She was the acclaimed author of the books *Inside Chhattisgarh: A Political Memoir and Sukhvasin: The migrant woman of Chhattisgarh*. Her husband Binayak was accused of being a courier of Maoists.

ENS

SHYAMLAL YADAV
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

FROM THE Covid-recovered donating their plasma in UP, Delhi, Bengaluru, Guwahati and Surat to opening shelters for returning migrants in Bihar; from distributing food packets in West Bengal to providing masks and sanitisers in Karnataka; from donating TV sets for students to access virtual classes in Kerala to organising vehicles during the lockdown in Chhattisgarh — and helping conduct the last rites of victims in Maharashtra.

For the RSS and its nationwide network, the Covid outbreak and the lockdown have brought about

a realignment in strategy — shakha activities on the ground are on hold and, instead, the entire machinery has been redirected to outreach and relief work.

"During the lockdown, 5.07 lakh volunteers distributed over 4.66 crore food packets and helped over 44.86 lakh migrant labourers. And since the lockdown ended, we have been helping labourers get their jobs back," says Parag Abhyankar, who heads the RSS's Seva Vibhag.

According to him, relief efforts were kickstarted by an appeal issued on April 26, a month after the lockdown was imposed, by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat: "Our seva (service) must be without bias. Seva is not an obligation but our

RAJASTHAN

11 of Pak migrant family dead, suicide abetment case filed

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, AUGUST 9

ELEVEN MEMBERS of a family of Pakistani migrants were found dead at a farm in Lorta village of Jodhpur district on Sunday morning, police said.

Police said the dead include Budha Ram and his wife Antra Devi, both in their 70s, their daughters Laxmi, Priya and Suman, son Ravi, and five children.

Jodhpur Rural SP Rahul Barhat said they found some pesticide, sedatives, and empty vials from the spot, with at least one of couple's three daughters being a trained nurse.

Ravi's brother Kewal Ram, who, police said, was sleeping outside the hut where the bodies were found and seems to be the only surviving member, blamed his in-laws for driving the family



Police personnel in Lorta village of Jodhpur district. ANI

to suicide.

"Kewal Ram said he and his brother Ravi were married to two sisters, also from a Pakistani migrant family, who had been living with their parents in Jodhpur's Mandore. Kewal Ram told us the sisters had been refusing to come

to Dechu and that their domestic dispute had been going on for several years. A point of conflict was custody of the children. Kewal Ram has four children, one of whom is with his wife while three were here," the SP said. The three are among the five children

who were found dead.

"The cause of death will be established through post mortem. As for circumstantial evidence, we found pesticide and sedatives nearby, and empty vials," SP Barhat said.

Police said an FIR has been lodged under IPC Section 306 (abetment of suicide) based on Kewal Ram's complaint. "He has claimed that his in-laws had been troubling his family and were levelling allegations," the SP said.

Police said Kewal Ram, however, ruled out that someone from outside could have poisoned the family, since he was outside the hut where the deceased were found.

"We are also questioning him and cannot give a clean chit to anybody. Two of the girls were trained nurses; we are looking at that aspect as well. We are examining the vials," the SP said.

Kerala landslide toll rises to 43

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUGUST 9

THREE DAYS after a row of quarters on a tea estate in Kerala's Idukki district was buried in a landslide, 20 people continue to be missing. Rescue workers on Sunday managed to retrieve 17 more bodies from the rubble and sludge, taking the death toll in the incident to 43.

Following heavy rain, a hillcock on the tea plantation at Rajamala, a remote village near Munnar, had come down, burying the estate quarters in the early hours of Friday. Out of the 78 people who lived in the quarters, 15 could be saved during the rescue work that was impeded for nearly a day due to bad weather and lack of road access.

Forest Minister K Raju, who visited the spot on Sunday, said the search would continue till all the missing persons are ac-



Rescue efforts were hit due to bad weather and lack of road access. Twenty people are still missing. Express

counted for. "All agencies of the state and a 200-strong NDRF team are actively engaged in the search, which has been expanded now. Inclement rain and poor visibility have affected the search," he said.

Many of the workers killed in the incident had relatives in Tamil

Nadu and scores reached the spot from the neighbouring state after obtaining a two-day entry pass amid Covid restrictions. As the earthmovers rummaged through the debris, they eagerly looked for some sign of their dear ones.

Meanwhile, the Opposition

has targeted the ruling CPM, saying that the compensation declared for families of the victims is not adequate.

On Saturday, the government declared a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each for the families of those who died in the airport mishap in Kozhikode. And, the compensation declared for families of those killed in the landslide is Rs 5 lakh each.

Union Minister V Muraleedharan, who visited Rajamala, told the media that CM Pinarayi Vijayan should not "neglect the poor people". "There should not be any discrimination in giving compensation," he said.

The Chief Minister countered the allegation, saying the compensation is only an initial announcement and that the government would ensure all support for the victims.

With the rivers overflowing, fear has gripped the downstream towns in Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts in central Kerala.

60,000 COVID CASES PER DAY

India tops in new case count, but low in population share

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, AUGUST 9

WITH MORE than 60,000 new infections being recorded every day for the last three days, India has emerged as the single largest contributor of Covid cases in the world, overtaking even the US — but when it comes to population share, it is still way down the ladder, below at least 90 other countries.

On Saturday, over 64,000 new infections were detected across the country, which accounted for more than 22 per cent of the 2.84 lakh cases recorded globally on the day.

The US and Brazil, with the largest number of infections so far, have logged a far fewer number of cases than India in the last three days, with numbers ranging just above the 50,000 mark in this period. India recorded 188 lakh new cases in this three-day period, followed by Brazil (1.68 lakh) and the US (1.58 lakh).

However, India has only 1,559 cases per million population, while the global average is 2,541 cases per million. Similarly, while India has the fifth largest number of deaths due to Covid (over 43,500), it has recorded only 31 deaths per million population, which is also less than at least 90 other countries.

The US, with over 48.36 lakh confirmed cases till Saturday, had been the largest daily contributor of cases in the world since May. In Brazil, more than 29.12 lakh people have been infected with the virus till now. And India has recorded 21.53 lakh cases till Saturday.

The outbreak had begun in Brazil and India around the same time, in early March, though the first three cases in India were detected in January-end. The US recorded its first infections in the second week of January.

But the early and complete national lockdown in India slowed the spread of the disease, while

the US and Brazil saw a spike during this time, which has continued more or less, till now.

The gap between India and Brazil amongst active cases is much narrower. India has about 6.28 lakh active patients, while Brazil has 8.18 lakh. In the US, the number of active cases is 23.46 lakh.

Meanwhile, the number of tests being carried out in India every day crossed the 7-lakh figure on Saturday for the first time, with over 7.19 lakh samples. More than 2.41 crore samples have been tested in India so far. Only three other countries, China, the US, and Russia, have carried out more tests. The government has been targeting a testing capacity of 10 lakh tests per day.

Apart from the US and Brazil, only Russia and South Africa have more than 5 lakh confirmed cases. But in India, Maharashtra has already registered more deaths (over 17,000) than Russia (less than 15,000) and South Africa (just over 10,000).

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

160 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN
CASES: 21,53,010
TESTS: 2,41,06,545
RECOVERED: 14,80,884
DEATHS: 43,379
DOUBLING RATE: 24.01**

KEY STATES TO WATCH	TOTAL CASES	SURGE IN 24 HOURS	7-DAY AVG GROWTH*	DOUBLING RATE**
■ Maharashtra	5,03,084	12,822	2.21%	32.59
■ Tamil Nadu	2,90,907	5,883	2.09%	34.49
■ Andhra	2,17,040	10,080	5.40%	13.34
■ Karnataka	1,72,102	7,178	4.17%	17.26
■ Delhi	1,44,127	1,404	0.76%	95.11

* Compounded Daily Growth Rate over last 7 days ** Calculated over 7-day growth

CASE FATALITY RATIO	POSITIVITY RATE	DAILY IN, DAILY OUT
7 DAYS EARLIER: 2.13 NOW: 2.01	7 DAYS EARLIER: 8.83 NOW: 8.93	DETECTED TODAY: 64,399 RECOVERED TODAY: 53,879

Deaths as a ratio of positive cases (in %); indicator of progress in averting deaths

Positives against number tested (in %); indicator of the spread of disease

Becoming sick vs recovering; more recoveries for 14 days may signal the peak

Data as on August 8, released by Union Ministry of Health, ICMR and states. Often daily numbers include data from previous days. As such, trends based on daily numbers are indicative, not definitive

Mukhtar Ansari's aide shot in Lucknow encounter: UP STF

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 9

THE UTTAR Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) gunned down a gangster carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 on his head in Sarojini Nagar area of Lucknow in the early hours of Sunday.

Rakesh Pandey alias Hanuman Pandey, 46, was a close associate of gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, police said. Pandey was accused in the 2005 killing of BJP leader Krishnanand Rai but was acquitted last year. He was from Mau district and had 12 cases against him, they said.

Police said Pandey was wanted in at least two cases — one each in Prayagraj and Mau districts. The cases pertain to cheating and attempt to murder charges, police said.

Police claimed to have recovered two country-made pistols and two cellphones from Pandey's possession.

In a video that surfaced on social media on Sunday, Rakesh Pandey's family members were

purportedly heard raising questions over the encounter. In the video, they demanded a "thorough inquiry" into the encounter. Pandey's father Baldudd Pandey was purportedly heard saying that he wants to "question the government on why my son was killed in an encounter" when there "were very few cases pending against him".

Rakesh Pandey had been tending to his mother, who was hospitalised in Lucknow and was discharged recently, his father purportedly said in the video.

Superintendent of Police (SP), STF, Sudhir Kumar Singh, said they received a tip-off on Saturday that Pandey and his associates were collecting weapons and planning a crime in Lucknow. In the meantime, police were informed that Pandey was spotted in a car in Gudamba area of Lucknow. A police team reached the area and followed the car. The driver increased the speed of the vehicle and tried to escape, as a result of which the car collided with a tree near Lucknow airport, said the SP.

Buxar SP orders probe into 'framing' of RTI activist's minor son

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, AUGUST 9

THE BUXAR SP on Sunday ordered a probe to find out if the local police were responsible for showing an RTI activist's 14-year-old son as an adult after arresting him under the Arms Act when he was returning after writing his Class 10 examinations in February. Bihar DGP Gupteshwar Pandey said he was personally monitoring the case.

On August 8, *The Indian Express* had reported on the issue in a report titled 'Son in jail for five months, Bihar RTI activist says 14-yr-old framed, declared adult; DGP seeks details'.

Buxar SP Upendra Nath Verma told *The Indian Express*, "Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Sadar, is ordered to look into the whole matter, whether there is any fault at the police station and station house officer level. SHO Rajpur is ordered to verify documents provided by the RTI activist and send a proposal accordingly to the court and Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) regarding the boy's age."

Verma also met the RTI activist on Friday.

The RTI activist said, "The police response is very belated. Anyway, I am somewhat relieved now that there is a hint of acceptance of mistake by the police. But if the matter is probed



The Indian Express carried the report on August 8

deeper, it would reveal collusion of musclemen with the police in framing my minor son in a false Arms Act case. My son has been suffering because I am an RTI activist whose RTI queries have been unmasking some influential people."

The activist had exposed how school students had got MGN-REGS job cards and alleged bungling in a village road scheme. The RTI activist had also sought details on paddy procurement by the Primary Agriculture Credit Society (PACS) under the cooperative department between 2009 and 2019. He suspected the role of PACS functionaries in framing his son, who could not write his final papers due on March 2 and scored 83 per cent marks in the five papers he wrote.

Lalan Pandey, the minor's lawyer, said, "We have already got a certificate from the school that shows he was born in April 2006. We are soon putting it up before JJB. If the police do the same, it could only help us."

4 Maoist camps busted in Odisha

AISHWARYA MOHANTY
BHUBANESWAR, AUGUST 9

A JOINT team of the Odisha police Special Operations Group (SOG) and CRPF on Sunday busted four Maoist camps after a gunfight in the Gandhamardhan reserve forest in Bargarh district.

According to a statement by the Odisha Police, the gunfight broke out when the team of security personnel was out on a

combining operation that was launched based on "reliable intelligence inputs regarding camping of CPI (Maoists) and planning of violent anti-state activities" in the area.

Bargarh SP Padmini Sahoo said the team spotted a group of 10-15 Maoists, who started firing on the security personnel, leading to an encounter. "Based on the hand-written literature... recovered from the spot, we are suspecting that one of their high level officials was present," Sahoo said.

Hubballi and Shivamogga, and blood donation camps conducted.

KERALA: Seva Bharati's 42,000 volunteers distributed food packets, grocery kits and medicine. They helped local bodies prepare Covid centres and took part in sanitation campaigns. Seva Bharati also distributed TV sets for students to access virtual classes. "So far, 42 lakh families in Kerala have benefited from our voluntary work," said Gopalankutty Master, state general secretary.

(WITH ENDS INPUTS FROM MAHARASHTRA, WEST BENGAL, RAJASTHAN, BIHAR, CHHATTISGARH, KARNATAKA, KERALA)



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AN UNEVEN RECOVERY

Services are seeing a greater fall, with job losses, localised lockdowns holding back demand and sharpening the challenge

FROM THE LOWS observed in April, economic activity in India has gradually climbed up in the weeks and months thereafter. While uncertainty looms over the pace of the recovery — some indicators suggest that economic activities have levelled off at lower levels — the picture that emerges is of an uneven, two-paced recovery. The recovery in the manufacturing sector, especially in some segments, appears to be far greater as compared to the pick-up in the services sector. This trend is observed in the purchasing managers index (PMI) for the two sectors. After plummeting to a record low of 27.4 in April, the PMI manufacturing rose to 47.3 in June, dipping marginally thereafter to 46 in July. In comparison, the PMI services, which plunged to a low of 5.4 in April, has limped thereon, touching 34.2 in July. It is unlikely that the gap between the two will narrow significantly in the near term.

Faced with grim income prospects, households have curbed their discretionary spending. Services, non-essentials in particular, have suffered disproportionately from this fall in demand. Adding to that is the fear of moving in crowded places which is also constraining consumption of services such as restaurants and hospitality, travel and tourism and others despite the easing of lockdown restrictions. There are several indications to this effect. For instance, reports in this paper reveal that despite restaurants and eateries being allowed to reopen, more than 60 per cent of licensed eateries in prominent areas of Delhi continue to remain shut and are yet to renew their trade/health licences. The effects of this collapse in demand for services, and non-essential manufacturing, on jobs and incomes are quite visible. As reported in this paper, 40 of the BSE 100 companies that have announced their results for the first quarter of the current financial year have seen a decline in their aggregate employee expenditure — indicative of a fall in both employees and employee costs. Some indication of the extent of the losses incurred during this period will reflect in the quarterly GDP estimates (to be released at the end of this month) in the “trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting”, and the “financial, real estate and professional services” category.

The near term prospects don't appear promising. With income and job losses, self-imposed restrictions on movement, and localised lockdowns to deal with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to influence consumption patterns, demand for services is likely to remain muted. In such a scenario, both individuals and businesses are likely to continue to be risk averse. Much will depend on the success in containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

BEIRUT IN THE DARK

The ammonium nitrate blast is a grim reminder: Despite the strict regulation of hazardous substances, risks remain

THE EXPLOSION in the Beirut docks area last week has left more than 150 citizens dead, over 5,000 injured, swathes of the city levelled and the dock out of commission, which could cause a food crisis in Lebanon in the days ahead. Shock and confusion over the cause of the devastating explosion has turned into public anger, bringing on the spectre of a political problem. All this damage owed to a single explosion. The blast had produced a powerful shock wave and a mushroom cloud, and it was briefly mistaken for the detonation of a nuclear weapon. But the explosion turned out to have involved 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, which had been improperly stored in a densely populated area.

Ammonium nitrate is best known as an agricultural fertiliser, but it is dual-use. It is also an element of binary mining explosives like ANFO and the fertiliser or nitrate bomb, an improvised device used by militant organisations ever since the Irish Republican Army deployed it in bombings in the 1970s. The same technology was also used in Oklahoma City in 1995, Bali in 2002 and Norway in 2011. After a nitrate stockpile was revealed to have caused the disaster in Beirut, other nations have woken up to the risk. In Australia, for instance, residents of Newcastle are concerned about a storage facility which holds about four times the volume of nitrate stockpiled in Beirut.

In India, there is concern over 740 tonnes of ammonium nitrate stored in a customs warehouse in Chennai since 2015, when it was apparently imported without the required licence. The customs department has clarified that it is stored in a safe location far from human habitation, but given the hazardous nature of the chemical, which has been under the Explosives Act since 2011, it could have been disposed of. In fact, in dealing with the dispute between the importer and the customs office, a court had drawn attention to the number of accidents involving ammonium nitrate across the country, and the fact that in a span of four years, 16,000 tonnes of the chemical went missing. S Ramadoss of the PMK has suggested that the stockpile could be diverted to agricultural use, and customs officials are in a hurry to dispose of the chemical at the earliest. Better late than never. The accident in Beirut is a reminder that despite the strict regulation of hazardous substances internationally, the risks remain.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



PRACHI MISHRA

INDIA'S ECONOMY WAS weak in 2019, but appeared to be near a trough. Just as the economy was starting to look up at the beginning of this year, the rising tide gave way to the COVID-19 shock. The global economy is facing the most unprecedented shock in post-war history. The shock is truly different this time around. One key difference vis-à-vis the earlier episodes is that the fear and scare factor among citizens was not prevalent during any of the previous recessions. The COVID-19 shock also has this unique feature which is the response to the shock itself, that is, the virus control and social distancing measures represent a physical constraint on economic activity, making it unparalleled.

When the constraint is physical, sharp contractions in economic activity are bound to happen. We project global GDP to contract by 3.5 per cent in 2020. This is almost certainly the deepest recession since at least the Second World War.

The good news is that global recovery has already begun, and global GDP is rising. The key risk to the global sequential recovery, however, is the fact that the virus has not been brought under control in the US, and across several emerging economies. Compared to rest of Asia, the situation is strikingly worse in India too, where new cases have accelerated — especially since the reopening began — and now stand at approximately 50,000 per day. This compares with less than 2,000 new daily additions on average in the rest of the region. The situation in India and the US, along with localised outbreaks in several parts of the world, raises the risk of a rise in infections as economies open up further, which might trigger renewed government restrictions or voluntary changes in behaviour that could weigh on growth.

The lockdowns and rising public anxiety about the virus led to a sharp deterioration in economic activity in India. After a deep contraction in the April-June quarter, we expect the economy to rebound mechanically. Going forward, we expect a step-down to a more normal, and lower sequential growth pace. Different parts of the economy are likely to recover from the hit at different speeds. Industrial activity could possibly normalise, especially in manufacturing where control-

Fall and rise

While global recovery could lift India's economy in 2021, domestic drivers for growth are still unclear

ling the virus might be easier. In contrast, industries in which it is harder — travel or entertainment for example — will still be in a gradual normalisation process, and probably won't rebound completely until a vaccine is available. Our quarterly estimates imply that real GDP would contract by 4.4 per cent in FY21; this would be the deepest recession India has witnessed since 1980.

Several high frequency economic indicators are displaying sequential improvement, which has likely set in a sense of complacency amongst market participants. What we are currently witnessing appears to be a tug-of-war between improving economic data, and the still escalating virus situation. It is important to note, however, that what we are witnessing is just the normalisation of activity from extremely low levels; this may not be evidence of marked improvements in domestic macroeconomic fundamentals. Overall activity still remains weak. For example, Eway bills — tax applications filed for movement of goods are 25 per cent lower as compared to the same time last year; vehicle registrations are tracking a 45 per cent year-on-year decline; and both Google and Apple mobility trackers reported contraction of 40 per cent compared to normal levels.

The key question that markets are confronted with is — what will be the key macroeconomic drivers of Indian growth going forward?

Discretionary fiscal policy support, defined as targeted support to households and businesses, the kind of policy support that can revive any economy quickly in times of an unprecedented shock like we have seen, is tepid in our view. Indeed, credit rating agencies appear to be less worried about the worsening of fiscal and debt positions in the short-term — in fact, it is the reverse. They appear to be more concerned about the fact that India may not have the administrative and fiscal capacity to implement large fiscal support, and that would be a headwind to growth. What would reassure markets and avoid further credit rating downgrades is not lower fiscal spending in the short-run as many perceive, but most importantly a strategy to revive growth, combined with a credible fiscal plan for the medium term.

Market participants also wonder why India has not seen more aggressive fiscal policy support, not only compared with advanced economies but with other emerging economies too, and given the nature and scale of the shock. One possible explanation — an underlying implication of Viral Acharya's recent book *Quest to Restoring Financial Stability in India* — is that fiscal dominance during normal times, which basically allowed the sovereign to run about 10 per cent deficits, implies that the government's ability to apply countercyclical policy is severely curtailed during a crisis. In the short term, the economy has to pay a price. The price of not saving and investing in an umbrella when there is sunshine is that we have to bear the costs when it is raining.

Monetary policy and the central bank have been the main “game in town”; the RBI has reduced policy rates by 115 bp since the crisis hit, combined with tools to inject liquidity, and regulatory measures. India's policy rate easing, in fact, remains comparable with the “average” conventional monetary policy support we have seen across emerging and advanced economies. We expect the MPC to reduce interest rates further, even though it decided to pause at its August meeting. It appears that it took a “wait and watch approach” given that inflationary pressures have started to show up in the data; and with the intention to save firepower for the future. Our view is that there is clearly a need to do more, conditional on the evolution of the economy so far, and our forecasts for the rest of the year, and the fact that the support from fiscal policy has been muted so far.

Finally, the exchange rate has remained remarkably stable in this crisis. The RBI's real effective exchange rate has actually strengthened by 4 per cent since pre-COVID, and would actually be a drag on growth. Therefore, while pent up demand, favourable base effects, and massive policy support in advanced economies driving the global recovery could lift India's economy in 2021, we struggle to see any domestic fundamental forces to drive India's growth ahead.

The writer is chief India economist, Goldman Sachs, India



AUROBINDO GHOSE

RABINDRANATH TAGORE ONCE said, “You cannot cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water”. Tagore was not only a man of words but also a man of action, who put his theory of education into practice by starting an Ashram school in 1901 at Shantiniketan. Twenty years later, he founded the Visva-Bharati. It became a central university in 1951 with the prime minister as its Chancellor.

Visva-Bharati means the communion of the world with India. Tagore wanted his students' view of society to be informed by internationalism, humanism and universal brotherhood. He viewed the traditional school, bounded by its four walls and weighed down by a rigid curriculum, as a prison. At Shantiniketan, classes are held in open air. The idea is to be close to nature, where students could define their boundaries of knowledge.

An extension of Tagore's concept of fusion of education with life is Shantiniketan's spring festival, Basanta Utsav. The Poush Utsav, celebrated during winter at Visva-Bharati, is also inspired by this ethos. The poet often said that the purpose of this annual fair was to encourage interaction — economic, cultural and social — between the variety and its neighbouring villages.

The Poush Mela has been a site for social and cultural interaction for decades. It also attracts thousands of visitors from across the globe, including former students

A DEAF EAR TO TAGORE

Why the decision to cancel Visva-Bharati's spring and winter festivals is disturbing

eager to return “home” to pay homage to Gurudev.

Take out the Basanta Utsav and Poush Mela from Visva-Bharati, and it will become unrecognisable. The university's current Vice-Chancellor Bidyut Chakrabarty is attempting to bring about such an “ideational change”. He believes that such a change is essential to improve the institution's health.

Visva-Bharati's motto, “Where the world makes a home in a single nest”, indicates its inclusive, secular and international character. Till now, the University has functioned on UGC grants and other public funds. The VC's appeal to the corporate houses to contribute money to build the University's corpus fund signals a departure that is anathema to Tagore's idea of an educational institution based on co-operation, rather than a profit motive.

Similarly, the move to build a tall concrete wall around the university campus, segregating it from the neighbouring residential colonies, goes against Visva-Bharati's ethos.

The University's executive council has decided to cancel the Poush Mela and the Basanta Utsav — “Basanta Tandav” according to the VC. He says that the university is “ill-equipped” to hold these festivals. The Poush Mela has been discontinued without consulting the Shantiniketan Trust, the body officially authorised to organise the fair.

The VC maintains that the campus is incapable of holding this event because of its inaccessibility. He also contends that the Mela leads to over-crowding and pollution. However, the Poush Mela's more than 100-year-old history is a testament to the organising committee's acumen in resolving such problems. More importantly, these decisions seem part of a broader agenda. It's no coincidence that the Visva-Bharati's traditions are being undermined at a time when the RSS-affiliated Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas headed by Dinanath Batra has publicly demanded that Tagore's thoughts — particularly those related to nationalism, the divide between religion and humanity and the limits to patriotism — be expunged from NCERT textbooks. The outfit reportedly has taken umbrage at the poet's downplaying of patriotism — “patriotism cannot be our final spiritual shelter. My refuge is humanity,” he said.

The year-long centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati are slated to begin from the third week of December. This is the time when the Poush Mela would usually have been held at Shantiniketan. There seems to be a concerted move to strip the centenary celebrations of Tagore's spirit of inclusiveness. Hence, the decision to ban the Poush Mela and Basanta Utsav.

The writer is a lawyer and human rights activist

AUGUST 10, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

TALKS UNCERTAIN UNCERTAINTY PREVAILED OVER the proposed preliminary talks set to begin on August 10 on the foreign nationals' issue at Imphal as the All-Assam Students' Union declared it would not go the negotiating table unless the actions against government employees were revoked. The formal invitation for talks from Manipur Chief Minister R Dorendra Singh was received by AASU during the day. The AAGP leadership is also meeting to take a decision on the matter. AASU president Prafulla Mahanta and AAGP general secretary Bhrigu Phukan in a statement expressed doubt about the Centre's attitude towards the people of Assam and called upon the people to be ready

for launching an agitation with greater vigour and determination if necessary.

UNRULY STUDENTS THE POLICE FIRED 12 rounds of tear gas shells to disperse an unruly mob of students at Shyam Lal College when they turned violent after stopping all vehicular traffic outside their college. This is the first student violence reported this year. Several persons, including passersby, police personnel and DTC employees, were injured and at least six DTC buses damaged. Traffic on G T Road, from the old Yamuna Bridge upto Shyam Lal College came to a standstill as the students held up 25 buses. Yamuna Bridge was offi-

cially declared closed at 9 a.m. and, opened to traffic only after 12 noon.

YAHYA KHAN DEAD THE FORMER PRESIDENT of Pakistan, General Yahya Khan, died in Rawalpindi on the night of August 8, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported. He was 63. He became Pakistan's third president in succession to Ayub Khan, whose 10-year rule ended abruptly after rioting and domestic unrest. But within three years, Khan's government collapsed, Pakistan's eastern wing proclaimed itself as the independent nation of Bangladesh and the career of the brilliant soldier-administrator was at an end.



9 THE IDEAS PAGE

An August lesson

An emotionally integrated India offers the best defence against both internal and external threats and challenges



M VENKAIHAH NAIDU

THE ADJECTIVE "AUGUST" means respected and impressive, something special. The month of August has special significance in the history of modern India. The freedom struggle came to fruition on August 15, 1947. Five years prior to that, the Quit India movement was launched with a clarion call to "do or die" by Mahatma Gandhi on August 8. On the fifth of this month, construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya commenced. These events were a culmination of long-drawn struggles that offer certain lessons for the present and the future.

India's independence was not just about the end of colonial British rule. It was also bringing down curtains on the dark age of about 1,000 years that began with the invasion of Mahmud Ghazni in 1001. It was the period when India's inherent weaknesses were exploited by a regular stream of invaders, traders and colonialists. The socio-cultural-economic landscape of our country was brutally battered and exploited, enfeebling the masses.

The invaders had a free run coming in and looting at will. The lack of a sense of belonging to each other and the missing unity of action and purpose among the myriad rulers of the day made the country a soft target. Solo campaigns of brave resistance by the likes of Prithviraj Chauhan, Maharana Pratap, Chhatrapathi Shivaji, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, Veerapandya Kattabomman, Alluri Sitarama Raju were not adequate. Moreover, there were Mir Jaffers all through. A divided nation suffered from disgrace and dismemberment. Once rich, India was reduced to an ocean of poverty and backwardness.

During this long dark period, India lost its soul and inner strength. The people began to rediscover themselves as British colonial exploitation became evident. The freedom struggle brought the people together in the quest to shape their own destiny. It was rightly called the Indian National Movement as emotive nationhood gained currency. The follies of a long period of disunity were too stark to be ignored. Finally, the Indian nation was born on August 15, 1947. It is hence appropriate to say that the hard-fought independence was the liberation of our country from the dark age of centuries marked by lack of social cohesion and the glue of nationhood.

The Quit India movement was the most defining moment of our freedom struggle. The Quit India Resolution adopted on August 8, 1947, stressed that "...the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity for both the sake of India and for the success of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India making her progressively less capable of defending herself and contributing to the cause of world freedom."

A few hours later on the same day, in his Quit India speech, Gandhi roared with a clarion call to the people to "do or die". The apostle of peace and non-violence who lent a moral and mass dimension to



CR Sasikumar

the freedom struggle, using such language had rattled the British who were already reeling under the crippling impacts of the World War-II. Why did Gandhiji say so?

Since his return to India in 1915, Gandhiji steered the freedom struggle on a new path using the "force of truth" as a weapon to open the eyes of the British to the need for letting Indians govern themselves. His approach found resonance across the globe with British coming under pressure even from their war-time allies to mend their colonial ways. For long, Gandhiji engaged the British in negotiations, seeking to prevail on them. India was declared as a party to the Second World War without even consulting the leaders of the freedom struggle and the people. This incensed Gandhiji and others.

Fearing a Japanese invasion from the east and under pressure from the allies to gain the support of Indians for the war efforts, the Cripps Mission was sent to India. But it failed as it fell short of the demand for immediate independence for the country. Gandhiji who had a good measure of the mind of the British, their trickery of divide and rule and shifting goalposts, decided that it was the time to strike. The three words he used urging the masses to "do or die" had the fullest contextual justification and fired the imagination of the people. The then Viceroy Linlithgow unleashed violence to quell the movement, but it lasted for two years.

The freedom struggle was marked by different streams of thought and action. To start with, moderates like Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta took to petitioning the British for incremental improvements. Assertive nationalists like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal believed in bold action. Revolutionaries like Khudiram Bose, Chandrasekhar Azad, and Bhagat Singh took to armed resistance. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose revived the INA and sought Japanese help to evict the British from India. It was, however, Mahatma Gandhi who emerged as the voice of the freedom struggle for over 30 years.

Though territorially not integrated, the people had been in different kingdoms and provinces over the centuries, they were bound by shared cultural norms and values. Temples were key instruments of such cultural homogeneity. The foreign invaders were bent on destroying this cultural fabric. Major temples were attacked, looted and destroyed, resulting

in sacrilege. Mahmud Ghazni attacked the famous Somnath temple umpteen times during 1001-25. It took over 925 years to rebuild and restore it. It took about 500 years to start construction of the Ram temple. Such is the price paid for being divided for too long.

Some apologists of colonialism have sought to portray British rule as beneficial to India. Nothing is farther from the truth. All the initiatives of the British were guided by their commercial and administrative interests. The noted economist Utsa Patnaik, based on nearly two centuries of data on tax and trade, estimated that Britain drained about \$45 trillion during 1765-1938 in different ways. This was 17 times the GDP of the UK. Indians were fleeced to support the advancement of the UK. During the 200 years of colonial rule, there was almost no increase in per capita income; during the last half of the 19th century, income in India dropped by half; the average life expectancy dropped by a fifth during 1870-1920. India would have emerged as an economic powerhouse if its revenues were invested within the country.

The humiliating experiences of the last millennium should guide us. The first lesson is — united we stand, divided we fall. An emotionally integrated India offers the best defence against both internal and external threats and challenges. We need to knit an India based on the principles of democratic-righteous governance that upholds equality of all and equal opportunities for all. We need to empower every Indian with the necessary tools to realise his or her fullest potential. A strong sense of Indianness that supersedes all other identities and a deep commitment to national interest should guide our actions.

The humiliating experiences of the last millennium should guide us. The first lesson is — united we stand, divided we fall. An emotionally integrated India offers the best defence against both internal and external threats and challenges. We need to knit an India based on the principles of democratic-righteous governance that upholds equality of all and equal opportunities for all. We need to empower every Indian with the necessary tools to realise his or her fullest potential. A strong sense of Indianness that supersedes all other identities and a deep commitment to national interest should guide our actions.

The writer is Vice-President of India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"However, it appears that the Saudis' lack of interest in resolving the Kashmir dispute has touched a raw nerve in ruling circles, and the government expects our Arab brothers to do more to help end the suffering of the India-held region." — DAWN

The new consumer

We will have to see how 'wait and watch' changes to the 'spend and support' the growth curve



SUNIL ALAGH

A "NEW NORMAL" is a term we have heard very often. But whether you like the term or not, the fact is COVID-19 is here to stay for some time and it has revolutionised the way we live and think. The consumer during and post-COVID is showing remarkable flexibility, bringing about a paradigm shift in her consumption pattern. I hope manufacturers, brand builders and the government are not forgetting that the economy does not merely need opening up, but it requires urgent generation of basic demand. Here is where consumer behaviour needs to be closely watched.

Since the lockdown, the priorities of consumers have seen a drastic shift. For manufacturers, the consumer is the king — someone who can afford and buy their products. For politicians, the voter is the king. Generally politicians are not really concerned with what products consumers buy, but what helps them buy their vote.

In many cases, there is an overlap between the two but there are also differences. First, the economy has been affected by a reduction in the purchasing power of many. Hence, the availability of money to buy products needs to be addressed. The government must look at ways like a reduction in taxes which will help the common man. Second, the current scenario has also made all of us go back to the basics, with food, shelter and safety being of prime importance. Luxury products hold little value. Cars, air-conditioners, second houses, and branded apparel will see a fall in demand. But renting will increase. Third, the emphasis will be on saving for a rainy day. Banks will have more money and cash will also be kept at home for emergencies.

Fourth, aviation, tourism and hospitality sectors have been hit. Even if the lockdown restrictions are relaxed, people will be wary of traveling and only doing so when absolutely necessary. Fifth, e-commerce has shown exponential growth and will continue to do so. Consumers would prefer making purchases online and opting for home deliveries rather than venturing out. Sixth, with "Vocal for Local" gaining momentum, there's a huge increase in local apps, local kirana stores, local artisans and brands. Seventh, people are growing increasingly tired of being at home, and the urge to meet their near and dear ones is at an all-time high. While a few industries like IT can work from home, most others cannot. In such cases, their offices and factories will re-open, but with less staff/working hours/alternate days. Eight, schools and colleges have taken a hit as e-learning and online courses are being pre-

ferred. Nine, the entertainment industry has been drastically hit. Theatres too will take time to reopen and consumers will watch shows and movies at home. The media and entertainment industry needs to pay heed to this and curate content accordingly. Ten, with a lot of people laying emphasis on their health and immunity, there's been a substantial rise in the consumption of organic, ayurvedic, and immunity-boosting products. Apart from the obvious products, financial and medical insurance will play an important role. Lastly, real estate will suffer as no long-term, high investment purchases will be favoured, but renting will increase.

The differences are: First, voters need to be provided with their daily needs — basic essentials such as food, water, housing, and electricity. The government is already taking care of that, but money also needs to be given. Second, voters need jobs through development of infrastructure projects. Third, farmers need to have insurance for their crops and the infrastructure to sell at the right price. Lastly, migrant workers who have faced extreme hardships with their livelihoods being disrupted are looking for support. Most are still unemployed, and many are focusing on agriculture as a means of income.

The way forward is to generate demand for products, and create jobs by improving infrastructure. Money will be required by all groups. The government must incentivise spending by offering tax benefits on the amount spent on products like white goods/travel/eating out, and provide jobs by spending on infrastructure projects. They must forget about fiscal prudence this year.

Philip Kotler has predicted that the pandemic will bring about the new consumer who will shake the foundations of capitalism. He believes that the new consumer will be more careful and vigilant against ostentatious consumption, resulting in a more equitable form of capitalism. While I agree with his assumption, I feel that this will not last beyond a few years. History always repeats itself because people have short memories.

Currently, rural areas seem to be the focus of companies, as the consumer there is buying more than before. Those seeking volume will find solace in growth there in the coming year or so. The bulk of our needy and voters lie in rural areas and the focus of government spending must continue to be there. Companies should take advantage and provide products at affordable prices and increase the width of availability to exploit this opportunity. One, however, must not forget that new products must also be launched in metros. It is the urban market that will stimulate growth in the medium to long run.

The government has done well to take care of the poor and rural markets. I am sure they are aware that spending by the urban consumer is also essential for pushing the economy up. The middle income group is crying for attention. The government has planned and has been successful in generating employment by attracting FDI, and developing infrastructure, among others. We will have to wait and see how the "WW" curve changes to the "SS" curve — Spend and Support the growth. I remain optimistic.

The writer is a business and brand consultant



KARAN THAPAR

The contempt test

Court must remember: It is supreme because it's final not because it's infallible

ARE JUDGES SPECIAL or is justice special? It's an interesting question and not because it's a tricky one. Actually, it's the issue at the heart of the debate around the Law of Contempt. It's been discussed before but two cases of contempt against the human rights lawyer Prashant Bhusan in the Supreme Court have brought it back into sharp focus.

The first contempt case, called the *Tehelka* case, dates back to 2009 and hasn't been heard for the last eight years. Why in the middle of a COVID crisis, when the Supreme Court is only functioning virtually and many cases are rejected because there is "no extreme urgency", has this case been given priority? When the Court cannot find time for the Citizenship Amendment Act or habeas corpus petitions from Jammu and Kashmir, are we to believe this case is more important?

Of course, the Court's concerns are allegations regarding the judiciary and corruption, made by Prashant Bhusan and published by *Tehelka*. But if this has really scandalised the Court how come it didn't act for 11 years? The second contempt case is mystifying. It arises out of one of Bhusan's tweets commenting on a photograph of the present Chief Justice. The Court claims his tweet "brought the administration of justice in disrepute ... undermining the dignity and

authority of the institution of Supreme Court in general and the office of the Chief Justice of India in particular".

These two cases have brought contempt of court back into focus and that's the reason why the question I started with is important. As regards the cases themselves, they were heard on consecutive days last week (the 4th and 5th) and in both cases a three-judge bench presided over by Justice Arun Mishra reserved judgement. It's expected in a week or 10 days. If good sense prevails he ought not to be sentenced. I now want to turn to what ought to constitute good sense in this matter. The answer to the question at the very start hinges upon it.

The concept of contempt is a centuries old British law abolished in 2013. At the time the British Law Commission said the purpose was not just "preventing the public from getting the wrong idea of judges ... but where there are shortcomings it's equally important to prevent the public from getting the right idea". In other words, one intention was to hide judicial corruption. The concept, therefore, clashed with the need for transparency but also freedom of speech.

As far back as 1968, Lord Denning, Britain's former Master of the Rolls, had this to say of the Law of Contempt: "Let me say at once that we will never use this jurisdiction

as a means to uphold our own dignity ... nor will we use it to suppress those who speak against us. We do not fear criticism, nor do we resent it. For there is something far more important at stake. It is no less than freedom of speech itself. It's the right of every man, in parliament or out of it, in the press or over the broadcast, to make fair comment, even outspoken comment, on matters of public interest ... we must rely on our own conduct itself to be its own vindication."

In 1987, after the *Spycatcher* judgement, when the *Daily Mirror* called British Law Lords "You Old Fools" or, in 2016, after the Brexit ruling, when the *Daily Mail* called three judges "Enemies of the People" the British judiciary consciously and sensibly ignored the headlines and did not consider contempt prosecution. In fact, Lord Templeton's comment on the *Spycatcher* headline is worth recalling: "I cannot deny that I am old; it's the truth. Whether I am a fool or not is a matter of perception of someone else ... there is no need to invoke the powers of contempt."

A similar position was adopted in a 2008 lecture by Justice Markandey Katju: "If a person calls me a fool, whether inside court or outside it, I for one would not take action as it does not prevent me from functioning, and I would simply ignore the comment or else say

that everyone is entitled to his opinion. After all words break no bones".

More importantly, Justice Katju added: "The test to determine whether an act amounts to contempt of court or not is this: Does it make the functioning of judges impossible or extremely difficult? If it does not, then it does not amount to contempt of court even if it's harsh criticism ... the only situation where I would have to take some action was if my functioning as a judge was made impossible ... after all I have to function if I wish to justify my salary."

I think that answers the question I began with. Whilst justice is important, judges must not take themselves too seriously. Even if their amour propre is offended, it does not mean the institution has been questioned or justice brought into disrepute. Judges deliver justice, they do not embody it. They should never forget their Court is supreme because it's final not because it's infallible. When they lapse they can be criticised, but of course, politely and fairly.

I hope the Supreme Court will bear this in mind when it pronounces on Bhusan's two cases.

The writer is a senior journalist based in Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GRAND FUNCTION

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Modi marks the mandir' (IE, August 6). The bhumi puja of the Ram Temple was a grand function. Keeping aside political differences, we must appreciate the way in which the event was organised, given the COVID pandemic. In fact, Narendra Modi aptly ended his speech with a message to all: "do gazki doori, mask zaroori"

MD Athalye, Dombivili

CHECK THE DELUGE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Uncommon flooding in South Mumbai' (IE, August 6). The flooding where the sea merges with the road was unprecedented and clearly due to the land reclamation in that stretch because of the coastal road construction. This is bound to be a recurring experience in future when high tide, combined with heavy rains will result in similar situations and progressively worsen as sea levels gradually rise over a period of time, as predicted by experts.

Rontu Basu, Mumbai

DEITY AND TEMPLE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Brick and milestone' (IE, August 6). The excessive enthusiasm shown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi while drawing a parallel between the freedom struggle and the struggle for construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya, is totally misplaced. It oblit-

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● THE LONG HAUL IN KASHMIR: J S SANDHU

● UNDERSTANDING THE MANDIR: SAYAN KUNDU

www.indianexpress.com

erates the fine line between the state and the sect. In comparison, former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru described developmental projects such as the Bhakra Nangal dam as the temples of modern India.

KL Sharma, Gurugram

IMPROVE MGNREGA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'With MGNREGA's help' (IE, August 6). The scheme's role in mitigating rural distress has brought to light its real potential. More reforms could improve its efficacy. One, create a repository of skilled workers. Two, increase the minimum wage to Rs 375. Three, roll out a similar scheme for cities.

Sagar Ganesh Borade, Thane

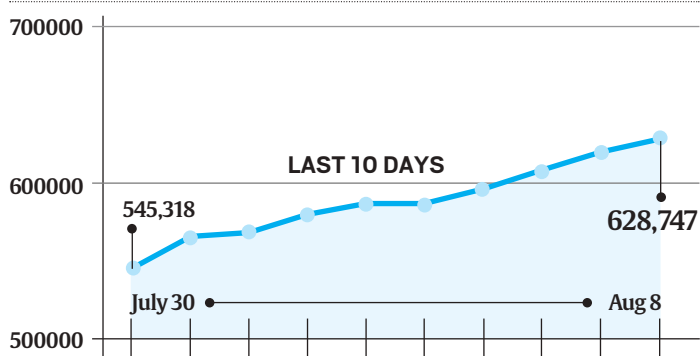
**@ieExplained**
#ExpressExplainedIf there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com**CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD****C#VID-19 VACCINE TRACKER****Russia claims vaccine soon, but speed raises questions**

IF RUSSIA sticks to its stated plan, the first novel coronavirus vaccine could become a reality this week. At least, it will clear the regulatory approvals. Russia has previously announced that a vaccine being developed by Moscow-based Gamaleya Institute in collaboration with the country's defence ministry would be approved by August 12, and that it would be made available for public use by September. The country plans to start mass vaccinations starting October.

The superfast speed at which it has been produced — other candidates are unlikely to be ready before at least the end of the year — has led to scepticism regarding the safety and effectiveness of the Russian vaccine. Especially so, since the human trials, which take several years in normal circumstances, have been completed in less than two months. Russia

claims this was made possible due to the fact that the vaccine candidate very closely resembles a vaccine for MERS, caused by another coronavirus, that has already been tested extensively. But at least Britain, according to a news report in London's Telegraph newspaper, has decided against using the Russian vaccine on its people.

Meanwhile, the phase-II and phase-III trials of the Oxford University vaccine are expected to begin in India this week. The trials are to be conducted by Pune-based Serum Institute of India, the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines by volume. The company got the regulatory nod last week for trials on about 16,000 volunteers. The vaccine, being produced in collaboration with pharma major AstraZeneca, is undergoing phase-III trials in some other countries as well.

**INDIA ACTIVE CASES****628,747****INDIA TOTAL CASES**
2,153,010

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on August 9

WORLD TOTAL CASES
19,696,961

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on August 9

Link found between poor liver tests and Covid-19 outcomes

NEW RESEARCH has found that Covid-19 patients have abnormal liver test results at high rates. While this has also been shown in previous studies, the rates have now been found to be much higher. Previous studies in China found that approximately 15% of Covid-19 patients had abnormal liver tests. The new study by Yale Liver Center, which looked retrospectively at 1,827 Covid-19 patients who were hospitalized in the Yale New Haven Health

**PAPER CLIP**
NEW RESEARCH

system between March and April, found that the incidence of abnormal liver tests was between 41.6% and 83.4% of patients, depending on the specific test.

The new study appears in *Hepatology*. It also found that higher levels of liver enzymes — proteins released when the liver is damaged — were associated with poorer outcomes for these patients, including ICU admission, mechanical ventilation, and death.

Source: Yale University

How to enrol in a vaccine trial

Who are the volunteers chosen for a vaccine trial, and how? As trials progress for three major vaccine candidates, a look at the recruitment and trial process, the risks involved, and the safeguards taken

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

WITH SERUM Institute of India, Bharat Biotech and Zydus Cadila progressing in the testing of their Covid-19 vaccine candidates, sites across India will be looking at enrolling volunteers for mid- to late-stage human trials. A look at who is chosen, how, and what else the trial process involves:

Who is a volunteer?

If a product is undergoing clinical trials, it means either that it has never been used before or that it has never been used to treat the condition for which the trials are being conducted. The trials aim to find out if it is safe and effective. In a vaccine trial, the aim is to check how well it will protect a population by building their immunity against a particular pathogen.

When healthy people who have not been exposed to a particular illness consent to be injected with doses of the vaccine, they are known as volunteers, participants or trial subjects. Researchers observe these volunteers to determine whether the vaccine is safe to be given to the community at large.

"The first and foremost benefit of having volunteers for these trials is that you help progress science," said Dr Chirag Trivedi, president of the Indian Society for Clinical Research (ISCR). "But, remember, it is absolutely voluntary for the person to participate." He said the volunteer can also choose to back out of the trial later, even after it is under way.

What are the eligibility criteria?

Each trial uses a specific set of criteria to determine if a person is eligible to participate, according to ISCR. This includes factors like age and illnesses. The criteria are modified as the trials progress, as the researchers try to understand whether the shots will also protect those more vulnerable.

For the first phase of the trials of their respective Covid-19 vaccine candidates, Bharat Biotech (Covaxin) and Zydus Cadila (ZyCoV-D) were looking at enrolling people between ages 18-55. Researchers also excluded applicants based on whether they had diseases or conditions like asthma, allergies, high blood pressure, or diabetes.

What has been modified since?

With Covaxin, ZyCoV-D and the Oxford vaccine candidate (Covishield) having moved to the second phase of testing in India, the age group of those who can participate has widened. ZyCoV-D's phase II trials are enrolling



At a trial site for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in Brazil. This vaccine is set to enter phase-II and phase-III trials in India too. Reuters

those aged 12 and above. Covaxin is enrolling those aged 12-65, while the Covishield trials will reportedly enrol those aged 18 and above.

"Phase-wise, we relax the range of the age groups tested because of the objective that is to be studied. In phase I, the main objective is to test the safety and side effects... but in phase II, immunogenicity becomes objective number one and side effects are the secondary objective," said Dr E Venkata Rao, the principal investigator in one of these trials. "In phase III, it is the efficacy trials to check how useful it is in the community (vaccinated)."

People who have participated in one trial are not eligible for another, because it may lead to "cross contamination" by the medical products being tested, skew up the results and even be dangerous for the volunteer.

How does one enrol?

Once a site receives approval to conduct clinical trials, it can advertise for volunteers, provided the advertisement is cleared by ethics committees. Those keen on volunteering can also search independently on the Clinical Trial Registry of India, which lists out locations for a specific trial, along with contact numbers. In the past, some participants have also found trials to participate in by contacting bodies like ISCR, Trivedi said.

Locations such as the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital-Odisha's Department of Community Medicine have set up websites for prospective volunteers. "We also have a form that helps people check whether they are eligible to register for the trials," said Rao.

What happens after they register?

The trial site may call in the volunteer as part of its enrolment process, which includes ensuring that they are consenting only after they have understood all details. "We explain to each volunteer separately that this is the purpose of the study, these are the advantages, these are the disadvantages and this is the procedure," said Rao.

This is usually done over camera, where audio-visual informed consent is taken. The volunteer is then tested to see whether he or she is eligible for the trial. In the case of the Covid-19 vaccine trials, this would include tests to make sure the prospective volunteer hasn't already been exposed to the virus — which would make them ineligible.

Do volunteers get paid?

Under Indian regulations, volunteers do not receive any remuneration for participating in trials. According to experts, there is a pre-approved standard operating procedure for each trial, which allows compensation for food and travel whenever the volunteer has to visit the site, but this is a nominal amount.

"There are poor and needy people in India. If you are trying to give compensation to incentivise them to join, then, at the end of the day, there will be some kind of pressure (on them) to take a risk," said Rao, adding this is "ethically incorrect".

What are the risks involved?

According to clinical trial practitioners, human trials are usually not supposed to lead to extreme adverse reactions. This is because the

product has already gone through a phase of testing on animals with genetic codes similar to humans and is being tested on humans only after regulatory scrutiny and approvals.

A Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) is set up for each trial to study the information collected throughout the process. It can even recommend that a trial be stopped if there is a major cause for concern.

Even after the trial is completed and the vaccine is marketed, clinical centres are supposed to "meticulously" observe the blood levels of those injected, the ability of the shot to produce an immune response and side effects, said Rao. Volunteers in most of the Covid-19 vaccine trials around the world have reported manageable side effects such as headaches, fevers, itching and swelling.

Can a clinical trial go wrong?

Despite pre-clinical testing and DSMB checks, trials can still go wrong. According to Health Ministry data, 1,443 people who had participated in clinical trials in India had died of serious adverse events between 2015 and 2018. At least 88 of these deaths were known to be due to serious adverse events related to the trials.

There is no clear information on what type of volunteers these were (while vaccine trials recruit healthy volunteers, people who are really sick also participate in certain types of trials). The deaths could include critically ill patients who are not responding to available treatment and are enrolled in trials for a new, potentially life-saving treatment.

Things can also go wrong if regulations meant to safeguard participants are not followed. In 2010, seven of 23,000 girls in India who were injected with a human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine as part of a study had died. In 2013, a Parliamentary Standing Committee observed that those conducting the study attempted to circumvent the "arduous" and "strictly regulated" route of clinical trials by calling it a "demonstration project".

What happens if it goes wrong?

India's clinical trial rules provide for a formula to compensate participants who die or experience injuries, including disabilities, related to clinical trials.

Based on this formula, the compensation would range from Rs 2 lakh to as much as Rs 74 lakh, depending on factors like how likely the participant was to die if they hadn't participated in the trials, according to Trivedi. If a healthy young volunteer dies, their next of kin would get the "maximum" compensation, he said.

How language leads to gender bias in science**KABIR FIRAQUE**
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

FOR DECADES, researchers have examined why women are underrepresented in science and associated fields, whether in college and university or at the workplace. Studies have found that the reason is often cultural: Girls grow up believing that boys are better at these fields, even when they are capable of excelling themselves.

A new study has now examined whether these cultural stereotypes are rooted in the languages that people speak. It has found that gender associations in a language do predict people's implicit gender associations. In other words, the findings suggest that linguistic associations may be related to people's implicit judgement of what women can accomplish.

The study is published in the journal *Nature Human Behavior*.

Words & connections

The researchers examined 25 languages

for gender stereotypes that undermine efforts to support equality across career paths in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). English and Hindi were among the 25 languages.

Specifically, researchers Molly Lewis of Carnegie Mellon University (Pennsylvania) and Gary Luppyan of University of Wisconsin-Madison examined how words co-occur with women compared to men. "The implicit biases don't come from any particular phrases. The bias that we find comes from looking at which words co-occur next to each other in a lot of text, and what words tend to have the same neighbors," Lewis told *The Indian Express* by email.

By training machine learning models on large corpora of texts in each language, the researchers examined, for example, how often 'woman' is associated with 'home', 'children' and 'family', whereas 'man' is associated with 'work', 'career' and 'business'.

"We find, for example, that the words 'man' and 'career' tend to co-occur with each other more often than 'woman' and 'career'

in nearly all 25 languages that we looked at," Lewis said.

Psychological bias

To quantify implicit gender bias in people, the researchers measured their performance in a psychological task called the Implicit Association Test.

The results suggested that if one speaks a language with high gender bias, then one is more likely to have a gender stereotype that associates men with career and women with family.

"Our study shows that language statistics predict people's implicit biases — languages with greater gender biases tend to have speakers with greater gender biases," Luppyan said in a statement.

Curiously, countries with a larger older population were found to have a stronger bias in career-gender associations. Given that India has a young population, did speakers of Hindi — the only Indian language among the 25 studied — show lower implicit bias than others? Lewis replied: "Participants in

India had a relatively low bias to associate men with career and women with family on the Implicit Association Task."

The STEM connection

The study used a gender equality metric reported by UNESCO — the percentage of women among STEM graduates in tertiary education. It found that countries with weaker associations between men and career tended to have more women in STEM fields. However, there was no relationship between the percentage of women in STEM fields and the language's explicit gender association measure, as quantified in the study.

Limitations

The results are correlational, although the researchers said the findings do suggest a causal influence. They also noted that the Implicit Association Test used in the study has been criticised for low reliability. They have called for additional work to explore language statistics and implicit associations with gender stereotypes.

Defence embargo list: the military equipment govt will cease to import**KRISHNA KAUSHIK**
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

ON SUNDAY, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced a negative imports list of weapons, military equipment and platforms with 101 items that will have an embargo on their imports.

What is the negative imports list?

It means that the Defence Ministry will stop importing these 101 items, and the Armed Forces will procure all of these from domestic manufacturers. The manufacturers could be private sector players or defence public sector undertakings.

As per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which tracks global defence exports and imports, India has been the world's second largest importer between 2014 and 2019, at \$16.75 billion.

Singh called the negative import list a "big step towards self-reliance in defence". He

said it will give domestic public and private players a "great opportunity" to manufacture the items in the negative list "by using their own design and development capabilities or adopting the technologies" that can be designed by the DRDO "to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces".

The government has been hoping the defence manufacturing sector can play a leading role in boosting the economy, not just for the domestic market, but through exports as well. Last week, it had announced a draft defence production and export policy, aiming at a Rs 1.75 lakh crore turnover for the defence manufacturing industry by 2025.

However, Sunday's embargo list is meant largely for the domestic market.

What does it include?

The government said the list "comprises of not just simple parts but also some high technology weapon systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircrafts, light combat helicopters



Light Combat Aircraft Tejas. 123 LCA are in the negative imports list. ANI

(LCHs), radars and many other items to fulfil the needs of our defence services".

For the Army, the government said 200 wheeled armoured fighting vehicles — which are to be embargoed from import by the end of 2021 — are expected to be contracted, worth Rs 5,000 crore. The Navy could place an order worth Rs 42,000 crore for six submarines,

which will be banned from import by 2021-end. Similarly, 123 Light Combat Aircraft Mk 1A with an indicative embargo date of December 2020, worth Rs 85,000 crore, are likely to be ordered for the Air Forces.

The government estimates that within the next six to seven years, contracts worth Rs 4 lakh crore are to be placed, with Rs 1.3 lakh crore each for Army and Air Force and Rs 1.4 lakh crore for the Navy.

How was the list created?

It has been created by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), headed by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat after consulting all stakeholders, including the Army, Navy, Air Force, DRDO, and public sector and private industry players. Singh said the list is likely to grow as "more such equipment for import embargo would be identified progressively" by the DMA.

Will it come into effect immediately?

Not immediately; but starting this year,

however, not all the 101 items mentioned in the list will be embargoed starting this year. The list is progressive.

Singh said that the "embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 to 2024" and that the government wants to "appraise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the Armed Forces so that they are better prepared to realise the goal of indigenisation".

Of the 101 items, 69 have an indicative embargo of December 2020. Another 11 have an indicative embargo of end of next year. Twelve more are likely to be embargoed by December 2023, another 8 by the end of 2024, and one item (Long Range-Land Attack Cruise Missile) will not be allowed to be imported after December 2025.

Is the move sudden?

It is in line with what the government had mentioned back in May. In her fourth presentation on the package for an

Atmanirbhar Bharat, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced measures to "help reduce huge defence import bill", including a negative imports list as part of a package for creating the ecosystem for a self-reliant India. She had said the government would "notify a list of weapons/platforms for ban on import with year-wise timelines" and work on "indigenisation of imported spares".

Sitharaman had said the government would create a "separate budget provisioning for domestic capital procurement". This too was announced by the government on Sunday. The capital procurement budget for 2020-21 has been bifurcated between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes, with a separate budget head with an outlay of nearly Rs 52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement this financial year.

Other measures included an increased FDI limit in defence from 49% to 74% under the automatic route.

‘Can’t make transfers to households in Covid because we haven’t had an open debate on fisc’

Former Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor Viral Acharya talks about how to revive trust and faith of depositors in the Indian banking system, blames push for short-term growth for the conflicts between govt and RBI, and calls for an independent fiscal council to vet the govt’s expenditure and Budget

SUNNY VERMA: In recent years, the faith and trust of people in the Indian banking system have been shaken to a great extent. What is the way out?

There are two ways to create this trust. One, you have a blanket deposit insurance, which is that no matter how large the deposits are, there is some government agency which is backing it up. Government resources are limited and so deposit insurance is not up to the highest possible level. And second, therefore, to substitute for public depositing insurance, you have to create a private deposit insurance. This is actually creating large amounts of equity capital in the bank so that the loss absorption capacity is tremendous. The onus on the regulator, therefore, is to maintain very high levels of bank capital at all points.

What the world is learning over a period of time is that you need three mechanisms in place at once. You require a certain amount of deposit insurance provided by the country, but because of funding constraints, that is not possible 100 per cent. Second, you need adequate levels of bank capital, and the global best practice here after the global financial crisis is that you have to do a stress test. You have to visualise: can the bridge withstand cyclonic levels of wind or collapse. The same way, you have to visualise what kind of macro-economic stress, sectoral stress or asset-quality stress can arise and can banks withstand it. You need to shore up the capital levels high enough so that the stresses can be handled without damaging the entire construction.

And third, despite these measures, if the losses still arise, you need to respond to the deterioration of the bank balance sheet ahead of depositors actually showing up and asking for their money. So, the regulator has to act preemptively to put the bank into what one can consider as sort of repair. This may involve selling the bank to a new set of equity owners who can bring in the capital, it may require changing the management of the bank, it may require putting restrictions on the ability of the bank to lend until certain underwriting and risk-management practices are put in place.

GEORGE MATHEW: The conflict between the government and the Reserve Bank of India also seems to be growing. Why is that?

What I am trying to explain in the book too is that there is actually a very deep reason as to why this conflict is rising. The reason is that the government has not stuck to its fiscal targets. They are trying to do too much in the short run. They want to take on more and more revenue expenditures of various types without first putting the economy on a sustainably high growth rate path. Given the nature of our political cycle, some election or the other is always around the corner, and then there is a desire in the entire administration to start showing high growth numbers in one way or the other. So we set ourselves these short-term targets instead of building structurally an economy that is going to be right for the next decade. What happens then is that if you have had a growth slowdown, then it becomes even more imperative that you focus on the structural and transformational changes because that will arrest the growth slide. Those measures are hard, they require clarity of thinking, they require a little bit of conviction, and they require some political capital to be pushed through. But instead, there starts this movement where everyone wants to turn to the central bank to solve their problems by accommodating all kinds of requests. There is request for coercively monetising the debt for dividend or deficit monetisation. And, at the other end, they want to simply relax bank capital requirement because they want public sector banks to lend and create short-term boosts to growth, what I call as credit-led stimulus. It is very expedient to turn to the central bank all the time to accommodate what are in my view deeper fiscal and structural issues.

I think the way out is a two-pronged attack. First, we have to get the fiscal house, the fiscal debt back in order. We have been slipping even in normal years... You have to demonstrate adherence to targets in a true economic sense. I think we now need institutional reforms to make this happen. And second, we really need to invest in financial stability in a long-term sense.

There is always a tendency to want to turn to the central bank and relax rules it has in place for financial stability. I think this is the primary reason why conflicts are arising. The central bank which is trying to do its job for fulfilling long-term objectives is then constantly getting pulled to fulfill short-term demands, which is not always in the long-run interest of the economy.

HARISH DAMODARAN: You have been emphasising a lot on fiscal dominance and how it is constraining the autonomy of central banks etc. But look at what is happening in the world. The rich economies are talking of



Former RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya at the Idea Exchange session



Senior Assistant Editor Sunny Verma moderated the exchange with Viral Acharya

some four trillion dollars, five trillion dollars... Every central bank is being asked to monetise the government's deficits. There is so much liquidity but no inflation. So, what is happening?

There are three aspects to it. First, these are countries that have grown well for long stretches of time. Their per capita income is very, very high. Second, from a legal, institutional and financial infrastructure sense, these are developed markets. They have an automatic stabiliser, which is that when events such as the global financial crisis and Covid-type shocks arise, the world's savings have a tendency to migrate towards these hard currencies. I think we need to distinguish these countries from emerging markets which have not grown in a robust way for long periods of time.

And third, I would say that they are not hard currencies in the sense that while each individual country might not necessarily have defaulted, over a period of time, countries that have these characteristics have a tendency to not repay the foreign creditors and want to save the taxes for domestic expenditures. So there is a reason why investors worry about these kinds of situations arising that have punctuated the histories of these countries over a period of time. Now, there is a sense that India has never defaulted. But we were very close to having a serious balance of payments crisis in the early '90s and assistance from the International Monetary Fund helped us tide over it. So this difference has to be kept in mind.

WHY VIRAL ACHARYA

Acharya's October 2018 speech, where he spoke about the "catastrophic" impact of transferring excess reserves from the central bank to the government, brought the tussle between the Finance Ministry and the RBI out in the open. In July 2019, the former RBI deputy governor quit his post, six months before his term was scheduled to end. He now serves as the CV Starr Professor of Economics in the Department of Finance at New York University's



Stern School of Business. His latest book, *Quest for Restoring Financial Stability in India*, has kicked off a debate on the RBI's autonomy and fiscal dominance

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: As the pandemic continues, the fiscal assistance for the distressed by the RBI and Government of India has been marginal. Our own calculation suggests that it is not more than 1-1.2 per cent of the GDP. Also, much of what has been done remains on the monetary side, through liquidity infusions etc. Do you think our response could have been better?

It's not an easy situation for any of the policymakers. It is a very large, unprecedented shock. Battles are being fought not just on the macro-economic front, but also on the health front... There are a few points. Why was our initial condition such that we did not have much fiscal buffers left? We need to have a conversation, a debate about that point. We have kept slipping in normal times. And not only have we slipped on the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) targets in the sense of the official deficits, but if you look at the real deficit, or the unofficial deficit, the full public sector borrowing requirement, we have actually

slipped by much more. We get borrowings done through public sector enterprises, we have debts which are secured, for instance, for the Food Corporation of India through small savings schemes. Many of these are extra-budgetary borrowings which are not even fully recognised in our Budget. So actually the true fiscal slippage was far worse than what has been acknowledged in an official sense. This has clearly constrained the policy space for response and once again the central bank has ended up doing the heavy lifting, having cut rates and injecting massive pools of liquidity, even at a time when the inflation in the country is actually high.

...Also, while it is not on the table, I think we need an independent fiscal council that holds a mirror to the government on its expenditures and that vets every budget before it is announced. A lot of our budgets seem to show adherence to FRBM norms simply through two things — extraordinary growth assumptions and this category called disinvestment which is just a residual category.

Whatever is the hole in the budget, they are going to put that number into the disinvestment category. We need these practices to be better.

RAVISH TIWARI: Could the RBI's communication with the government have been better, like, in the recent years, if those at the helm, including you and Urjit Patel, had built allies in the government system?

Criticism is most welcome and there are things that could be done differently... To everyone who says we do not know how to work tactfully, we do not know how to communicate, we did not build allies, we did not bring everyone on board, my question is when things were being done in that manner, do you have evidence to show me that the next 10 years of India's growth were great? And I am fundamentally questioning the thesis that when the central bank toed the line, and the way to do things was to strike back-door compromises, the way to move forward was to agree to relaxations, recognising that there were political short-term pressures, in my view, we are paying the cost of that right now.

Why are we not able to take the necessary expenditures and transfers that perhaps need to be made to households in the midst of Covid, is because we have not had an open debate about the fiscal situation of the country. A number gets announced as the real deficit and everyone is happy... everyone in the system says oh how can we question the real official statistics of the government. But when they are not right, they are not right. I want to fundamentally disagree with the thesis that those who agree have been able to pave a better outcome for the country.

RAVISH TIWARI: Raghuram Rajan, Arvind Panagariya, Arvind Subramanian, Viral Acharya and Urjit Patel are competent professionals who could not find the value for their time and effort in the Indian system. How would you describe your experience and would you still advise your peers to work in this system?

We should not interpret exits as a problem. In my view, we should interpret exits as a form of voice, as a form of dissent that the system requires to have the right public debates and get to the right path... In my

view, the government and the bureaucracy are stuck in the old mode of functioning, even though the Indian economy is no longer a nationalised era economy. They are regressing... they need to embrace a more market-based economy.

I encouraged everyone who contacted me to apply for the deputy governor's position when I left.

ANIL SASI: If you zoom out and look at the government-central bank relationship, there also seems to be a symbiotic relationship there. Governments periodically run large revenue deficits, with the central bank subscribing to its bonds in open market, getting interest on it, which becomes its profit or surplus, and then there is pressure from the government to get that back as dividend. Is this a vicious cycle and is the government winning in how the relationship is panning out now?

The central bank balance sheet should be viewed in a consolidated manner with the government balance sheet. This is because the central bank's profit at some point or the other is ultimately going to go back to the government. So, when the government is trying to get more out of the central bank, all that it is doing is trying to move forward, what is going to come to it later...

...The main difference between deficit financing and market borrowing is that no signals will be generated about at what cost you are borrowing this in the market. Because the central bank is essentially doing it as an off-market transaction or buying these bonds from the government. In my view, the desire for the central bank balance sheet comes essentially from this myopia and wanting to say that we are meeting short-term targets. But ultimately this is the consolidated debt of the public exchequer. Whatever deficit you have incurred, whether it is funded by the central bank or the markets, it is the debt of the public exchequer. And you get some temporary benefit because the cost of borrowing is not at the market rates. But if precisely because you are not borrowing at market rates, the market discipline is lost, and the debt sustainability actually starts slipping, ultimately you could have a bigger long-term problem on your hand even though you kept your short-term borrowing cost to be fine.

This is the essence of why the central bank is supposed to be independent, why deficit monetisation is not always favoured, why the FRBM Act of 2003 explicitly prevented the RBI from buying the ad-hoc treasury bills directly in the primary market. These things are not getting enough attention.

To everyone who says we do not know how to work tactfully... we did not build allies, we did not bring everyone on board, my question is when things were being done in that manner, do you have evidence to show me that the next 10 years of India's growth were great?

Thousands of students, activists and residents of Mauritius were working around the clock Sunday, trying to reduce the damage to the Indian Ocean island from an oil spill after a tanker ran aground on a coral reef. An estimated 1 tonne of oil from the Japanese ship's cargo of 4 tonnes has already escaped into the sea, officials said.

TOP OF THE WORLD



BRITAIN

Spectacles believed to be worn by Gandhi emerge at auction

A PAIR of gold-plated spectacles believed to have been worn by Mahatma Gandhi and presented as a gift in the 1900s have emerged on the UK auction circuit, estimated to fetch between £10,000 and £15,000. East Bristol Auctions in Hanham, England, said Sunday they were pleasantly surprised to find the spectacles, dropped through their letterbox in an envelope, may have such a rich history behind it. "It's a huge find of great historical importance. The vendor had presumed them to be interesting, but of no value and did tell me to dispose of them 'if they're not worth anything,'" said auctioneer Andy Stowe. "I think he nearly fell off his chair when we presented our valuation. It's a really great auction story and one that we all dream of," he said.

USA

1 killed in shooting at 'block party' in Washington

AT LEAST three shooters opened fire during a large, unauthorised gathering of people in Washington early on Sunday, killing a teenager and wounding 20 others, including a critically injured police officer, authorities said. The gunfire broke out during a gathering of hundreds of people in a southeast district of the nation's capital, D.C. Metropolitan Police Chief Peter Newsham and Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said at a press conference. Local media called the event an "unsanctioned block party" in a residential neighborhood. Bowser said it violated the city's coronavirus-induced ban on large public meetings of more than 50 people. **REUTERS**

JAPAN

Nagasaki urges nuke ban on 75th anniversary of US atomic bombing

THE JAPANESE city of Nagasaki on Sunday marked its 75th anniversary of the US atomic bombing, with the mayor and survivors urging world leaders to do more for a nuclear weapons ban. At 11.02 am, the moment the B-29 bomber dropped a 4.5-tonne plutonium bomb dubbed "Fat Man", Nagasaki survivors and other participants stood in a minute of silence to honor more than 70,000 dead. The August 9, 1945, bombing came three days after the US dropped its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. **AP**

Afghanistan to release Taliban prisoners, paving way for talks

Grand alliance of Afghan leaders agree to remove final obstacle for starting peace negotiations

HAMID SHALIZI & HAMEED FARZAD
KABUL, AUGUST 9

AFGHANISTAN AGREED on Sunday to release 400 "hard-core" Taliban prisoners, paving the way for the beginning of peace talks aimed at ending more than 19 years of war.

Under election-year pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump for a deal allowing him to bring home American troops, the war-torn country's grand assembly, or Loya Jirga, on Sunday approved the release, a controversial condition raised by the Taliban militants to join peace talks.

"In order to remove an obstacle, allow the start of the peace process and an end of bloodshed, the Loya Jirga approves the release of 400 Taliban," the assembly said in a resolution. Minutes later, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said, "Today, I will sign the release order of these 400 prisoners."

Last week Ghani invited some 3,200 Afghan community leaders and politicians to Kabul amid tight security and concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic to advise the government on whether the prisoners should be freed.

With the release, the Afghan



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani holds up the resolution on the last day of an Afghan Loya Jirga, or traditional council, in Kabul on Sunday. **AP**

government will fulfil its pledge to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners.

Talks between the warring Taliban and government will start in Doha this week, Western diplomats said. Ghani appealed to the headline Islamist group to pledge to a complete ceasefire ahead of talks.

Deliberation over the release of last batch of Taliban prisoners, accused of conducting some of the bloodiest attacks across

Afghanistan, had triggered outrage among civilians and rights groups who questioned the morality of the peace process.

In 2019 alone, more than 10,000 civilians were killed or injured in the conflict in Afghanistan, putting total casualties in the past decade over 100,000, a United Nations report said last year.

Ahead of the Loya Jirga, Human Rights Watch cautioned that many of the prisoners had

been jailed under "overly broad terrorism laws that provide for indefinite preventive detention".

Ghani also called on the Taliban to implement a comprehensive ceasefire while they move to talks. It was not immediately clear whether this would take place or whether the insurgent group would commit to reduced violence, with officials saying attacks in recent months have sapped trust needed for successful talks. **REUTERS**

KEY TO TALKS

US-TALIBAN DEAL

■ The US and the Taliban signed an agreement in Feb for a pullout of US troops from Afghanistan in exchange for security guarantees by the Taliban.

■ The deal envisaged a swap in which the Afghan govt would release 5,000 Taliban prisoners and the insurgents release 1,000.

THE DELAY

■ The Taliban said they had completed a phased release of 1,000 prisoners, but the Afghan govt paused after releasing 4,600 Taliban inmates, saying the remaining 400 were imprisoned for crimes too serious to be freed.

WHAT NOW?

■ Ghani said on Sunday he would release the 400 prisoners, as the Loya Jirga recommended. He said the Taliban would sit down for talks within three days of the prisoners being freed.

Beirut protesters hurl rocks as anger over blast reignites

Lebanon information minister resigns

MICHAEL GEORGY
BEIRUT, AUGUST 9

LEBANESE PROTESTERS hurled rocks at security forces blocking a road near Parliament on Sunday in a second day of anti-government demonstrations after last week's devastating explosion in Beirut.

Fire broke out at the entrance to Parliament Square as protesters tried to break into a cordoned-off area, Lebanese TV footage showed.

Tuesday's blast of ammonium nitrate killed 158 people and injured more than 6,000, compounding months of political and economic collapse and prompting angry calls for the government to quit.

Riot police wearing body armour and carrying batons clashed with demonstrators in chaotic scenes in central Beirut on Sunday.

Thousands of demonstrators were converging on Parliament Square and nearby Martyrs' Square, a Reuters correspondent said.

The country's top Christian Maronite cleric, Patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rai, said the cabinet should resign as it cannot "change the way it governs".

Information Minister Manal Abdel Samad said she was re-

EXPLAINED

Graft concerns complicate aid

LEBANON HAS seen months of mass protests against systemic corruption even before Tuesday's blast. The devastation in Beirut has brought that anger to boiling point. But it also presents a problem for foreign countries in sending much-needed aid to rebuild Beirut. Survivors pleaded with the visiting French President to not let government agents loot the relief fund. This has resulted in the US, France, UK, Canada and Australia declaring that their contributions would go to the Lebanese Red Cross and UN agencies, not to the government.

signing on Sunday, citing the explosion and the failure of the government to carry out reforms.

World powers agreed at an emergency donor conference on Sunday to provide "major resources" to help Beirut recover, pledging not to fail Lebanon's people. **REUTERS**

U.S. TOPS 5 MILLION CONFIRMED CORONAVIRUS CASES

Trump signs virus relief order after talks with Congress fail

JEFF MASON
BEDMINSTER, AUGUST 9

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump signed executive orders on Saturday partly restoring enhanced unemployment payments to the tens of millions of Americans who lost jobs in the coronavirus pandemic, as the United States marked a grim milestone of 5 million cases.

Negotiations broke down this week between the White House and top Democrats in Congress over how best to help Americans cope with the heavy human and economic toll of the crisis, which has killed more than 160,000 people across the country.

Trump said the orders would provide an extra \$400 per week in unemployment payments, less than the \$600 per week passed earlier in the crisis. Some of the measures were likely to face legal challenges, as the US Constitution gives Congress authority over federal spending.

"This is the money they need, this is the money they want, this gives them an incentive to go back to work," the President said of the lower payments. **REUTERS**

58 dead amid heavy rain in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 9

HEAVY RAIN in the last three days have killed at least 58 people in Pakistan, officials said Sunday.

Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)



US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar (left) greets Taiwanese officers at Taipei airport on Sunday. **AP**

US health chief in Taiwan on trip that angered China

REUTERS
TAIPEI, AUGUST 9

US SECRETARY of Health and Human Services Alex Azar arrived in Taiwan on Sunday as the highest-level US official to visit in four decades, a trip condemned by China which claims the island as its own, further irritating Sino-US relations.

Washington broke off official ties with Taipei in 1979 in favour of Beijing. The Trump administration has made strengthening its

support for the democratic island a priority, and boosted arms sales. Beijing has threatened unspecified countermeasures to Azar's visit.

Azar's trip to Taiwan is to strengthen economic and public-health cooperation with Taiwan and support Taiwan's international role in fighting the pandemic, according to the US.

On Monday he will sign a health cooperation memorandum of understanding with Taiwan's government and visit Taiwan's Centres for Disease Control.

said the northwestern province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was the worst-hit, where 19 people died.

Another 12 died in the southern province of Sindh, while 10 died in Gilgit-Baltistan, eight in Punjab and eight in Balochistan, according to the NDMA, adding that another 15

people were injured. It said that 158 houses were fully destroyed and another 128 partially damaged across the county. The Army took up relief work in Sindh, one of the worst hit areas. The Army said a rescue operation was done in Dadu district where 20 villages were inundated.

The agency's new leader,



MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA SWORN IN

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa bows in front of his elder brother Mahinda after the latter was sworn in as Prime Minister for the fourth time on Sunday, at Kelaniya Royal Buddhist temple in Colombo, after their party secured a landslide victory in parliamentary elections that cemented the family's hold on power. **AP**

New Zealand goes 100 days without new local Covid case

REUTERS
WELLINGTON, AUGUST 9

NEW ZEALAND marked 100 days without a domestic transmission of the coronavirus on Sunday, but warned against complacency as countries like Vietnam and Australia which once had the virus under control now battle a resurgence in infections.

New Zealand's successful fight against Covid-19 has made the Pacific island nation of 5 million one of the safest places in the world right now. New Zealanders have returned to normal life, but authorities are concerned that



New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern has received international praise for her handling of pandemic

people were now refusing testing, not using the government contact tracing apps, and even ignoring basic hygiene rules.

"Achieving 100 days without

community transmission is a significant milestone, however, as we all know, we can't afford to be complacent," Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield said.

"We have seen overseas how quickly the virus can re-emerge and spread in places where it was previously under control, and we need to be prepared to quickly stamp out any future cases in New Zealand," he said.

New Zealand has 23 active cases in isolation facilities.

Vietnam, which went for three months without detecting any domestic transmission, is now racing to control a new outbreak in Danang.

Controversy in Nepal over Jaishankar's Buddha remarks

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, AUGUST 9

A DAY after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar described Buddha as one of the two greatest "Indians", along with Mahatma Gandhi, the remark stirred a diplomatic controversy in Nepal.

Leaders from the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and the opposition Nepali Congress expressed anguish over Jaishankar's statement who said on Saturday that Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi were the two greatest Indians.

"Who are the two greatest Indians ever that you can remember. I would say, one is Gautam Buddha, and the other is Mahatma Gandhi. Not just the greatest Indians that you and I, as Indians remember. But the greatest Indians that the world remembers," Jaishankar had said during a webinar on Saturday.

NCP leader and former Prime Minister of Nepal, Madhav Kumar Nepal said Jaishankar's statement was "mischievous".

Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "It is a well-established and undeniable fact proven by historical and archaeological evidences that Gautam Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal. Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha and the fountain of Buddhism, is one of the UNESCO world heritage sites."

"During his visit to Nepal in 2014, the Prime Minister of India H.E. Shri Narendra Modi himself, while addressing Nepal's legislature Parliament, had said that 'Nepal is the country where apostle of peace in the world, Buddha, was born,'" the ministry said.

Nepal lawmakers ask leaders not to split ruling party

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, AUGUST 9

AS THE ongoing feud within the ruling Nepal Communist Party appeared to be inching towards a formal split, 64 parliamentarians on Sunday asked top leaders to overcome their differences and save the party.

The members, who together constitute over one-third of the party's strength in the House of Representatives, said they would not side with any of the three leaders — Prime Minister K P Oli, senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal or Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' — if they go as far as splitting the party.

MAIL-IN BALLOTS LIKELY TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN NOVEMBER'S VOTE AMID CORONAVIRUS FEARS

US Postal Service emerges as flash point heading into election

ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE & MATTHEW DALY
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 9

MAIL PILING up. Constant attacks from the President. Cuts to overtime as record numbers of ballots are expected to pass through post offices this fall.

The success of the 2020 presidential election could hinge on a most unlikely government agency: the US Postal Service. Current signs are not promising.

The Postal Service already was facing questions over how it would handle the expected spike of mail-

in ballots due to the coronavirus pandemic, but several operational changes imposed by its new leader have led to mail backlogs across the United States as rumors of additional cutbacks swirl, fuelling worries about the November vote.

"It seems like they're just trying to turn customers away from the post office," said Jim Sizemore, president of the Postal Workers Union chapter in the Cincinnati region. He said his offices are behind on deliveries because of new rules specifying when mail can go out.

The pandemic has forced states to expand voting by mail as a safe alternative to in-person



polling places. That's led to predictions of an unprecedented amount of mail voting in the presidential election.

Trailing in the polls, President Donald Trump has been sowing

The US Postal Service reported \$2.2 billion in losses during the three months that ended in June. Authorities are already putting in place cost-cutting measures ahead of an election that could depend on postal ballots. **AP**

public distrust in the Postal Service's ability to adequately deliver ballots and has said allowing more people to vote by mail will result in rampant corruption.

The agency's new leader,

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, a former supply-chain CEO and a major donor to Trump, has pushed cost-cutting measures to eliminate overtime pay and hold mail until the next day if postal distribution centers are running late.

DeJoy is the first postmaster general in nearly two decades who is not a career postal employee.

DeJoy has said repeatedly that the Postal Service is in a financially untenable position and needs to rein in expenses. This past week, it reported \$2.2 billion in losses during the three months that ended in June.

Memos from post office lead-

ership detailed an elimination of overtime and a halting of late delivery trips that are sometimes needed to make sure deliveries arrive on time. One document said if distribution centers are running behind, "they will keep the mail for the next day."

Another said: "One aspect of these changes that may be difficult for employees is that — temporarily — we may see mail left behind or mail on the workroom floor or docks."

Additional records outline upcoming reductions of hours at post offices, including closures on Saturdays.

The new policies have angered lawmakers from both parties and

drawn criticism from former President Barack Obama, who said the administration is "undermining the Postal Service in an election that's going to be dependent on mail-in ballots."

DeJoy has been the target of multiple letters from Congress who have called on him to rescind his measures. Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer have written a letter to DeJoy that said the operational changes "threaten the timely delivery of mail — including medicines for seniors, paychecks for workers, and absentee ballots for voters — that is essential to millions of Americans." **AP**

13 ECONOMY

'VOLUME OF TRANSACTIONS VIA UPI SOARS 10 TIMES COMPARED TO IMPS'

Falling cash usage in May-Jul: Transaction value via UPI 24% higher than that of IMPS

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

Mounting job losses and salary cuts across sectors coupled with limited use of cash due to COVID-19 apprehensions has changed the spending habits of citizens, according to data available from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

During May, June, and July, for example, the total number of transactions done through the NPCI's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) stood at 1,234.5 million, 1,336.9 million, and 1,497.3 million, respectively.

The total value of transaction done via UPI in these three months amounted to Rs 7,707.6 billion, which was 24 per cent higher than all transactions done through the inter-bank immedi-

SPENDING HABITS CHANGING, SHOWS NPCI DATA

■ During May, June, and July, for example, the total number of transactions done through the NPCI's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) stood at 1,234.5 million, 1,336.9 million, and 1,497.3 million, respectively

■ Rising job losses and salary cuts across sectors along with limited use of cash due to COVID-19 apprehensions has changed the spending habits of citizens, as per data from the National Payments Corporation of India

ate payment service (IMPS).

The reason for UPI, which is built on the IMPS platform, outstripping the latter as the preferred mode of payment was the massive decrease in the inter-personal transfer of funds as people opted more for precautionary savings, officials said, adding that IMPS is mostly used by people for lending short-term loans to friends and family or paying rents

and other utilities.

"For UPI, if you see, the volume of transactions was soared by up to 10 times compared to IMPS. The total value, however, remains small as it has become the preferred contactless option even if it is for small payments at your daily grocery stores. The usage of cash has remained restricted due to COVID fear," an official said.

According to data, the total

volume of cash withdrawal transactions on all platforms supported by NPCI during May, June and July stood at 255.4 million, 290.3 million, and 283.9 million, respectively. The total value of cash withdrawn during these three months was Rs 3,389.4 billion. Similarly, the total volume of IMPS transactions in May, June, and July stood at 166.9 million, 198.9 million and 222.1 million, respectively. The total value of transactions done via IMPS in these three months was Rs 6,021.2 billion.

Going ahead, this behaviour is likely to continue as people opt for more precautionary savings, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its July bulletin. "Looking further ahead in 2020-21, the COVID-19 pandemic is also expected to induce behavioural changes such as, increase in internet-based transactions vis-à-vis cash and card-

based transactions," it had said.

The trend was also observed in payments done through UPI based platforms supported by private players such as Razorpay.

In a report released in July, the company said that around 45 per cent of all transactions done through its platform were UPI-based, leaving behind transactions done through credit and debit cards, and even net-banking.

"UPI is gaining significant traction since the onset of lockdown. With time, contact-based payment models such as PoS (point-of-sale) machines will get replaced with new-age, contact-less mobile-based features such as dynamic QR (quick response) codes, AePS (Aadhaar Enabled Payment System), mATM, contactless biometric authentication and contactless card payment solutions," Razorpay had said in its report.

June quarter: Even as MFs & FPIs see dip in holding in NSE-listed cos, retail investors raise theirs to 30-mth high

SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

IN LINE with the surge of retail investors into the stock markets in the quarter ended June 2020, the retail holding in NSE-listed companies went up from 6.54 per cent in March to 6.74 per cent as on June 30, 2020 — highest in 10 quarters.

During the June quarter, which witnessed 20 per cent jump in Nifty, retail investors raised their holding in 1,018 companies listed on the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

According to Prime Infobase, the retail holding (investors with holding of up to Rs 2 lakh) went up even as the domestic mutual funds (MFs) and foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) saw a dip in their share of holding.

Domestic MFs saw their share decline for the first time in 24 quarters on a quarter-on-quarter basis. While the share of MFs holding in NSE listed companies increased from 2.86 per cent in June 2014 to 7.96 per cent in March 2020, it dipped for the first time (in six years) over the previous quarter and stood at

7.81 per cent as on June 30, 2020.

The FPIs' holding in NSE-listed companies decreased from 21.17 per cent by value as on March 31, 2020 to 21.05 per cent as on June 30, 2020, despite net inflows of Rs 29,516 crore during the quarter.

The jump in retail investor numbers can also be seen from the rise in demat accounts over the last four months. In the three month period — April, May and June — the Central Depository Services Limited added 19 lakh new investor accounts. Even in July, it added 10 lakh new accounts the investor account numbers rose to 2.41 crore as of July 31, 2020.

"Unlike seen in previous quarters and years where retail would typically buy at the peak and sell at lows, the last quarter saw heavy buying by retail making use of the steep fall in share prices due to the coronavirus pandemic," said Pranav Haldea, MD of Prime Database. He further pointed out that retail investors have an overwhelming presence in smaller companies, which institutional investors typically stay away from.

Besides retail investors, even

the holding of high-net-worth individuals (those with more than Rs 2 lakh shareholding), increased in NSE-listed companies as it rose from 1.78 per cent to 1.84 per cent as on June 30, 2020.

Even the private promoters continued to increase their holding and raised their holding in NSE-listed companies from 44.25 per cent in March 2020 to 44.43 per cent as on June 30, 2020. Data shows that over 11 years (since June 2009), private promoter ownership has been steadily increasing and has increased from 33.61 per cent on June 30, 2009 to 44.43 per cent on June 30, 2020.

On the other hand, the percentage holding of Government of India (as promoter and public shareholder) in companies listed on the NSE hit an all-time low of 6.36 per cent as on June 30, 2020 down from 6.56 per cent as on March 31, 2020.

Over the same 11-year period, the holding has been steadily declining, from 22.71 per cent as on June 30, 2009 to 6.36 per cent as on June 30, 2020, "partly also due to the Government's divestment programme," said Haldea.

'Coal import falls 43.2% in July on high stockpile'

India's coal import fell 43.2 per cent to 11.13 MT in July, on account of high stockpile of the dry fuel at pitheads, plants and ports, provisional data from mjunction showed



57.27 MT: Total coal imports in April-July 2020, 35.76 per cent lower than 89.15 MT imported in year-ago period

38.84 MT: Non-coking coal imports in April-July 2020, as against 60.97 MT in corresponding period last year

10.67 MT: Coking coal imports in April-July 2020, down from 17.73 MT in April-July 2019

74.629 MT: Coal stock as on

March 31, 2020, compared to 54.155 MT on March 31, 2019

72.88 MT: Pithead stock of Coal India Ltd (CIL) as on July 16, compared to 33.17 MT in corresponding period a year ago

Rising coal stock at pithead: CIL had said that despatch of coal was adversely affected in last week of March, causing mounting coal stock at pithead

Source: mjunction/PTI

Why this is important: Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given directions to target thermal coal import substitution, particularly when huge coal stock inventory is available in the country this year

MARKET WATCH

FPIs NET BUYERS IN AUG 1ST WEEK

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) remained net buyers in domestic markets by investing a net Rs 8,327 crore in the first week of August amid better than expected results by big Indian companies. PTI

Authorities look to revive plan to extend Kozhikode airport runway

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

IN THE aftermath of the Air India Express plane crash at Kozhikode on Friday that killed 18 people including both pilots, authorities are looking to revive plans to extend the airport's runway, within the overall constraint of additional land being unavailable for the exercise. Earlier plans to extend the runway ran into hurdles on account of the state government not being able to allocate additional land to the airport developer Airports Authority of India (AAI).

On Friday, a Boeing 737-800 aircraft with 191 people on board overshot the runway at Kozhikode airport after landing and fell into a 35 feet deep gorge resulting in the aircraft being broken up into three parts. "Options to expand the runway within the constraints are being explored," a senior government official said.

The runway, which was 2,850-metre long till 2016, was reduced by around 100 m in length to accommodate the runway end safety area (RESA). The RESA at the Kozhikode runway was extended from 90 m in length to 240 m, in accordance with recommendations of the committee that proposed changes following a similar incident in Mangalore back in 2010, which killed 158 people on board. RESA is an area at the end of the runway where the plane can



Rescue operation that was undertaken after the Air India Express flight, with 191 passengers on board, en route from Dubai skidded off the runway while landing, in Kozhikode, August 7. File

sink in if it overshoots the tarmac.

Alluding that the plan to acquire additional land for expansion of the runway may face bottlenecks in implementation, the official said that in the wake of the accident, alternate options are being looked at. These may include increasing the available landing distance by reducing the dimensions of other aspects of the runway, or creating an artificial structure on the gorge that is part of the airport land.

The Indian Express reported Sunday that back in 2017, AAI, which manages the airport, had firming up plans to extend Kozhikode's 2,750-m runway by 800 m and was awaiting allocation of land by the Kerala government. Sources said that land was not acquired by the state citing

high costs and local resistance.

A senior AAI official told *The Indian Express* that any finality regarding chalking up fresh plans for extending the runway will depend on the report by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), which is investigating the Kozhikode incident.

According to officials tracking the investigation, the ill-fated aircraft touched down with around one-third of the runway already crossed, not leaving the crew with enough distance available to bring the aircraft to a safe halt in time.

However, an official at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said that the visibility and the tailwinds affecting the aircraft were within legal limits and that the investigators were still looking for a cause of the incident.

How lack of a post-crash fire in Kerala flight mishap resulted in fewer casualties

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

EVEN AS investigations are underway, the primary difference between the Mangalore crash of an Air India Express aircraft in 2010 and the one in Kozhikode on the evening of August 7 was the lack of a post-crash fire in the latter. This minimised the casualties at Kozhikode.

What are the causes for a post-crash fire?

An aircraft is usually carrying large quantities of the highly inflammable aviation turbine fuel (ATF), which is housed in tanks in the belly of the aircraft and the two wings. When the aircraft makes an uncontrolled impact

with the ground or an object, the structural damage to hull could cause the tanks to rupture leading leakage of fuel or oil, which, if sparked off, could result in an explosive fire. Additionally, a fire can also be ignited in case the aircraft is carrying goods that flammable such as batteries, chemicals, etc.

What happens when there is a post-crash fire?

When an aircraft becomes engulfed in flames after crash-landing, it becomes all the more difficult for people on board to evacuate the plane. It also restricts the ability of first responders to carry out the evacuation process.

Given that most modern airliners carry large amounts of fuel, whenever the cockpit crew fore-

sees a problem with the aircraft, such as engine failure or landing gear problem — something that could lead to an unusual landing at an airport — the air traffic control informs the emergency services including the fire brigade to expect a fire. Plus, the pilots attempt to jettison the fuel before a crash landing.

Do chances of survivors fall if a plane catches fire after crash?

With evacuation efforts being hindered by the fire, the chances of survival decrease significantly. This was exemplified at the crash of a Russian passenger jet in May 2019, which was carrying 78 people on board. The aircraft crashed shortly after taking off — meaning it was fuelled up for the flight — after suffering an electrical failure. Of the 78 people on board, 41 died because of the fire that followed the crash.

BRIEFLY

CVD on certain imports from Indonesia

New Delhi: The Commerce Ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies has recommended imposition of provisional countervailing duty (CVD) on certain steel products from Indonesia to guard domestic manufacturers from subsidised imports. PTI

TKM forays into compact SUV segment

New Delhi: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) announced its entry into the compact SUV segment in India with the all new Toyota Urban Cruiser — its youngest SUV. "We will share more details about the car and the launch in the days to come," Naveen Soni, senior vice president—Sales and Services, TKM, said. ENS

'Non-personal data plan jolts US tech giants'

New Delhi: India's plan to regulate "non-personal" data has jolted US tech giants Amazon, Facebook and Google, and a group representing them is preparing to push back against the proposals, as per sources and a letter seen by Reuters. The US-India Business Council calls imposed data sharing "anathema" to promoting competition. REUTERS

Amid staggering losses, India Inc says recovery depends on course of pandemic

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

CORPORATE INDIA'S Q1FY21 results were marked by severe disruptions to the supply chain as also demand, with much of the country locked down for most of the time. To that extent the numbers are less helpful than the commentary in giving us a sense of what to expect in the rest of the year.

Nonetheless, the losses are staggering, exacerbated by the regulatory provisions made by the telcos, and it will take an exceptional performance in the rest of the year to reverse the trend. As of now, the Nifty companies are expected to report a 5-10 per cent drop in profits for 2020-21 before rebounding smartly in 2021-22.

Q1FY21 results were marked by severe disruptions to the supply chain as also demand, with much of India locked down for most of the time

The good news is that despite local lockdowns, several economic indicators — e-way bills, electricity, registrations of cars and two-wheelers, container traffic have started looking up.

Moreover, capacity utilisation at factories, too, is increasing as migrant labourers return.

Nonetheless, the management commentary has been cautious with chief executive officers (CEOs) reminding us that the growth trajectory will depend on how soon the pandemic subsides and how quickly business activity picks up.

They have also cautioned

that the high frequency data for June and July don't reflect the full picture since some of it is simply the pent-up demand getting fulfilled. The numbers, they say, could taper off.

CEOs have also pointed out that with thousands losing their jobs in COVID-impacted sectors such as civil aviation, hospitality, tourism, trade and retail, the cap or cut in incomes in many companies, the near-total absence of fresh investments by the private sector and also increasing automation and digitisation demand is bound to remain weak. FE

Saudi Aramco second quarter profit plunges 73%

REUTERS
DUBAI, AUGUST 9

STATE OIL giant Saudi Aramco's profit plunged 73 per cent in the second quarter of the year, as a slump in energy demand and prices due to the coronavirus crisis hit sales at the world's biggest oil exporter. But the company stuck with plans to pay \$75 billion in dividends this year and CEO Amin Nasser said global oil demand was recovering.

All major oil companies have taken a hit in the second quarter as lockdowns to contain the coronavirus limited travel, which reduced oil consumption and sent

prices tumbling to levels not seen in nearly two decades.

Aramco, which listed in Riyadh last year in a record \$29.4 billion flotation, said the rapid spread of COVID-19 globally had significantly reduced demand for crude oil, natural gas and petroleum products. Nasser told reporters he had seen a partial recovery in the energy market and a pick up in demand as economies gradually open after the easing of coronavirus lockdowns.

"Look at China, their gasoline and diesel demand is almost at pre-COVID 19 levels. We are seeing that Asia is picking up and other markets (too)," he said after announcing the quarterly results.

GREG ROUMELIOTIS
& KANISHKA SINGH
BENGALURU, AUGUST 9

TWITTER INC has approached TikTok's Chinese owner ByteDance to express interest in acquiring the US operations of the video-sharing app, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters, as experts raised doubts over Twitter's ability to put together financing for a potential deal.

It is far from certain that Twitter would be able to outbid Microsoft Corp and complete such a transformative deal in the 45

BharatNet equipment shifting: BBNL, CSC agree to iron out differences, work together

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9

THE DoT's Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's Common Services Centre (CSC) have buried the hatchet on the shifting on equipment used for last mile internet connectivity and have agreed to work together for now, senior government officials close to the development said.

Following meetings in the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) between officials from BBNL and CSC, the two agencies decided it was in everyone's best interest if CSC continued to work on last mile connectivity under BharatNet as agreed.

Earlier this year in May, BBNL

ISSUE STARTED IN MAY THIS YEAR

■ In May, BBNL Chairman Sarvesh Singh had alleged that CSC had violated terms of a tripartite agreement by shifting equipment used for last mile connectivity without telling BBNL.

■ CSC defended its move, saying in most cases, the equipment was kept at places where there was hardly any power connectivity or security

Chairman Sarvesh Singh had written to the Universal Service

Obligation Fund (USOF) alleging that CSC had violated terms of a tripartite agreement by shifting equipment used for last mile connectivity without informing the former. This, Singh had said in his letter, would be a hindrance in providing non-discriminatory access to all telecom and internet service providers.

On its part, CSC had defended its move to shift equipment alleging that in most cases, the equipment for last mile connectivity was kept by BBNL at places where there was hardly any power connectivity or security.

"Some of the equipment was stolen. These equipment were kept in the panchayat buildings or municipal schools where they remain locked at night and the caretaker of such buildings used to switch off the internet and go

home. So we suggested to the DoT that to maintain these equipment, regular power supply and maintenance is needed and hence the CSC should be allowed to move equipment," a senior CSC official said.

BBNL, however, had objected to the idea and said that since the equipment belonged to the central government, allowing village level entrepreneurs to transfer all machines without any accountability could not be allowed.

"BBNL was of the view that the CSCs' habit of leaving the VLE (village level entrepreneur) completely independent and free is not possible in the case of government assets. If and when an auditing of the equipment is done, BBNL will be held responsible if any equipment or machinery is missing," a DoT official said.

'FAR FROM CERTAIN IF TWITTER WOULD BE ABLE TO OUTBID MICROSOFT CORP'

'Twitter expressed interest in buying TikTok's US ops'

Twitter has a market capitalisation of close to \$30 billion and would need to raise additional capital to fund the deal, according to the sources

days that US President Donald Trump has given ByteDance to agree to a sale, sources said Saturday.

The news of Twitter and TikTok being in preliminary talks and Microsoft still being seen as the front-runner in bidding for the app's US operations was reported earlier by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Twitter has a market capitalisation of close to \$30 billion, al-

most as much as the valuation of TikTok's assets to be divested, and would need to raise additional capital to fund the deal, according to the sources.

"Twitter will have a hard time putting together enough financing to acquire even the US operations of TikTok. It doesn't have enough borrowing capacity," said Erik Gordon, a professor at the

University of Michigan.

"If it (Twitter) tries to put together an investor group, the terms will be tough. Twitter's own shareholders might prefer that management focus on its existing business", he added. One of Twitter's shareholders, private equity firm Silver Lake, is interested in helping fund a potential deal, one of the sources added.

Twitter has also privately made a case that its bid would face less regulatory scrutiny than Microsoft's, and will not face any pressure from China given that it is not active in that country, the sources said.

TikTok, ByteDance and Twitter declined to comment. TikTok has come under fire from US lawmakers over national security concerns surrounding data collection.

Earlier this week, Trump unveiled bans on US transactions with the China-based owners of messaging app WeChat and TikTok, escalating tensions between the two countries. Trump said this week he would support Microsoft's efforts to buy TikTok's US operations if the US government got a "substantial portion" of the proceeds. He nevertheless said he will ban the popular app on September 15. REUTERS

