

OTHER STORIES

Niloufer slammed over diet scam

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court is puzzled about why the diet contractor in Niloufer hospital, who has been facing allegations for misappropriation in supplying an adequate diet to the inpatients and children in the hospital, continues in his post. After the scam was highlighted in news reports, the hospital superintendent had ordered an inquiry. Even after the inquiry, no action was taken against the contractor. The court expressed surprise as the superintendent has not furnished a copy of the inquiry report to the court, even though he had been directed, on earlier adjudication, to furnish the report. The court observed that the superintendent may be hand-in-glove with the diet contractor.

Surveyor jailed for accepting bribe

Hyderabad: A mandal surveyor who demanded and accepted a bribe of ₹2,500 was convicted and sentenced to undergo two years of rigorous imprisonment by an Anti-Corruption Bureau court on Thursday. The ACB said the accused, Seri Narsimhulu, who was working at Jagdevpur in Medak district was arrested in 2008 when he demanded and accepted the money from P. Mallaiiah, to issue a copy of panchanama after the demarcation of the land. A chargesheet was filed before the ACB Court in 2009. After conducting a trial, the court on Thursday gave the judgment convicting the accused officer for the charges framed against him. The court sentenced him to undergo two-years rigorous imprisonment under two charges, which would run concurrently and also directed him to pay ₹2,000 as penalty, the ACB note said.

SOLAR PLANT IN MANUGURU SYNCHRONIZED

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, JULY 30

The 30 MW solar power plant of the Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) in Manuguru was synchronised successfully on Thursday.

SCCL plans to produce 300 MW solar power by setting up solar plants in the area. In the first phase, it will produce 129 MW solar power. Presently it is already produced 10 MW from its Mancerial plant.

The Manuguru plant will produce 30 MW and SCCL will produce 40 MW solar power. The company set up 1 lakh solar panels in 150 acres at a cost of ₹125 crore. Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited took up the construction. Another 20 MW power production through solar systems will commence soon. The company is expected to earn ₹11 crore per year from the plant. The power will be supplied to the local 220 KV sub-station.

The Adani group has been given the contract to construct a 90 MW capacity power plants in the second phase which include the Bhupalapalli (10MW), Mandamarri Bellampalli (43MW) and Kothagudem (37MW). Construction of the Bhupalapalli power plant has already begun at Bhoopalapalli. Construction in other areas is expected to be completed by the end of 2020.

SPECIAL GRAVEYARDS FOR COVID-19 VICTIMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JULY 30

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) has decided to identify special graveyards for Covid-19 victims. Municipal commissioner Pamela Satpathy told officials to allocate special graveyards for the burial of Covid-19 victims separately for the three major religions – Hindu, Muslim and Christians.

“We are also arranging ambulances to ferry the bodies to the graveyards.

A 12-member special team led by DFO Kishore has been constituted to ensure that the last rites of the Coronavirus victims is done in a hassle free manner,” Ms Pamela said.

The officials were also told to ready the municipal guest house, two community halls in Hanamkonda to accommodate municipal workers advised home quarantine.

The GWMC will take care of its employees, she assured. Additional commissioner Ch

Outrage in Siddipet over farmer's suicide

Parties allege state wanted to take his land for Bhavan

IRREDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

A Dalit farmer from Veluru village in Varagi Mandal of Siddipet district committed suicide by consuming pesticide in his fields.

Byagari Narsimhulu, was allegedly facing pressure from the government authorities to give away his 13 guntas of land for the construction of a Rythu Vedika building. In order to take the land, the land details were not entered into the records by the revenue officials, which reportedly forced him to take the extreme step on Wednesday.

Locals took him to Gajwel government hos-

● **THE POLICE** detained BJP leaders, Vivek Venkataswamy, Motihkupalli Narsimhulu, Babu Mohan, MLC, N. Ramchander Rao and MLA, Raja Singh, who went to the village to find out the facts behind the incident.

pital from where he was shifted to Siddipet government hospital where he died while undergoing the treatment during the early hours on Thursday.

Minister T. Harish Rao who learned about the incident has expressed his condolences to Narsimhulu's family. On Thursday, he met the family and assured them of an acre of land towards exgratia. The

minister also assured education for Narsimhulu's children.

He also assured the family of inquiring into the incident and finding the people who instigated him to take the extreme step and punish them legally. “Some people are trying to blame the government for Narsimhulu's death. It would be a trouble for those who are doing this,” said the minister.

BJP leaders in Telangana condemned the suicide of a farmer from Gajwel constituency, represented by Chief Minister, K. Chandrashekar Rao. The suicide should be considered as a governmental murder, said Karimnagar MP, Bandi Sanjay.

The police detained BJP leaders, Vivek Venkataswamy, Motihkupalli Narsimhulu, Babu Mohan, MLC, N. Ramchander Rao and MLA, Raja Singh, who went to the village to find out the facts behind the incident.

Congress party leaders demanded that the people responsible for the death of Narsimhulu be arrested under SC and ST (prevention of atrocities) act. They alleged that from the time TRS came into power, the people from backward communities have been targeted and attacked. Congress leaders who went to console the family of the deceased were also detained by the police on Thursday.

Mock drill for I-Day



An OCTOPUS unit carries out a mock drill at the RTA office in Secunderabad on Thursday as part of preparations for Independence Day. — R. PAVAN

Teenager, juveniles steal tobacco worth ₹2.3 lakh

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

A teenager and two juvenile boys involved in stealing cigarettes and other tobacco products from pan shops during the lockdown were apprehended by Golconda police here on Thursday. They were involved in nine cases in Hyderabad and Rangareddy districts.

Golconda police said that during the early hours of Wednesday they saw two teenagers sleeping in front of a pan shop and another

● **THE YOUTH** were involved in nine cases of theft so far, said the police who arrested Shetty, and produced the juveniles before the JJ Board.

● **THE POLICE** said the trio confessed to stealing bikes and tobacco

boy hiding inside the pan shop. One was identified as Jatinmally Shetty (19) while the other two were minors.

The police said that three, who lived in huts near Gudimalkapur

area, confessed to stealing bikes, tobacco products from pan shops, which they sold. One of the juvenile boys also confessed to being involved in an attempt to murder at Warangal district.

The teenagers are involved in nine cases of theft so far, said the police who arrested Shetty, and produced the juveniles before the JJ Board.

The police also seized two stolen bikes, cigarettes and tobacco products worth ₹2.3 lakh from the trio.

KTR flags off six ambulances

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

IT and industries minister K. T. Rama Rao on Thursday flagged off from Pragathi Bhavan six ambulances that he gifted to the state government on occasion of his birthday on July 24 under the “Gift a Smile” initiative.

Health minister Etala Rajender, KTR's wife Shailima, daughter Alekhyia as also other ministers and legislators were present on the occasion. The ambulances will be put to use as

COVID PATIENTS CAN NOW HAVE HELPERS IN HOSPS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

Covid-19 patients may soon be able to have an attendant with them in the hospital while undergoing treatment at.

Such a ‘willing attendant of the patient’ can be cleared to remain in an ‘area earmarked to the hospital’, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said in a letter to Chief Secretaries of all state governments.

Union Secretary at the ministry, Preeti Sudan, in her letter dated July 26, also said all Covid-designated hospitals should create a helpdesk “accessible physically as well as by telephone” from where the well-being of patients admitted in the hospitals can be enquired.

Following the receipt of the letter, the Telangana health department on Wednesday issued a note to the Director of Health Services, Commissioner Family Health, and Director of Medical Education to implement the instructions from the Centre.

In addition to facilitating presence of attendants and provision of patient-related information, the Centre also directed the states that all Covid-19 hospitals should install CCTV cameras to facilitate patient management and “for screening of footage by designated authorities or bodies” when remedial action is required. CCTV cameras should also be installed in areas handling the bodies of Covid-19 patients, who have succumbed to the pandemic.

Further, the states have also been instructed to set up a team of doctors and other experts for inspecting hospitals treating Covid-19 patients, supervision, and guidance. The team will make its recommendations to the state governments. The respective Chief Secretaries have been told to set these committees in a week.

The Centre said the directions follow a Supreme Court order dated June 19 in a case on proper treatment of Covid-19 patients and a dignified handling of dead bodies, among other issues.

Panel tenure extended to resolve water dispute

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

The Union Government has extended tenure of Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT) by a period of one year to resolve disputes over water sharing between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Ministry of Jal Shakti issued a gazette notification on Thursday extending the tribunal's tenure by one year from August 1, 2020.

The ministry issued another notification filling up an existing vacancy in the tribunal with Tripura High Court Judge Justice S. Talapatra. The vacancy rose after resignation of KWDT member Justice B.P. Das, former judge of Odisha High Court.

The centre had constituted the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal for adjudicating disputes between the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh under Section 4 of the Inter-State River Water Dispute Act, 1956. The tribunal submitted its report in December 2010 after which the Ministry of Water Resources dissolved the tribunal.

After bifurcation of the combined state of Andhra Pradesh into Telangana and

CONGRESS ASKS KCR TO MOVE TO APEX COURT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

The Krishna Water Protection Committee of TPCC on Thursday asked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao to make Telangana's point of view clear before the Apex Council on river water sharing, as the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh is trying to bulldoze the issue before the council.

Committee convenor Ram Mohan Reddy, in a statement, said if the AP government continues its adamant attitude and goes ahead with construction of its projects, the Telangana government must move the Supreme Court. “The Chief Minister must make the state's point of view clear before the council. Unless we are strong and clear, we will be put to a great loss,” he remarked.

AP, the centre decided to revive the tribunal to resolve disputes between the two states in accordance with Section 89 of AP Reorganisation Act 1954.

Protect TS interests in krishna waters: Bandi

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Thursday requested Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat to protect the interests of Telangana state with regard to sharing of Krishna river waters between TS and AP. He met the Union minister in New Delhi in this regard and submitted a memorandum.

He informed Shekhawat that the AP government on May 5, 2020, issued an order giving administrative approval for a series of irrigation schemes worth over ₹7,000 crore aimed at drawing an additional quantity of six to eight TMC of water per day from Srisaillam, which would be detrimental to the interests of Telangana.

Sanjay Kumar said that the act of the AP government is

highly objectionable and illegal as per the AP Reorganisation Act of 2014. He pointed out that under the Act, any new irrigation project or up-gradation of existing projects by either state (AP or TS) on River Krishna should have the approval of Krishna River Management Board and the Apex Council.

The state BJP chief brought to the notice of the Union minister that in the 12th meeting of the KRMB, AP had been directed not to go ahead with its projects till detailed project reports are not gone through by the board and Central Water Commission, and sanctioned by Apex Council.

He told Shekhawat that despite the direction from KRMB, the AP government has issued tender notifications last week for constructing the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Project.

AP'S APPROVAL LETTERS CITED BY TELANGANA

From Page 1

Citing letters of the AP government, Harikesh Meena said granting administrative approval to new projects, vide GoAP GO RT No 203 dated May 5, 2020, is a violation of Section 84 and para-7 of the Eleventh Schedule of the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.

As the AP government has not submitted the project's Detailed Project Report to the KRMB or the Central Water Commission for appraisal, he said the KRMB has directed that “the government of Andhra Pradesh shall not go ahead with the project, till the same was appraised by KRMB/CWC and the sanction of Apex Council is obtained”. He said the Telangana government had complained that AP has begun tender process violation of the instructions of the KRMB.

● **AS THE AP** government has not submitted the project's Detailed Project Report to the KRMB or the Central Water Commission for appraisal, Hairkesh Meena said the KRMB has directed that the government of AP shall not go ahead with the project, till the same was appraised by KRMB/CWC and the sanction of Apex Council is obtained.

ANGUISH OVER CENTRE'S BEHAVIOUR

From Page 1

Water sharing will be done through the Union water resource ministry in case of no disputes between both states, but when there are disputes then they should be entrusted to the tribunal to resolve. The meeting condemned the way the CWRM turned a deaf ear to the Telangana government's requests.

The participants of the meeting expressed anguish that both the states are paying a heavy price due to the irresponsible behaviour of the Centre.

The meeting unanimously resolved that projects like Palamuru-Ranga Reddy and Dindi lift irrigation scheme, aimed at supplying irrigation water to Mahbubnagar, Ranga Reddy and Nalgonda districts, subjected to gross injustices during united AP rule, should be completed on a priority basis.

● **THE MEETING** unanimously resolved that projects like Palamuru-Ranga Reddy and Dindi lift irrigation scheme, aimed at supplying irrigation water.

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING UNIT STARTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

Rachakonda police on Thursday established an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) at the commissionerate to exclusively deal with trafficking of women and children for flesh trade. Ever since the commissionerate was formed in 2016, its police have rescued 556 victims and arrested 557 traffickers, including women.

Telangana additional director general of police (Law and Order) Jitender inaugurated the AHTU at LB Nagar. “It is most befitting that functioning of AHTU starts on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons,” he remarked.

The additional DGP said problem of human trafficking is confined not just to India but is spread across the world. He asked public to inform the police.

VIRUS | UPDATE

Number of cases went up from 1 to 60,717 in 150 days

Covid-19 cases rise rapidly in TS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

One hundred and fifty days after the first Covid-19 case was reported in Telangana on March 2 this year, the total number of Coronavirus cases has gone up to 60,717. The total number of people who have lost their lives after getting infected by the virus is 505, the Telangana government has said.

In its data released for 24 hours from 8 pm on Tuesday to 8 pm on Wednesday, the state health department said on Thursday that it recorded 1,811 new Covid-19 cases. During the period, 13 more people lost their battle with the disease.

As has been the trend for past couple of weeks,

Gyms enable booking slots on app

From page 1

Kiranmayee, who heads operations at Golds Gym, said that “the gym has come up with a smartphone app that enables a client to book a workout slot 24 hours in advance. We plan to allow a very restricted number of clients to ensure social distancing. Apart from that, showers will be closed as will the steam bath. But the air-conditioning will be switched on.”

Gandhi Gyan Mandir Yoga Kendra, which used to witness a daily

attendance of close to 500 people from early morning till evening before the Covid-19 crisis erupted, is also planning to cut its hourly attendance by more than half. “Our hall which used to accommodate 100 participants at a time will, from now on, have 30 to 40 participants to maintain proper social distancing. The carpet in the hall is coming off and individuals will be required to bring their own mats and towels.”

Director, Ravindra Kapadia, said the institu-

tion suffered losses over the past five months and employees could not be paid. “However, since the building itself belongs to the trust, we have been spared of the burden of rent,” he said.

Anthony D'Mello, of Johns Gym at Ramkote, said “This is a small gym, furnished with basic equipment keeping middle class users in mind with minimal fee structure. For our six instructors, the re-starting of gyms has given us hope. We now look forward to slightly better times.”

number of Coronavirus infections. Of 1,811 cases reported in the lat-

est bulletin, 521 are from within GHMC limits and the rest 1,290 from

IN BRIEF

KAMAREDDY GETS SKOCH AWARD FOR COVID SERVICESDC CORRESPONDENT
KAMAREDDY, JULY 30

Kamareddy district administration has received Skoch silver award for Covid-19 services in the district.

The representatives of the organisation handed over the award to the district collector A.Sharath on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the collector said that medical and health, police, sanitation and other officials strived hard to curb the spread of Covid-19 in the district. The collective efforts of the district administration has received the due recognition for Covid-19 services, he added.

GGH APPOINTS THREE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENTSDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JULY 30

To monitor Covid-19 treatment and services, the Government General Hospital at Nizamabad has appointed three deputy superintendents and an officer on special duty on Thursdays.

Associate professors, doctors Harish Chandra Reddy, Nim-mala Balraj and Venkat Lakavath were appointed as deputy superintendents for Covid-19 census, coordination, treatment, Covid-19 lab, drugs, sanitation, diet and other responsibilities.

Assistant professor Dr Saraswathi has been appointed as OSD for coordinating clinical aspects of Covid-19 patients. GGH superintendent Dr Prathima Raj issued orders in this regard on Thursday.

NIZAMABAD HOPES MANDAVA WILL GET PLACE IN CABINETDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JULY 30

The TRS party cadre in undivided Nizamabad district are eagerly awaiting the elevation of former minister Mandava Venkateshwar Rao and his induction into the state Cabinet.

Mr Mandava Rao and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao enjoyed a good rapport when they were both in the Telugu Desam (TD). Mr Mandava had joined the TRS prior to last year's Lok Sabha elections. It is to be noted that during the heyday of the TD Mr Chandrasekhar Rao, Mr Mandava and Mr Bojjala Gopalakrishna Reddy were close friends.

"The Chief Minister knows Mr Mandava well and he may be accommodated as and when required", sources close to Mr Mandava said. During the coronavirus lockdown, Mr Mandava supplied food for guest labourers for 41 days in Nizamabad district.

The undivided Nizamabad district presents three MLCs-D. Rajeshwar, Akula Lalitha and V.G. Goud while Ms Kavitha is in the MLC by-election fray.

■ **MANDAVA RAO and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao enjoyed a good rapport when they were both in the Telugu Desam (TD).**

Politics even in Covid-19 tests

People with political recommendations get priority over others waiting in queue: PatientsA. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KOTHAGUDEM, JULY 30

The indifferent attitude of the medical and health officials to people suspected to be Covid-19 positive has caused worry among the people in the coal town.

It is alleged that recently the District Headquarters Hospital refused to conduct Covid-19 test on Ramesh (name changed), a constable. Ramesh who tested positive for Covid-19 had to stand in a queue for three days before he could get tested. Ramesh said, "After the test, the authorities asked me to home isolate."

In another incident, the relatives of an SCCL employee who died due to Covid-19 had asked the authorities to test them for the virus, but their request was denied and they were told to home quarantine for a week.

It is alleged that the medical and hospital employees are collecting samples only of certain people, while those standing in queue for hours are told to come back the next day.

Arun Kumar, a social activist said, "Officials are conducting Covid-19 tests on persons with political recommendations. Recently, a six member team that came for Covid-19 testing, were tested first despite other patients in the queue. What message does the government want to send across? Mr Arun asked."

The condition of the Covid-19 isolation ward in the District Headquarters Hospital is worse. There is no ventilation in the wards; patients are not attended to even 24 hours after they are admitted. Space between the beds in the isolation ward is not being maintained, allege patients undergoing treatment.

With no checks in place in the hospital, patients visiting the hospital to avail treatment for other ailments and the attendants of the patients move around freely.

In addition, those displaying symptoms of the virus are not adhering to home quarantine rules as a result the virus is spreading at a fast pace in Kothagudem it is alleged.



Kothagudem district headquarters hospital in Kothagudem. — DECCAN CHRONICLE



Mahbubabad collector V.P. Gautham interacts with the family of a person infected with Covid-19 at Kesamudram on Thursday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

Utilise govt quarantine centres, says Mahbubabad collector

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JULY 30

Mahbubabad collector V.P. Gautham visited the homes of those infected with Covid-19 in Kesamudram mandal on Thursday. He along with the health, revenue, panchayat and police officials visited Danasari and Chaitanyapuri villages.

He asked the villagers about their health conditions and suggested them to undergo tests and call the revenue officials for any of their needs.

Speaking to the family members of the infected, the collector asked everyone in the house to maintain physical distancing

● **ANYONE** developing fever, cold or cough must inform the local ANM.

and wear face masks. He said, "If anyone develops symptoms like fever, cold or cough they must inform the local ANM. In addition, Covid-19 positive patients advised home quarantine but have no space in their homes, can get admitted at the government quarantine centres."

Mr Gautham also appealed to the public representatives to take care of the people and create awareness among them. Kesamudram Tahsildar Venkat Reddy, DMHO Sri Ram were present.

BODHAN TRS FLOOR LEADER DIES OF COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JULY 30

The TRS floor leader in Bodhan municipal council succumbed to Covid-19 on Wednesday midnight in Hyderabad.

He had symptoms of the virus and was admitted in a private hospital in Hyderabad.

His wife and other family members also tested positive for Covid-19. Last rites were conducted on Thursday in Bodhan.

₹12 crore released for new Covid block under PMSSY

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JULY 30

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Thursday sanctioned ₹12 crore for a new multi-specialty hospital being constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) on the premises of the Kakatiya Medical College premises, said minister for panchayat raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao.

The state government is going to utilise this hospital as a temporary 250 bedded facility for treating those infected with Coronavirus. The state finance secretary Ronald Rose has directed the medical department to grant administrative permission in this regard.

Mr Errabelli said that the funds would be utilised towards providing better treatment to Covid-19 patients.

With these facilities old Warangal district will have 500 beds dedicated towards treating Covid-19 patients.

Khammam, Bhadradri register 310 +ve cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, JULY 30

The Coronavirus is spreading at an alarming rate in Khammam and Bhadradri-Kothagudem districts.

In the last four days 310 Covid-19 positive cases were reported. In Khammam 103 persons tested positive for Covid-19 on July 29 and on July 30 there were 60 cases reported.

About 10 persons working in the office and the house of the Kothagudem MLA and one person working in the camp office of the Wyra MLA tested positive for the virus. Kothagudem MLA has been asked to home isolate. In Khammam district four people died due to Covid-19.

In Azeez Galli 20 persons

● **IN AZEEZ GALLI** 20 persons tested positive for Covid and the police have closed the street, which is a famous bazaar in Khammam.

tested positive for Covid-19 and the police have closed the street, which is a famous business bazaar in Khammam. Meanwhile three persons including a computer operator in the civil supplies office in Khammam also tested positive for the virus.

Covid-19 positive cases were registered in Kallur; Bonakal, Mudigonda, Errupalem, Madhira, Chintakani, Wyra, Konigerla, Kallur and Khammam Rural mandals in Khammam district.



Work in progress at the multi-specialty hospital under construction on the premises of the Kakatiya Medical College premises in Warangal on Thursday. — DC

TRS grabs all four co-opted posts in Jagtial municipality

DC CORRESPONDENT
JAGTIAL, JULY 30

The ruling TRS party has grabbed all the four municipal co-opted posts in the elections that were held peacefully under the supervision of in-charge municipal commissioner Aruna Sri and Jagtial municipal chairperson Bhoga Shrivani and MLA Dr. Sanjay Kumar in Jagtial on Thursday.

Mr Vadakapuram Srinivas, Mr Kottakonda Vajramma, Mr Mohammad Riyazuddin and Mr Aneez Kutheza were elected successfully. Mr Srinivas and Mr Md. Riyazuddin secu-

red 36 votes out of 48 wards present in the Jagtial municipality while Mr K. Vajramma and Mr Aneez Kutheza were elected unanimously in the women category. From 48 wards in the municipality, 41 ward members participated in the elections.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Shrivani after congratulating those elected, said that in view of the Bakrid festival, three large garbage covers were handed over to every Muslim household in the municipality so that people do not throw their waste outside their houses.

Speaking about the

loans sanctioned to street vendors, Ms Shrivani said that of the 3,701 applications received from street vendors for bank loans, 2,405 applicants were identified. Of the 2,405 members, around 996 enrolled their names online and 190 applications were approved while the remaining were being scrutinised by various banks, she informed.

Jagtial MLA, Dr. Sanjay Kumar said that in view of the widespread Coronavirus, an ambulance was donated for providing emergency medical services to the people of Jagtial constituency.

Horticulture polytechnic soon: KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JULY 30

Mahbubabad MLA Banoth Shankar Naik on Thursday met Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao at Pragathi Bhavan. The CM promised that a Horticulture Polytechnic College in the district would begin functioning from the next academic year.

The promise of the polytechnic college integrated with the already existing Krishi Vignana Kendra (KVK) in Malyala village has been a long pending one. The MLA reminded that the former Vice Chancellor of the Agriculture University J. Raghotham Reddy had donated 160 acres at ₹1 crore for the

● **FORMER** Vice Chancellor of the Agriculture University J. Raghotham Reddy had donated 160 acres for the Krishi Vignana Kendra. The promise of the polytechnic college integrated with the already existing KVK in Malyala village is a long pending one.

KVK. He said that the state Rythu Bandhu Samithi president Palla Rajeshwar Reddy inspected the KVK and also submitted a report.

The MLAs spouse Dr Seethamahalakshmi was also present.



Mahbubabad MLA Shankar Naik gives the letter of appeal to Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao regarding the setting up of a Horticulture Polytechnic College at Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

Jammikunta hospital staff sit-in over pending salaries

DC CORRESPONDENT,
KARIMNAGAR, JULY 30

The hospital staff of Jammikunta Government Hospital staged a sit-in in front of the hospital in Jammikunta of Karimnagar district on Thursday. They demanded that the government pay their wages which are pending for the last five months.

Jammikunta mandal comes under the Huzurabad constituency which health minister Etala Rajendar represents.

The hospital staff said, "Even though we have not received our salaries for so many months, but keeping in view the present situation due to the Coronavirus we are rendering services in the hospital without any interruption of services."

Meanwhile, municipal chairman T. Rajeshwar Rao who visited the hospital promised them that he



The hospital staff of Jammikunta Government Hospital stage a sit-in at the entrance of the hospital demanding that the government release pending salaries in Karimnagar district on Thursday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

would raise the issue with the concerned authorities to resolve it as the earliest.

Mr Rajeshwar Rao questioned hospital superintendent, Dr. Anitha Reddy why Covid-19 tests are not being done on patients visiting the hospital. Instead of answering him, Dr. Anitha Reddy rudely questioned the Mr Rajeshwar Rao as to

why was he interfering in the hospital issues. As a result the councillors who accompanied Mr Rajeshwar Rao also staged a sit-in seeking an apology from Dr. Anitha Reddy.

District collector K. Shashanka ordered additional collector Rajaiah to resolve the issue as early as possible.



SHORT TAKES

Next hearing on 3 capitals on Aug. 6

Vijayawada: The Andhra Pradesh High Court has directed the state government to file a counter-affidavit on a petition, which sought quashing of two committees set up by the government on three capitals issue, and posted the matter for the next hearing on August 6. Former Telugu Desam MLA Tenali Sravan Kumar filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in the High Court earlier asking the court to declare the appointment of an expert committee led by G.N. Rao and another high-powered committee as void. He stated that the reports of these two committees were the motive for initiation of two Bills dealing with AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of all Region, 2020 and also AP Capital Region Development Authority Repeal Bill, 2020. The court observed that a three-judge bench would hear the petition and direct the state government to file its counter-affidavit by August 6.

BIE TO PUBLISH SHORT MARKS MEMO ON AUG. 1

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 30

Board of Intermediate Education (BIE) will make available second year general subjects' short marks memos of Intermediate Public Advanced Supplementary Examinations July, 2020, for download from its website 'bie.ap.gov.in' from 1 pm on July 31.

In a release issued here on Thursday, BIE secretary V. Ramakrishna stated that the short marks memos of second year vocational subjects and first year general and vocational subjects would be available for download on the same website from 1 pm on August 1.

NIMMALA: GOVT NOT DOING MUCH TO FIGHT COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 30

The YSRC government has failed to deal with the Covid pandemic in the state. There are no special hospitals with adequate beds, oxygen supply, ventilators and ICU facilities, alleged Telugu Desam MLA Nimmala Rama Naidu.

The MLA said the government re-designated the existing government hospitals as Covid centres, instead of creating special facilities. "Half-cooked or tasteless food is being served to patients at quarantine centres and pregnant women are having a tough time due to lack of services at both government and private hospitals in the state. He alleged that the government was not keeping its promise of paying ₹15,000 towards funeral expenses of Covid victims.

He claimed that the CM's only obsession is how to get the Legislative Council abolished and how to get the assent of the Governor for three capital and CRDA repeal Bills.

GOVT DIVERTING CENTRAL FUNDS, SAYS TD

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, JULY 30

The Telugu Desam (TD) district president Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy and other leaders were refused permission by the Kadapa Central Prison authorities on Thursday to meet J.C. Prabhakar Reddy, who is in judicial remand in the jail.

Later speaking to the media outside jail, the Telugu Desam (TD) leaders said Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and his party leaders were not taking the Covid pandemic seriously. They accused the government of diverting Central funds given for public health.

Meanwhile, TD district general secretary Baliseti Hariprasad, addressing a press meet, said the CM's talk on Coronavirus fight was zero in implementation. "Listing Covid treatment in Aarogyasri is not serving any purpose as doctors are afraid to treat patients," he observed.

Ridiculing the CM's directive to officials to provide beds to patients within 30 minutes of their reaching hospital, he wanted to know what was the use of it was not implanted. "Making 300 people wait for tests from 6 am to 6 pm is nothing but cruel," he said.

Nearing completion



Workers lay the road on Kanakadurga flyover in Vijayawada on Thursday.

— C. NARYANA RAO

Oppsition asks govt to respect new edu policy

New education policy calls for implementing mother tongue

MD ILAYS | DC VIJAYAWADA, JULY. 30

Opposition parties and academicians on Thursday welcomed the new education policy, which advocates imparting education in the mother tongue of students much to the chagrin of the Jagan government, which is determined to introduce English medium in schools.

YSRC leaders argued that the new policy announced by the Centre on Wednesday had clearly mentioned that mother tongue should be medium of instruction "wherever possible". "This means that mother tongue is not compulsory," they reasoned.

Adhikara Bhasha Sangham former chairman Mandalai Buddha Prasad, welcoming the decision, said this was a big setback to the AP government's English medium policy. The AP High Court also faulted the English medium decision of the Jagan government and now the new education clearly called for implementation of mother tongue. Hence, the government should continue Telugu medium to protect mother tongue, he observed.

Former MLC A. Aja Sarma said that the new education policy of the Union government supported mother tongue as

NEP 2020 ON DEGREE BEING A 4-YR COURSE ECHOES CM'S STANCE: MIN

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY. 30

Affirming that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 took into consideration many of the recommendations made by the state government, education minister Adimulapu Suresh said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan was ahead of times in visualising a level playing field for all students.

Speaking to media here on Thursday, Mr Suresh said the CM's ideas reflected in the NEP 2020. Like NEP, Jagan held the view that poverty should not be a barrier to higher education.

"Our CM was the first to

medium of instruction, but the AP government was adamant to impose English medium in the state. "Children can easily understand lessons in their mother tongue. But the YSRC government conveniently hides the fact and deceives the masses.

The Jagan government should take back its decision in reverence to the new education policy. Jana Sena founder K Pawan Kalyan also welcomed the new education

say that degree should be of four-year course and announced the pre primary 1 and pre primary 2 which was echoed in the new policy."

Like Amma Vodi, the NEP talks about incentivising parents by cash transfer to bring down the dropout rate.

Mr Suresh alleged that the previous TD government behaved like a brand ambassador to corporate education and closed government schools. "Unlike the TD policy, our government has revived them and launched Nadu Nedu to improve infrastructure in schools. He stated that YSRC government earmarked ₹12,000 crore for educational institutions.

policy's push for implementation of mother tongue as medium of instruction in schools. Faulting English medium policy of the Jagan government, he said that the children would grasp subjects easily in their mother tongue and called for reconsideration of the policy.

He suggested that the government give parents choice to selection medium of instruction.

Former chief minister and TD chief N.

Chandrababu Naidu welcomed the new education policy rolled out by the Narendra Modi government to usher in reforms in accordance with the changing times.

Mr Naidu also favoured mother tongue as medium of instruction at least up to class 5th. TD MLC and educationist AS Ramakrishna, BJP leader P Thirupati Rao, several academicians and other leaders urged the government not to impose English medium on the people.

Minister for education Adimulapu Suresh said since the matter was in court, it's not fair to speak about it but the news appearing in a section of the press did not touch the core issues that the government implemented. "We have taken the opinion of parents and 95 percent were in favour of the government decision, which was taken after careful consideration and consultations with NCERT."

Minister Suresh clarified that the new education policy clearly stated, "Wherever possible" about education in mother tongue.

"We have thoroughly discussed the NEP 2020 and will apprise the CM of the policy. Digitalisation of education was also a feature of our policy which found its place in the new policy."

Call 7993822444 on illegal liquor: SEB

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC KURNOOL, JULY 30

Kurnool SP Dr Kagineelli Fakkeerappa said that Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) has made rapid progress in two-and-a-half months and helped confiscate huge amount of liquor and sand.

This new branch, led by the Additional SP, will further succeed in controlling anti-social elements.

He appealed the public to share information on illegal liquor smuggling and other anti-social elements over phone no: 7993822444. The informer details

would be kept confidential, the SP said.

Additional SP Gouthami Sali, who is also the head of SEB activities said that controlling illegal trans-bureau of sand and liquor is high on priority and necessary staff has been allocated by the Departments of Police and Excise.

As per records, the SEB police seized 29,439 liquor and beer bottles, 28,401 litres of ID arrack and 52,355 kg of jaggery.

They also destroyed over 5,19,875 litres of jaggery along during the raids. 6,698 persons have been arrested in this connec-

tion and 1,856 vehicle seized during the transport of illicit liquor in total 4,806 cases.

The SEB also seized 3,276 tonnes of sand that was being illegally transported and 221 vehicles were seized in this matter. Around 203 cases were booked against 368 persons who were arrested for illicit sand transport.

He said that from May 16 to July 29 this year, the SEB police registered 5,009 cases in the district against 9,066 people who were involved in illicit transmissions and anti-social elements.

On Thursday, district SP K. Fakkeerappa opened the new office on the premises of the District Police Office.

The SEB was led by District Additional SP Gouthami Sali on May 16 in the district.

Since then, the SEB has continued its raids and surprise checks on illicit transmission of liquor and sand.

The teams also conducted raids on illicit and country-made liquor units and jaggery units at various parts of the district, especially remote and tribal tandas.

OFFICIAL | APATHY

State healthcare system is wilting under pressure to handle caseload in hospitals

AP finds it tough to cope up with rising Covid-19 cases

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, JULY 30

With the phenomenal rise in Coronavirus cases in the state, the healthcare system is wilting under the pressure of caseload, resulting in deficient services and causing misery to people.

The family of a 70-year-old woman from A.T. Aghraharam in Guntur claims that the negligence of government hospital staff resulted in her death and that they are still awaiting their result of the tests conducted on them on July 24.

The woman, who suffered from chronic kidney disease, was taken to a local government hospital after a private hospital refused to perform dialy-

sis unless she was found negative for Covid-19 disease. The local government hospital, however, admitted her on July 17 as she had a fever. She was tested positive for Coronavirus on July 19 and after a few hours, he died of a cardiac arrest. The hospital had also reportedly delayed the release of her body from the mortuary. After repeated requests, the body was released two days later for cremation.

The health officials conducted Covid tests on her six primary contacts — her 72-year-old husband, two sons, a daughter, her husband and a 10-year-old grandson — on July 24. But till July 30, there was no communication from the health officials about the result. None of them

have any symptoms of Coronavirus infection. However, they have quarantined themselves as a precaution.

Speaking to this newspaper, the deceased woman's son, who works at a private firm in Hyderabad, said, "Our mistake of taking our mother to government hospital cost her life with no proper care. We begged literally to release her body from the mortuary. After our repeated pleas, our samples collected and test results are still awaited. It has been 11 days since our mother tested Covid-19 positive, but no health official informed us about our health status or others about it. We are staying in home isolation on our own to avoid the spread of disease in case we were also infected by

● Patients at Bommuru quarantine centre complained that no one was checking their temperature or providing them with suitable medication regularly.

the virus. If something similar had happened to illiterates, they would have roared around spreading the virus to all those who came into contact with them as there is an inordinate delay in the conduct of the test and declaring results."

The woman's husband says the delay in announcing results of their tests has affected their livelihood. "We run a petty business at home, but we have shut it as we are in home isolation. This is making us lose our only source of

2.20 lakh new beneficiaries to get pension on August 1

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 30

Over two lakh people, who applied for YSR Pension Kanuka in July, will get a pension on August 1. This increases the total pensioners under this scheme to 61.28 lakh. Volunteers will visit the houses of the beneficiaries of the scheme on August 1 to pay them the pension.

Panchayat raj and rural development minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy said the government would be spending ₹1,478.9 crore towards the YSR Pension Kanuka

● YSRC government has sanctioned 2.20 lakh new pensions in just one month. He refuted the allegations of opposition parties of cutting down budgets for welfare schemes.

scheme in August. He said the government has replaced biometric mode of authentication of beneficiaries during the payment of pensions with geo-tagging technology and photo-identification because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said Andhra Pradesh is the only state which is distributing social security pensions at doorsteps of

the beneficiaries and the credit for this goes to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, who established the volunteer system which has been playing a crucial role in the implementation of government welfare schemes.

The minister recalled the sanction of new pensions had become virtually impossible during the previous government but the YSRC government has sanctioned 2.20 lakh new pensions in just one month. He refuted the allegations of opposition parties of cutting down budgets for welfare schemes.

Hospital denies neglecting infant boy's treatment

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 30

A woman, who is undergoing Covid treatment along with her two-month-old infant son at the GGH Guntur, narrated her "sufferings" at the hospital through a selfie video on Thursday.

The woman and her son were admitted at the hospital on July 24 after they had tested positive.

She said that her son was facing severe problems due to Covid and urine infections. She bought injections prescribed by the doctors for treatment of her son's urine infection, but the staff did not administer it to the infant boy.

When the boy started crying, she ran from pillar to post and even met the RMO, but there was no response from anybody.

She said that the gynaecology and pediatric ward staff shut the doors on her saying that she should get treatment for

her son only in the Covid ward.

She alleged that a nurse filled the syringe with liquid medicine from the vial, but left the ward without administering it to her son despite her repeated requests.

The nurse, according to the woman, assured that a doctor would come and give the injection to the boy. But nobody turned up.

GGH superintendent Dr K. Sudhakar refuted the allegations of the woman and said that the doctors were administering the injections to the boy according to the prescription.

He said that there was only a few minutes delay as the doctor concerned was attending to emergency patients, but the woman turned edgy and released the selfie in a hurried manner.

He assured that the doctors were taking utmost care of the mother and child putting their own lives at risk.

Fake doc arrested at Vijayawada GGH

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 30

A con woman, who visited the Covid ward in GGH Vijayawada in the past four days posing as a doctor, allegedly collecting money promising better treatment for patients, was handed over to police on Thursday.

According to police, she introduced herself to the patients as Dr Sailaja, and made a visit to the hospital daily for the last four days. She even entered the ICU where Covid-19 patients were being treated.

The hospital staff grew suspicious and asked the woman about her identity. They were knocked off their feet when she nonchalantly replied: "I am Dr Shailaja... working here in the hospital."

Though they did not believe her claim, they nonetheless asked her to sign in the register to get a PPE kit and show her ID card.

To wriggle out of the tight spot, she reeled off contradictory answers.

First, she said she came on the insistence of her relatives. Then, the woman claimed she was an ayurvedic doctor and came to see her relatives in the ICU.

The staff initially mistook her for one of the 80 new doctors deputed to the hospital on Covid-19 duty. They also could not immediately establish her identity as she was wearing a PPE gear.

Machavaram CI Vinay Mohan said that realising that there was something fishy about her, the staff informed the police, who took her to the police station. During questioning, she claimed that she belonged to Prasadampadu and completed post-graduation. The police registered a cheating case and launched further investigation into her antecedents.



IN BRIEF

Pak Senate nod to 2 FATF bills

Islamabad: Pakistan's Senate on Thursday unanimously approved two bills related to the tough conditions set by the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog FATF, a day after they were passed in the National Assembly amidst vociferous protest from the Opposition parties. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Amendment Bill, 2020, and the Anti-Terrorism Act Amendment Bill, 2020, were presented by Advisor to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Senator Babar Awan. The bills include measures of freezing and seizure of assets, travel ban, and arms embargo on the entities and individuals, who are designated on the sanctions list of the United Nations and impose heavy fine and long-term jails for those facilitating militancy. The two bills passed by the National Assembly on Wednesday fulfil various requirements of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force.

Indictment: Plea by Zardari

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, JULY 30

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday submitted a plea in the court requesting to halt indictment proceedings against him in Thatta Water Supply reference. The accountability court has issued a notice to National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Mr Zardari's plea. The court had decided to indict Zardari in Thatta water supply reference on August 4. Earlier, NAB court had postponed indictment of Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur in mega money laundering case till August 7. In December 2019, Zardari was released on medical grounds after an accountability court in Islamabad issued separate orders in the Park Lane Estate Company and the money laundering through fake bank accounts cases against him.

JAPAN GAS LEAK KILLS 1, INJURES 17

Tokyo, July 30: A sudden explosion from a suspected gas leak blew out walls and windows in part of a northern Japanese town Thursday morning, killing one person and injuring 17 others. There was no sign of a fire and investigators at the suspect a gas leak may have caused the blast, Koriyama fire department official Hiroki Ogawa said. Local media say a gas leak and explosion occurred at Onyasai restaurant. So far, one person was confirmed dead and 17 others have been taken to hospitals. Two of them were seriously injured, Ogawa said. The area has been closed off and neighbours have been evacuated. NHK footage showed only a skeleton left of a building, the steel structure gnawed and pieces of wall and glass scattered around. Several employees and customers at a nearby bank were injured, NHK said. The explosion occurred in a crowded business and commercial district close to the city's main train station, where hospitals, schools and the city hall are also located. "I heard a 'boom' and felt the ground shaking, so I thought it was an earthquake, but the shaking didn't last very long so I realised it wasn't," an employee at nearby Kuwano Kyoritsu Hospital told NHK. Nobody was injured at the hospital, although some of its windows were shattered. The restaurant was undergoing repairs, according to its owner, casual dining group Colowide Co.

COUNTRY'S | HERITAGE

9th century Shiva statue to be returned to India

London, July 30: A rare late ninth century stone statue of Lord Shiva, which was stolen from a temple in Rajasthan and smuggled to the United Kingdom, will be returned to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Thursday. The stone Nataraj/Natesha murti, in "chatura pose with jatamakuta and trinetra" and almost four-feet-tall, is a rare depiction of Lord Shiva in the Pratihara style. It was stolen in February 1998 from Ghateshwar Temple in Baroli, Rajasthan. In 2003, it came to light that the statue had been smuggled out to the UK.

"When this information was received in London, the UK authorities were contacted and with their support the matter was pursued with the private collector, who was in possession of the idol in London. He voluntarily returned the idol to the Indian High Commission in the UK in 2005," said the High Commission of India in the UK. In August 2017, a team of ASI experts visited the India House and examined the idol, which took pride of place inside the building's main lobby. The experts confirmed that it is the same

● **THE STONE**
Nataraj/Natesha murti, in "chatura pose with jatamakuta and trinetra" and almost four-feet-tall, is a rare depiction of Lord Shiva in the Pratihara style. It was stolen in February 1998 from Ghateshwar Temple in Baroli, Rajasthan. In 2003, it came to light that the statue had been smuggled out to the UK.

statue that was stolen from Ghateshwar Temple. An official Indian govern-

ment communique said that in line with the government of India's renewed impetus to protecting India's cultural heritage and showcasing it to the world, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) along with India's law enforcement agencies have been actively pursuing investigations and restitution of stolen and smuggled Indian antiquities. As a result, antiquities and idols have been returned to India from various countries, including the United States, Australia, France and Germany. The High Commission of India (HCI) in London said it

has also been playing a leading role in the successful restitutions and repatriations of India's cultural heritage. "HCI is presently working with various law enforcement agencies to trace, seize and retrieve stolen artefacts. HCI is working on many such cases at present. We are confident that in coming days, in partnership with the ASI, government of India, state and central authorities as well as UK law enforcement agencies and independent experts, we will be successful in returning more items of our cultural heritage to India," a

statement said. Some examples of restitution from the UK include the Bramha-Brahmani sculpture, which was stolen from India and returned to the ASI in 2017. It has found a prominent resting place at Purana Quila Museum in New Delhi, in the gallery curated by the ASI. On August 15, 2018, a 12th century bronze statue of Bhagawan Buddha was restored to the Indian High Commission by London's Metropolitan Police and then handed over to the Indian government last year. — PTI

US Coronavirus death toll goes past 150,000

Washington, July 30: The US has recorded over 150,000 Covid-19 deaths, another grim milestone that comes amidst warning from a top Indian-American physician that the country has failed to arrest the spread of the deadly pandemic. America's Coronavirus death toll was 150,676 as of Wednesday — more than a fifth of the world's recorded deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

The US also had over 4,426,000 confirmed cases, making it the world's worst-hit country. The first death in the US was reported on February 29. The country reached 50,000 deaths 54 days later on April 23, and 34 days later, on May 27, crossed 100,000 deaths. It has taken 63 days to add another 50,000 to reach the 150,000 mark, *CNN* reported.

"I think the fact that we as a country have not been able to get our arms around this, have not prioritised preventing those deaths is all that much more maddening," Dr Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, said. "And so, for me it's frustration, it's sadness. And a resolve to try to figure out how we prevent the next 150,000," Jha told *CNN*. "I think we can, but we're really going to have to work for it," he added. Some states in the US are seeing their highest death tolls. California on Wednesday reported 197 Covid-related deaths in a single day, according to state Department of Public Health. That total far outpaces the previous high of 159, recorded just

last week. Florida also reported a record 216 deaths on Wednesday. Infectious disease experts say the US is at a critical juncture, as debates about how and whether to reopen schools for in-person learning are taking place across the country.

Careless youth driving some COVID-19 spikes, says WHO

Beijing, July 30: China's Geneva, July 30: The World Health Organisation on Thursday warned that spikes in Coronavirus transmission in a number of countries were being driven by young people "letting down their guard". "Young people are not invincible," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual news conference in Geneva.

While the pandemic, which has killed nearly 670,000 and infected more than 17 million people worldwide, has disproportionately impacted the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions, he stressed that "younger people are at risk too".

He lamented that a major challenge in trying to rein in the Coronavirus was "convincing younger people of this risk". He said there was evidence that "spikes of cases in some countries are being driven in part by younger people letting down their guard." WHO's technical lead for Covid-19 Maria Van Kerkhove lamented that nightclubs had become "amplifiers" of transmission. Tedros insisted that "young people must take the same precautions to protect themselves and protect others as everyone else". — AFP

TROPICAL STORM ISAIAS HITS PUERTO RICO

San Juan, July 30: Tropical Storm Isaias was battering Puerto Rico early Thursday with high winds and heavy rains, according to the US National Hurricane Center. Isaias was located about 100 miles (160 kilometres) west southwest of Ponce, Puerto Rico, and about 160 miles (257 kilometres) southeast of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. It had maximum sustained winds of 60 mph and was moving west northwest at 21 mph. A west-northwestward to northward motion with some decrease in forward speed is expected over the next couple of days. — AP

Trump floats pol 'delay' amid voting fraud claims

It will require an act of the Congress to change the election dates

Chinese long-range bombers join South China Sea drills

Beijing, July 30: China said on Thursday that long-range bombers were among the aircraft that took part in recent aerial drills over the South China Sea amid rising tensions between Washington and Beijing over the strategic waterway.

The exercises included nighttime takeoffs and landings and simulated long-range attacks, Defence Ministry spokesperson Ren Guoqiang said. Among the planes were H-6G and H-6K bombers, upgraded versions of planes long in use with the People's Liberation Army Air Force and the People's Liberation Army Navy Air Force, Ren said.

He said the exercises had been previously scheduled

and were aimed at boosting pilot abilities to operate under all natural conditions. It wasn't clear whether live bombs were used. Ren's statement appeared to distance the drills from recent accusations exchanged between the sides over China's claim to virtually all of the South China Sea, which it has buttressed in recent years by building man-made islands equipped with runways. The US this month for the first time rejected China's claims outright, prompting Beijing to accuse it of seeking to create discord between China and its neighbours. Five other governments also exercise claims in the South China Sea, through which around \$5 trillion in trade is

transported annually. Previously, US policy had been to insist that maritime disputes between China and its smaller neighbours be resolved peacefully through UN-backed arbitration. But in a statement, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the US now regards virtually all Chinese maritime claims outside its internationally recognised waters to be illegitimate.

The shift does not involve disputes over land features that are above sea level, which are considered to be "territorial" in nature. "The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire," Pompeo said.

— AP

THREAT FROM CCP VERY REAL, SAYS POMPEO

Washington, July 30: The threat from the Communist Party of China (CCP) is very real, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Wednesday asserting that the Trump administration has begun to take all the "right actions" to rebalance the relationship with Beijing in a way that protects and secures freedom for Americans.

Pompeo also expressed hoped that the Chinese will decide that their commitments under the Phase one trade deal must be complied with. "Will wait and see if they come through with their obligations there," he noted.

"From America's national security perspective, the threat the President (Donald Trump) identified when he campaigned back in 2015 from the CCP is very real. And so we've begun to take all the right actions to rebalance this relationship in a way that protects and secures freedom for the American people," Pompeo told Michael Knowles of The Ben Shapiro Show in an interview. "You saw it first from the administration on trade. We had a deeply nonreciprocal set of trade relationships where the CCP stole intellectual property and then turned around and sold it back to us, dumped it with state-sponsored enterprises, conducted cyber-theft at levels that no other country can match the scale of today. — PTI

CHINA, INDIA GOT LOT RICHER BUT REFUSED TO TAKE ON ANY MORE RESPONSIBILITIES, SAYS TOP US SENATOR

Washington, July 30: Countries like China and India have got a lot richer over the last two decades but they have refused to take on any more responsibilities, a top US Senator has claimed, as he applauded President Donald Trump for taking on this "imbalance" to make the World Trade Organisation (WTO) relevant. Senator Chuck Grassley, Chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, made the comments during a Congressional hearing on

WTO on Wednesday. "No one expected the Uruguay Round to be the last global trading round. Over the last two decades, countries like China and India got a lot richer, but they've refused to take on any more responsibilities," he claimed.

"In fact, they claim they are entitled to special treatment in any future negotiations because they are developing countries," he said. The Senator said that the notion that China and India should get the

same consideration as a country like Cameroon is ridiculous. "So I applaud the President for taking on this imbalance, and pushing to make the WTO relevant." As part of reforms at the WTO, the US wants formulation of some guidelines that countries with high economic growth are prevented from taking benefits of special and differential treatment (S&DT), which is meant for developing and poor nations.

— PTI

Animal fair in Syria

A picture shows an animal market on the outskirts of the town of al-Dana, in the northwestern Idlib province of Syria, on Thursday ahead of the Muslim holiday of Id-al-Adha.

— AFP

Times Square to display Ram's images Aug. 5

New York, July 30: Images of Lord Ram and 3D portraits of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be beamed across the giant billboards in the iconic Times Square here on August 5 to celebrate the temple's groundbreaking ceremony, with organisers describing the commemoration as a one-of-a-kind and historic event. Prominent community leader and President of the American India Public

Affairs Committee Jagdish Sewhani on Wednesday said that arrangements are being made to celebrate the historic moment in New York on August 5, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Sewhani told PTI that among the prominent billboards that are being leased for the occasion are the giant Nasdaq screen

and the 17,000-square-foot wrap-around LED display screen, considered among the largest continuous exterior displays in the world and the highest-resolution exterior LED screen in Times Square.

Beginning from 8 AM on August 5 till 10 PM, images of the words 'Jai Shri Ram' in Hindi and English, Lord Ram's portraits and videos, 3D portraits of the temple's design and architecture as well as pic-

tures of the laying of the foundation stone by Modi will be displayed across several billboards, which are among the most striking and popular features of Times Square, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

Sewhani said that members of the Indian community will also gather at Times Square on August 5 to mark the celebration and distribute sweets. "This is not a once in a

lifetime or a once in a century event. This is an event that comes once in the life of mankind. We had to give it a befitting celebration and what better place than the iconic Times Square to commemorate the 'Ram Janma Bhoomi shilanyas' (ground-breaking ceremony). Under PM Modi, the construction of the Ram Temple is a dream come true for Hindus all over the world. — PTI

NASA launches Mars rover

Cape Canaveral, July 30: The biggest, most sophisticated Mars rover ever built — a car-size vehicle bristling with cameras, microphones, drills and lasers — blasted off Thursday as part of an ambitious, long-range project to bring the first Martian rock samples back to Earth to be analysed for evidence of ancient life. NASA's Perseverance rode a mighty Atlas V rocket into the morning sky in the world's third and final Mars launch of the summer. China and the United

Arab Emirates got a head start last week, but all three missions should reach the red planet in February after a journey of seven months and 300 million miles (480 million kilometres). The plutonium-powered, six-wheeled rover will drill down and collect tiny geological specimens that will be brought home in about 2031 in a sort of interplanetary relay race involving multiple spacecraft and countries. The overall cost: more than \$8 billion. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

31 JULY 2020

Devil in detail of new education blueprint

On the face of it, there is a lot to cheer about the new education policy. Coming as it is after a long wait of 34 years, it proposes to introduce multidisciplinary to courses, expanding their depth and scope, open the door to vocational training and options for earning livelihood by allowing students to step away from higher education and return when they can and bring much-needed relief to them from the pressures of the perform-or-perish Boards. These are commendable goals. However, read the fine print, and come away sceptical. The policy is a grand vision document indeed, but the devil lies in the detail of implementation. For this, the outlook is not hopeful.

Take the proposal regarding autonomy of institutions. The policy announces all higher education institutions are to become autonomous self-governing entities. But the record of the government in charge of implementing this recommendation repeatedly shows its supporters infiltrating boards and administrative bodies. According to the new policy, there will be a single regulator for higher education, the proposed Higher Education Commission of India, which will replace bodies such as the UGC and AICTE. This new body, as envisaged in the 2018 bill to form it, is to decide accreditation, grant of autonomy and appointment of vice-chancellors to universities, but it will be, in turn, bound by the guidance of an advisory body headed by the education minister. So once the policy is implemented, expect greater centralisation and commercialisation of education via indiscriminate entry of private parties. Next, the policy announces that the government's spends on education will be raised to six per cent of the GDP. As over the past six years of the rule of the Narendra Modi government, this figure has consistently fallen, that inspires little trust. The language policy for primary schools is the elephant in the room. It has been proposed that English as a medium of instruction be dropped in these schools. This is even as the government has set, putatively, multilingualism as one of the cornerstones of its new learning strategy. But consider: What if the regional language where the school is located is different from the student's mother tongue? Will they be then taught in their mother tongue or the regional language? What if the student's mother speaks one language and the father a different language, in the case of children from mixed marriages? What if the parents have transferable jobs? How will they be expected to have a good learning outcome if they keep switching languages? In addition to these practical impediments, consider the fact that in a country as diverse and mobile as India, it is still English, not Hindi, that serves as a universal business language. To rob a child of their prospects of becoming a natural (as distinct from native) English speaker under these circumstances is to professionally and economically disempower them. It is all very well to bring in the study of Sanskrit and foreign languages at all levels, but at what cost? Already, there is opposition to the teaching of Arabic in Kerala from Hindutva elements.

It all points to the fact that this move has the blessings not only of the Cabinet but also the RSS. The government's ideological mentor has stated that 80 per cent of its suggestions were incorporated in the policy; thus, for it, this has been just the start it was looking for in this arena. Or else, what was the compelling reason behind steamrolling the blueprint in a pandemic year, at a time when schools and universities are non-operational, bypassing Parliament and not taking into confidence the governments of the Union Territories and the states?

'Dangerous' for his views

The arrest and incarceration of Prof. Hany Babu Tharayil of Delhi University in the Bhima Koregaon violence case is yet another instance of how the NDA government at the Centre is using its investigating agencies to harass people who oppose its ideology. Dr Babu, a human rights activist and being vocal about it, is accused of having links with those involved in the violent incidents that took place as part of the Elgar Parishad event organised by the Kabir Kala Manch at Shaniwarwada in Pune on December 31, 2017. According to NIA, Prof. Babu propagated Naxal activities, Maoist ideologies and was being a "co-conspirator" in the case. The agency had arrested two other accused, writer and Dalit thinker Anand Telumbe and journalist Gautam Navlakha, on April 14. The case of an event of local violence was being investigated by the Maharashtra police when the Union government took over the case in February this year and handed it over to NIA. It may be recalled that Sharad Pawar, supremo of the Nationalist Congress Party, a partner in the Maharashtra's ruling coalition, had called the takeover "unfair" and said a special investigation team must probe the case.

The draconian provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which have been slapped against the intellectuals, will ensure that they will rot behind the bars as is the case of poet Varavara Rao, who has been jailed in the same case, for a long time. And it will happen at time when BJP leaders such as Kapil Sharma, who openly called for violent attack on people during the riots in Delhi, will roam about freely in the nation's capital with impunity. The message is clear: the ruling dispensation can put behind bars intellectuals opposed to it one after the other and allow the real trouble-makers go scot free. Not a comforting message at all.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

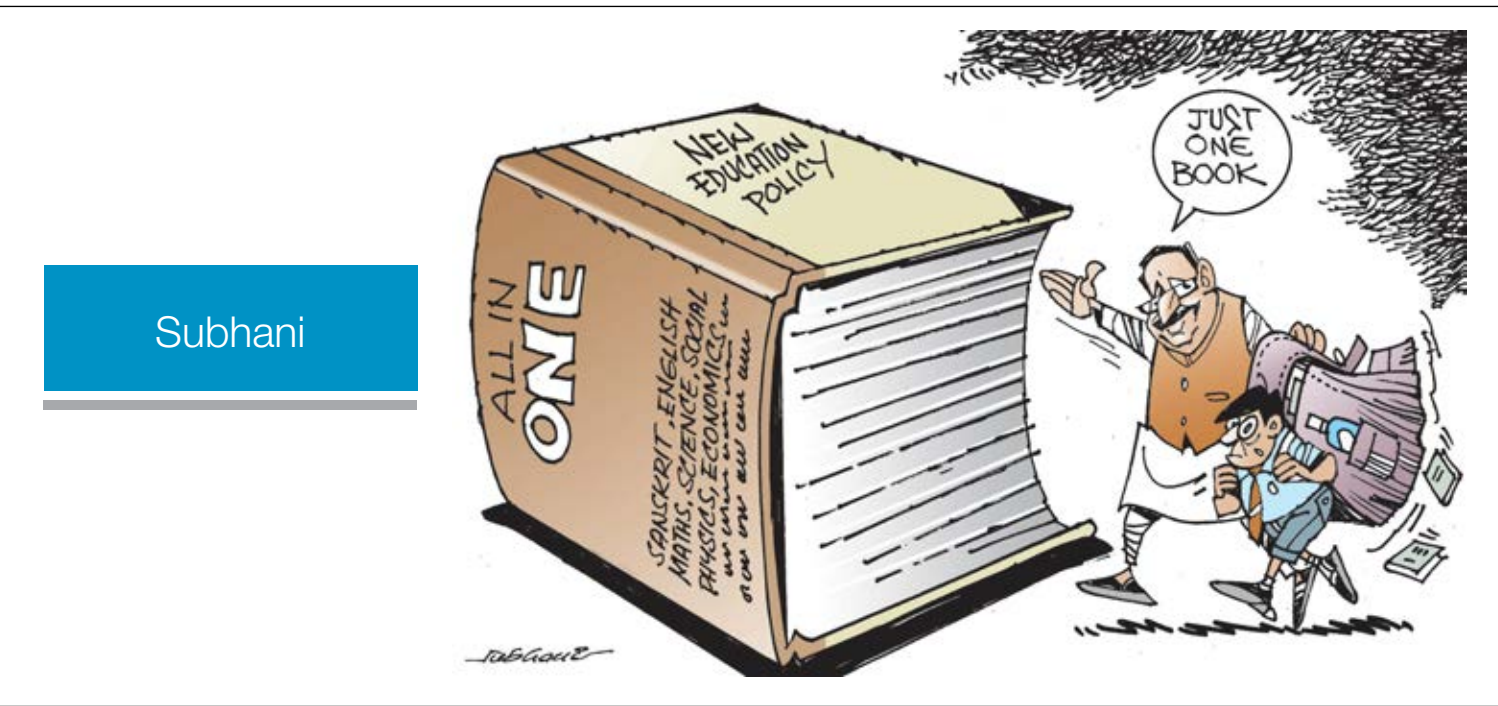
ADITYA SINHA
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Putamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/5A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904
Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325
Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloorkadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycud (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014
Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax : 0495 4019 018
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Subhani



Reviving Congress will be a very difficult task



Sanjay Kumar

In a long political journey, political parties may win and lose elections, face ups and downs, but the crisis which the Congress Party is facing at the moment is much deeper than merely dissatisfaction, defection, disavowal and factional infighting. The way political events that have unfolded within the Congress during the last few years are clear signals of a grave crisis that the party may find it extremely hard to overcome.

The Congress has not only lost two Lok Sabha and many state Assembly elections one after another, it has also not been able to hold on to power even in the states where it managed to form a government or emerged as the single largest party in the Assembly. It remains in power only in a handful of states either on its own or in alliance with regional parties.

The Congress has been extremely marginalised in states where it has not been in power for some time, and its voteshare declined to single digits. In states where the Congress lost power in recent Assembly elections, it trailed behind the winner by a big margin of votes. What has added to the problems of the Congress is defections and desertions by some important leaders. Given these circumstances, a revival of the Congress is going to be extremely difficult as the problems are manifold.

The Congress is out of power at the Centre and will remain out of power at least till 2024. It has lost elections in many states and is currently in power only in three states — Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Rajasthan, and is a coalition partner in the gov-

ernments of Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Puducherry. While that count might suggest that the Congress is sharing power in at least six states, some of them count for very little in national politics in terms of the number of members they send to Parliament.

Not only has the Congress lost many elections, it has even failed to hold on to power in the states where it formed the government. Defections have posed a huge challenge for the Congress in recent times. After it had formed the government in Karnataka in association with the JD(U), it lost power in the state due to defections, and recently lost power in Madhya Pradesh, could not form the government in Goa even after winning more seats than the BJP, and lost power in Arunachal Pradesh due to the large-scale defection of Congress MLAs to the BJP. In Manipur, the defection of Congress MLAs enabled the BJP to form government in the state. The Congress should have been in power in these states in an ideal situation, if the party had not faced defections.

The Congress also suffered a setback as many leaders either defected to other parties or left the party. While Bhupaneswar Kalita, Sanjay Singh and Jyotiraditya Scindia left the Congress and joined the BJP, Priyanka Chaturvedi, having left the Congress, joined the Shiv Sena, and Ajay Alok joined the AAP. The young leader from Haryana, Ashok Tanwar, left the party before the Assembly election, while spokesperson Sanjay Jha was recently suspended from the party.

The recent defections

and desertion from the Congress is mainly in the states where Congress has some stakes, but that does not indicate that all is well with the party in the remaining states. The party is lying very low in many states and it would be a herculean task for it to revive again. In Bihar, the Congress has been completely marginalised and its voteshare has fallen below 10 per cent in several elections during the last couple of decades: it was 6.7 per cent during the 2015 Assembly elections. The party which ruled Delhi for 15 long years polled only 4.2 per cent votes during the 2020 Assembly election. The electoral contest in West Bengal remains restricted mainly between the BJP and the Trinamul Congress, and the Congress is completely marginalised, with only 12.2 per cent of the vote during the 2016 Assembly election. In Uttar Pradesh, the state which sends the largest number of MPs to the Lok Sabha, the Congress has been pushed to fourth position, with just 6.2 per cent votes during the 2017 election. In Jharkhand, though it is a coalition partner in the Hemant Soren-led UPA government, its voteshare is a low 13.8 per cent.

When the India Gandhi-led Congress was decisively defeated in the 1977 Lok Sabha polls, the southern states had remained with the party, but now the Congress seems to have completely collapsed in the South. The Congress has been completely marginalised in Tamil Nadu for decades — in the 2016 Assembly election it polled only 6.4 per cent

votes. Ever since Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy broke away from the Congress, the party has been completely wiped out in Andhra Pradesh, polling only 1.1 per cent votes in the 2019 Assembly elections. Though the Congress remains the single largest party in terms of vote-share in Karnataka, the BJP has made heavy inroads. In Kerala, in the sea-saw change of government, the Congress-led UDF has been alternating with the CPI(M)-led LDF every five years, but the Congress is heavily dependent on the Muslim League in the state. There are other states where the Congress still has a sizeable support base — Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Odisha — but it is far behind the winner.

The story of the Congress remains the same in the Northeast. The party was wiped out in Nagaland, where it polled 2.1 per cent votes in the last Assembly elections; in Sikkim its voteshare was less than one per cent in the 2019 Assembly elections and in Tripura it polled 1.7 per cent votes in the 2018 elections. In Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram, the Congress may have a decent voteshare, but not enough to hold power. The mass defections in Arunachal Pradesh led to it losing power to the BJP, while in Manipur the defection of one Congress MLA enabled the BJP to form the government. In Mizoram, the Congress got 29.9 per cent votes but the MNF is in power in the state. In Meghalaya, similarly, despite getting 28.5 per cent votes in the 2018 election, the Congress failed to form the government, but the NDA did. In short, any revival of the Congress seems a herculean task at this juncture.

The writer is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and a political commentator. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

EDUCATION POLICY

The New Education Policy (NEP) brings about lot of changes in the education system (NEP for fewer exams, focuses on learning, DC, July 30). It will help children to develop skills in their areas of interest and pursue a career.

Sreelakshmi Peri
Secunderabad

The fundamental aim of any education is learning. However, a majority of students from any stream strive to get a good job for a livelihood. It is in this regard the policy appears to have failed. There is no priority given to revamp the curriculum with emphasis on meeting the requirement of the ever-changing demand of the job market. Further, we have almost gone back to the old system without giving autonomy to change the curriculum so as to make it easier to implement. The Centre should decentralise the powers of the UGC and other such bodies for adaptation to market based education.

Dr P.L.Panda
Hyderabad

STATE GOVERNORS

I appreciate your editorial (*Raj governor should not stand in the way of House, DC, July 30*). Whenever an assembly is in a political crisis, Governors are seen crossing the lines of Constitutional provisions. I think the citizens and the Centre revisit the utility of a Governor. The post in modern days is just an ornamental one and whenever his office needs to act, it will be an impediment to normal functioning of Legislative Assembly representing the citizens. This expensive post has become a dumping ground for retarded politicians.

M. Vijayan
Secunderabad

Bahuguna warns against 'dark forces'

By a staff reporter

HYDERABAD, July 30
Mr. H.N. Bahuguna, General Secretary of the Ruling Congress today warned the Cong-R legislators in Andhra Pradesh against the "dark forces" which were trying to envelope the country.

Addressing the 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle, he asked them to cast a spell over the people by taking the message of Cong-R to them through song, music, dance and drama. The General Secretary of the AICC suggested that sitting members of the Legislative Assembly should be made responsible for a constituency they had lost.

Sanju Verma



India has got a good start on path to self-reliance

Even as the Coronavirus pandemic is bringing global economies to a grinding halt this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, undeterred by the enormity of the challenge, recently unleashed a ₹20.97 lakh crore mega stimulus package, equal to roughly 10.48 per cent of India's GDP. Another ₹90,000 crores is being spent for providing free foodgrain to over 80 crore people, which is more than double the population of the United States. From being an importer in March this year to becoming the world's second largest PPE kit manufacturer, producing over 4.5 lakh kits daily, Aatma Nirbhar Bharat has taken firm roots.

Reduction in corporate tax rate from 30 per cent to 22 per cent and for new companies to 15 per cent, allowing the private sector in commercial coal mining on a revenue sharing basis with no end use restrictions, 100 per cent FDI via the automatic route in defence manufacturing, single brand retail and real estate broking services and privatisation of power distribution companies in Union Territories underpin the essence of Modinomics.

In the first year of his second term,

Narendra Modi's landmark steps have been many — the decision to implement Rs 102 lakh crore worth of infrastructure projects via the national infrastructure pipeline, lowering employees' state insurance act (ESIC) contribution from 6.5 per cent to four per cent, which benefits 3.6 crore employees and 12.85 lakh employers, a monthly pension of Rs 3,000 to over 42 crore small traders and shopkeepers in the unorganised sector after they attain 60 years of age under the PM Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, passing the Code on Wages Bill 2019, which will benefit over 500 million workers across the country and, of course, the recent historic decision to defang agricultural produce marketing committees and amend the Essential Commodities Act of 1955, to enable farmers to sell their produce to whomsoever they wish to sell to without any inter-state barriers or any price or quantity related restrictions are measures that showcase how good politics and good economics can peacefully co-exist.

More recently, measures like the ₹3 lakh crore of collateral free loans to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), liquidity support of ₹6,750 crore by bringing provi-

dent fund rate down from 12 per cent to 10 per cent, reducing the benchmark repo rate to four per cent, the lowest in 20 years, ₹2 lakh crore concessional credit for farmers and fishermen via Kisan Credit cards, throwing open six new airports for privatisation via the public-private partnership (PPP) route, allowing private sector in space exploration and, of course, decriminalising certain offences under the Companies Act have been commendable.

The Bank Nationalisation Act of 1969, a forgettable vestige of outdated Nehruvian socialism, has been a millstone for public sector banks. By merging SBI with its five associates and the Bharatiya Mahila Bank in 2017, Mr Modi created a banking behemoth with an asset size of over ₹41 lakh crores and over 370 million customers. The decision to thereafter consolidate 10 public sector banks into four, allowing the private sector to enter into non-strategic areas and, the decision to privatise power distribution companies in Union Territories, are a reflection of how Modinomics is following the path of minimum government, maximum governance.

Be it Ayushman Bharat, the largest healthcare scheme globally,

which has given free treatment to well over one crore people since its inception, the PM-Kisan initiative which gives ₹6,000 per annum to over 14.5 crore farmers, or the PM Ujjwala Yojana that gave free gas connections last year, to over eight crore households, the Modi government has given last mile connectivity a whole new meaning.

Clearly, Mr Modi has many firsts to his credit, including PM Jan Dhan Yojana, the largest financial inclusion scheme in the world with over 38 crore account holders, the Swachh Bharat mission, the largest sanitation scheme globally, with over 11 crore toilets built and, of course, the direct benefit transfer scheme, that till date has directly transferred cash worth ₹8.91 lakh crores, to various beneficiaries. Under an inept UPA, money meant for the poor was pilfered by wily middlemen, but under the Modi government, the policy framework has been overhauled to ensure that Nehruvian-style nepotism does not stand a chance. The Manipur water supply project, meant to provide clean drinking water to Greater Imphal and 1,700 villages in Manipur, is yet another example of how Modinomics is mainstreaming the North-east, which was neglected

by the Congress for decades together.

Giving self-reliance and India's domestic civilian nuclear programme a new dimension is the Kakrapar project, the country's first 700 MWe unit and the biggest indigenously developed variant of the pressurised heavy water reactor. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Aatma Nirbhar Bharat is inclusive, pluralistic, bereft of incrementalism and seeks to be globally competitive. This is evident from tech giant Apple's decision of manufacturing one of its latest offerings — the iPhone 11, at Foxconn's Chennai plant. Be it Google's decision to invest \$10bn in the next five-seven years via a digitisation fund, Samsung's decision to manufacture smartwatches at its Noida plant, Amazon setting up its largest facility centre in Hyderabad last year, or the 750MW solar power plant coming up at Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, Mr Modi's Make in India vision is shaping up robustly. With a forex war chest of over \$517 billion, clearly, the world is India's oyster.

The writer is an economist, chief spokesperson for BJP in Mumbai and author of 'Truth & Dare — The Modi Dynamic

SHORT TAKES

WOMAN SETS HERSELF ON FIRE IN PROTEST

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JULY 30

A woman in a Madhya Pradesh village set herself on fire in protest against the anti-encroachment drive being carried out in her farmland by the local administration.

A video showing the woman identified as Shabra Bi (45), suddenly turning her into a ball of fire after pouring kerosene on herself while protesting against the anti-encroachment drive has gone viral.

Although the incident occurred on Tuesday, it came to light on Thursday when former chief minister Kamal Nath tweeted the video demanding a probe into it.

The woman, a resident of Atwas village under Satwas police station in Dewas district, received 20 percent burns following the incident. She has been admitted to a hospital in Indore. Her condition was stated to be stable.

Her husband Ramzan Khan alleged that the authorities were destroying the soybean crop in their field. "I do not know from where Shabra brought kerosene to immolate herself. She poured kerosene and lit herself by the time we could take a note of it", he said. However, Dewas DSP Shivdayal Singh said Shabra Bi and ten others attacked the team of police and revenue officials leading to injuries to two revenue inspectors.

"There was a complaint that Shabra Bi and her family had encroached upon government land. The revenue court had settled the issue last week and the revenue team had gone there to free the land of encroachment when Shabra Bi and ten others attacked them", he said.

SOZ: WILL SUE GOVT FOR UNLAWFUL HOUSE ARREST

Srinagar, July 30: Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Saifuddin Soz on Thursday said he would sue the government for his "unlawful house arrest" since August 5 last year, when the Centre revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, and termed the government's response in the Supreme Court that he was not under detention as "falsehood".

"I take a strong exception to the government stand before the Supreme Court that I had neither been put under house arrest nor had any restrictions been imposed on me since August 5, 2019," Soz said in a statement here.

He said the government has resorted to "falsehood as it had unlawfully incarcerated me since August 5, 2019".

"All this while, I was not allowed to move out of my premises. I left my premises twice, when I had to visit my ailing sister and I went to Delhi on 17th September, 2019 to 21st September, 2019 and 15th December, 2019 to 21st December, 2019 for seeking medical advice. Whenever I went out of my premises since August 5, 2019, I had to obtain permission from the government," he said.

The former Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) president added that he has decided to sue the government for his "unlawful" house arrest.



Villagers on a banana raft move to a safer place from the flooded area of Goalbil, in Baksa district on Thursday. The flood situation in Assam improved further though one more person lost his life taking the toll to 108 even as more parts of Bihar were affected by the deluge caused by rise in water levels of rivers originating in Nepal. Also, actor-producer Anushka Sharma and Indian skipper Virat Kohli announced that they have pledged their support to the people of flood ravaged Assam and Bihar.

— PTI

TN decides to extend lockdown till Aug 31

Restrictions on intra-state, inter-state travel continue

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JULY 30

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced the continuation of the current lockdown till August 31 with existing regulations and a few relaxations but clearly restricted intra-state and inter-state travel despite the Union ministry of home affairs doing away with e-passes.

Among the few relaxations are allowing industries, private companies and export firms that were earlier permitted to function with 50 per cent staff to increase it to 75 per cent, letting vegetable and grocery shops and other business establishments to be open for an additional hour — vegetables and groceries from 6 am to 7 pm and other shops from 10 am to 7 pm.

E-commerce has been allowed all over the state for both essential and non-essential goods and celebration of Independence Day on August 15 has been permitted with the adaptation of social distancing and other such norms for the prevention of Covid-19.

Kerala govt nod for home care isolation of patients

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JULY 30

In a significant decision, the Kerala government decided to allow home care isolation for Covid-19 patients even as the state reported 506 cases on Thursday.

At a press conference, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the home care isolation system for Covid-19 patients would be implemented on an experimental basis.

Initially healthcare workers who have tested positive will be treated at home.

The health officials will conduct house-to-house visits to assess the situation once the system is put in place.

In the event of complications like respiratory distress or any other medical emergency, the person would be moved out from home and taken to hospital or CFLT whatever his condition demands.

Those individuals who prefer to have home care isolation will have to submit an affidavit to the authorities concerned about their willingness to avail the facility.

The facility will be available in Thiruvananthapuram districts initially and after examining the outcome, a decision will be taken on extending it to other districts.

Earlier, Thiruvananthapuram collector issued a notification in this regard.

Places of worship, other than the small ones earning less than ₹10,000 a year, would remain shut and restaurants and teashops can allow dine-in facility but in 50 per cent of their seating capacity. They can function between 6 am and 7 pm though takeaway would be

allowed till 9 pm.

However, in containment zones no activity would be allowed and Section 144 would be in force everywhere, preventing more than five persons to gather in public.

The Chief Minister urged companies to encourage their employees to

work from home, said that the decision to continue the lockdown was taken on the basis of the views expressed by medical specialists, health experts, district collectors, senior bureaucrats and ministers, besides taking into consideration the Central government's advice.

Lab technician arrested for taking vaginal swab for Coronavirus test

HARSHADA PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JULY 30

In an incident that sent shockwaves across the state, the police arrested a lab technician in Maharashtra's Amravati district after he took swab samples from a woman's private parts.

State woman and child development minister

Yashomati Thakur, who is also the local MLA, has promised strict action against the accused. The police have slapped a rape case against him.

The incident took place on Tuesday when the 20 to 25 staff members of a local mall, including the 24-year-old victim visited a local testing centre for Covid-19 test after one of

their colleagues tested positive. However, after taking the nasal swabs of all staffers, technician Alpesh Deshmukh convinced the victim to also give swab sample from her private parts.

"The accused person convinced the victim that vaginal swab was necessary for the Covid test. Later, the victim realised

that she has been cheated and she filed the police complaint.

We have arrested the accused under Indian Penal Code Sections 354 (assault or criminal force on woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and 376 (rape)," said a police officer from Badnera police station where the FIR has been filed.

Ex-Samata party chief, 2 others get 4-year jail

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 30

A Delhi court on Thursday sentenced former Samata Party president Jaya Jaitley and two others to four years in prison for corruption in a 2000-01 case related to a purported defence deal.

Special CBI judge Virender Bhat also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh each on all three and directed them to surrender before it till 5 pm on Thursday itself.

The Delhi High Court, however, put on hold Jaitley's four-year jail term. The High Court has sought the CBI's response on Jaitley's appeal challenging her conviction and sentence in the case.

Jaitley, her former party colleague Gopal Pachherwal and Major General (retd) S.P. Murgai were held guilty of corruption and criminal conspiracy in the purported purchase of hand-held thermal imagers.

The case stemmed from 'Operation Westend' sting aired by a news portal in January 2001.

While convicting the

three accused, the court held that they, along with Surender Kumar Surekha (who later turned approver), were party to a criminal conspiracy that took place between December 2000 and January 2001 at Delhi.

The court observed that while Jaitley accepted ₹2 lakh illegally from Mathew Samuel, a representative of fictional company Westend International, Maj Gen Murgai received ₹20,000.

The illegal money was accepted for obtaining supply orders for hand held thermal imagers from the Army.

They were convicted of the offence of conspiracy (Section 120-B IPC read with Section 9 (taking gratification, for exercise of personal influence with public servant) of Prevention of Corruption Act.

The court held it is "proved beyond doubt that in the meeting in the hotel room on December 25, 2000, Surekha and Murgai assured their assistance to Samuel in procuring letter of evaluation for the product of his company

from the ministry of defence and also to arrange a meeting between him and accused Jaya Jaitley who would provide political cover to them in this regard."

"It was agreed that Samuel would pay ₹1 lakh each to Surekha and Murgai and ₹2 lakh to Jaitley," the court noted.

"Thus there had been an agreement between them to obtain the evaluation letter for the concerned product by illegal means, i.e. by resort to corruption and personal influence upon the concerned officials," it said, adding, "Accordingly, Pachherwal arranged the said meeting for December 28, 2000. He too was present in the said meeting in the room of Jaitley along with Surekha, Samuel and Murgai."

The court further said, "In that meeting, which took place in the official residence of the then Union minister for defence, George Fernandes, Samuel was introduced to Jaitley as a businessman whose company intends to enter the market of defence procurement."

Priyanka vacates official bungalow

New Delhi, July 30: Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday vacated her official bungalow at Delhi's posh Lodhi Estate area before the deadline specified in the July 1 eviction order.

The central government, in the notice, had asked her to vacate the sprawling premises by August 1 or face monetary penalty.

An official statement issued by the Congress said Gandhi handed over the possession of her 35, Lodhi Estate bungalow, "previously allotted to her on security grounds", to the CPWD on Thursday.

Sources close to her said she will be staying

for a few days in her Gurgaon penthouse before shifting to central Delhi, where she has finalised a house on rent. Renovations are currently going on in her new house in Delhi, they said.

"She will be residing in a temporary accommodation until a more permanent accommodation in Delhi rented by her is ready for use," an official communication from the Congress said.

Earlier in the day, a team of central PWD officials visited her house and took the keys of the Lodhi Estate bungalow.

The Congress said that she has paid all electricity, water and previous dues. — PTI

SC: Police to probe Sushant's case

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JULY 30

The Supreme Court on Thursday junked a public interest plea seeking transfer of investigation in late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide case from Maharashtra police to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Asking the PIL petitioner Alka Priya to go to Bombay High Court if she has anything concrete to show, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sharad A. Bode, Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ra-

masubramanian dismissed the PIL asserting "let police do its job".

"The Mumbai police are probing the matter. If you want you can go before the Bombay HC and seek appropriate relief," said the CJI refusing to entertain the plea.

Meanwhile, Sushant's father Krishna Kishore Singh has filed a caveat in SC seeking to be heard before any decision is taken on Rhea Chakraborty's plea seeking transfer of investigation into FIR lodged in Patna to Mumbai.

MY GOVT TRIED TO ESTABLISH 'RULE OF LAW': NITISH

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JULY 30

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday said his government tried to establish "rule of law" in the state and never compromised on three "Cs" — crime, corruption and communalism.

He was speaking at the inauguration of 124 police buildings in Bihar through video conference.

"My government never compromised on crime, corruption and communalism. The scenario earlier was completely different. There used to be massacres in the state before 2005, but the scenario has changed now", Nitish Kumar said.

"Our police have played a crucial role in establishing the rule of law in Bihar. There has been a zero-tolerance on crime and communalism and our police have worked hard in maintaining peace in the state", Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said.

His statement has come at a time when the Opposition, especially the RJD, has been targeting Nitish Kumar on various issues including the Covid-19 crisis, flood and deteriorating law and order scenario in the state.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and the Congress have been hinting at using these issues as their main agenda during the Assembly elections scheduled to be held in October — November this year.

During the event, Nitish Kumar said that his government worked hard for the development of the state in the last fourteen years.

He also used the occasion to appreciate the medical fraternity and the police for their efforts to control the Coronavirus crisis in the state.

Separatist camp in disarray, supporters bewildered

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JULY 30

Jammu and Kashmir's separatist camp has been in a state of stagnation since August 5 last year when the Centre cancelled the special status and downgraded the state by bifurcating it into two Union Territories.

Even the key faces in the separatist camp, who would earlier rule the roost and whose writ ran large over vast sections of Muslim population, mainly in the Valley, have miserably failed to play any predictable or even customary role in Kashmiri politics during past one year. This has pushed the entire separatist camp in disarray and its supporters in public dispirited and bewildered.

Weeks after the Centre moved harshly on J&K, it was widely rumoured in the Valley and beyond that some of the separatist leaders who were among those

365 DAYS AFTER 370

detained around August 5 signed bonds to secure their release.

As also reported by sections of the media, the detainees, mostly politicians from both mainstream and separatist camps, were offered to be released by the authorities on the condition that they sign the bond, agreeing to cease their political activities.

Even after the lapse of one year, the separatist leadership remains in the doldrums, unable to guide their supporters on the issues they would insist on being a 'matter of life and death' for Kashmir and its people.

Their issuing guarded statements occasionally is like 'one swallow does not make a spring', as was put by a supporter. He asserted,

"They have betrayed us."

The BJP calls the jumble and the killing of over 250 militants including a couple of dozen top commanders in security forces' operations since August 5 last year a "big achievement" of the Modi government. It also says that it has broken the Kashmir jinx.

Independent watchers, however, say the government's brutal policies towards J&K have, on one hand, only decimated pro-India constituency in the politically sensitive Valley, and, on the other, proliferated a young generation of diehard legacy and that to handle it might not be an easy task ahead.

The not-so-good human rights situation in J&K has already prompted various international organisations and, also some countries other than Pakistan and its allies, to call for corrective measures.

Recovery of weapons raises alarm in Assam

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JULY 30

Security agencies in the state raised concern over the presence of large number of illegal weapons with former militants in Western Assam's Bodoland Territorial Council.

While the security agencies succeeded in recovering some weapons, they admitted that former militants are still running a private militia and may turn out to be a serious threat to law and order situation in the area.

The ministry of home affairs had made a breakthrough by forcing all the factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) to sign a peace accord that led to ceremonial surrender of arms before Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in January this year. The separatist groups, which announced the end of armed struggle, however, deposited only 178 weapons, raising the eyebrows of security agencies that

feared these rebel groups withheld a large number of sophisticated weapons.

Asserting that these recoveries are alarming and indicate that a large number of sophisticated weapons are still in possession of surrendered militants and hidden, security sources said that sophisticated weapons recovered in the BTC area in recent times, belonged to different factions of the NDFB. Indicating that it is almost impossible to assess the number of weapons in possession of the militant groups, security sources said that all the factions are holding illegal weapons as these militant outfits did not deposit all their weapons while surrendering.

It is significant that all together 1,615 cadres which included 836 of the NDFB-Progressive, 579 of the NDFB-Ranjan Daimary faction and 200 of the NDFB(S) had laid down arms.

Pointing out that all the four factions claimed to

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have deposited 4,800 weapons security sources said that on scrutiny of the arms, it was found that only 178 weapons that NDFB cadres used were surrendered and remaining arms were junk and unused old weapons. Security forces recovered

one HK-33 rifle, an M-16 rifle, an AK-47 rifle and 27 rounds of live cartridges on July 19 from Ghagra Part II in Udalguri district. Police had also recovered a HK-33 Rifle with ammunition from No 4 Moinaguri under Bijnai Police Station in Chirang district on Sunday evening.

Earlier a day before on Saturday, in two separate operations, the police recovered arms and ammunition from Kokrajhar and Baksa districts. Two AK-47 rifles, 2 9MM pistols and ammunition were recovered from Goreswar Police Station area and one AK-47 and ammunition from Simla Police Station area in the district.

In Kokrajhar, police had recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition from beneath a bamboo grove in Duligaon area under Bagribari police station on Saturday. The recovery included an AK series rifle, two AK series magazines, one polythene sheet used for wrapping and covering the rifle and magazine to

which lubricant was applied, 30 AK series ammunitions in a plastic container half filled with rice husk.

Admitting that the recent recoveries of weapons have been a major success for the security forces and all out efforts must be made by police and security agencies to seize illegal weapons, security sources did not rule out the possibility of surrendered militants selling out the weapons that they kept with themselves to criminals or poachers.

Security sources also claimed that these weapons may be used during the BTC elections which have been deferred due to COVID-19.

It is significant that the ministry of home affairs had declared that Bodoland Territorial Council has become free from militancy as all the factions of militant groups joined the mainstream but recovery of illegal weapons has set the alarm bell ringing for the security forces.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,736.07	-0.88
Nifty 50	11,102.15	-0.90
S&P 500*	3,241.97	-0.51
Dollar (₹)	74.84	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.16	-0.20
Euro (₹)	87.95	-0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,860▲118	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.96	-0.79
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.825	-0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.543	-0.038

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Local shops to make Prime Day debut: Amazon

Over 100 small and medium businesses and start-ups on Amazon.in will be launching more than 1,000 new products across 17 categories on Prime Day this year on August 6 and 7. Thousands of local shops on Amazon sellers will be also making their Prime Day debut in India, the e-tailer said in a statement. Start-ups and small businesses from Amazons Launchpad programme will be launching unique products, it said.



Net rises to ₹13,248 cr in June quarter
Reliance posts record profit

New Delhi, July 30: Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) on Thursday reported record net profit of Rs 13,248 crore in the June quarter after one-time gain from stake sale as well as bumper telecom revenues cushioned Covid-19-hit earnings from refining, petchem and retail segments.

The net profit in April-June was 30.6 per cent higher than it was in the same period a year back, and bettered the company's previous best of Rs 11,640 crore earning in October-December 2019, the company said in a statement.

The conglomerate said it had a one-time gain of Rs 4,966 crore from sale of 49 per cent stake in fuel retailing venture to BP plc.

This together with 183 per cent jump in Reliance Jio's standalone net profit to Rs 2,520 crore covered up drop in earnings from mainstay segments.

Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) declined by 11.8 per cent to Rs 21,585 crore "due to lower contribution from oil-to-chemical (O2C) business, which was impacted by significant demand destruction and margin pressure across transportation fuels and polyester chain."

Also, lower realisation in the export market also impacted profitability.

"Closure of stores and restrictions on operations across the country due to Covid-19 contributed to a



COGNIZANT Q2 INCOME DOWN 29%, SEES STRONG GROWTH AHEAD

New Delhi, July 30: IT major Cognizant has reported a 29 per cent drop in the June quarter net income at \$361 million (around Rs 2,701 crore), but is confident of logging strong growth in the coming quarters on the back of strong bookings and demand for digital services.

The US-based company, which posted net income of \$509 million in the June 2019 quarter, said it expects its FY2020 revenue to be in the range of \$16.4-16.7 billion.

For the June 2020 quarter, Cognizant's revenue saw 3.4 per cent decline (2.5 per cent in constant currency) at \$4 billion from \$4.14 billion in the year-ago period.

Cognizant, which has about 2 lakh employees based in India, follows January-December as financial year.

"We delivered a solid second quarter performance whilst continuing to improve our competitiveness," Cognizant CEO Brian Humphries said.

decrease in Ebitda of Retail business. This was partially offset by an increase in Ebitda of Digital services business due to improved margins and continued subscriber momentum," it said.

RIL chairman Mukesh D

Ambani said: "The severe demand destruction due to global lockdowns impacted our hydrocarbons business but the flexibility in our operations enabled us to operate at near normal levels and deliver industry-leading results".

J&J vaccine protects monkeys with one shot

JULIE STEENHUYSEN
JULY 30

Johnson & Johnson on Thursday kicked off US human safety trials for its Covid-19 vaccine after releasing details of a study in monkeys that showed its best-performing vaccine candidate offered strong protection in a single dose.

When exposed to the virus, six out of six animals who got the vaccine candidate were completely protected from lung disease and five out of six were protected from infection as measured by the presence of virus in nasal swabs, according to the study published in the journal *Nature*.

"This gives us confidence that we can test a single-shot vaccine in this epidemic and learn whether it has a protective effect in humans," Dr. Paul Stoffels, J&J's chief scientific officer, told Reuters in a telephone interview.

The drugmaker said it had started early-stage human trials in the United States and Belgium and would test its vaccine candidate in more than 1,000 healthy adults aged 18 to 55 years, as well as adults aged 65 years and older.

The US government is backing J&J's vaccine effort with \$456 million in funding as part of a spending spree aimed at speeding production of a vaccine.

Audit found cybersecurity lapses at NPCI last year

New Delhi, July 30: A government audit of India's flagship payments processor last year found more than 40 security vulnerabilities, including several it called "critical" and "high" risk, according to an internal government document seen by Reuters.

The audit, which took place over four months to February 2019, highlighted a lack of encryption of personal data at the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) which forms the backbone of the country's digital payments system and operates the RuPay card network championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The March 2019 government document cited the storing of 16-digit card numbers and other personal information such as customer names, account numbers and national identity numbers in "plain text" in some databases, leaving the data unprotected if the system was breached.

The NPCI said in a statement to Reuters it is regularly audited in the interests of security and senior management reviews all findings, which are then "remediated to (the) satisfaction of the auditors".

National cyber security coordinator Rajesh Pant, whose office coordinated the audit, also said in a statement to Reuters that "all observations raised in last year's report have been confirmed as resolved by the NPCI".

The audit was undertaken to provide the National Security Council with an overview of the NPCI's



defences against cyberattacks. The PMO and the finance ministry did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The audit's findings underscore the data-security challenges faced by the NPCI which processes billions of dollars daily via services that include inter-bank fund transfers, ATM transactions and digital payments.

Set up in 2008, the NPCI is a not-for-profit company, which as of March 2019, counted 56 banks as its shareholders, including the State Bank of India, Citibank and HSBC.

RuPay has grown to account for almost two-thirds of nearly 900 million debit and credit cards issued in India as of October, according to NPCI and central bank data.

The audit followed a Reserve Bank of India inspection report on the NPCI in July 2017 that found lapses in its internal auditing practices, operational risks and improper whistleblower policies.

There was "lack of awareness of risks and

risk culture in the institution," according to a mostly redacted version of the 37-page report that was obtained by Reuters via the Right to Information Act (RTI) last year.

The 2019 government document about the audit also noted: "There is a strong need for proper governance."

The RBI conducted another inspection between November and December 2019. A 33-page report on that audit included its assessment of NPCI's governance and operational and credit risks. But most of the report, also obtained by Reuters via the RTI Act, was redacted by the central bank, which cited the need to protect India's and the NPCI's economic interests.

The March 2019 government document said a variety of card numbers were unencrypted within the NPCI database for the country's network of almost 250,000 ATMs, while unencrypted RuPay card numbers could also be seen in the organisation's server logs.

— Reuters

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Danish cries foul over Umar case

New Delhi: Former Pakistan spinner Danish Kaneria, who has been trying get his life ban for spot-fixing lifted, on Thursday said PCB's decision to reduce Umar Akmal's suspension for failing to report corrupt approaches smacks of double standards.

The likes of Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Asif and Salman Butt, who too were found guilty of spot-fixing like Kaneria, have been allowed back into the PCB fold. "You call it zero tolerance policy for corruption. Umar was proved guilty but still his ban has been halved. They showed compassion in his case. Amir, Asif, Salman too were allowed to come back, why leave me out?" he asked.

"Why don't they show the same compassion in my case? They say I talk about my religion (he is a Hindu) but what do I say when the discrimination is crystal clear. I am just going by simple logic," he said from Karachi. Independent adjudicator Faqir Mohammad Khokhar stated in his order on Tuesday that the case against Akmal was proved to the hilt. — PTI

Shooting coach is Covid-19 positive

New Delhi: A shooting coach at the Dr Karni Singh Range here has tested positive for Covid-19 but the development will not force a closure of the facility, where the Olympic core group will start training from August 1.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI), in a press release, said the woman coach intimidated the result of her test to it on Thursday but since she did not come in contact with any of the shooters, the facility will remain open for training. The Karni Singh range was reopened on July 8. "The coach had visited the centre's administrative department only on July 24. She did not visit the field of play or interacted with any athlete training at the centre," SAI stated.

Champs thumped

Juve crash to humiliating defeat in Italy

Milan, July 30: Juventus crashed to a humiliating 0-2 defeat at Cagliari on Wednesday, days after sealing their ninth consecutive Italian league title, prompting coach Maurizio Sarri to consider fielding his Under-23 team in Saturday's finale to conserve resources ahead of their Champions League challenge.

Cagliari's 20-year-old forward Luca Gagliano tapped in the opener eight minutes into his first Serie A match, beating veteran Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon to score his first top division goal.

And the young Italian then teed up Giovanni Simeone in first half stoppage time to give Cagliari their first win over top bracket Juventus in 11 years.

Cristiano Ronaldo missed the chance to keep pace with Serie A's leading scorer Ciro Immobile, the Portuguese now four goals behind the Lazio forward's tally of 35 with one match remaining.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner had a goal ruled offside after 16 minutes and was denied twice by Cagliari goalkeeper Alessio Cragnano as the 13th-placed Sardinians ended their eight-match winless run.

It was a worrying performance for Sarri's side, who have won just two of their last seven games, with key forwards Paulo Dybala and Douglas Costa fighting for fitness ahead of the Champions League showdown with Lyon on August 7 in Turin, when they need to overturn a 1-0 first-leg deficit. — AFP



Cagliari's Luca Gagliano (left) celebrates after scoring during their Italian league match against Juventus at the Sardegna Arena stadium in Cagliari, Italy, on Wednesday. Cagliari won 2-0.

— AP

Criminal case against Fifa chief Infantino

Geneva, July 30: A criminal case against FIFA president Gianni Infantino was opened Thursday by a Swiss special prosecutor, plunging world football's governing body in a new scandal.

Special prosecutor Stefan Keller has concluded there is enough evidence to take the case to court after investigating the circumstances of a meeting Infantino had with Swiss attorney general Michael Lauber, who offered his resignation last week.

"Keller has uncovered elements that make up reprehensible behavior," according to a statement from the Swiss authority overseeing the federal prosecutors office.

Keller opened a criminal case against Infantino as well as Valais prosecutor Rinaldo Arnold, and has sought authorisation to open a legal case against Lauber, too, according to a statement from the Swiss authority.

Keller, a legal expert named to the post of special prosecutor on June 29,

found possible infractions included abuse of public office, breach of official secrecy, assisting offenders and incitement to these acts, the supervisory authority for the office of the attorney general said in its statement, adding other criminal acts and proceedings could also be considered.

The Bahraini is senior vice president of FIFA so would be in line to replace Infantino temporarily if he was suspended due to the criminal case.

— AP

BARTY SAYS NO TO US OPEN OVER COVID

Sydney, July 30: World number one Ashleigh Barty pulled out of the US Open Thursday over "significant risks" from the Coronavirus pandemic in a major blow for the Grand Slam, which is scheduled to start in New York on August 31.

The Australian is the biggest name so far to withdraw from the tournament, with her decision coming as the United States marked a grim milestone when its Covid-19 deaths topped 150,000.

"My team and I have decided that we won't be travelling to the US for the Western and Southern Open and the US Open this year," she said in a statement to Australian media.

"I love both events so it was a difficult decision but there are still significant risks involved due to COVID-19 and I don't feel comfortable putting my team and I in that position."

"I wish the USTA all the best for the tournaments and look forward to being back in the US next year," she added.

Her decision came despite the New York area keeping Coronavirus cases at a relatively low level since spiking in March and April while areas such as Florida, Texas and California have become hotspots.

It was not unexpected from Barty, who last month expressed concerns about the US Open going ahead, and she won plenty of support Thursday on social media for her "sensible" decision to give it a miss.

Barty, who surged to the top of the rankings last year and has stayed there since, said she would continue to monitor the situation.

— AFP

Willey whips Irish cream

Southampton, July 30: David Willey marked his return to England duty with five wickets during an Ireland collapse at Southampton on Thursday as One-Day International cricket resumed for the first time since the Coronavirus lockdown.

Willey took 5-30 as Ireland were all out for 172 in 44.4 overs after losing the toss in a match that launches the new World Cup Super League, which will determine qualification for the 2023 50-over showpiece in India.

Curtis Campher stood tall amidst the ruins with an unbeaten 59 while Andy McBrine made 40 for Ireland.

Given the first over by England captain Eoin Morgan, Willey needed just four balls to have Ireland dangerous Paul Stirling chipping an

inswinger to the skipper at midwicket. And Ireland were 7-2 when captain Andy Balbirnie was caught behind driving at Willey.

Ireland ODI debutant Harry Tector was then bowled for a nine-ball duck by Saqib Mahmood.

Gareth Delany hit five fours in his 22 before he struck Willey straight to Tom Banton at backward point. And next ball the 30-year-old Willey, the son of former England batsman and umpire David Willey, had Lorcan Tucker lbw for a duck on review to leave Ireland in dire straits at 28-5 inside seven overs.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Ireland 172 in 44.4 overs (Gareth Delany 22, Kevin O'Brien 22, Curtis Campher 59 n.o., Andy McBrine 40, David Willey 5/30, Saqib Mahmood 2/36) vs England.

— AFP

JUNIOR | CRICKET

Sunil is named South mentor

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 30

Cricketer Association of Telangana secretary Sunil Babu Kolanpaka has been appointed South Zone mentor of the Junior Cricket Championship (JCC) that was launched earlier this year by Seven3Sports to promote the game among Indian youth.

The initiative aims to create 100 private clubs across the country for boys aged 8 to 18 across three age segments through talent hunt as JCC plans to engage them on an integrated platform.

"It's a great privilege to be involved with this project which focuses on schoolkids and strives to provide them exposure. Also, it's a pleasure to work alongside former Indian cricketers," Sunil said pointing to Chetan

Sharma, Ashok Malhotra and Surinder Khanna who are mentors of Central, East and North Zones respectively.

Dronacharya Awardee Sanjay Bhardwaj is the mentor for West Zone.

Malhotra is president of the Indian Cricketers Association while Khanna is on the IPL Governing Council as the ICA representative.

"JCC is specifically designed to integrate online and offline cricketing activities and will offer a fair, inclusive and merit-based opportunity to all. Matches will be played on a zonal basis followed by a national round, from which a team will be selected and provided exposure in England," Sunil said, adding interested players should log on to https://jcc-india.com/ for pre-registrations, for a fee.