

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 2 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 28°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 6 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 18
Tithi: Chaturtashi
Star: Puradam/ Uthiradam

Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.39 am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.32 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.52 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.55 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.44 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.24 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+54,865)	(+852)
17,51,919	37,403

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,879)
TN: 2,51,738 4,034

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,79,01,532

DEATHS

6,85,780

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES **213**

worldometers.info

110-yr-old woman wins battle against Covid-19

Bengaluru: In a cause for cheer, a woman, said to be 110 years old, has recovered from Covid-19 and was discharged on Saturday in Chitradurga district of Karnataka.

According to health officials, Siddamma, who stays in the police quarters, has five children, 17 grand children and 22 great grandchildren.

Flood situation worsens in Bihar; 2 more die

Patna: Floods claimed two more lives in Bihar on Saturday taking the death toll to 13, while the number of people affected by the calamity inched closer to 50 lakh as the waters of overflowing rivers reach fresh areas of the state's northern part.

COUNTER POINT



It's not a legislators' camp... it's the Assembly session in progress!

Criminal contempt law challenged in SC

New Delhi, Aug. 1: Former union minister Arun Shourie, veteran journalist N. Ram and activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan have moved the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of a legal provision dealing with criminal contempt for "scandalizing the court", saying it was violative of freedom of speech and right to equality.

The petition, which may come up for hearing next week, challenged the validity of Section 2(1)(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 as being unconstitutional and incompatible to the basic feature of the Constitution and is vague and manifestly "arbitrary".



Prashant Bhushan

The provision defines what constituted criminal contempt and said that if by way of publication of words, the dignity of the courts is lowered and if they scandalize the courts then the offence of contempt of court is deemed to have been com-

mitted.
"The impugned sub-section is unconstitutional as it is incompatible with preambular values and basic features of the Constitution. It violates Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression), is unconstitu-

tional and incurably vague...", said the plea filed through lawyer Kamini Jaiswal.

The filing of the plea challenging the validity of the provision assumes significance in view of the fact that a three-judge bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra on July 22 had issued a show cause notice to Bhushan after taking note of a petition urging it to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against him for his alleged tweets against the judiciary. This case is listed for hearing on August 5.

The top court is also scheduled to hear on August 4 another criminal contempt case against Bhushan which

was initiated in 2009 over his alleged comments against former CJs in an interview given to a magazine.

The petition alleged that the provision violated the freedom of speech and expression. The provision violates the right to free speech to the extent that it is not covered under the reasonable restrictions enlisted under Article 19(2) of the Constitution, it said. The offence of 'scandalizing the court' cannot be considered to be covered under the category of the contempt of court and under Article 19(2) of the Constitution which permitted reasonable restrictions on free speech, it said. — *PTI*



CITY | 2
Illaiyaraaja complains against Prasad owner



NATION | 4
Uma Bharti gets invite for Ram Temple event

SPORT | 8
Lewis smashes record for pole



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Rescue operations underway after a heavy-duty crane collapsed at the Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), in Visakhapatnam, on Saturday. — *PTI*

Vizag crane crash kills 11 who were in cabin

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

All the deceased who came under the falling iron mass, rail-mounted and known as jetty crane for being on a ramp to handle cargo, were killed on the spot, even as TV visuals showed the equipment collapsing on the ground with a loud thud after its cabin and base snapped during the trial run.

The new crane was erected at HSL about two years ago but was not yet commis-

Inquiry panel instituted to establish cause behind crane mishap: Rajnath

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that departmental inquiry committee has been instituted to establish cause behind the collapse of a crane at Hindustan Shipyard in Visakhapatnam that left 11 people dead.

sioned for regular operations due to change in contractors.

The HSL management, with the help of three new contractors, started conducting a trial run of the crane when its cabin and

"Extremely anguished by the loss of lives due to an accident at HSL facility in Vishakhapatnam (AP). My thoughts are with the bereaved families. May the injured recover quickly," said Mr Singh. He said that departmental Enquiry Committee has been instituted to establish the causes leading to the accident.

base snapped and collapsed as a dead-weight load was being tested, Visakhapatnam District Collector V Vinay Chand said.

There were no other casualties in the incident, he added. — *PTI*

NEP to make job creators, says PM



RS member
Amar Singh passes away in Singapore

New Delhi, Aug. 1: Rajya Sabha MP Amar Singh, who once wielded immense influence in power circles as a close aide of Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, has died in Singapore where he was undergoing treatment for kidney-related ailments. Singh, 64, had undergone kidney transplant in 2011 and was not keeping well for a long time. He was admitted to a hospital in Singapore some eight months ago.

"Amar Singh Ji was an energetic public figure. In the last few decades, he witnessed some of the major political developments from close quarters. He was known for his friendships across many spheres of life. Saddened by his demise," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet. — *PTI*



incomplete and lack confidence which affects their whole life. The new education policy is an attempt to change this approach and bring systematic reforms in the education system by reforming the intent and content," he added.

The prime minister said that the new NEP has been framed keeping in mind the aspirations of the youth of 21st century of our country. "The 21st century is the era of knowledge. This is the time for increased focus on learning, research, innovation. This is exactly what India's National Education Policy, 2020 does. We are focussing on the quality of education in India. Our attempts have been to make our education system the most advance and modern for students of our country. — *PTI*

Pvt hospital in city loses licence for excess billing

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

Cracking down on private hospitals which overcharge for Covid-19 treatment defying the price regulation, the health department on Saturday revoked the Covid care centre licence of Bewell hospital at Kilpauk here.

Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar, in a statement, said the punitive action was taken based on a complaint registered by a patient. "The hospital has charged ₹12.20 lakh from a Covid patient for a 19-day treatment. Following the complaint, the department examined the allegations levelled against the hospital. It was found that the hospital had overcharged

● **"The hospital has charged ₹12.20 lakh from a Covid patient for a 19-day treatment. It was found that the hospital had overcharged patients and did not follow the pricing cap formulated by the state," the statement said**

patients and did not follow the pricing cap formulated by the state. Hence, the licence of the hospital was revoked temporarily", the statement said.

It may be recalled that the health department had issued an order on June 6, fixing the Covid treatment charges at pri-

vate hospitals after an expert panel led by then health secretary Beela Rajesh submitted a report to the government, fixing the Covid-19 treatment charges.

The government decided to put a cap on the treatment charges at private hospitals following the widespread criticism from the various quarters of the society on the profiteering in the time of pandemic. As per the order, the private hospitals that come under A1 and A2 categories cannot charge more than ₹7,500 per day from asymptomatic and mild symptomatic patients whereas the daily treatment charge has been capped at Rs 5,000 for the hospitals under A3 and A4 categories. ■ **P2**

Death tally from Covid-19 goes up by 99 in TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

Total Fatalities due to Coronavirus in the State touched 4,034 on Saturday with 99 persons succumbing to the disease across the various districts even though the death figure in Chennai was relatively low at 27.

Fresh infections in the State was 5879 with Chennai having 1074, Chengalpattu 314, Coimbatore 238, Kancheepuram 368, Theni 327, Thiruvallur 305, Thiruvannamalai 242, Thoothukudi 243 and Virudhunagar 286. Some of the districts were deaths were high were Coimbatore 10, Thiruvallur 7 and Chengalpattu and Virudhunagar 5 each. ■ **P2**

GST July collection down to ₹87,422 crore

New Delhi, Aug. 1: The country's GST collections declined to ₹87,422 crore in July from ₹90,917 crore in the previous month, a finance ministry statement said on Saturday.

The July collections, however, are higher than ₹62,009 crore goods and ser-

vices tax (GST) mopped up in May and ₹32,294 crore in April. Year-on-year, the July 2020 collections are 86 per cent of the revenues mopped up in the same month last year.

In July 2019, the GST revenue was over ₹1.02 lakh crore. "The gross GST rev-

enue collected in the month of July 2020 is ₹87,422 crore, of which CGST is ₹16,147 crore, SGST is ₹21,418 crore, IGST is ₹42,592 crore (including ₹20,324 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹7,265 crore," the statement said. During the month, GST

revenues of all major states were down in the range of 15-20 per cent over July 2019.

It may also be noted that the taxpayers with turnover less than ₹ 5 crore continue to enjoy relaxation in filing of returns till September 2020. — *PTI*



Members of the Muslim community offer namaz on the occasion of Id al-Adha, at Jama Masjid in New Delhi, on Saturday. — *PTI*

If high command forgives rebels, I will welcome them back, says Gehlot

Jaisalmer/Jaipur, Aug. 1: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to get the alleged attempt to topple his government stopped and said he is open to welcoming back the Congress rebels led by Sachin Pilot.

Asked if the dissidents will be forgiven, he said, "It depends on the party high command. If the party high command forgives, I shall embrace them."

Since the power tussle between him and Sachin Pilot resurfaced last month, the Congress veteran has used harsh words against his former deputy, once even referring to him as 'nikamma' or useless. But Gehlot said he will do whatever the Congress leadership wants.

He said the party trusted him and he has been a Union minister, AICC general secretary, state unit president and chief minister for a third time. "What else do I want? I am doing this to serve the public," he told reporters in Jaisalmer. The chief minister was on his way back to Jaipur after an overnight stay at Jaisalmer's Suryagarh resort, where loyalist MLAs have been shifted ahead of the assembly session from August 14. — *PTI*

SUSHANT DEATH CASE

Rhea Chakraborty 'under watch': Police

Mumbai/New Delhi, Aug 1: The Bihar police on Saturday said actress Rhea Chakraborty was "under watch" in the abetment to suicide case in the death of Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput while her plea before the Supreme Court for transfer of the FIR against her from Patna to Mumbai is listed for hearing on August 5.

A four-member Bihar police team is in Mumbai since Wednesday to probe the FIR registered in Patna against Chakraborty, 28, and six others including her family members based on the complaint filed by Rajput's father. Krishna Kumar Singh (74) had lodged the complaint for the alleged abetment to suicide of his son on Tuesday.

As the chorus for a probe by the CBI into the case grew louder, a Bihar minister said Chief Minister Nitish Kumar would definitely act if a demand for the premier investigating agency to step in comes from the family of Rajput. Bihar's Director General of Police (DGP) Gupteshwar Pandey, meanwhile, said the state police



wants the forensic science laboratory reports, inquest report, post-mortem report and relevant CCTV footage in the case to facilitate its probe.

On Saturday, the Bihar police team visited the Bandra police station. When asked whether Chakraborty, who was Rajput's girlfriend, would be interrogated, an official of the Bihar police said, "It is not required as of now. But she is under our watch."

Another member of the visiting team said they have sent a notice to Chakraborty under the relevant CrPC sections, asking her to cooperate with the police in the probe. — *PTI*

OTHER STORIES

'Life-saving drugs sold at high rates in markets'

From PI
Live-saving drugs used in the treatment of Covid-19 were reportedly sold in the market at exorbitant rates, State Health Secretary J Radhakrishnan said. He was speaking at Kancheepuram after overseeing some pandemic related work when he said that complaints of such overpricing of key drugs had come from places like Erode, Coimbatore and Madurai. Severe action would be taken against those who sold drugs for high prices, he warned.

Poor can avail free treatment in pvt hosp with CM insurance

From PI
In terms of treatment in intensive care units (ICUs), hospitals across grades (from A1 to A4) should not charge more than ₹5,000 per day. The state government had also permitted those covered under the CM's health insurance scheme (economically weaker sections) to avail free treatment in private hospitals. In government hospitals and Covid care centres, treatment has been made free of cost. Earlier, this newspaper had reported on overcharging by private hospitals in the city despite the government capping the treatment fee.

Plus-1 girl ends life over poor marks

Coimbatore: A 17-year-old girl student committed suicide after scoring low marks in the Plus-1 public exam here. Police said, Senthil Kumar, is a resident of Rathinapuri Subiah-Gounder street. His daughter, Swathi, is a Plus-1 student attached to Ram Nagar Sabarban higher secondary school. Swathi was found depressed after receiving her public exam marks on Friday. She had remained inside her bedroom without talking to anyone at home and committed suicide.

■ 'Musical instruments, notes in studio damaged, sold'**Ilaiyaraaja complains against Prasad owner**

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

Renowned music director Ilaiyaraaja on Friday lodged a complaint against the owner of Prasad Studios, alleging that his room in the studio was opened and musical instruments and handwritten music notes were damaged and sold.

Ilaiyaraaja moved his complaint to the city police commissioner on Friday, which was received by the Additional Commissioner of Police, South, Dinakaran, who assured necessary action.

In 2019, the grandson of LV Prasad, Sai Prasad, took over the studio. After taking control, Sai Prasad allegedly threatened to disconnect electricity, water and other facilities and also sent his henchmen to usurp the property, Ilaiyaraaja said in his complaint.

According to the complaint, Ilaiyaraaja said the founder of Prasad Studios, late LV Prasad, handed over room 1, known as Ilaiyaraaja's recording theatre, to him in the year 1977. He has

invested lot of money in the studio, kept several costly equipment, musical instruments and handwritten musical notes there and has been using the room for more than three decades. In 2019, the grandson of LV Prasad, Sai Prasad, took over the studio. After taking control, Sai Prasad allegedly threatened to disconnect electricity, water and other facilities and also sent his henchmen to usurp the property, Ilaiyaraaja said in his complaint.

A legal battle in this regard is going on in the

Madras high court.

Ilaiyaraaja added: "However, at the time of the pandemic, the respondents through their men broke into my room and removed valuable materials. I have learnt that Sai Prasad through his men has been removing, stealing and damaging many of my belongings and articles which are worth several crores and they have been selling the materials in the illegal market for a huge amount. Hence I appeal to the police to initiate necessary action against the act, the complaint added.

Youth hurls petrol bombs at guard

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

Police are on the lookout for a 23-year-old youth who allegedly hurled petrol bombs at a security guard of an apartment in Old Pallavaram, after an argument, on Friday night.

The security guard, Samson(45), suffered burns and is undergoing treatment at a hospital in the city.

According to the police, the accused, identified as Vijay(23), is a third year BCA student of a university in Chennai, who stays in the apartment building. He absconded after the petrol bomb attack.

Samson told police that Vijay attacked him since he did not allow his friends into the apart-

ment as advised by the apartment association due to the Covid-19 pandemic. On Friday night, when Vijay's friends came to meet him, Samson did not allow them inside the premises. Irked by this, Vijay argued with the guard and hurled petrol bombs at him.

Police said a mother and a child had a close shave in the attack. He allegedly poured petrol into a bag and lit the atom bomb and flung it at Samson and fled the scene.

He threw three bombs and one of them burst, police said. Pallavaram police arrived at the spot and inspected the scene. They also seized around 20 liquor bottles from his room. A case has been registered.

PIL seeks ban on spitting in public

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

A Public Interest Litigation has been filed in the Madras high court to direct the authorities to ban spitting in public places and make it punishable under the provisions of Prohibition of Smoking and Spitting Act, 2002 and strictly implement the same.

A division bench comprising Justices M.M.Sundresh and R.Hemalatha, before whom the PIL filed by advocate N.Rajkumar came up for hearing ordered notice, returnable by four weeks, to the state government, Chennai Corporation and Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board.

In his PIL, Rajkumar sought a direction to the Public Health Board to provide public sanitary conveniences and regulate deposit of rubbish/garbage on streets in total implementation of prohibition of defecation in Open Place Act, 2019 passed by the Government of India.

He also sought a direction to the authorities to manage and segregate waste in a scientific manner; more particularly medical hazardous and toxic waste and other plastic waste, to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic and other epidemics, to prevent environment pollution and to file a report on disposal track of such waste.

He sought a direction to the authorities to monitor all staff of private and government establishments were provided with sufficient toilets and levy penalties on faulting staff who defecate on public streets/roads, besides to implement the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016 strictly all over the state and levy

penalties as per the Act on persons who have not implemented the same in violation of the said Act.

He also sought a direction to the authorities to give widespread consciousness and awareness at all public places by installation of boards and spreading message to practice social distancing and wearing of appropriate masks which will prevent infection.

According to Rajkumar, the Public Health Act obligate the local authority to provide public sanitary conveniences. The Public Health Act also prohibits deposit of rubbish on streets and provides for prevention and treatment of disease. It also provides for maintenance of isolation, hospitals and wards.

The Act intended to maintain the public health in all respects. The Government of Tamil Nadu also passed an enactment namely the Prohibition of Smoking and Spitting Act, 2002. According to the Act, smoking and spitting in place of public work was prohibited. It also prohibits smoking and spitting in public service vehicle.

Further it prohibits advertising, smoking and sewing and prohibition of storage, sale and distribution of cigarettes around the colleges and schools or other educational institutions within 100 meters.

However, the enactments were only on paper. No effective steps were taken to implement the Act and its object. Today the entire country was facing the vast and fast spreading of Covid-19 virus which killed and kills lakhs and lakhs of people throughout the world. Therefore, he has filed the present PIL, he added.

Pammal lake cries for attention

The Thirupananthal lake in Pammal municipality in the city's southern suburbs has been heavily contaminated due to discharge of sewage from residential areas in the vicinity and encroachments. Residents have been fighting with the state government for over two decades to protect and conserve this lake which is situated in 25 acres. This led to partial success as the then Kancheepuram district administration took up development work and beautification programmes. However, the restoration works lacked momentum and the lake has once again fallen victim to neglect. Though there is plenty of water due to the recent rainfall, plastic and other waste have accumulated in the area. Residents have appealed to the municipality and the Chengalpattu district administration to ensure that sewage or solid waste do not find their way into the lake.

— E.K. Sanjay

Snake park set to charm Chennaiites

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR [DC]
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

The 48-year-old Chennai Snake Park, located in the Guindy National Park campus, has come out with a unique scheme called 'Snake Charmer' under which corporates, educational institutions, residential and gated Communities, families and individuals are invited to become 'Friends of Snake Park' and avail some benefits.

Explaining the scheme, its special coordinator, Dipankar Ghose of Human'E' Connect, said that it was an appeal to all citizens to come to the rescue of the Chennai Snake Park and the reptilian world and become habitat conservation ambassadors.

The contributors, however, would get in return the services of the snake park in creating snake-bite free zones on their premises and training for its watch and ward staff in handling snakes.

Beneficiaries would also

receive complimentary passes, depending on the category of 'pit of charity' they chose from, to visit the snake park and also be taken on field trips and camps that would help them learn and understand eco-restoration, climate change and global warming.

The various categories of 'pit of charity' offered for corporates and companies are Nagaraj (Emperor) for those donating ₹5 lakh and above, Nagdoot (Ambassador) for ₹2.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh and Nag Sevak (Savior) for ₹1 lakh to 2.5 lakh.

For others they are: Nag Rakshak (Protector) for educational institutions contributing Rs 25,000 and above, Green Warrior for residential and gated communities that donate ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh, Bio Warrior for ₹25,000 to ₹50,000, Ozone Warrior for ₹5,000 and Eco Warrior for ₹2,500.

"The park with a skeletal staff of Mani (working since its foundation in 1972) and a team of five

animal keepers, under astute direction of its chairman Dr. S. Paulraj; director R. Rajarathinam and deputy director Dr. S. Ganesh went about with its iconic breeding programme that resulted in natural mating of the Indian python, gharial and the mugger," Ghose said.

About a score of hatchlings were born free to each mother, who without stress due to absence of visitors, mated, laid the eggs, incubated, and hatched the young ones during the lockdown and it was those hatchling that inspired the park trustees to draw up the Friends of Snake Park Programme, he said.

The snake park is basically a knowledge and research centre affiliated to both the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU) and donors can seek IT exemption under Sec 80 G, said Ghose, who can be reached at +91 73959 17040 for details on the programme.

Low-key Bakrid celebrations

Chennai, Aug. 1: Low-key celebrations marked Bakrid (Eid-al-Adha) in Tamil Nadu on Saturday amid the coronavirus pandemic, confining the festivities to homes. Also, the four months of COVID-19 lockdown, resulting in job loss or decreased income among the people has imposed economic hardship among many Muslims in celebrating the "festival of sacrifice" with great enthusiasm. "The sealing of the state borders had affected our prospects in procuring goats from the neighbouring states ahead of Bakrid. We have to depend entirely on the breeding here besides obtaining goats from the farmers within Tamil Nadu," said Nadeem of Al Khair Goat Farm, Kundrathur, here. Due to nil arrival from the other state markets, a goat is sold for Rs 12,000 this time, he added. "The pricing had been high this time - about Rs 2,000 more than in the previous year, per goat. Even the sale is not so brisk, as it had been in the past, due to the pandemic scare," Nadeem said. Ahead of Bakrid, the Tamil Nadu



Muslims offering prayers on Bakrid in Chennai and Coimbatore on Saturday.

Thowheed Jamath (TNTJ), which has over 800 mosques under its control across the state, appealed to the members of the community to avoid congregation, as advised by the state government and support the administration in the fight against COVID-19 and offer prayers at home. "We asked our members to be safe and follow healthy practices during the celebrations. We don't want the infection to spread. We even asked them to clean the

places where the goats are sacrificed properly and strictly advised against public sacrifice," M Ibrahim, state secretary of TNTJ, said. "The coronavirus has affected the overall economy. Realising that many among us are unable to buy during this festival, we made arrangements to help reach food to the deserving," he said. S Ashim Basha, a city resident, said he and his family offered prayers at home.

—PTI

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

Deprecating the act of the state government in withholding the terminal benefits of an engineer, even after revocation of the suspension order and imposition of penalty, the Madras high court has directed it to disburse all the retirement benefits to him within four months.

Disposing of the petition filed by D.Sankar; Justice S.Vaidyanathan said "Considering the overall facts and circumstances of the case, I am of the view that there is substance in the submission made by the petitioner and the petitioner is entitled for the direction sought for in this petition. Accordingly, this petition is disposed of, with a direction to the respondent to regularize the period of suspension with effect from April 28, 2018 till June 30, 2018, and disburse the entire retirement benefits to the petitioner, including DCRG,

Subsequently, a provisional conclusion was arrived at by the authorities to impose a punishment of withholding of pension at the rate of ₹1,000 per month for a period of two years. He also agreed for the conclusion. However, no retirement benefits were disbursed to him, he added.

revised pay after notional fixation, commutation of pension, pension arrears, encashment of surrender leave and unearned leave on private affairs, within four months, after adjusting the amount of ₹ 24,000 that was imposed as per the order of punishment. It is made clear that no recovery beyond ₹24,000 is permissible, as the order of punishment has attained finality and the petitioner also undertook that he will not question the said order of punishment before any forum".

According to petitioner, while he was working as an executive engineer and

was at the verge of retirement on June 30, 2018, he was placed under suspension on April 25, 2018 citing the reason of initiation of enquiry under Rule 17 (b). Subsequently, three charges were issued to him and the enquiry officer held the charges to be not proved.

However, the public works department being disagreed with the view of the enquiry officer, held two charges as proved. However, on October 31, 2019, the authorities had revoked the suspension and permitted him to retire from service, holding that the disciplinary

proceedings against him shall be continued under Rule 9 of the Tamil Nadu Pension Rules.

Subsequently, a provisional conclusion was arrived at by the authorities to impose a punishment of withholding of pension at the rate of ₹1,000 per month for a period of two years.

He also agreed for the conclusion. However, no retirement benefits were disbursed to him, he added.

The judge said the contention of the authorities that it was based on the consensus given by the petitioner; the said order of punishment of cut in pension was imposed on the petitioner, cannot be accepted, for the simple reason that the petitioner, at the time of giving such consent, would have thought that payment of penalty amount of ₹24,000 could be much safer than spending huge amount for litigation, as the government, may, for some rea-

son or the other, deprive his monetary benefits, in case he had to approach this court for redressal. The petitioner would also be aware that he may have to incur huge amount towards litigating expenses over and above the amount sought to be provisionally imposed, apart from endless waiting for release of his terminal benefits, the judge added.

The judge said, "The act of the respondent in withholding the terminal benefits of the petitioner, even after revocation of the suspension order and imposition of penalty, is highly depreciated and the respondent ought not to have driven the petitioner to approach this court for disbursement of his retirement benefits and the respondent, on their own, should have extended the benefits to the petitioner, after adjusting the penalty amount, as the petitioner also consented for deduction of ₹24,000 from his retirement benefits".

SHORT TAKES

Bike rider falls into pit, dies

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

A 33-year-old man died of injuries after his bike fell into a pit dug for constructing a culvert over a waterbody at Sengattur village in Cheyyur on Thursday. According to the residents, the work on the causeway started in May but was stopped due to Covid-19. The pit was uncovered for months now and the contractors and the employees of the municipality did not even place some kind of a barricade to alert people about the danger ahead.

According to the police, the deceased Moorthy was an employee of a private company in the city. On Tuesday night, while returning home from his workplace, he fell into the pit. He sustained grievous injuries and was rushed to the Chengalpet government hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries on Thursday. Moorthy was the only earning member of his family and has a year-old girl child.

Meanwhile, on Friday, the family and friends of the victim, along with area residents staged a protest blocking the Landhur BDO office in Pavunjur, demanding to register cases against the contractor and the erring officials. They had also demanded compensation for the family of the victim. Madurantakam DSP Mahendran and police rushed to the spot and pacified the crowd. Police have launched an investigation into the matter.

Youth held under Pocco Act

DC CORRESPONDENT
MAYILADUTHURAI, AUG. 1

The all women police here arrested a youth under the Pocco Act on Friday for allegedly sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl when she was alone at her house, at Sembanarkovil near here. Police said the accused also threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident to her parents. However, the victim informed her parents.

Senghandhal park getting ready

N. SAMPATH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

In an attempt to increase green spaces in Chennai, the department of horticulture is constructing a 6.83 acre park on Avvai Shanmugam Salai. Named as Senghandhal park, it is the second horticulture park in the city after 'Semmozhi'.

The ₹5 crore project is expected to be completed in a month, said Director, Horticulture and Plant Crops, Dr Subbaiyan.

Besides the 250 trees that already existed in the space, the department is planting a total of 1,300 native trees like neem, mango and punnai, 30,000 shrubs and 1,600 palm trees.

"The park will reduce pollution levels in this part of the city, which is always choked with carbon monoxide released from vehicles," added Dr Subbaiyan.

The park has several insightful and many interesting components like pathway for walkers, rain water harvesting ponds, tree court area, child play area and ponds, surrounded by pergola. "We will also have an amphitheatre that could accommodate 150 to 200 people," added the official. A space to encourage people to play traditional games is the highlight of the park. An 'Art Gallery' and a 'Rock Garden' with xerophyte plants are its additional features.



THIS YEAR, IT'S AVANI AVITAM AT HOME

B. VIJAYALAKSHMI | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 1

With Covid restrictions in place, men are gearing up to celebrate Avani Avittam or sacred thread ritual in their homes on Monday. While the ceremony is usually conducted by priests in batches at several temples, mutts, schools and halls, this year Chennai men have preferred to take one of the three routes: Go online and do the rituals as per priest's instructions through WhatsApp video call or a special link; Invite the family *vathiyar* (priest) home and do the rituals with his help; Or manage the ceremony on their own.

Photo journalist N. Sarangapani says, "Every year my sons and I will go to my elder brother's house for Avani Avittam. This year, I have asked our priest to come home to conduct the ceremony."

R. Manikandan, a priest of Meenambakkam, says he will be going to a few houses for Avani Avittam rituals in places like Velachery and Madippakam. "I also help those who want it to be done online," he adds.

However, with some apartments and gated communities placing restrictions on entry of outsiders, men in such high-rises have decided to conduct the rituals on their own with the help of reference material provided by Vedic experts/priests or by watching YouTube videos.

"It is comforting to find that people are continuing to do these rituals amid this pandemic crisis. They are also helping priests whose livelihood has been severely hit due to lockdown," adds Manikandan vathiyar.

Hide and tweet: Piercing the cloak of anonymity



Sanjay Pinto

What a lawless society we would be, if everyone is allowed to make telephone calls by blocking their numbers? Or if a group can print a newspaper without details about who the printer, publisher, editor or writers are? Or if individuals have firearms without a licence? Would that not lead to a spate of anonymous, abusive calls, libellous articles and a firing spree? This is why the Caller Line Identification Restriction (CLIR) requires security clearance. Newspapers must sign a declaration before a magistrate with details of the printer, publisher and editor responsible for the selection of news under Section 5 of the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867. And there are strict norms for issuance of a gun licence under the Arms Act, 1959 and Arms Rules, 2016.

If used for the wrong purpose, a social media handle or account can do no less damage - not just defamation but also social unrest. The downside of instantaneous publication is that there is no editor, no screening, no checks or balances. What constitutes a threat to society are anonymous sniper attacks and trolling on the social media by 'hide and tweet' brigades who don't have their real names or profile information or even photographs. Basking in their vitriol and emboldened by inaction, they indulge in character assassination, often without a shred of evidence, and their defamatory content, based on rumours, malice, vested interests and conjecture, is retweeted or shared by millions. The force multiplier effect of the medium could catapult it into a viral trajectory.

The cheap thrill of anonymously abusing people, like the recent objectionable tweet about Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan, recovering from Covid-19, is a recent case in point. A fusillade against the News18 Tamil

channel and some of its talented journalists was equally in bad taste. Wounding religious sentiments is just as unacceptable. So were offensive tweets about a woman journalist. In Chennai, a comment on a Facebook post wishing that two senior government officials die of Covid, when reported, elicited a standard response that it does not violate community standards! Be you ever so low, are these standards still below you?

There is often a concerted and mischievous effort to label any critique of the flip side of the social media as a stand against free speech. Hence this caveat. The advent of these platforms has undoubtedly empowered ordinary citizens to speak truth to power, to champion causes and to effect change. Full marks. Users have a fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. They are, of course, liable for a breach of any of the nine reasonable restrictions to free speech under Article 19(2) such as defamation or decency.

In the good old days when the 'Letters to the Editor' column was the only space for the public to express their views on issues, anonymous missives were never entertained. The editor exercised discretion on specific requests to withhold the name and address of the writers in the publication. The identity had to be nevertheless revealed to the editor.

How are social media platforms any less accountable to the law of the land? What these sites may accept as within the threshold of community standards may attract a slew of penal provisions. Like Section 507 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) on criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication or Section 354D IPC on cyber stalking of a woman, or defamation under Section 499, 500 IPC or even abetment of suicide under Section 306 IPC. In fact, in relevant cases, handles blocked by victims must be investigated. A private complaint to a magistrate under Section 200 of the Criminal Procedure Code for criminal defamation or a civil



suit for damages can be filed. But for anonymous posts, the lack of a name and address is the first and often permanent hurdle.

Even if the decision on whether social media sites fall within the definition of 'intermediaries' under Section 2(1)(w) of the Information Technology Act and the requirement of their due diligence under Section 79(2)(c) of the Statute is still under review, there are international laws in play. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically deals with the right to protection against "attacks on the honour and reputation" of citizens. Ditto with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Supreme Court in Dr Subramanian Swamy Vs Union of India (2016) which refused to decriminalise defamation held that "the right to free speech cannot mean that a citizen can defame the other. Protection of reputation is a fundamental right. It is also a human right. Cumulatively it serves the social interest."

I have been repeatedly raising the issue of the need for authentication of identities of social media accounts for several years. The Supreme Court is seized of this matter in Antony Clement Rubin Vs Union of India. Let there be views, rebuttal, discourse, criticism - fair and harsh, narratives and spin of every hue, till thy kingdom come. But let people own their tweets and show their faces. Anonymity is not the better part of valour or democracy!

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)

Largest hydro-power project coming up in Ooty

■ Activists warn of serious irreversible damages to ecology

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG. 1

As expected, the battle has begun between conservation and development with regard to the proposed construction of 'Sillahalla Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project', the largest such project in the state, which would eventually generate 1,000 MW of power.

The project is likely to commence soon with the construction of a reservoir in the first phase across the Sillahalla river around the Mandhanai slopes near here. While various environmental organizations, villagers in Mandhanai belt and farming communities have raised their voice against the proposed project over the past few months, the Nilgiri Documentation Centre (NDC) here, cautioned that the dam could cause irreversible damages to the ecology and rural culture of the Nilgiris itself.

Director of NDC and a noted conservationist, D Venugopal, said that the proposed Sillahalla project in the heart of the Nilgiris at an initial cost of Rs 4,000 crore is being planned solely aimed to supply hydel power to manage the summer power demand of Greater Chennai, for two to three months. Already one such project is underway in



The Mandhanai slopes near Ooty wherein the proposed upper reservoir for the Sillahalla pumped storage hydroelectric project will come up.

— DC

Kattukuppai in the Nilgiris, he noted. "The proposed dam project could destroy the health, culture and peace of the hill station besides seriously impairing biodiversity, forests, tourism, agriculture, real estate and employment. The original project application submitted to the Central government contains inadequate or misleading data. The initiation of dam work without EIA (environment impact assessment) and public hearings would further set a dangerous precedent in the country," warned Mohan.

"The 20-odd villages that would be directly affected

are over 200-years-old. The location is a traditional farming area for over 100 years. The entire drainage and grey water of Ooty municipality, neighbouring villages and institutions like public schools and resorts outside the town, flow into the stream which is to be condemned. Waste water generated by the huge floating population and left stagnant for most part of the year, is bound to become a major health hazard. Therefore, there is a definite need for a 'Health Impact Assessment'. The steep Sillahalla watershed is an intensely cultivated area. Therefore, the proposed reservoir will face a seri-

ous threat from siltation. Sillahalla watershed has been prone to landslides since 1978. The villages of Kallakorai, Bembetti, Thulithalai, Kanneri, Thangadu, Oranalli, Meekeri and Balacola which are directly impacted by the dam have been recently declared as 'Landslide Vulnerable Hotspots' by the Nilgiri district administration. Also, two of the three fault lines of the district run in the vicinity of the project. Therefore, the threat of landslides to the project needs to be examined duly along with preparedness for disaster management. A dam breach could destroy a huge amount of



D. Venugopal



Manjai V. Mohan

land, properties and people," he added.

Manjai V. Mohan, president, Baduga Desa Party (BDP), said that the government should hold a public hearing to allay the fears of the public and the farming community, regarding the proposed Sillahalla project area and take them into confidence by addressing the issues raised by locals over the project.

If the government decides to go ahead with the project, then it should come forward to provide double compensation to farmers whose lands would be absorbed for the project, he added.

Regular water stock vital to generate power

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG 1

WATER RECYCLED TO PRODUCE POWER

Official sources working on the Eproposed 'Sillahalla pumped storage hydroelectric project' said that as per project module, an upper dam across Sillahalla river near Mandhanai belt, and lower dam across Kundah river down the Annamalai slopes, would be built and interconnected by a tunnel to generate electricity for peak hours. The project would house four underground power

plants with a combined capacity of 1,000 MW. The water reaching the lower dam from the upper dam after generating power, will be pumped back again to the upper dam to generate electricity

again. So, sufficient water storage in the upper dam is enough to generate power across the year, even during the dry months. The total land proposed to be acquired for the project is around 450 acres, including government lands, sources added.

"No grey water from Ooty municipal limits will be used for the project. The project site is 20 kms away from Ooty town. There will not be much damage to the ecology in the area. This project

found its place in the 'Vision 2023' document for TN made in 2014, and late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa made an announcement on this scheme in the assembly in 2015 itself. Under the rehabilitation, resettlement guidelines for the project, provisions have been made to provide two per cent of the total turnover (electricity sale) to those who part with their land holdings, during the lifetime of the project," sources maintained.

IN BRIEF

TOLL IN PUNJAB
LIQUOR TRAGEDY
RISES TO 86

Chandigarh, Aug. 1: The death toll in the Punjab spurious liquor tragedy rose to 86 on Saturday even as Chief Minister Amarinder Singh suspended seven excise officials and six policemen, officials said.

The government also announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh for each of the families of the deceased, they said.

Tarn Taran alone accounted for 63 deaths, followed by 12 in Amritsar and 11 in Gurdaspur's Batala.

It may be recalled that till Friday night, the state had reported 39 deaths in the tragedy unfolding since Wednesday night.

Among the suspended officials are two deputy superintendents of police and four station house officers.

Strict action will be taken against any public servant or others found complicit in the case, said the chief minister, describing the police and excise department failure to check the manufacturing and sale of spurious liquor as shameful.

Nobody will be allowed to get away with feeding poison to our people, the Chief Minister added.

₹2 CR SIPHONED
OFF FROM
COLLECTOR'S A/C

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG 1

An official of the sub treasury here allegedly siphoned off ₹2 crore from Thiruvananthapuram Collector's account.

The Treasury director has ordered an inquiry into the embezzlement. Sources in the treasury department said the culprit, a senior accountant in the department, had used the user name, password of a sub treasury officer who retired from service on May 31.

The staffer siphoned off the amount from the collector's account which had been started for a specific reason and was in operative. Several transactions amounting to a total of ₹2 crore were made during the period up to July using the login name and password of the retired official.

Subsequently the transaction details were deleted.

Many say the department's failure to cancel the retired official's account including login name and password came handy for the staffer to carry out the fraud. Normally the user name and password of officers are scrapped the day they retire from service.

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

Meanwhile, on the direction of the treasury director, a high-level probe has begun into the fraud. The involvement of other officials is also being probed.

PLEA SEEKS RESET
OF PANEL ON
DUBEY ENCOUNTER

New Delhi, July 30: A fresh plea was Thursday filed in the Supreme Court seeking re-constitution of the inquiry commission set up to probe into the killing of gangster Vikas Dubey in police encounter by removing former apex court judge Justice B.S. Chauhan as the chairman along with two other members.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde had on July 28 dismissed an earlier application seeking removal of two other members of the inquiry commission and had said that it would not allow the petitioner to cast aspersions.

In the fresh application, advocate Ghanashyam Upadhyay has sought re-constitution of the inquiry commission and substituting its members - Justice (ret'd) Chauhan, former high court judge Justice (ret'd) Shashi Kant Agarwal and retired Uttar Pradesh director general of police K.L. Gupta with other former judges of the apex court and retired DGPs.

Besides this, the plea has also sought re-constitution of the special investigating team (SIT), set up by the Uttar Pradesh government to look into the crimes committed by the gangster and alleged collusion between Dubey, police and politicians.

The inquiry commission will also probe the killing of eight policemen allegedly by the Dubey gang and the subsequent encounter of the gangster and five of his purported associates. The apex court had on July 22 approved the Uttar Pradesh government's draft notification on the panel.

Uma Bharti gets
invite for Ram
Temple event

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, AUG. 1

Two senior BJP leaders of Madhya Pradesh, former chief minister Uma Bharti and ex-minister Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya, have been invited to attend the 'Bhumi Pujan' for Ram temple, to be held in Ayodhya on August 5.

Both the saffron leaders are currently facing trial in the Babri mosque demolition case.

They are the only leaders from MP who have received an invitation to attend the ceremony by the Ram Jannabhoomi Nyas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the ceremony.

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

According to her, the invitees have been asked to reach the venue on August 4 and not leave before August 6.

● Uma Bharti, who played a major role in Ram temple movement, said she felt elated when she received the invitation to attend Bhumi Pujan for the temple.

Ms Bharti, who played a major role in Ram temple movement, said she felt elated when she received the invitation to attend Bhumi Pujan for the temple.

Another BJP leader from MP who received an invitation to attend the occasion was former minister Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya. Mr Pawaiya had also played a role in Ram temple movement and is an accused in Babri mosque demolition case.

He had earlier served as national president of Bajrang Dal.

Mr Pawaiya who lost 2018 Assembly polls in Gwalior in MP as a BJP candidate, is also known as a bitter critic of erstwhile Gwalior royal family of Scindia.

All set for the big day



Preparations ahead of the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Saturday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the Bhoomi Pujan ceremony of the temple on August 5. -PTI

New domicile law triggers fear

The law has raised fears of bringing demographic changes in predominantly Muslim J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 1

In the past one year, the government has in unseemly haste introduced several new laws and altered many existing ones in Jammu and Kashmir, the enterprise to the dismay of vast sections of its population.

While the government authorities insist the enactments are legally sanctioned and follow the pattern set by the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A ending the special status of the erstwhile state within the Indian Union, people here and also in Jammu ask why

not a single such or similar law has been introduced in Ladakh carved out of J&K as a separate Union Territory.

As no one in the government has attempted to answer this justifiable question, so far, people tend to believe bringing in changes in J&K's statute and the haste with which it is being done are "ill-intentioned".

It is mainly the new domicile law introduced earlier this year which has raised fears of the beginning of demographic changes in predominantly Muslim J&K.

Reports pouring in mainly from Jammu say

**365 DAYS
AFTER 370**

that thousands of non-locals have been granted domicile certificates during the past couple of months. They include some IAS officers, their family members, refugees of erstwhile West Pakistani and members of Balmiki Samaj and Gorkha communities.

While various political and social groups in Jammu have publicly expressed apprehension that they might lose their land and identify as a consequence of the new

domicile law, in the Valley the dominant public view is: India is transforming Kashmir into another Palestine.

"There are instances which clearly indicate that the Government of India is following the footsteps of Israel to change the demography of J&K and assimilate it socially and culturally after altering its Muslim majority character. People are worried over it," said Noor Ahmed Baba, political analyst and former professor at University of Kashmir's political science department.

J&K's major regional mainstream parties have

termed the implementation of new domicile law as "ill-advised, arbitrary and dishonest" as Supreme Court has yet to decide on a series of petitions challenging the abrogation of Articles 35A and 370 and cautioned the government that it's "misadventure" is fraught with grave consequences for the state and the country as a whole.

CPIM leader Muhammad Yusuf Tarigami warned, "Changing the demography of J&K, plundering its people of their identity and going back on constitutional guarantees and commit-

ments of the country's leadership which provided the basis for the state's accession will only invigorate alienation".

However, BJP spokesman, Anil Gupta, rejected the criticism as "unfounded, motivated and part of a misinformation campaign aimed at misleading people for political reasons."

He said, "The new domicile law will neither change the demography nor snatch the jobs of the local youth. It will, however, end certain discriminations and injustices which were there but went against the constitutional guarantees."

Telangana daily
tally crosses 2K
for the first time

DC CORRESPONDENTS
AUG. 1

For the first time, Telangana state recorded more than 2,000 Covid-19 cases in a day. The health department said the new cases for the 24-hour period ending at 8 pm on Friday were 2,083. Eleven more persons succumbed to the disease, taking to 530 the number of fatalities.

The number of active cases continued to witness a rise, to 17,754 till Friday evening, according to the Covid-19 bulletin released on Saturday, from 16,796 on the previous day. For Thursday, this figure stood at 15,640, including 11,359 under home or institutional isolation.

While GHMC area recorded the single highest number of cases for Friday with 578, this accounted just a little less than a fourth of the total cases declared for the day.

Cases emerging from several districts turning into the new hotspots of the disease accounted for 1,505 Covid-19 infections along with the rest of districts. Top among emerging hotspot districts were Ranga Reddy (228 cases), Medchal-Malkajigiri (197), Warangal Urban (134), Karimnagar (108), and Sangareddy with 101 cases.

Meanwhile, private hospitals continued to dominate the Covid-19 care despite the state promising free and effective care. Private hospitals had significantly higher number of admitted patients.

AP total tally crosses 1.5 lakh

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh has registered 9,276 new Covid-19 cases, taking the overall tally to 1,50,209, apart from 58 deaths, raising the total

● While Hyderabad area recorded the single highest number of cases for Friday with 578, this accounted just a little less than a fourth of the total cases.

number of deceased to 1,407 during the last 24 hours.

The state health department, in its Covid-19 bulletin issued here on Monday. State Police Chief, Lok Nath Behera, has also issued an order exempting police officials above 50 years from Covid prevention/control duties and other field duties, especially in crowded areas.

Those with lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension and chronic ailments will also be exempted from field duties. The decision comes in the wake of the death of a Sub inspector of police on Saturday and the significant increase in numbers of police personnel contracting the infection while on duty.

98 persons die in Karnataka

Bengaluru: Karnataka on reported 5,172 fresh Coronavirus infections and 98 fatalities, taking the Covid-19 tally to 1.29 lakh on Saturday. The death toll mounted to 2,412 with the new fatalities.

There were as many as 53,648 discharges including 3,860 on Saturday whereas there were 73,219 active cases in the state including 602 in the ICU, the department said in a statement. The spike in cases and deaths on Saturday was led by Bengaluru Urban district, which recorded 1,852 fresh cases and 27 deaths.

The city has so far reported 57,396 cases and 1,056 deaths. There are 37,760 active cases including 338 in the ICU and 18,579 discharges including 1,683 in Bengaluru. According to the health bulletin, 365 fresh Covid cases were reported in Mysuru and 269 in Ballari.

Covid-hit Kerala police
HQ shut for two days

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 1

The Kerala police headquarters here was shut down for two days after three staff members tested positive for Covid-19 even as the state recorded 1,129 new cases on Saturday.

The police headquarters premises will be sanitized thoroughly before resumption of work on Monday. State Police Chief, Lok Nath Behera, has also issued an order exempting police officials above 50 years from Covid prevention/control duties and other field duties, especially in crowded areas.

Those with lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension and chronic ailments will also be exempted from field duties. The decision comes in the wake of the death of a Sub inspector of police on Saturday and the significant increase in numbers of police personnel contracting the infection while on duty.

Several police personnel attached to the armed reserve camps and police stations were detected with Covid-19 recently.

The DGP has directed the district SPs and heads of all wings to strictly enforce Covid-19 safety protocol in their respective departments and adhere to social distancing norms.

Kerala has 10,862 active cases. Meanwhile, 752 persons recovered from the disease.

The active cases in the state have gone up to 10,862 and a total of 13,779 people have recovered from the infection so far. The highest number of cases were reported from Thiruvananthapuram at 259 followed by Kasaragod 153 and Malappuram 141.

Of the new cases, 880 contracted the infection through contact, 80 came from abroad, 114 from other states and the source of infection of 58 persons is not yet known.

As many as 24 health workers also contracted the disease.

RECORD SINGLE
DAY SPIKE
IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 1

After an unprecedented increase in positive cases and fatalities in July, Odisha continued to witness an upward trend in the Covid-19 graph with a record single-day spike of 1,602 new cases on Saturday. With this, the Covid-19 tally in the state reached 33,479.

As per the information shared by the state government, maximum 308 cases were reported from Ganjam district followed by Khurda (285), Rayagada (164), Gajapati (108) and Cuttack (54) in the last 24 hours.

Apart from the biggest spike, Odisha's Covid-19 toll reached 187 after 10 more positive patients succumbed to the virus in the last 24 hours.

Second sero-survey
kickstarts in Delhi

New Delhi, Aug. 1: With a steady decline in the number of active Covid-19 cases in Delhi, the containment zones have come down to 496 from 715 following a review, providing relief to thousands of people living in these restricted areas, while a second sero-prevalence survey kick-started on Saturday in the national capital.

The city reported 1,118 fresh coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 1,36,716. The active cases stand at 10,596. With 26 fresh fatalities, the death toll stands at 3,989. The recovery rate is over 89 per cent.

While more restrictions are being eased under Unlock 3, a fresh tussle is on between the AAP government and the Lieutenant governor, this time on whether hotels and weekly bazaars should be reopened. A day after L-G Anil Baijal rejected the AAP government's decision to allow hotels and weekly bazaars to resume business, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking directions to the L-G to reverse his order.

In his letter to Shah, Sisodia said the Delhi government will again send its proposal on reopening of hotels and weekly markets to the lieutenant governor on Tuesday.

Sisodia accused the Centre of adopting a "dual policy" towards Delhi where Covid-19 situation has been "quite under control" in past one month and "is gradually headed to become normal". "At such a time when hotels and weekly markets are open in the whole country, even in states like UP, Karnataka etc where highest number of cases have been reported hotels, it is beyond comprehension as to what the Centre wishes to achieve by keeping hotels and weekly markets shut in Delhi," he wrote.

"I request you to ask the L-G not to stop the proposal. If traders start their business, jobs will be generated, and that the condition of the

57,118 MORE PEOPLE
TEST POSITIVE; CASE
FATALITY RATE IN
INDIA REMAINS LOW

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1

India once again recorded its highest ever single-day detection of fresh novel coronavirus cases on Saturday with 57,118 people testing positive. As per Union health ministry data, India's Covid-19 overall numbers reached 16,95,988 even though the actual number of active cases stands at 5,65,103 and the number of people who have recovered has crossed 11 lakh. The overall death toll in the country due to the virus is 36,511 with 764 people succumbing to the disease in a day.

With 36,569 patients discharged in the last 24 hours, India's recovery rate stands at 64.53 per cent.

Officials said India continues to maintain the record of having the lowest Covid-19 mortality rate across the world and the Case Fatality Rate now stands at 2.15 per cent, which is lowest since the lockdown started on March 25.

Officials said CFR has been continuously reducing from 3.33% in mid-June.

"Falling Case Fatality Rate indicates that India has been able to successfully contain the fatality rate of Covid-19. A comprehensive Standard of Care approach has resulted in a consistent addition of more than 30,000 recoveries per day," officials said.

Due to the falling Case Fatality Rate, the Union government has decided to permit export of Indian-made ventilators. Officials said the progressively declining case fatality rate means that fewer numbers of active cases are on ventilators.

Meanwhile, more than 45 Kolkata Police personnel including two senior officers of the detective department have tested positive for Covid-19. So far, over 1,100 police personnel have been infected by the virus, the official said.

"These police personnel tested positive yesterday (Thursday). While a few have been sent to home isolation the others with severe problems have been hospitalised," the official said.

The number of active cases in the force in the state is around 70.

● **DELHI REPORTED** 1,118 fresh coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 1,36,716. The active cases stand at 10,596. With 26 fresh fatalities, the death toll stands at 3,989. The recovery rate is over 89 per cent.

● **AFTER A TWO-DAY REVIEW**, the number of containment zones has been brought down to 496, which affects the movement of 1,06,211 people.

economy will improve," Sisodia, who also holds the finance portfolio, said.

The AAP government has been advocating further easing of restrictions to revive economic activities.

After a two-day review, the number of containment zones has been brought down to 496, which affects the movement of 1,06,211 people, according to Delhi Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot.

Earlier, there were 715 containment zones affecting 3,48,099 people, he said.

In a containment zone, all entry and exit points are completely barricaded to prevent any movement of residents. Police are deployed to keep a watch on it, while necessary supplies are provided to people in such zones at their doorstep.

The review to decrease the number of containment zones by Delhi government comes close on the heels of a Health ministry office memorandum earlier this week, allowing all states and Union territories to de-notify a containment zone 14 days after discharge of the last confirmed case which was 28 days earlier, officials said.

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

In Delhi, a locality is declared a containment zone by district authorities if three or more persons test positive to Covid-19. -PTI

IN BRIEF

Hurricane Isaias lashes Bahamas

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

Afghanistan flood leaves 16 dead

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

UAE starts up first Arab reactor

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

Indian dancer bags UK PM's award

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

US ASTRONAUTS PACK UP FOR RARE SPLASHDOWN

Cape Canaveral, Fla, Aug. 1: Two US astronauts about to make the first splashdown return in 45 years said on Friday they'll have seasick bags ready to use if needed.

SpaceX and Nasa plan to bring Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken back Sunday afternoon in the company's Dragon capsule, aiming for the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida Panhandle. Flight controllers are keeping close watch on Hurricane Isaias, expected to stick to Florida's east coast.

Hurley said if he and Behnken get sick while bobbing in the waves awaiting recovery, it won't be the first time for a crew. Astronauts returning in the early 1970s from Skylab, NASA's first space station, did not feel well following splashdown, Hurley noted.

Feeling sick "is the way it is with a water landing," he said during the crew's final news conference from the International Space Station. This will be SpaceX's first splashdown with astronauts on board.

Protest for justice

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

— AP

China ready to push close ties with Nepal

Xi says both countries have written new chapter of friendship

Beijing, Aug. 1: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday said he wants to push for a continued advancement of ties with Nepal amidst Beijing's sustained forays to shore up pro-China Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's grip on power in the backdrop of intra-party feud in the ruling communist party.

In an exchange of congratulatory messages with his Nepalese counterpart Bidhya Devi Bhandari on the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Xi asserted that he was ready to work to bring greater benefits to the two peoples of the two neighbouring countries.

The Chinese President said that he attaches great

importance to the development of China-Nepal relations and is willing to work with his Nepali counterpart Bhandari to push for the continued advancement of the bilateral relationship.

Xi, also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China, said that since the establishment of the diplomatic ties, the two countries have always respected each other, treated each other as equals, enhanced political mutual trust and deepened mutual beneficial cooperation.

Xi said the two sides have stood together through thick and thin in the fight against the Covid-19 and have written a new chapter of friendship between China and Nepal.

— PTI

Trump says will ban TikTok app from US

Washington, Aug. 1: President Trump said on late Friday he plans to ban Chinese-owned TikTok from operating in the United States, the latest sign of the administration's increasingly strident stance on China and its tech companies.

"As far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them from the United States," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One.

Earlier on Friday, Trump was considering signing an order forcing China's

ByteDance to sell off the US portion of TikTok over national security concerns, according to people familiar with the talks, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss them publicly.

One of the individuals confirmed Microsoft was in the lead to acquire the popular platform's US service. Trump said he could use emergency economic powers or an executive order to ban TikTok.

— AFP

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

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

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

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

Allies and adversaries stayed the same and a non-partisan diplomatic corps pursued American

interests. That changed with Trump. Under his "America First" policy, he viewed both allies and the foreign policy establishment with suspicion, while speaking warmly of adversaries like North Korea's Kim Jong Un and Russia's Vladimir Putin. But Trump found it hard to make swift changes.

Academics often say that heading into the fall. There is no evidence that America's enemies have yet succeeded in penetrating campaigns or state election systems, but Democrat Joe Biden's presidential campaign confirmed this week that it has faced multiple related threats.

The former vice president's team was reluctant to reveal specifics for fear of giving adversaries useful intelligence. Because of such secrecy, at least in part, foreign interference largely remains an afterthought in the 2020 contest.

— AP

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

Donald Trump

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

ocratic negotiators like aid for state and local governments, food stamp increases, and assistance to renters and homeowners.

Unemployment insurance is a principal element as the Covid-19 relief bill is expected to grow considerably from a \$1 trillion-plus GOP draft released this week. The \$600 per week jobless benefit officially lapsed on Friday and Democrats have made it clear that they will not extend it without securing other relief priorities.

— AP

US may use China, Russia vaccine as virus cases rise

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

Six months after the World Health Organisation declared a global emergency, the novel coronavirus has killed at least 6,79,000 people and infected at least 17.9 million, according to an AFP tally.

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

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

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

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

would use any vaccine developed in either country, where regulatory systems are far more opaque than they are in the West.

"I do hope that the Chinese and the Russians are actually testing the vaccine before they are administering the vaccine to anyone," he told a US Congressional hearing on Friday. "Claims of having a vaccine ready to distribute before you do testing, I think, is problematic, at best."

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

— AFP

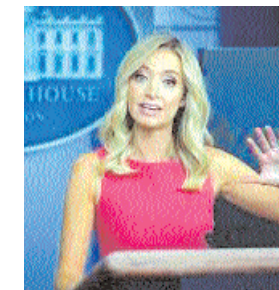
MEXICO NOW AT NO. 3 IN WORLD FOR VIRUS DEATHS

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

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

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

— AP



Kayleigh McEnany

US CONDEMNS HK DECISION TO POSTPONE POLLS

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

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

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

— PTI

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

INTERNET | SENSATION

The couple began modelling from clothes left behind in their laundrette

Taiwan grandparents become Insta stars

Taichung, Aug. 1: Taiwan's trendiest couple these days are neither young celebrities nor teen influencers — they are an octogenarian duo who run a mom-and-pop laundry service and have become an online sensation by modelling abandoned clothes.

Chang Wan-ji, 83, and his wife Hsu Sho-er, 84, have racked up nearly 6,00,000 followers on Instagram over the last month as their attitude-filled fashion portraits went viral.

They have even been featured in the Taiwanese edition of Vogue and Marie Claire.

The couple have run a

● **CHANG WAN-Ji, 83, and his wife Hsu Sho-er, 84, have racked up nearly 6,00,000 followers on Instagram over the last month as their attitude-filled fashion portraits went viral.**

laundry for decades in a small town near the central city of Taichung.

Over the years, customers have either forgotten or failed to collect reams of clothing that the couple never felt able to throw away.

Grandson Reef Chang, 31, hit upon the idea of using the clothes to allevi-

ate the couple's boredom.

"My grandpa and grandma were staring blankly at the streets because business wasn't good," he said. "I wanted to find something new they could enjoy doing." The pair were naturals in front of the camera.

"Modelling these clothes makes me feel 30 years younger," beamed Chang.

"Many people are telling me 'You are famous now and you look younger'," Hsu felt so, too.

"I am old in age but my heart is not ageing," she said. "I like to put on pretty clothes and go out to have some fun."

It was while modelling

other people's garments. Hsu came to remember that she also had many forgotten outfits in her closet which she has since rediscovered. "I even found some clothes I bought 30 years ago and I can still wear them. It's a happy surprise," she said.

The couple's Instagram account — @wantshow-asyoung — is managed by grandson Reef.

Chang currently only uses the Line messaging app to make free phone calls but Reef says his grandfather is keen to learn how to make the perfect Instagram post.

— AFP



Chang Wan-ji, 83, and his wife Hsu Sho-e seen posing for a picture with their outfits.

— Credits: Instagram

DECCAN Chronicle

2 AUGUST 2020



Shreevatsa Nevatia

Off the beaten track

When Covid hits too close to home

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

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

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



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

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

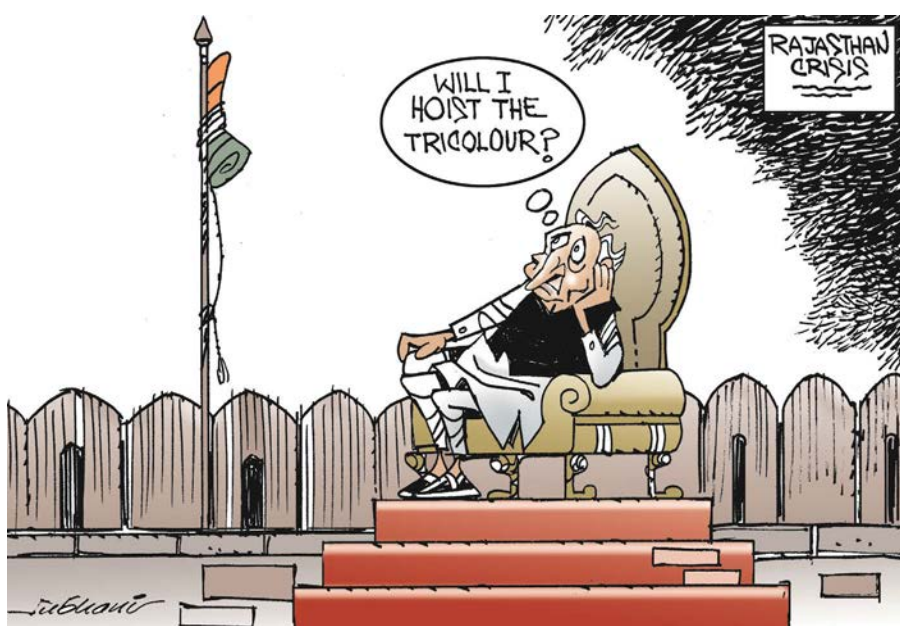
Finding us desperate to 'unlock' with the rest of the city, the constables posted outside our building turned a blind eye when we surreptitiously started using the back gate to visit our friends and barbers. When the Amazon parcels and Swiggy deliveries started coming back in, we felt free. Our prolonged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

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

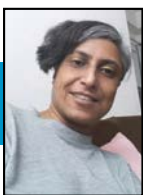
My building has a WhatsApp group that swings into action every time a family finds itself in crisis, or when someone badly wants a special bread. Residents also organise Zoom calls to discuss what action they should take to protect themselves better. I sometimes feel these digital interfaces don't allow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

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

Subhani



The Women's Party: An opening manifesto



Sucheta Dasgupta

No More Mansplaining

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

verting the spouse). The list goes on.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Would you vote for the new women's party?

LETTERS

KHUSHBU'S OVERTURES

Actor and Congress spokeswoman Khushbu welcoming the Centre's new National Education Policy doesn't seem to have gone down well with the Congress party. In her defence, Khushbu has said that she would rather speak the truth than be a head-nodding robot or a puppet. While TNCC President K.S. Alagiri has termed her endorsement as an act of 'indiscipline', some others in the party have felt that the actor is moving closer to their arch rival BJP. Even if Khushbu joins the saffron party, there's nothing wrong about it. Because, all these years she was playing second fiddle to the party's top brass without getting anything in return. Moreover, she has realised that Congress is now akin to a sinking ship, and it's wiser to follow the example of the proverbial rats.

P.G. Menon
Chennai

STALIN'S REMARK

THE DMK, which spearheaded anti-Hindi agitation across Tamil Nadu in 1960s, has virtually spoiled the education system in the state. People, whose children have had been deprived of learning Hindi in state board and aided schools in Tamil Nadu, should respond to the DMK leader's balderdash remark (*Stalin hits out at state over education policy, Aug. 1*). What's wrong in studying Hindi? Many DMK MPs speak in Hindi, but do not want the people of the state to learn it. Let us do in Rome, what the Romans are doing. India is a unique country with diverse cultures and languages. But it is imperative that we follow the nation, as far as education is concerned.

S. Ramakrishnasayee
Chrompet

THREE CAPITALS

WITH THE AP Governor's assent to the Bill for three capitals, the BJP's black cat is out of the bag. The question is how did the Governor, without seeking an opinion from the Attorney General or the President of India, sign on the resolution passed by the state assembly, that too a Bill which had bypassed the Legislative Council? Did not the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha pass the state bifurcation Act and was not a Presidential proclamation issued to establish the High Court in Amaravati and which was inaugurated by the President as well as the PM? When the state's resolution on three capitals contravenes the Presidential proclamation and both the Houses which passed the Bill, how could the Governor sign it? This proves that the Centre and state governments are in cahoots. And how could BJP leaders ridicule themselves saying the capital issue is not in the Centre's purview? Since the Bill does not stand judicial scrutiny, it is a fit case to be challenged in the apex court.

A. Seshagiri Rao
Chennai

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

I-Day buzz

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

Churning in Congress

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

MPhil envy theory

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



By WAQYANAWIS

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

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

Veteran in a spot

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

rebellious deliberations.

The other Shah

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Botham member of House of Lords

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

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

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

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

— PTI

TNPL to be pushed to Nov or early '21

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

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

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

Golfer Stanley in lead at PGA event

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

Stanley leads the field with 22 points in the event in Truckee, California which uses a modified Stableford scoring format.

Players receive eight points for albatross, five for eagle, two for birdie, zero for par, minus-one for bogey and minus-three for double bogey or worse.

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

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

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

— AFP

RELIEF FOR BOSTON RUN BOMBER

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

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

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PSG on French high

Paris side claim another domestic treble

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

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

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

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

Before penalties, Thomas Tuchel's team had the better of a terse final on a sweaty night, but they badly missed the injured Kylian Mbappe.

The masked France superstar watched from the stands as Lyon kept PSG at bay for two hours before having Brazilian defender Rafael sent off for chopping down Angel Di Maria on the edge of the box late in extra time. Mbappe was injured in last week's French Cup final, suffering a sprained ankle that looks likely to rule him out of the Champions League quarterfinal against Atalanta in Lisbon on August 12.

PSG are desperate for tangible success in Europe but on this evidence they still have some rust to shake off before being ready for that test.

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

son, unlike the other major European leagues.

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

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

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

winner in the French Cup final.

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

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

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

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

— AFP

BRITISH GRAND PRIX

Lewis smashes record for pole

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

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

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

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

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

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Main race from 6.35 pm on
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McLaren, Daniel Ricciardo and his Renault team-mate Esteban Ocon and Sebastian Vettel, who was 10th for Ferrari.

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

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

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

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

— AFP

Giannis powers Bucks to victory

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HARDEN SHINES AS ROCKETS TRIUMPH

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

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

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

— AFP

What a delivery!



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

Stage set for IPL GC meet

New Delhi, Aug. 1: The IPL governing council will be updated on the status of necessary government approvals for hosting the T20 league in the UAE when the members meet on Sunday apart from deliberating a foolproof SOP on health safety along with a discussion on the Chinese sponsorships.

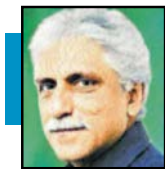
While the BCCI is all set to shift the league to the United Arab Emirates, it is learnt that status of government's clearance is top-most in the 10-point agenda of the Brijesh Patel-led governing council.

It is expected that president Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay

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

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

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



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

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

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

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

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

panic within the team.

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

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

Broad's prowess in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

players look happy to be back on the field.

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

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

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