


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | SUNDAY | 11 JULY 2021

WEATHER

 **Max:** 32.0°C
Min: 25.0°C
RH: 69%
Rainfall: 6.5mm

Forecast: Rain and Humid.
Max/Min temp.
32/25 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Ashada Shuddha Padyami
till 7.45 am
Star: Pushyami till 2.19 am
(Monday)
Varjyam: 9.26 am to 11.07 am
Durmuhurtam: 5.06 pm to
5.58 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 29,1441 AH
PRAYERS
(ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.00 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.50 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.36 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.29 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.42 PM

COUNTER POINT



**Happy population day...
more population,
more voters!**

SHORT TAKES

Eric Garcetti is US envoy to India

Washington: US President Joe Biden on Friday nominated Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, to be ambassador to India. Garcetti, who has led country's second-largest city since 2013 with a focus on improving transportation and sustainability, declined to run for president last year but has been widely seen as seeking to burnish his credentials with a new job.

■ Report on Page 5

4 held with heroin worth ₹2,500 cr

New Delhi: The Delhi Police Special Cell has arrested four men, including an Afghan and recovered a record 354 kilograms of heroin worth over ₹2,500 crore from them, officials said. The accused have been identified as Rizwan Kashmiri, a resident of Ghitorni here and native of Anantnag in Jammu and Kashmir, Gurpreet Singh and Gurjot Singh, both residents of Jalandhar in Punjab and Hazrat Ali, from Afghanistan, they said.

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**Boat owners want
tourism to restart**

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**Kabul rushes troops
to border**

MONSOON | ERRANT

Deficit rain slows down cultivation

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Deficit rainfall in coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh has slowed down cultivation activity this kharif season. The north and coastal AP districts received deficit rainfall and Rayalaseema districts received excess rainfall in June month which is considered as the beginning of kharif sowings.

Chittoor, Anantapur, Kadapa and Kurnool districts had received an average of 103.8 mm rainfall in June which was 43.6 mm

excess to normal rainfall of 72.3 mm. The targeted cultivation area in 13 districts of AP for kharif-2021 is 38,13,859 hectares and sowing activity has been started in only 5,75,884 hectares. According to the Directorate of Economics and Statistics (DES) on Rainfall in Andhra Pradesh, the Rayalaseema districts - Chittoor, Kadapa, Anantapur and Kurnool - received an average of 103.8 mm of rainfall in June that was 43.6 mm excess compared to normal rainfall of 72.3 mm. Chittoor district received 98.5 mm against

● **THE TARGETED cultivation area in 13 districts of AP for kharif-2021 is 38,13,859 hectares and sowing activity has been started in only 5,75,884 hectares.**

normal rainfall of 78.7 mm, Kadapa 109.3 mm against 89.2 mm, Anantapur 102.9 mm against 63.9 mm and Kurnool 104.3 mm against 77.2 mm rainfall during June month. South coastal district received normal rainfall of 61.1 mm against 74.7 mm

normal rainfall in June. Krishna district received 100 mm rainfall against 97.8 mm, Guntur 81.7 mm against 88.3 mm, Prakasam 42.3 mm against 58 mm and Nellore 20.4 mm against 56.8 mm rainfall in June. The north coastal districts received deficit rainfall of 85.5 mm against 126.1 mm. Srikakulam district received 82 mm rainfall against 134.9 mm, Vizianagaram 83.4 mm against 128.4 mm, Visakhapatnam 102.7 mm against 128.8 mm, East Godavari received 88.0 mm

against 123.7 mm and West Godavari district received 71.5 mm rainfall against normal rainfall of 114.7 mm during June. Farmers B Seetharamaiah and K Brahmaiah said irrigation water was must but the deficit rain slowed down the sowing activity. They said the sowing activity would pick up in the second half of July with the release of irrigation water in the canals and due to seasonal rains.

■ **Page 2: Deficit rain only in north coastal districts**

Sky no limit for Sirisha Bandla



An artist paints a portrait of astronaut Sirisha Bandla in Mumbai on Saturday. Sirisha, the Indian-origin aeronautical engineer who was born in Guntur and brought up in Houston, Texas, will join Sir Richard Branson, Virgin Galactic's billionaire founder, and five others on board SpaceShip Two Unity to make a journey to the edge of space from New Mexico on Sunday.

— PTI

TS stops N'sagar hydel power

AP sees bid to avoid criticism as Pulichintala was filling fast

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Telangana state government has stopped hydroelectric power generation from Nagarjunasagar dam main power house with a capacity of 810 mw at about 12 noon on Saturday. AP water resources authorities say that power generation has come down at Srisaillam project as water level in the reservoir dipped to 810. 24 ft with the current storage of 34.39 tmc ft (15.94 per cent). With zero

inflow of water into the reservoir, outflow was recorded at 6,357 cusecs. At Nagarjunasagar dam, current water level was recorded at 530.81 ft with storage of water to the tune of 166.59 tmc ft (53.39%) against gross capacity at FRL of 312.05 tmc ft with inflow and outflow registering 1,000 cusecs each. At Pulichinthala project, current water level was recorded at 171.03 feet with current storage of water at 39.83 tmc ft (87.02%) against gross capacity at FRL of 45.77

tmc ft of water while inflow and outflow of water were recorded at 6,790 cusecs each. At Prakasam barrage, current level of water was recorded at 57.05 ft with current storage of 3.07 tmc ft of water (100%) against gross capacity at FRL of 3.07 tmc ft of water and inflow of water was recorded at 14,024 cusecs and outflow was at 12,646 cusecs of water. The AP water resources authorities maintain that as Pulichinthala is getting huge quantum of water and it may get filled

up to the capacity as water was being released from both Srisaillam and Nagarjunasagar projects for power generation by TS, the latter may have stopped power generation from Nagarjunasagar. This may result in more water at Pulichinthala forcing the authorities to lift spillway gates and discharge huge quantities of water into Prakasam barrage and from there into the sea. They say that as this may lead to criticism for wasting water into the sea, TS may have stopped generation to avoid it.

AP'S IRON ORE TENDER: K'TAKA SAYS BORDER NOT DEMARCATED

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JULY 9

A controversy has erupted over the mining department inviting tenders for mining of iron ore in D Hirehal mandal, in the western boundary region of the state, as the Karnataka government says a survey to demarcate the boundary line remains unfinished. The Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC), fully owned by the state government, invited e-tenders from experienced and competent bidders for exploration, development and operations of 25 hectares of the iron ore deposit area at H Siddapuram village in D Hirehal mandal of the district a week ago. The mining operations will be on a raising-cum-sale-contract basis.

■ **Page 2: Bidders asked to register on AP portal**

Cabinet reshuffle rumours get loud

Several YSRC aspirants hoping to get berths

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Speculation is rife about a Cabinet reshuffle and many aspirants including firebrand YSRC leaders are pinning hopes on getting berths. The YSRC came into power with a mammoth majority and there was huge competition for Cabinet berths during that time. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy decided to reshuffle the Cabinet after two-and-a-half years to give chance to others. Recently, the BJP-led Central government was reshuffled as per equations to face the elections. Similarly, the YSRC will rejig the state Cabinet for the next general elections to strengthen the party. Jagan Mohan Reddy, under social engineering

concept, kept five deputy Chief Ministers' posts and priority to all sections in his Cabinet. There was no representation of minorities in the earlier Telugu Desam (TD) government but Jagan gave deputy Chief Minister's post to Amzath Basha who belongs to a minority community. The YSRC legislators who had played active roles when the party was in Opposition were hoping to be placed in the Cabinet but missed and now, they are expecting ministries in the Cabinet reshuffle. According to the sources, the CM is considering the performance of ministers to continue them further in the Cabinet but only a few countable ministers were on the safe side. According to the sources, the Cabinet is expected to make another

reshuffle in the next three months or in December this year. The sources informed that the Chief Minister was unhappy with the performance of some ministers and they would be sacked from the Cabinet. Jagan Mohan Reddy, in a major development, stripped two of his ministers of important portfolios by their subjects from revenue to finance department. Registrations and stamps being looked after by deputy CM Dharmana Krishna Das and commercial taxes department being looked after by Deputy CM K. Narayana Swamy were transferred to finance under the charge of finance minister Buggana Rajendranth Reddy.

■ **Page 2: Wide debate about new Cabinet ministers**

Shah to empower all coops

New Delhi, July 10: The government is determined to make cooperatives and all cooperative institutions more empowered, Union minister Amit Shah, who met some leading figures of the country's cooperative sector on Saturday, said. The meeting came three days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi reallocated the portfolios of his ministers in which Shah was given the charge of the newly-created Ministry of Cooperation. Those who met the Union home minister include chairman of the National Cooperative Uni-on of India Dileep Sanghani, the chairman and the managing director of the Indian

Farmers Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) B.S. Nakai and U.S. Awasthi respectively and chairman of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) Bijender Singh. "Today met @ncuicoop chairman Dileep Sanghani ji, @IFFCO_PR chairman B.S. Nakai ji, managing director U.S. Awasthi ji and @nafedindia chairman Dr Bijendra Singh ji. Officials said even though Shah has not yet assumed the charge of the ministry of cooperation, he has begun to meet people. In the meeting, the minister asked cooperatives like IFFCO and KRIBHCO to

work in the field of seed production using vacant land of 38,000 hectares as well as in organic farming, the NCUI said in a separate statement. Shah also assured the delegation that the same benefits given to Farmer Producer Organisations will be provided to primary agriculture cooperatives in the country for strengthening them, it added. In the meeting, the minister desired that a conference with representatives of state-level cooperatives should be organised by NCUI, IFFCO and other cooperatives for discussing issues confronting the cooperative movement.

— PTI



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SHORT BRIEF

NEED EXPLANATION ON OBJECTIONS TO LOANS: PAC TO CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 10

Payyavula Keshav, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of AP Legislative Assembly, on Saturday demanded the YSRC government to explain whether or not the Union Finance Ministry had taken strong objection to loans of ₹17,923 crore taken by the state in excess of the ceiling imposed.

In a statement, the PAC Chairman asserted that the objections of the Centre were enough to understand how the AP finances and economy were crumbling under the Jagan Mohan Reddy misrule.

“It was high time that the Chief Minister, Finance Minister and the AP Finance Department should give an explanation to the public on the Centre’s letters,” Keshav said.

3 SPECIAL OFFICERS APPOINTED FOR HOUSING WORKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Three special officers were appointed to coordinate the construction of houses under YSR Congress government’s flagship Navaratnalu Pedalandariki Illu to complete the targets. M. Kamalakara Babu, OSD, appointed as incharge of housing programme for Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari Districts. M. Siva Prasad, OSD appointed as incharge of housing programme for Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore Districts. P. Sree Ramulu Chief Engineer appointed incharge of housing programmes for Anantapur, Kadapa, Kurnool and Chittoor districts. These officers would supervise the housing programme with coordination of concerned District Officials and reports will be submitted to the Special CS and Managing Director housing department.

Special Chief Secretary to Government for housing, Ajay Jain said that instructions were given to all the Joint Collectors (Housing), Project Directors Housing to concentrate on completing the construction of Houses within stipulated time. He said that the offline grounded houses are being updated in the Website and the task would be completed soon. He said that 9.95 lakh houses had been grounded during a three day mega housing grounding programme and now the details of 7,39,613 grounded houses were updated on the website.

MEDICOS TO MOVE HC TO PROMOTE THEM TO 2ND YEAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

First year medical students of the 2019 batch who failed to get promoted to the second year due to backlogs are to move the AP High Court seeking entry to the second year.

T. Srinivas Vishwanath, AP Medical Students Parents Association state convener, said here on Saturday that 450 students were affected. He said the students and their parents would file a petition in the HC on Monday.

He said that a delegation comprising association members met the Dr Aruna V. Vanikar, president of the National Medical Commission’s UG Medical Education Board, and adviser Saxena in New Delhi recently and explained to them about the difficulties that students face while taking online classes, failure to get support from their faculty members.

He said that they also informed the NMC that the NTR University and the college managements failed to bring about awareness among the students on new pattern of exam resulting in some students lost 20 marks in each paper as they failed to answer the questions in allotted time and added that the university also made some mistakes in setting question papers. He said that some students failed to appear for the exams as they were infected with Covid-19. He stated that the affected students and their parents met the NTR university registrar and vice chancellor and sought their intervention to allow them to appear to attend second year classes. They also took the issue to the notice of Health Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas and others to take their issue to the notice of the CM for his intervention.

Neta’s Natter

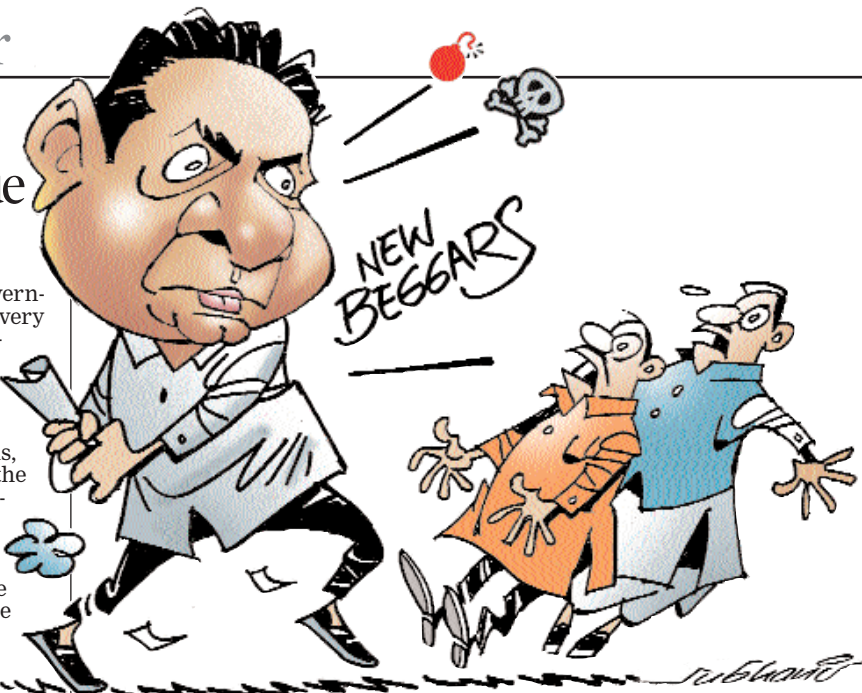
AP’s move to increase revenue boomerangs!

The Andhra Pradesh government has been trying every trick to meet its mounting expenses. However, all those efforts seem to be of no use, and, making matters worse, they also create utter confusion among the officials, resulting in further loss to the exchequer. The latest experiment that AP has undertaken is to bring the taxes and registration departments into the fold of the finance department, a practice unheard in the state administration for decades. The task has been entrusted to a secretary-level officer, N. Gulzar, which came as a shock to many officials. They are said to be wondering how such a change can improve the state finances. They feel that the move will certainly increase red-tapism as the finance department is already loaded with pending files and anything more will only add to further delays.

Babus propose, but the big boss disposes

A new trend has emerged in Andhra Pradesh babudom. Officers themselves have been deciding on what posts they want to handle or at least propagating their choices of the posts. Senior bureaucrat Sameer Sharma, who is currently on Central deputation, requested Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to allow him to join the state cadre before retirement. Coming back to the state will help the officer make some monetary gains in the form of post-retirement benefits. The Chief Minister immediately agreed and a request was sent to the Centre to relieve him. The order of his repatriation was drafted in such a manner that it appeared that the officer was being sent back on the request of the state government and it coincided with the end of term of chief secretary Adityanath Das. Rumours started just a night before Das’ retirement that Sameer Sharma will be the new chief secretary, only to subside the next day when the Centre extended the former’s tenure by three months. Then came the illusionary transfer of Gandham Chandrudu as Visakhapatnam collector. He was shunted out of Anantapur recently and put in charge of the village secretariat administration. The WhatsApp group of babus received a forward message of someone congratulating him on being appointed as Visakhapatnam collector from Chandrudu himself. Some media publications even uploaded to their web editions the news of his appointment which later turned out to be fake.

● **RUMOURS STARTED** just a night before Das’ retirement that Sameer Sharma will be the new chief secretary, only to subside the next day when the Centre extended the former’s tenure



KTR joins foul-mouthed club

TRS working president and IT minister K.T. Rama Rao, may be unwillingly, has joined the race of ranters, apparently to survive among aggressive leaders of Opposition parties. Rama Rao had carved a place for himself during the Telangana agitation and subsequently in the government led by his father K. Chandrashekar Rao. Smart, sophisticated and a go-getter, Rama Rao won the hearts of many, particularly the urban middle class and the elite. Active on social media, the minister used them to convey his views, ideas and highlight his efforts besides lending a helping hand to the needy. He has also been credited with success in developing the capital city and attracting investments. But changes in the political arena following the appointment of Congress MP A. Revanth Reddy as Pradesh Congress Committee chief and his BJP counterpart Bandi Sanjay preparing himself for a walkathon, seem to have made the minister rethink. Moreover, his father himself becoming hyperactive in the recent past turned the arc lights slightly away from the son. The two opposition leaders succeeded in drawing media and thereby public attention for, what the political analysts say, speaking to the Chief Minister in his own language. Neither the Chief Minister nor his two adversaries think for a moment to use language that puts the sophisticated lot ill at ease. Now comes Rama Rao with a verbal attack on his political adversaries whom he described as “new beggars on the street”. Welcome to the club!



TS political leaders, high officials immune to rules, even for Covid

Has the Covid-19 called it a day in Telangana state? Or may be gone on a vacation? It certainly appears so if one were to see various ministers, MLAs, MLCs, Opposition leaders and anyone and everyone, waltzing around the city and the rest of the state without wearing the mandatory face mask. Even the state’s top bureaucrats do not seem to care much for the orders issued by the Chief Secretary for not wearing a face mask while in a public space, punishable by a fine of Rs 1,000. Such events can be seen every day in every news bulletin on television news channels, in videos forwarded by the PROs of the ministers and MLAs and Opposition leaders, and anywhere and everywhere. The other day, a minister

and a former minister held a press conference about the upcoming Bonalu festival and spoke about how Covid-19 safety guidelines would be strictly followed to ensure safety of all those who might participate in the festivities in temples across the city. Only, neither the current minister, nor the former one, was wearing a face mask while promising citizens that safety of the people was paramount for the Telangana state government. Meanwhile, the police are yet to make a single announcement of slapping a ₹1,000 fine on any minister, and the rest of the political class members. Clearly, two sets of rules are in operation in the state, one for the elite ruling class, and another for the common folk.

Boat owners want tourism to restart

Operators had been jobless due to the pandemic

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Private boat operators appealed to the state government to permit them to ply boats on the Godavari river to popular tourist destinations like Papikondalu and others during the ensuing festive season beginning from October.

As the state government recently launched operations of AP Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) boats from Pochamma Gandhi to Papikondalu carrying tourists, private boat operators too want to operate their boats as they have been unable to operate their boats for nearly two years following the tragic boat mishap at Katchuluru in East Godavari in September 2019, depriving their source of livelihood. Nearly 4,000 families directly or indirectly depend upon boat operations to make their living.

Nearly 60 boats and launches used to ply on the Godavari river transporting tourists and of them, about 25 boats underwent overhaul to comply with safety norms while the plying of the launches is uncertain once the Polavaram dam gets completed.

As private boat operators got registration and licence to operate them on the Godavari river from port authorities after complying with all safety norms, they want APTDC to issue no objection certificate and water resources authorities to issue route maps based on

● **NEARLY 4,000** families directly or indirectly depend upon boat operations to make their living. Nearly 60 boats and launches used to ply on the Godavari river transporting tourists.

bathymetric survey. They also want the state government to come up with modalities to operate the boats, especially dealing with the price of tickets.

At present, the APTDC is charging ₹750 per head for an adult and ₹650 for a child, including road transport, food including breakfast, lunch, tea and snacks from Rajahmundry to Pochamma Gandhi by road and from there to Papikondalu on the river and return to the place of origin, between 9 am to 5 pm in a day in their AC boat. However, private boat operators want the ticket price to be fixed at nearly ₹1,200 per head assuring quality transport and food in their AC boats, given the huge burden of maintaining four crew persons with each to be paid ₹15,000 per month and other maintenance and operation costs. They allege that APTDC’s big AC boat incurred nearly ₹10,000 loss for its Papikondalu trip as the ticket price is very low and they cannot afford to operate their boats by incurring loss.

They want the state government to take the initiative to promote tourism on the Godavari river especially to the Papikondalu by giving good publicity and also to

release modalities to operate the boats in the context of safety. They also want the government to come up with Covid-19 protocol to be complied with, in case the virus still prevails during October with regard to occupancy of seats and other norms.

A private boat owner Raja Viswanath Kumar said, “We appeal to the state government to permit private boat operators to operate their boats on the Godavari river carrying tourists once the flood season is over and during the commencement of festive season in October as we have been unable to operate boats for nearly two years and are facing severe financial hardships. We want the APTDC and private operators to enter into an MoU and operate boats together by fixing reasonable rates for tickets with quality service and food.”

Another boat owner, P.V. Ramakrishna Rao said, “We want clarity on what level of water the boats to be permitted to ply on the Godavari at Sir Arthur Cotton barrage, how much to be paid for maintenance of control rooms, food to be served packed or open and fate of launches to ply on river as they are not registered with port authorities for want of overhaul for safety.”

The state government also has to decide on plying of boats from Singanapalli in West Godavari to Papikondalu as tourists from Hyderabad arrive to take darshan at Bhadrachalam temple and sail on Godavari to Papikondalu.

TS violated KRMB orders, says Sajjala

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

YSR Congress alleged that the Telangana government was indulging in politics on Krishna water sharing even as there were crystal clear norms.

Advisor to the government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy alleged that Telangana government has violated KRMB orders and its construction of projects illegally would deprive Andhra Pradesh from getting water from Krishna River.

The YSRC conducted a virtual meeting on Saturday on AP’s water rights issues and consumption of Krishna waters by the two states. The meeting was attended by Ramakrishna Reddy, minister for water resources, P. Anil Kumar Yadav and other leaders. Speaking on the occasion, Ramakrishna Reddy recalled that Telangana Chief Minister K

Chandrasekhar Rao assured to cooperate in helping quench the thirst of Rayalaseema region but he was now creating obstacles to the Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme.

Reddy claimed that Telangana constructed illegal irrigation projects during Telugu Desam government but the then CM N. Chandrababu Naidu did not raise any objections despite deeksha protest by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. He recalled that AP and Telangana governments had agreed to the allotment of water but now the Telangana government is violating the norms by starting power generation using Krishna waters. He said that they would fight against the injustice meted out to AP.

Anil Kumar said that Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) came into existence under provisions in Section 85 of AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.

TUNGABHADRA DAM RECEIVES 34 TMC FT WATER FROM HEAVY RAINS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JULY 10

In view of constant inflows from upstream parts of Western Ghats, the Tungabhadra Reservoir received constant inflows and TB dam reported 35,786 TMC ft capacity on Saturday. As against 1633 ft capacity,

the dam reported storage level of 1610.28 ft.

Dam authorities hoped the TB reservoir would get full storage capacity of water around August 15. A senior official from TB dam hoped to release water into the river by lifting all gates as part of I-Day celebrations, which is a tradition here.

RAYALASEEMA STARES AT SEVERE FAMINE: SOMIREDDY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JULY 10

Telugu Desam leader Somireddy Chandrababu Naidu criticised CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for writing letters to the Centre. This will not help Rayalaseema, which is now in a dangerous position. He wanted to know when more than 8,000 cusecs of water was flowing into the sea every day, why was he afraid to blame K.

Chandrasekhar Rao. Addressing a press conference here on Saturday along with politburo member Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy (Vasu), he said it was time to go to Delhi and settle the issue, otherwise Nellore and Prakasam districts would face severe famine. He recalled that N. Chandrababu Naidu had opposed the Palamuru-Ranga Reddy and Dindi projects in Telangana during the apex council meeting held in 2016. He said that Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy persuaded Jawaharlal Nehru during his tenure as CM to bring in the Srisaillam project to rejuvenate the drought-stricken Rayalaseema.

He questioned why Jagan was not opening his mouth even though all the important projects in Kadapa district were drying up today and the KCR government was acting in a way that would cause damage to Rayalaseema.

Wide debate about new Cabinet

From Page 1

There is widespread debate over who will replace the current ministers in the forthcoming cabinet expansion. According to sources, the positions of Ch. Venugopalakrishna and Sidiri Appalaraju, who became ministers in the middle after Pilli Subhash Chandra Bose and Mopidevi Venkataramana became MPs after the first Cabinet expansion, are safe for now. Apart from them, senior ministers Botsa Satyanarayana, Peddireddy Ramachandra

Reddy, Mekapati Gautham Reddy, P. Anil Kumar Yadav, Kursala Kannababu, Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Nani, Muttamsetti Srinivas, Mekathoti Sucharita and Buggana Rajendranath Reddy are on the safe side.

The present situation in districts would also be considered to give chance to legislators in the Cabinet reshuffle. Opposition TD is continuously campaigning against YSRCP government from the beginning on every issue for the past 25 months, halted many

government programmes and schemes taking advantage of technical snags and but only a few ministers strongly retaliated opposition attacks hence political activeness also would be considered in view of coming elections in performance evaluation.

This time the list of leaders hoping for ministerial posts is big. According to sources, senior leader and Jagan Mohan Reddy’s relative Y. V. Subba Reddy who worked as TTD chairman is seeking a minister post but the chances seem to be very low. Assembly

Speaker Tammineni Sittaram is also said to be vying for a minister post. Sources further informed that Ambati Rambabu, Samineni Udaya Bhanu, Shilpa Chakrapanireddy, Granthi Srinivas, Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, Talari Venkat Rao, Kalavati, Ushashree Charan, Kiliveti Sanjeevaiah, Kolagatla Veerabhadraswamy, Peedika Rajama Dora, KP Parthasarathy, Jogi Ramesh, Alla Ramakrishna Reddy and others are putting a lot of hopes to get Cabinet berths.

Bidders asked to register on AP portal

From page 1

In the e-auction, the intending bidders were asked to register themselves with the AP e-procurement e-auction portal using valid digital signer certificate. The tender document for the e-tender can be viewed on APMDC website www.apmdc.ap.gov.in or on https://konugolu.ap.gov.in from 02-07-2021.

The bidder shall upload receipt / transaction acknowledgment along with prequalification doc-

uments in the online portal. The last date for submission of technical bid by online is July 23.

The H. Siddapuram mining area has rich iron deposits in the D. Hirehal mandal located closer to Bellary district’s forest area of Karnataka.

A dispute between AP and Karnataka states over demarcation of boundary is ongoing. In view of the illicit mining activities and also because of the damage thereof to the state’s boundary caused by mining companies, the

● **TAPALA GANESH**, mining owner from Ballari, observed in his representation to the authorities that the Survey of India has demarcated Karnataka and AP interstate boundary without considering the original landmark. The original boundary was displaced for about 400 metres.

CBI had filed cases. Thereon, mining activities were stopped for a decade now in D Hirehal mandal. With the APMDC is

inviting e-tenders for mining activities in H. Siddapuram area, more than four lakh million tonnes of rich iron ore, including a major part of it having 65 grade ore, is available.

While Karnataka mining companies have reportedly demanded that the state government stop mining activities because a boundary dispute existed, the central survey teams have not considered village contours for demarcating the boundary.

Tapala Ganesh, mining owner from Ballari, observed in his representation to the authorities that the Survey of India has demarcated Karnataka and AP interstate boundary without considering the original landmark. The original boundary was displaced for about 400 metres from the original line, due to illegal mining activities.

Sources in the mining department observed that the e-tender process was done as per norms without any violation.

DEFICIT RAIN RECORDED ONLY IN THE NORTH COASTAL DISTRICTS

From page 1

AP State Agriculture Mission vice-chairman M.V.S. Nagi Reddy said cultivation and sowing works began in the second week of July and would continue till the end of July. He said there was deficit rainfall only in the north coastal districts and the rest of the state received good rainfall and Rayalaseema received excess rainfall which was a good sign.

IMD Amaravati director S. Stella said from July 8

● **IMD AMARAVATI** director S. Stella said from July 8 there would be seasonal rainfall in almost all districts.

there would be seasonal rainfall in almost all districts and a low pressure would be formed in the West Central Bay which would give good rainfall for north coastal Andhra. She added that there would be normal rainfall in all the districts according to weather reports in the coming days.

SHORT TAKES

TRAINS TO ARAKU,
TIRUPATI TO RUN
FROM JULY 15DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 10

The railways has, on Saturday, decided to restart the operations of key trains including Vizag-Araku and Vizag-Tirupati keeping in view the demand from the passengers, from July 15.

The trains include 08528/27 Vizag-Raipur daily-Vizag will be operated from July 15, while the train 08516/15 Vizag-Araku-Kirandul-Vizag, 08561/62 Vizag-Kacheguda-Vizag, 07488/87 Vizag-Kadapa-Vizag, and 02831/32 Vizag-Lingampalli-Vizag will be operated from July 15.

JAWAN'S LAST
RITES PERFORMED
WITH HONOURSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Last rites of martyred Army Jawan Maruprolu Jaswanth Reddy have been performed with full military honours at his native Dariwada Kothapalem village in Bapatla mandal of Guntur district on Saturday.

Jawan Jaswanth was killed in cross firing between militants and Army at Rajouri in Jammu. Locals and ex-servicemen gathered in large numbers at Dariwada Kothapalem on Saturday. They joined the funeral procession should slogans "Jai Jawan, Jaswanth Reddy Amar Rahe". Army personnel gave the deceased Jawan a gun salute as mark of respect before family members performed the last rites amid tears and sorrow.

Earlier AP home minister Mekatothi Sucharita and AP Legislative Assembly deputy speaker Kona Raghupathi handed over a cheque of ₹50 lakh ex-gratia announced by state government to the jawan's parents.

Sucharita and Raghupathi, apart from Guntur collector Vivek Yadav and district SP Vishal Gunni, were among those who paid floral tributes to the Jawan.

FILM CRITIC
KATHI MAHESH
PASSES AWAYDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Film critic and actor Kathi Mahesh, 43, passed away while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Chennai on Saturday evening.

Mahesh met with an accident while travelling in a car, with his friend at the wheel, suffering injuries to his head and eyes. He was on his way to his native place in Chittoor district on June 26 when the accident occurred. His friend escaped with minor injuries. Mahesh was admitted in a local hospital and later shifted to a private hospital in Chennai for better medical care.

Mahesh gained popularity in the last few years for his sharp reviews of Telugu films and at times, he faced online spat from fans of actors. He acted in films like Hrudaya Kaleyam, Kobburi Matta, Krack and others. He also appeared as a contestant on season one of popular show Bigg Boss Telugu hosted by actor Junior NTR.

He found himself in controversies frequently. He faced trouble for his remarks on Lord Rama and Sita from religious institutions and the police had to exile him from Hyderabad in July, 2018 as his remarks could cause social unrest. Though he received flak for his remarks from several people and religious heads, he got support from those who believed that freedom of expression of the citizens should not be breached.

The Andhra Pradesh government released ₹17 lakh to provide medical treatment to Mahesh recently from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Mahesh had openly appreciated various programmes of YSRC government and even took part in the campaign in support of party nominee Dr Gurumoorthy in Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll. He also took part in a dharna organised by YSRC at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi with a demand for according special category status to AP.

Mahesh was a popular Dalit activist and a staunch critic of Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan.

● **MAHESH HAD** openly appreciated various programmes of YSRC government.

Fish aplenty



Birds flock to the overflowing Prakasam Barrage which is filled with fish from the upstream, in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Sudden slump in oil palm
prices shocks farmers

Rate of fresh fruit bunches fall from ₹19,100 per tonne to ₹16,300

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, JULY 10

Oil palm farmers in West Godavari expressed concern over the sudden slump in the rate of fresh fruit bunches (FFB) from roughly ₹19,100 per tonne to ₹16,300 per tonne within a month due to the fall in international prices. The rate of oil palm bunches is fixed on the formula based on the international prices by the governments.

Oil palm farmers in West Godavari district alleged that the companies had deceived them by not giving minimum support price (MSP). The farmers under the purview of the processing unit at Jangareddygudem complained that the company was deceiving them and they were paid ₹19,100 per tonne in June, but now they were only getting ₹13,500 per tonne after reduction of 'ad hoc advance'.

CREDAI WELCOMES
POSTPONING OF
REVISION IN LAND
VALUESDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Confederation of Real Estate Developers Associations of India (CREDAI) has welcomed AP government's decision to postpone revision of land values in the state.

However, CREDAI AP chairman S. Venkataramaiah, president A. Raja Srinivas and general secretary K. S. C. Bose reiterated that AP government must also reduce stamp duty because construction sector is in a slump due to Coronavirus pandemic, which started in the beginning of 2020.

They said it will take quite some time to recover from the effect Covid-19-induced lockdown has had on the construction industry. Reduction in stamp duty fee will help not only the construction sector but people of entire Andhra Pradesh.

They recalled that on June 29, CREDAI had submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and revenue minister Dharmana Krishnadas seeking cancellation of market value revision, which takes place in August every year.

They thanked the CM and revenue minister for postponing the revision in land values.

However, they asked the state government to reduce stamp duty too. They pointed out that reduced stamp duty will increase revenue to the state government by boosting realty activities and construction industry in the state which, in turn, will lead to more property registrations.

● **THEY THANKED** the CM and revenue minister for postponing the revision in land values.

● **THE FARMERS** under the purview of the processing unit at Jangareddygudem complained that the company was deceiving them and they were paid ₹19,100 per tonne in June, but now they were only getting ₹13,500 per tonne after reduction of 'ad hoc advance'.

They were not even getting the harvesting cost, the farmers complained. They also alleged that the company representatives were rejecting many fresh fruit bunches as unripe and not fit for extraction.

Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham District Secretary K. Srinivas said the prices of FFB were ₹19,100 in June, and in July, the prices had been reduced to ₹16,300. He said that further the company had given training to labourers on the fruit which they should cut after ripening. But now, the company employees were rejecting most of the FFBs and it was a great loss to the farmers.

When asked about these allegations, the company

representatives gave clarification that the prices were fixed by the government and in June, the farmers were paid on the basis of May prices.

"The government will announce the present month prices next month. We will make payments as ad hoc advance to the farmers to their crop. In this case, the farmers have been paid in June based on the May month prices. But the government announced ₹16,300 and so in July for June month prices. If there had been an increase, they would have paid the balance to the farmers. If any slump in the prices, the balance will be deducted during the payment to the farmers," said Navabharat

Company Deputy General Manager Y. Rajagopal.

About the unripe fruits, he said that the company had provided training to labourers by giving stipends to them so that the farmers should not incur losses, he said.

If the farmers encouraged the cutting of unripe-fruit, it would not be made use of either the company or the farmer. Not only that, the farmer should bear additional expenses. If he cut the ripening fruit, the weighing can be increased and it would profit them, he said and added that the government had increased the 'oil extraction rate' to 18.68 per cent from 16 per cent. The farmers will get 75 per cent of participation rate on 18.68 per cent rate.

Nearly 20 lakh tonnes of palm oil fruit is being purchased from nearly 1.52 lakh palm oil gardens in West Godavari district.



Students and women from all walks of life take part in the seminar on Disha Duty Policies towards Women's Safety organised by AP Police at AU Convention Centre on the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

— DC

Disha court in every
district, says DGPDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 10

Director general of police Gautam Sawang said Disha courts would be established in every district of the State as the government has been giving top priority to women security.

Addressing a seminar on awareness on the Disha App held in Visakhapatnam on Saturday, the DGP said Mahila Mitra committee would also be set up in every police station to widen the network.

● **THE DGP Disha App** has been created as per the global standards and every audio and video would be treated as an evidence in the court.

He said Disha App has been created as per the global standards and every audio and video would be treated as an evidence in the court.

Stating that the awareness programmes would be taken to the village level, the DGP said every woman should take the responsibility of

explaining the importance of the App to the women in their vicinity.

He said a large number of women have been taken into the police force and recently 15,000 women have been appointed to the village and ward secretariats. However, Mahila Mitras would not be treated as employees as they would serve as representatives.

He said that 31,100 FIRs have been registered during the last 20 months and that cases were being resolved at an impressive pace.

PANDEMIC | HIT

Collective writes to NHRC to direct state for help

Vimukti wants state help sex workers

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

VIMUKTI, a state-level collective of sex workers and survivors of trafficking in AP, has written to National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) that it direct state government to implement orders helping informal workers, including sex workers, acutely affected by Coronavirus pandemic.

State convener of the collective S. Meharunnisa pointed out that during both waves of Covid, survivors of human trafficking and sex workers faced severe economic, physical and mental issues. But the government's support services for sex workers and rescued survivors had been very nominal, almost nil. Meharunnisa urged the state government to

implement a comprehensive and concrete action plan for ensuring alternative livelihoods for sex workers. This would enable them to lead a life of dignity both during pandemic and post pandemic days.

VIMUKTI convener said all rights and entitlements available to informal workers in India must apply to sex workers too. They must have accessibility to ben-

Jagan offers 100 p.c. rebate
in tax to boost EV businessDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 10

The state government supports eclectic vehicles (EVs) by offering 100 per cent road tax exemption while the Union government offers nearly 30 per cent of the subsidy on the purchase of EVs, said Ravneet Singh Phokela, the chief business officer of Ather Energy.

Speaking to DC on the sidelines of launching Ather's 12th outlet in the city on Saturday, Phokela said that electric motor scooters contribute nearly 40 per cent share in the country's motorcycles by the next five years.

They would open a second outlet in Vijayawada in the state. The vehicle's

● **PHOKELA SAID** that electric motor scooters contribute nearly 40 per cent share in the country's motorcycles by the next five years. They would open a second outlet in Vijayawada in the state. The vehicle's manufacturing unit is based in Tamil Nadu, their company can open manufacturing units in Andhra Pradesh too if the situation demands.

"The Andhra Pradesh government has introduced

several policies to encourage faster adoption and manufacturing of electric vehicles in the state. The state government offers various subsidies for customers like a 100 per cent road tax exemption for newly-purchased EVs. Andhra Pradesh's EV policy supports every aspect of electric mobility and is focused on accelerating the adoption of EVs," Phokela said.

The next generation will have to depend on electric vehicles since the rising cost of fuel prices and other reasons force the people to adopt electric vehicles as an alternative and best option for mobility on the public roads, SN Auto managing director Sudhakar Nagalapati.

TRADE UNIONS
TAKE OUT HUGE
RALLY FOR VSPDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
JULY 10

In the intensifying agitation against the privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, several trade unions took out a massive rally in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. The rally was taken out from Saraswati Park to Gandhi statue via Daba Gardens and culminated into a public meeting.

State secretary of CITU M.A. Gafoor and AITUC general secretary Obulesu addressed the gathering in which they demanded the central government to withdraw the proposals to privatise the steel plant.

Highlighting the importance of the public sector undertakings, Gafoor said Vizag steel plant came to the rescue of the people by providing oxygen and Covid Care centres during the Covid-19 pandemic, which could not have happened in the private sector. He said the BJP government failed to establish a single manufacturing unit in the country but on the other hand closed thousands of them, rendering unemployment to lakhs of people.

FREE EDUCATION TO
THE DAUGHTER OF
HAVALDAR KILLED
BY TERRORISTSDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JULY 10

In a laudable gesture, actor Mohan Babu offered free education to the daughter of a Havaladar, who sacrificed his life for the country, after 18th regiment Commanding Officer Colonel O.L.V. Naresh wrote to him about the plight of the family recently. The Havaladar identified as Ch. Praveen Kumar, 36, belongs to Reddyvaripalle village in Irala mandal of Chittoor district. He was working in the 18th regiment and he was killed in a shootout by terrorists while on duty at Srinagar on November 8, 2020. He was survived by his wife Rajitha apart from a son and daughter. Though everyone condoled his death and praised him, no one helped the family except the government.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Andhra Pradesh registered 2,925 new Covid-19 cases with 26 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Saturday that out of 95,366 samples tested, 2,925 people were infected with Coronavirus. Out of 2,28,94,611 samples tested so far, 19,20,178 persons were infected with the virus and of them, 18,77,930 were recovered while 29,262 are still active with the infection.

Among the daily cases, East Godavari reported the highest at 611 followed by 414 in Chittoor, 361 in West Godavari, 260 in Prakasam, 250 in Krishna, 211 in Guntur, 199 in Nellore, 180 in Kadapa, 139 in Visakhapatnam, 117 in Kurnool, 84 in Anantapur, 67 in Srikakulam and 32 in Vizianagaram.

Mines official rules out illegal
mining of bauxite in VizagDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 10

Mines principal secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi ruled out any illegal mining for bauxite in Visakhapatnam district and said that mining for laterite was permitted at Nathavaram mandal in the district.

He told the media on Saturday that out of six areas leased out for mining for only laterite in the district, the lease period was over for one leaseholder and no mineral was found. No mining was taken up by two leaseholders.

In two leased out areas in the names of Singam

Bhavani and Lovaraju, illegal mining of 2.3 lakh tonnes of laterite was found during the inspection and ₹19 lakh penalty was imposed on two leaseholders and the illegal mining was stopped. No mining was taken up in two more areas leased out areas for want of road connectivity. He said that out of six leased out areas for mining of laterite, no mining took place in five areas.

He said that mining of laterite was being taken up in Nathavaram leased out area in the district and it was confirmed by both Geological Survey of India and Indian Bureau of Mines.

LONGING FOR SON, MAN KILLS INFANT
DAUGHTER, INJURES ELDER SISTERDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 10

Frustrated for not having male children, a man killed his two-year-old daughter and injured her older sister in a ghastly incident that took place in Jodimamidiyalasa village under Salur mandal in Vizianagaram district.

Reports said the man banged his two daughters against the wall as he was angry at his wife for not giving

birth to a son. The younger daughter died on the spot and the older suffered injuries in the incident. The deceased was identified as K. Pravani (2) and the injured girl K. Siri, who was admitted to a hospital. The accused was identified as K. Prasad.

The police said that Prasad, a daily wage worker, married Lakshmi six years ago. He was fond of having sons but the couple had two daughters.

THREE ARRESTED FOR LIQUOR THEFT

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JULY 10

Karapa police arrested three persons - Jetti Satya Vamsi alias Bamsi, Sangadi Jeevanandam alias Jeeva and Kambala Veerabhadra Sai alias Vivek-and recovered 534 liquor bottles worth of 1,38,840 and broken liquor bottles worth Rs.10,400 and also seized car Karapa Sub Inspector D. Ramesh Babu said that on July 3, the five accused have stolen 755 liquor bot-

tles worth ₹1,96,300 from government liquor shop at Karapa.

After stealing the bottles and carrying it in a car, the car hit a an auto which was stopped near Nadakuduru village, then some of the liquor bottles were damaged and the accused fled away from the spot. The Karapa police under the supervision of kakinada Rural Circle Inspector A. Muralikrishna nabbed the accused on Saturday.

FIRE BREAKS OUT AT AGRO FACTORY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JULY 10

Fire broke out in an agro processing unit at Peddapuram of East Godavari district on Saturday. According to Additional District Fire

Officer Sashank Srinivas, as a part of dismantling the pipelines, when the workers were doing welding work, sparks ignited in oil residue in the pipeline. Then the fire broke out and fire fighters rushed to the spot.



SHORT TAKES

NIA RELEASES
LIST OF 20
WANTED NAXALSRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
RAIPUR, JULY 10

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), probing the killing of the local BJP MLA Bheema Mandavi in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Dantewada in April, 2019 by Maoists, on Saturday released a list of 20 wanted Naxals in the case.

The premier probe agency has issued a list of 20 Maoists including Nambala Keshav Rao alias Gagana alias Basavraj, Kottam Sudarshan alias Anand alias Mohan and Madvi Hidma, the commander of battalion number one of CPI (Maoist), declaring different bounties on them.

NIA has declared a reward of ₹10 lakh each on Basavraj and Mohan, while a bounty of ₹7 lakh has been announced on Hidma.

Barring Basavraj and Mohan, all the Naxals figured in the wanted list of NIA in the killing of the Dantewada MLA, have been active in insurgency-hit Bastar.

The NIA filed a chargesheet in the case in the NIA court in Jagdalpur in Bastar in March, 2020, naming 33 people as accused. Six of them have so far been arrested.

AYURVEDA DOYEN
DR P.K. WARRIER
DIES AGED 100DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JULY 10

Doyen of ayurveda medicine Dr P. K. Warriar died at his residence in Kottakkal in Malappuram district on Saturday. He was 100.

Warrior who popularised ayurveda globally, had celebrated his 100th birthday on June 8. He was also honoured by the nation with Padma Bhushan in 2010 and Padma Shri in 1999.

He became the trustee of the Aryavaidya Sala, one of the leading Ayurveda Healthcare chains in the country, at the age of 24 and remained its managing trustee till death.

Dr Warriar made huge contribution to ayurveda sector and initiated several measures to make the alternative system of medicine accessible to the common masses. He also focused on extensive research and drug standardisation.

Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi expressed deep condolences over Warriar's death. "Saddened by the passing away of Dr P. K. Warriar. His contributions to popularise ayurveda will always be remembered. Condolences to his family and friends," Mr Modi tweeted.

Chief Minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan said Warriar brought principles of ayurveda to the grassroots level. He was known for his secular and progressive ideas.

D.K SHIVAKUMAR
SLAPS MAN FOR
EMBRACING HIM

Bengaluru: Karnataka Congress President D. K. Shivakumar on Saturday allegedly slapped a man who attempted to put his arms around him, drawing criticism from the BJP and on social media.

In the video that has since gone viral, Shivakumar can be seen getting irritated by the action of the man, who tried to get close to him and pace along with him.

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee Chief, who appeared to lose cool, can then be heard telling the man, said to be a party worker: "...you should be responsible...", before asking cameramen present there to delete the footage.

The incident took place during his visit to the district headquarters town of Mandya to inquire about the health of ailing veteran leader, former Minister and MP G Made Gowda.

Tweeting the video of the incident, BJP national General Secretary C. T. Ravi, asked Congress national leader Rahul Gandhi whether he had given "licence for violence" to Shivakumar, whom he referred to as a follower of Kotwal Ramachandra, one of the underworld dons of Bengaluru in the 1970s and 1980s.

"Karnataka Congress President @DKShivakumar Slaps his party worker in full public view. If this is how the 'former shishya' of Kotwal Ramachandra treats his party worker, one can imagine what he would do with Others. Have you given DKS the 'licence for violence', @RahulGandhi?" he asked.

LA Mayor is US envoy to India

Los Angeles Mayor nominated by Biden to replace Kenneth Juster if confirmed

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JULY 10

United States President Joe Biden has nominated Los Angeles city mayor Eric M. Garcetti as the next US ambassador to India. If confirmed by the Senate, Mr Garcetti, 50, would replace Kenneth Juster, who served as the US ambassador to India during the Trump administration.

Mr Juster's term had ended a few months ago. In between, after his departure, the US had appointed Daniel Smith as Chargé d'Affaires (CdA) to head the US embassy in

New Delhi and after his retirement had recently appointed senior career diplomat Atul Keshap — who is of Indian origin — as the CdA to head the US embassy in India.

Announcing the nomination along with several other ambassadors, the White House said Eric M. Garcetti has been the mayor of the City of Los Angeles since 2013, following 12 years as a member of the City Council, including six as Council President.

As Mayor, Garcetti oversees the busiest container port in the Western Hemisphere, the largest municipal utility in the



Eric M. Garcetti

country, and one of the busiest airports in the world.

He led LA's successful bid to return the summer Olympic Games to American soil for the first time in three decades.

He currently chairs LA

Metro, the country's second-busiest transit agency, which is building or extending 15 new transit lines, and shifting to an all-electric fleet.

Mr Garcetti, a Rhodes Scholar, had earlier spent 12 years as an intelligence officer in the US Navy Reserve Component and had served under the US Defence Intelligence Agency.

Mr Garcetti co-founded Climate Mayors and led more than 400 US mayors to adopt the Paris Climate Agreement.

He is the current Chair of C40 Cities a network of 97 of the world's biggest cities taking bold climate action and has led the

organisation's engagement and expansion in India as well as C40's global response to the Covid-19 pandemic through the sharing of best practices and resources.

A Rhodes Scholar, he studied at Queen's College, Oxford and the London School of Economics and Political Science. Garcetti was selected as an inaugural Asia 21 Fellow of the Asia Society, and taught at Occidental College's Department of Diplomacy and World Affairs, as well as at the University of Southern California's School of International Relations.

People's plight



Police personnel detain Youth Congress activists during their agitation outside Governor House to protest against hike in the fuel and LPG prices in Kolkata, on Saturday.

—PTI

ANANTNAG
GUNFIGHT: 3 LeT
MILITANTS KILLEDDC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR JULY 10

The Jammu and Kashmir police on Saturday said that it along with the Army and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) killed three Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants in a fire fight that broke out in southern Anantnag district earlier during the day.

The police claimed that one of the slain militants was involved in the murder of a Territorial Army (TA) soldier in June 2019.

It said that the fighting broke out in Kwarigam village of Anantnag's Achabal area following a cordon-and-search operation was launched jointly by its counterinsurgency Special Operations Group (SOG), the Army's 19 Rashtriya Rifles and the CRPF to flush out militants.

The J&K police and Army officials said that when the joint teams zeroed in on the suspected hideout of the militants they opened fire, triggering the gun battle.

BJP claims win in UP local polls

Lucknow, July 10: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday claimed victory in the polls for the posts of the block panchayat chief, amid allegations of violence by the opposition parties.

The Opposition has slammed the state government over incidents of violence in the run-up to the polls. Reports of clashes had surfaced from several areas of the state with allegations that candidates backed by opposition parties were not allowed to file nomination papers.

However, claiming an outstanding show by the

BJP in the polls to the posts of block and district panchayat chiefs, Adityanath said almost 85 per cent seats went in favour of the ruling party.

Terming the success an outcome of the team work, the chief minister said the BJP and its allies bagged 635 of 825 seats of block panchayat chief on Saturday.

Meanwhile, lauding the BJP's win in the elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that the "big victory" is a reflection of the benefits people have received due to the Yogi Adityanath government's policies and pro-

people schemes.

All party workers deserve congratulations for this win, he said.

The CM also praised the state Election Commission for the peaceful and fair polls.

Conducting such a massive election process peacefully, in a state where democracy was mortgaged before professional criminals and mafia on the basis of caste religion and sect, is praiseworthy, he told reporters at the BJP headquarters here.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday congratulated Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath and other BJP leaders for the party's victory in the elections to posts of block and district panchayat chiefs and said it happened due to people's faith in the state government's welfare programmes.

Adityanath said almost 85 per cent seats in the polls went in favour of the ruling BJP. "This grand victory of @BJP4UP in the Uttar Pradesh block chief election is a result of the public's faith in the welfare policies of the Yogi government under the guidance of Prime Minister @narendramodiji," Shah said on Twitter.

—PTI

AIKSCC: Maha govt betrayed farmers

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, JULY 10

Farmers' union All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) of Maharashtra on Saturday alleged that the MVA government has betrayed the farmers by bringing three amendment bills in connection with the central farm laws. Despite giving assurance of passing a resolution in connection with revocation of all the farm laws, the MVA government has acted under pressure from the corporate lobby and the Union government, the AIKSCC said.

Dr Ajit Nawale of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) said that if the state government did not stop from implementing the proposed three bills, the farmers would protest in Mumbai on the lines of

the Delhi protests. Meanwhile, Maharashtra agriculture minister Dada Bhuse denied the allegation that the state government is working under anyone's pressure.

The bills were drafted after several rounds of discussion and deliberations, he said. "Accordingly, the bills were tabled in the state Assembly. The farmers' body can give their suggestions to the

proposed bills," the minister said.

Earlier in this week, the MVA government in Maharashtra had introduced three amendment bills in the assembly in connection with agriculture, co-operation and food and civil supplies, in a move to counter contentious farm laws enacted by the Union Government that are facing stiff opposition from farmers in the Country.

The bills have provisions for higher than MSP rate for produce in farming agreement with traders, timely payment of dues and three-year jail term or Rs 5 lakh fine or both for harassment of farmers. It has also provisions to give power to the state government to regulate and prohibit production, supply, distribution and impose stock limits on essential commodities.

WHO to decide on
Covaxin inclusion
within 4-6 weeks

New Delhi, July 10: The World Health Organisation (WHO) is likely to take a decision on including Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin in the emergency use list (EUL) within four to six weeks, Soumya Swaminathan, the global health body's chief scientist has said.

Speaking at a webinar organised by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on Friday, Ms Swaminathan said the WHO is reviewing Covaxin as its manufacturer Bharat Biotech is now uploading its entire data on the health body's portal.

According to WHO guidelines, EUL is a procedure to streamline the process by which new or unlicensed products can be used during public health emergencies.

"There is a process to be followed for EUL and pre-qualification of vaccines under which a company has to complete phase 3 trials and submit the whole data to the regulatory department of WHO which is examined by an expert advisory group," Ms Swaminathan said.

"The completeness of the data, which includes safety and efficacy and also the manufacturing quality, standard is provided. So, I expect that Bharat Biotech has already submitted data and in four to six weeks there will be a decision on its inclusion," Ms Swaminathan added.

At present, the WHO has approved vaccines by

INDIA RECORDS
42,766 NEW
COVID-19 CASESDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI JULY 10

India on Saturday recorded 42,766 fresh cases and 1,206 fatalities, taking the total Covid-19 death toll to 407,145. With 455,033 active Coronavirus cases, India's share of global active cases now stands at 3.82 per cent (one in 26) and it is the fourth most affected country in the world.

Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla on Saturday sounded a note of caution against the blatant disregard of Covid-appropriate behaviour at hill stations and other tourist locations, stressing that the second wave of the pandemic is not yet over.

Amid the huge influx of tourists in Uttarakhand, newly-appointed chief minister of the state, Pushkar Singh Dhami, on Saturday said that the state government has issued an order restricting occupancy of hotels in Nainital and Dehradun, the two most visited tourist places in the state.

Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca-SK Bio/Serum Institute of India, AstraZeneca EU, Janssen, Moderna and Sinopharm for emergency use.

—PTI

India, Georgia
to work jointlySRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, JULY 10

Becoming the first Indian Foreign Minister to visit the strategically-located Caucasus nation of Georgia after its independence three decades ago, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar held talks with the Georgian leadership, even as India made a major goodwill gesture by permanently handing over a part of the Holy Relics of the revered 17th century martyred Georgian Queen St. Ketevan that had been preserved in Goa for centuries.

The move, on the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has generated enormous goodwill for India in the Caucasus nation that borders Pakistan's friend Turkey, estranged neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as India's time-tested friend

Russia.

But it is Georgia's troubled relations with Russia that has been viewed with a lot of interest by foreign policy watchers. Georgia claims that 20 percent of its territory comprising the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been illegally occupied by Russia. It is an issue on which India is expected to tread carefully, given New Delhi's close ties with Moscow, even though Georgia is understood to have thanked India for "strong and steadfast support" for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Georgia was part of the erstwhile Soviet Union that broke up in 1991.

After talks on Saturday with both Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and Deputy PM and Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani, EAM Jaishankar said, "I come here in a sense with a sacred purpose".

SHIVRAJ, NATH
RIVALRY SPILLS
TO RAJ BHAVANRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, JULY 10

A day after Leader of Opposition (LOP) Kamal Nath met governor Mangubhai Chaganbhai Patel here to draw his attention to 'deteriorating' law and order situation in Madhya Pradesh, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday invited the latter for dinner at his official residence, taking his political rivalry with the Congress veteran to the Raj Bhavan.

Mr Chouhan visited the governor at the Raj Bhavan in the morning to extend his invitation for dinner at his official residence in Shyamla Hills here. Although, the dinner hosted for the governor is termed as a 'gesture of courtesy' and 'purely apolitical', sources said the chief minister was likely to apprise the governor of achievements of his government. The governor may be apprised of the law and order situation in the state on the sidelines of the occasion, sources said.



SHORT TAKES

UKRAINIAN
SOLDIER KILLED,
THREE WOUNDED

Kiev, July 10: The Ukrainian army said on Saturday that a soldier had been killed and three others wounded in the country's pro-Russian separatist east, amid rising tensions in the conflict-torn region.

It was the fourth Ukrainian soldier killed in the past week. The wounded were being treated in hospital and their injuries not life-threatening. Ukrainian positions on the frontline had been targeted by artillery, mortars, grenade launchers and machine gun fire. The war, which has left more than 13,000 people dead, broke out in 2014 shortly after Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula.

TAJIKISTAN
QUAKE CLAIMS
FIVE LIVES

Dushanbe, July 10: An earthquake struck eastern Tajikistan on Saturday morning, killing at least five people, according to authorities in the mountainous Central Asian country. Tremors from the 5.9 magnitude quake could be felt in the capital of Dushanbe, 165 kilometres (100 miles) southwest of the epicentre.

"Dozens of houses were destroyed," the Tajik committee for emergency situations said.

"Power lines were also partly damaged" in three villages in the district of Tajikabad, where all the victims lived.

The quake struck at 7:14 am (0214 GMT) and at a depth of 10 kilometres, according to the committee and state news agency Khovar.

Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon has ordered a commission of inquiry.

MOGADISHU
BLAST: UNKNOWN
CASUALTIES

Mogadishu, July 10: A car bomb targeting a top police chief exploded in Somalia's capital Mogadishu on Saturday, causing an unknown number of casualties, police and witnesses said. "The commissioner is unharmed but there are other casualties the attack inflicted," said Somali police spokesman Sadiiq Dudishe.

He said the bomber, using an explosive-laden vehicle, struck the convoy of Benadir region police commissioner Farhan Mohamud at a busy intersection in the capital.

"It caused huge devastation and casualties of both police and civilians," said Mire Adan, who was a few metres from the scene, adding that he counted six bodies.

Nobody immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing.

ZELDA GAME
CARTRIDGE SELLS
FOR \$870,000

New York, July 10: A sealed cartridge of "The Legend of Zelda" for the old Nintendo NES console has sold for a world record sum of \$870,000, auction house Heritage Auctions said in a statement Friday.

The cartridge, dated to 1987, is still in its original packaging and trumps the previous world record sale of a video game — \$660,000 for a 1986 "Super Mario Bros" cartridge sold in April — according to the auction house. The game was the "masterpiece" in a sale of 443 lots that runs until Sunday, Eric Bradley, spokesperson for the Dallas-based company, said. The auction house has not revealed buyer's identity.

Blending adventure, action and exploration in a magical universe, Zelda is one of the most significant titles in the history of video games.

REMOVAL OF
U.S. CAPITOL
FENCING BEGINS

Washington, July 10: More than six months after the deadly US Capitol insurrection, authorities on Friday began the process of dismantling fencing and barricades surrounding the iconic Washington building, although some access restrictions will remain in place.

Personnel were seen removing bars connecting sections of the eight-foot (2.4-metre) black metal fencing that had been erected in the days following the violent unrest at the citadel of American democracy.

Removal of the fence itself was to begin early Saturday, workers on the site said, with the operation expected to last through the weekend. Thousands of National Guard troops were stationed there following the attack, and a wide security boundary complete with razor wire turned the Capitol into a fortress for months.

EU hits goal of delivering
vaccines for 70% of adults

Brussels, July 10: The European Union has hit its target of delivering enough Coronavirus vaccine to cover 70 percent of the adult population, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Saturday.

The 27 EU member state governments are responsible for administering the vaccines to citizens — and some are working much faster than others — but von der Leyen stressed that: "The EU has kept its word." The EU joint vaccine purchasing scheme, run by von der Leyen's European Commission, has delivered 330 million BioNTech-Pfizer shots, 100 million AstraZeneca, 50 million from Moderna and 20 million Johnson & Johnson.

All but the J&J jab require two doses to achieve full efficacy, and the EU is home to an estimated 366 million adults.

"This weekend, we delivered enough vaccine to member states to fully vaccinate at least 70 percent of the adult population this month. By tomorrow, some 500 million doses will have been distributed to all regions of Europe," von der Leyen said.

"Covid-19 is not yet defeated. But we are prepared to continue supplying vaccines — also against new variants. Now the member states must do everything they can to ensure that vaccinations move forward. Only then will we all be safe." When the Coronavirus epidemic hit Europe last year, the European Commission — which previously had little role in health policy — stepped in to coordinate a joint buying programme for members.

This was criticised at first by some for having been slow to get into gear and to negotiate contracts with drug suppliers, and the plan was hampered later when some firms — notably UK-based AstraZeneca — fell short in deliveries. But, as industry raced to boost production of the newly developed vaccines, purchases started flowing in, and von der Leyen will see meeting the European Commission's self-imposed July deadline for 70 percent coverage as vindication.

"The EU is delivering," she said. "Our vaccination campaign has accelerated tremendously since the beginning of the year. The joint approach is a success. Only together can we come out of this crisis well."

— AFP



People wait in a queue to register for the Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine at a convention hall building in Banda Aceh on Saturday.

— AFP

Delta variant cases mark
32% weekly surge in UK

London, July 10: UK health officials said the Delta variant of Covid-19 continues as the dominant strain of Coronavirus and marked a sharp increase in the UK with 54,268 more cases logged on Friday, which marks a 32 per cent increase over the previous week.

Public Health England (PHE) said its weekly analysis shows the continued rise in infections is not followed by a similar increase in hospitalisations and deaths, which reflects a high protection

DATA SHOWS that the sharp rise in cases that we are seeing is not being followed by a similar increase in hospitalisation and death, said Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency.

offered by both doses of a Coronavirus vaccine.

In a separate study, PHE also found that all the vaccines being administered are as effective at preventing symptomatic disease

in the majority of people with underlying health conditions as the rest of the population.

The data continues to show that the sharp increase in cases that we are seeing is not being followed by a similar increase in hospitalisation and death, said Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency.

This is because two doses of the available vaccines offer a high level of protection against the Delta variant.

— PTI

Tencent game merger blocked

China to remove 25
Didi service apps

Beijing, July 10: China's regulator ordered the removal from app stores of 25 apps owned by Didi Global Inc., the country's largest ride-hailing service, citing severe violations of rules against collecting personal data.

The Cyberspace Administration of China had already taken down the main Didi app last Sunday, pending a cybersecurity review, after it debuted on the

US stock market last week. The 25 additional apps include Didi Enterprises, as well as ones designed for Didi drivers.

A spokesperson for Didi did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The move comes after Chinese authorities said earlier this week they would step up supervision of companies listed overseas.

— AP

Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) said in an online statement.

"This has the effect of eliminating or restricting competition, is not condu-

cive to fair market competition ... and is not conducive to the healthy and sustainable development of the online gaming and video game livestreaming

market." The blocked merger comes shortly after regulators abruptly announced a cybersecurity review into ride-hailing app Didi Chuxing on the heels of a US IPO that raised \$4.4 billion.

Plans for the deal were initially announced by Tencent last October, but SAMR said it would undertake an antitrust review into the merger in December. The same month, it announced an antitrust investigation into e-commerce giant Alibaba, whose fintech arm Ant Financial's IPO was shelved at the last minute by regulators in November.

The company was later slapped with a record 18.2 billion yuan (\$2.78 billion) fine for anti-competitive practices. Tencent currently has a majority stake in Huya and a 38 per cent stake in Douyu.

— AFP

Kabul rushes
troops to border

Afghans try to retake Taliaban-held crossing

Kabul, July 10: Afghan authorities prepared Saturday to try to retake a key border crossing seized by the Taliban in a sweeping offensive that the insurgents claim has helped capture a vast swath of the violence-wracked nation.

As US troops continued their withdrawal, the Taliban said its fighters had seized two crossings in western Afghanistan — completing an arc of territory from the Iranian border to the frontier with China. It now held 85 per cent of the country, a Taliban official said Friday, controlling about 250 of Afghanistan's nearly 400 districts — a claim impossible to verify, and disputed by the government. Beijing, meanwhile, which has criticised Washington for its hasty withdrawal, urged its citizens to leave the country "as soon as possible" after evacuating 210 nationals.

The "complex and severe domestic security situation" prompted the evacuation warning, the foreign ministry said, adding that 22 of those flown out tested positive for Coronavirus on arrival in China.

On Friday Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said their fighters had captured the border town of Islam Qala on the Iranian frontier and the Torg-hundi crossing with Turkmenistan. Herat governor spokesman Jilani Farhad said Saturday the authorities were deploying fresh troops to retake Islam Qala post, the biggest trade crossing between Iran and Afghanistan.

"They will be sent there soon," he said.

The Afghan government has repeatedly dismissed the Taliban's gains as having little strategic value, but the seizure of multiple border crossings and the taxes they generate will likely fill the group's coffers with new revenue.

In a clear sign fighting was getting closer to major urban centres, an official at one hospital in Kandahar — the country's second-largest city and the birthplace of the Taliban — said Saturday dozens of wounded had been admitted in the past 24 hours, including at least 15 service members.

With the Taliban having routed much of northern

Afghanistan in recent weeks, the government holds little more than a constellation of provincial capitals that must largely be reinforced and resupplied by air.

The air force was under severe strain even before the Taliban's lightning offensive overwhelmed the government's northern and western positions, putting further pressure on the country's limited aircraft and pilots.

On Thursday President Joe Biden said the US military mission would end on August 31 — nearly 20 years after it began — but he admitted it was "highly unlikely" Kabul would be able to control the entire country. "The status quo is not an option," Biden said of staying in the country. "I will not send another generation of Americans to war in Afghanistan." Biden said the Afghan people alone should determine their future, but he acknowledged the uncertainty about what that would look like.

Asked if a Taliban takeover was inevitable, the president said: "No, it is not."

— AFP

Cyberattack hits
Iranian ministry

Tehran, July 10: Iran's transportation ministry said Saturday a "cyber disruption" had affected its computer systems and website, while the country's national railway company denied reports of being hit by a cyber attack. The disruption started before noon (0730 GMT), taking down the body's website and links associated with it, the ministry said in a statement reported by state news agency IRNA.

It said "technical experts" were investigating the issue and will announce when they are back up, without elaborating further. The body's website was still inaccessible around 5 PM (1230 GMT).

The railway company's announcement came a day after *Fars* news agency reported "unprecedented chaos" at stations with hundreds of trains delayed or cancelled.

In the now-deleted report, it said the incident followed "a widespread disruption in... computer systems that is probably due to a cyber attack."

Sadegh Sekri, a spokesman for Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, said on Saturday that "there has been no disruption or cyber attack for passenger, cargo or intercity

NO CASUALTIES
FROM TEHRAN
BLAST: OFFICIALS

Tehran, July 10: Iranian police said a reported explosion early Saturday at a public park near state TV headquarters in the capital Tehran caused no casualties or damage, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Tehran deputy police chief Gen. Hamid Hoda-vand said the case was under investigation and details would be provided later. He accused foreign media outlets of exaggerating the reported blast. At 12:52 a.m. Iranian media reported an explosion in northern Tehran.

— AP

trains." The company had said in a statement late Friday that trains were arriving and departing on schedule with "no problems". This followed the *Fars* report, which had included a picture of a station's departures and arrivals board showing rows of cancelled trips with a message reading "long delays due to cyber attacks".

— AFP

Factory owner in B'desh
nabbed after fire kills 52

Dhaka, July 10: The owner of a factory where 52 people died in a fire was arrested for murder Saturday along with seven others, as it emerged that children as young as 11 had been working there.

Police said Abul Hashem and four of his sons were among eight people detained over the inferno, which broke out Thursday and raged for more than a day. A separate inquiry has been launched into the use of child labour at

the food factory. Jayedul Alam, police chief for Narayanganj district where the factory is located, said the entrance had been padlocked at the time of the blaze and the factory breached multiple safety regulations.

"It was a deliberate murder," the police chief said. All eight people detained face murder charges.

Before his arrest, Hashem told the *Daily Star* newspaper the fire "may have been a result of wor-

kers' carelessness", suggesting a discarded cigarette could have sparked the carnage.

Emergency services found 48 of the bodies on the third floor of the Hashem Food and Beverage factory in Rupganj, an industrial town outside Dhaka.

The fire department said the exit door to the main staircase had been padlocked and highly flammable chemicals and plastics had been stored in the building.

— AFP

HEAT, WIND
SPUR CALIF FIRE

Beckwourth (US), July 10: A California wildfire that closed nearly 200 square miles of forest forced evacuations across state lines into Nevada on Friday as winds and scorching, dry weather drove flames forward through trees and brush. The Beckwourth Complex showed "extreme behaviour," fire information officer Lisa Cox said Friday evening.

— AP

HISTORIC | DEAL Final agreement not expected until the run-up to the leaders' meet in Oct

G20 finance ministers endorse global tax reform

Venice, July 10: G20 finance ministers on Saturday gave their backing to a "historic" global deal to tax multinational companies more fairly and urged hold-out countries to sign up.

A framework for international tax reform, including a minimum corporate rate of 15%, was agreed this month by 131 countries. But the endorsement

by the 19 biggest economies plus the European Union will help ensure it becomes a reality following years of negotiations.

"After many years of discussions and building on the progress made last year, we have achieved a historic agreement on a more stable and fairer international tax architecture," the final statement said. "We endorse the key

components of the two pillars on the reallocation of profits of multinational enterprises and an effective global minimum tax." French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire was quick to hail the agreement, saying it was a once-in-a-century opportunity for reform. "There is no turning back. We are putting an end to the fiscal race to the bottom and the digital gi-

ants will now pay their fair share of taxes," he said.

The reforms aim to prevent countries competing to offer the lowest tax rates to attract investment, which has often resulted in multinationals paying derisory levels of tax.

Final agreement is not expected until the run-up to the G20 leaders' summit in Rome in October.

The 15% minimum tax

rate was agreed on July 1 under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Countries, including the United States, France and Germany, along with aid agencies such as Oxfam, have been pressing for a higher rate. But some nations are opposed, including EU member Ireland, which lured Apple and Google

with low tax rates.

The G20 ministers said they "invite all members" of the negotiations... that have not yet joined the international agreement to do so". The minimum rate is expected to affect fewer than 10,000 major companies, but the OECD estimates an effective 15% rate would generate an extra \$150 billion in revenue per year.

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

11 JULY 2021



Shashi Warriar
Off the beaten track

To keep power, redouble effort, hire triple agents

Murthy dropped in last week, the day I'd got a bottle of 12-year-old Irish whiskey. I don't know how he does it, but he invariably drops in — always without notice, mind you — just when I've got a bottle of something special that I want to keep for an occasion. But this time he drank my whiskey with a distracted air, staring out of the window at the grey drizzle falling outside. "What's up?" I asked.

"I need advice from a statistician," he said. "You know a lot of professors, and one of them might be good with statistical analysis, besides being able to keep a secret."

"Sure," I said, "I know a couple of guys. But why? You're into wheeling and dealing, not stats."

He evaded. "It's just some minor project that came up a few months ago, you know, after the recent state elections that took us all by surprise."

But I knew it was more than that, and, sure enough, a couple of whiskeys later, he got expansive. "Those elections," he said, "they're going to change the way elections are managed."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

He emptied his glass. After I poured him a refill, he continued. "I won't name any names," he said, "because all this is speculation. You know, during those last elections up in the east of the country, there was this local state-level party facing a national-level juggernaut. Every analyst predicted that the juggernaut, which had done very poorly thus far in that state, would give the local party a drubbing, or, if not that, at least a great fight. There were lots of people who said that the people hated the local party because it was corrupt and favoured some sections of the populace and so on.

"But when the results came, all that went up in smoke. The local party got a two-thirds majority, the juggernaut got half the seats they'd expected — and a third of what their leaders claimed they'd get — and everyone else got wiped out."

"Right," I said. Of course I remembered! "That was when all those MLAs who had deserted the local party for the juggernaut began to queue up to return... I don't remember seeing such a flood of sleaze ever before."

"You judge too quickly," he said. "It's human nature. You won't succeed if you sit around judging it instead of understanding it and using it."

"I'll do that when I can stomach it," I said, "but what's this all about?"

"Well, practically the only one who got it right was a hired advisor to the local party," he said. "He said that if the juggernaut got more than a hundred seats, he'd give up his career."

"Yes, I remember," I said.

"After the results came," said Murthy, "he quit the company that officially assisted the local party, the company that he founded, despite having called it right."

"So what?" I asked.

"Another state government that will be facing the juggernaut soon, and has dissent within its ranks, has hired him as an individual at an undisclosed fee... That fee must be stratospheric. So he has all the power and the money he wants but is accountable to no one. Brilliant!"

"So why are you looking for a good statistician?" I asked.

"Because I figured out what he did," he replied. "He figured out a way to beat all the pollsters and election-watchers. He's changed the way elections are managed. Permanently."

"You still haven't told me how," I complained.

"Ah, yes," he said, in his best superior manner. "Whenever there's an election, parties and candidates... Well, they offer voters money and booze to vote for them."

"Yes," I replied. "Part of the sleaze."

"Well, I think this guy took it a step further," he said. "He offered his flock the usual money to vote for his party, and a little extra to tell everyone that they were going to vote for the juggernaut."

"But why?" I asked. I'm a simpleton in these matters.

"Two things," he said. "It gave the juggernaut's people the wrong idea about how well they were progressing. Second, the poll analysts, too, thought the juggernaut would do better, and got thrown off."

"But that still doesn't explain why you need a statistician!" I said.

"I thought you'd understand," he said, disappointment in his voice. "This guy created a lie that's essentially a statistical bias, so I want to know if there's a statistical method to understand and neutralise it. The other thing is, the local party had limited cash. So the guy had to figure out a way to spend his money in critical constituencies in areas where it would have the most effect. There might be a mathematical way to do that."

"Well," I said, reaching for my phone. "I'll put you on to a couple of profs right away. You can speak to them directly."

"No thanks," he said, emptying his glass again. When I reached for the bottle, he waved it away. "No thanks for that, too. I've just figured out a possible solution."

"But you don't know any mathematics," I said.

"I don't," he said. "But this is politics and people, not mathematics. This guy we were talking about, he told people to lie: they did one thing and said another. Like double agents, sort of."

"Yes," I said.

"If you want to beat him and his double agents," he said, rising to leave, "you pay some of those double agents a lot of money to change who they vote for, but not what they say. You pay them to tell the truth about who they're voting for. You spread the rumour that you're willing to pay other double agents as well. It won't cost much, since you're working with rumours and confusion. So you create not double but triple agents, see?"

Shashi Warriar has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.

Subhani



The method & madness of Modi's Cabinet shuffle



Pavan K. Varma
Chanakya's View

Teams have been written on the recent Cabinet reshuffle, as though it marked a major milestone in the Modi Sarkar. However, such mid-term reshuffles are fairly routine exercises, and the temptation to over-interpret them, or to derive substantive consequences from them, should be resisted.

Any shifting around of ministers in the current dispensation has little meaning because the actual focus of power has shifted so dramatically to the all-powerful Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Ministers are like elevated bureaucrats, tasked to implement a brief given to them from the PMO, with little scope for personal initiative in a system where both directive and monitoring powers are vested elsewhere. Such a form of functioning makes a mockery of the consultative process that is the very essence of a Cabinet form of government. To be fair, this is not the hallmark only of this government. It has been the case whenever the PM becomes the sole fountainhead of power in the system, and Narendra Modi certainly is one such.

There are many inexplicable factors in this round of the shuffling of the pack. For instance, Mansukh Mandaviya has been given charge of the crucial portfolio of health. Its importance can hardly be overstated during pandemic times. Glaring inadequacies have been revealed, and major restructuring is required in the health sector. Given this, one would have thought that Mansukhji would be dealing only with health. But, he has also been made in charge of chemicals and

fertilisers, major subjects in themselves. Why?

The way portfolios have been combined leaves one, frankly, flummoxed. Why should Sarbananda Sonowal be dealing with ports, shipping and waterways and Ayush? What is common between ports and Ayurveda? Similarly, the new blue-eyed boy Ashwini Vaishnav holds the railways portfolio. Anyone even remotely familiar with the functioning of government knows that railways is an empire in itself, requiring the full time and concentrated focus of the minister in charge. But, Vaishnav has also been given the electronics and information technology portfolio.

There will be those who say that there is an overlap between IT and electronics and railways. Maybe, but these are big portfolios in their own right, and a minister trying to deal with both may end not giving enough time to either.

Other appointments also raise worrying questions. What is common between petroleum, and housing and urban affairs, which Hardeep Puri has been tasked to deal with? G. Kishan Reddy has been given culture, tourism, and development of Northeast region. Firstly, given that India is a civilisational entity of great antiquity and refinement, and has an abundance of neglected talent in the realm of the arts, culture should have merited a full time Cabinet minister, especially since this government never tires of paying tribute to our ancient past. The tremendous potential of tourism, and the consistent record of neglect it has suffered, should have made the PM think of giving this sector too to a full time Cabinet

minister. Now, the overwhelmed Shri Reddy, will end up doing effectively neither culture nor tourism, even as he struggles to deal with the affairs of the Northeast. He will be further surprised to find that his minister of state in the ministry of tourism is simultaneously dealing with ports and shipping!

Home minister Amit Shah has been saddled with a new ministry of "cooperation". Its task is to "provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country", and to streamline the processes for ease of doing business and enable development of multi-state cooperative banks. What has this brief to do with the home ministry will remain an eternal mystery, unless the idea is to improve the law and order situation in the functioning of cooperatives!

One feels sorry for the ministers who have been dropped, for they were but puppets — less or more agile — in a system where the strings were in the hands of the PMO. Harsha Vardhan, the health minister, needed to go for his terrible handling of the pandemic, but surely the blamegame should have also included those who are in charge of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)? The NDMA kicked in in March 2020 when the pandemic was declared a national disaster. All subsequent steps to handle it, including a

Mansukh Mandaviya has been given charge of the crucial portfolio of health. Its importance can hardly be overstated during pandemic times. But, he has also been made in charge of chemicals and fertilisers, major subjects in themselves. Why?

national plan devised for this purpose, were in the hands of the NDMA. The Prime Minister is the chairperson of the NDMA. Where should responsibility rest for the gross incompetence and lack of anticipation that was seen when the second wave hit us?

Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javdekar, more loyal than the king, faced the axe. I am sure they must be still wondering what they did wrong. Prasad could not have adopted his abrasive response to Twitter and social media without clearance from the PMO. Others have been equally culpable. Eighty-four years old and seriously unwell, Father Stan Swamy died in custody, begging for a straw sipper to drink water because he suffered from Parkinson's, while the National Investigation Authority (NIA), doggedly argued against his bail. There was justifiable national and international outrage over his death. The NIA is under the Home ministry, but its incumbent was not touched. On the other hand, Anurag Singh Thakur, who was seen on public video footage openly inciting a mob to kill during the anti CAA-NRC protests, has been promoted. What is the message?

Prime Minister Modi has been lucky so far. Very often his decisions, escape close scrutiny by the media and the public, because of his aura, and the ever-efficient publicity and propaganda departments of his party. But, that aura is severely dented today. It is time to ask the right questions, rather than be mesmerised by his ordained claim to invincibility. When such questions are asked, it will be seen that the much hyped Cabinet reshuffle was another routine and lacking exercise rather than the gamechanger it has been so assiduously projected to represent.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

POPULATION DAY

July 11 is observed as the World Population Day to create awareness among the people. The world's population is expected to rise by 2 billion in the next 30 years, from 7.7 billion to 9.7 billion by 2050. To avert a catastrophic situation, governments must take action with respect to stabilising population growth. One way could be to conduct different awareness campaigns at every panchayat to bring awareness among people about the serious consequences of rising population and help in sustainable development.

Dr Mejari Mallikarjuna
Nadigadda, Chittoor

VIRUS CASES

The Andhra Pradesh High Court's advice to the state government for micro planning to curb the spread of virus is appreciable (*HC to AP: List reasons for rise in virus cases in 3 districts, DC, July 10*). With the second wave of Covid-19 subsiding, people have become carefree and reckless. Neither are they maintaining social distance nor wearing masks properly. Large gatherings without masks are going viral on social media. Constant monitoring and imposition of fines is the key to reduce cases.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

PIL FIASCO

Arvind Kejriwal, the self-righteous CM of Delhi filed a PIL against the Centre in the Supreme Court on pollution laws (*SC throws out first ever PIL by a state, DC, July 10*). He has problems of communication with his neighbouring state CMs of Punjab, Haryana and UP and with Modi at the Centre. Taking it lightly as amusing, the court allowed Delhi government to withdraw its PIL without any costs.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

It's high time the Centre took up the issue of Uniform Civil Code seriously and bulldozes it in the Parliament as they did the 3 Farm Laws. They may not get this chance after 2024. The Centre should take Delhi HC's directive and Article 44 of the Constitution as its trump cards and go ahead.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

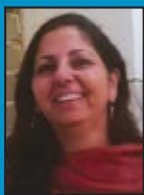
50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Nixon sets 5(M) dollar military aid to India

WASHINGTON, July 10. The Nixon administration has proposed an allocation of five million dollars in military aid to India during the 1972 financial year, according to previously secret figures released here yesterday. The figures related to proposed military aid to 42 countries. The total amount involved was 2,360 million dollars — 120 million dollars more than in the previous financial year.

The US State Department, which traditionally has kept the figures secret, released them after Senator William Proxmire (Democrat Wisconsin) threatened to publicise them on his own.

Anita Katyal
Political Gup-Shup



Amit Shah's secret of utmost 'cooperation'; Twitter & Puri

The creation of a new ministry, the ministry of cooperation, which is mandated to strengthen the country's cooperative movement, has led to considerable speculation about the real purpose behind this move. The fact that it is headed by home minister Amit Shah, the second-most important leader in the Narendra Modi government, is a sure sign that the new ministry is politically important for this dispensation. It is said the new ministry is aimed at checkmating state leaders like Sharad Pawar, who derive political clout from these cash-rich cooperatives. Mr Shah is not new to this game. He has had a long association with the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank which was embroiled in a controversy post-demonetisation when RTI replies revealed it had received the highest deposits of banned old currency notes. Mr Shah has been a director with the bank and also served as its chairman in 2000. He even fought a bitter court battle to gain control of the bank. Tushar Mehta, the present solicitor general of India, was his lawyer. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury has already

sounded alarm bells, saying cooperative societies are a state subject that the new ministry will be encroaching on their rights.

It clearly pays to be visible on social media. The newly-promoted petroleum and urban affairs minister Hardeep Puri can testify to that. Mr Puri was hyperactive on Twitter in the run-up to the Cabinet reshuffle. While he took care to amplify Prime Minister Narendra Modi's messages, speeches and articles, describing him as "Karmayogi PM" and his writings as brilliant, Mr Puri was equally busy trolling his opponents, especially those who dared to criticise the Central Vista redevelopment project. Mr Puri even persuaded friendly media-persons and former bureaucrats to pen articles praising the project and castigating those who dared to quizz the government on the need to line the three-kilometre stretch on Rajpath with aesthetically questionable concrete structures. Mr Puri's efforts clearly paid off as he was rewarded with an upgrade as a Cabinet rank.

While health minister Harsh Vardhan's exit from the Cabinet did not come as a surprise given how the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic was mismanaged, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar's resignation was a bolt from the blue. Mr Prasad, who was heading the law and information technology ministries, assumed it would be business as usual for him. He believed he had successfully filled the vacuum created by Arun Jaitley's death as he was often called upon to take on the Opposition and defend the government and the party. It was, therefore, a shock for Mr Prasad when he received a phone call on Wednesday morning asking him to put in his papers. No one, not even Mr Prasad, knows why he was shown the door. It is being assumed that his running battle with Twitter cost Mr Prasad his job but it is well known that in this government, a minister cannot go so far without permission from top bosses.

Stung by criticism that there is a talent deficit in the Modi government, its media managers were

at pains to point to the educational qualifications of the Prime Minister's ministerial team, including the foreign universities they attended. But a study of the list of ministers shows the talent deficit persists as Mr Modi has entrusted key ministries to leaders who are not from the BJP ranks. The all-important civil aviation ministry is headed by Jyotiraditya Scindia, a recent entrant to the BJP. Ashwini Vaishnav, a former career civil servant, is in charge of the ministries of railways as well as information technology. Kiren Rijju, now promoted as law minister, is originally from the Congress and Maratha strongman Narayan Rane, the new MSME minister, was with the Shiv Sena and had a brief stint in the Congress before he joined the BJP. Not to forget S.Jaishankar, Hardeep Puri and Raj Kumar Singh, all former bureaucrats, who head the important ministries of foreign affairs, petroleum and power, respectively. Even the Janata Dal (United) nominee RCP Singh, the new steel minister, is a former bureaucrat.

The inclusion of Uttarakhand's Ajay Bhatt in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Cabinet and the appointment of Pushkar Singh Dhami as CM of the hill state has baffled many people. Both Mr Bhatt and Mr Dhami hail from the Kumaon region while the BJP has its base in the Thakur-dominated Garhwal region which has shown a marked preference for the saffron party. It was expected that leaders from Garhwal would be accommodated to send out the right message before next year's crucial Assembly election. But the BJP leadership in Delhi apparently believes the Thakurs are loyal to the party and will not desert the saffron camp. It, therefore, decided to focus on the Kumaon region to take on Congress leader and former chief minister Harish Rawat who, in BJP's reckoning, needs to be countered as he is the Opposition's only tall leader in Uttarakhand. Time will tell if the BJP's change of tactics will pay electoral dividends.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES

India-Lanka series
now from July 18

New Delhi: The Indian team's six-match limited-overs series in Sri Lanka will now start from July 18, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Saturday, a day after a Covid-19 outbreak in the home team camp forced the postponement. The series, which was originally scheduled to start with the three ODIs on July 13, had to be rescheduled after Sri Lanka's batting coach Grant Flower and data analyst G.T. Niroshan tested positive for the dreaded virus on their return from the UK tour. It also meant an extended quarantine period for the squad members. While the tentative date that was originally being discussed was July 17, but Shah confirmed that it will start from July 18. — *PTI*

Sciver shines as
England beat India

Northampton: England all-rounder Nat Sciver smashed a record-equalling half century before the bowlers put the struggling Indian batters under pressure to ensure an 18 run-win for the hosts via DLS method in the rain-curtailed first T20I against here. Put in to bat, England rode on Sciver's 27-ball 55 and wicket-keeper Amy Jones' 43 off 27 balls to reach 177/7 in 20 overs. Sciver's sensational fifty was England's joint fastest in the format. In reply, India failed to keep up with the required run-rate despite vice-captain Smriti Mandhana's quickfire 29 off 17 balls before rain gods had the last laugh with the visitors at 54/3 in 8.4 overs, 18 runs behind England via the DLS method. — *PTI*

Brief scores: England 177/7 (Sciver 55, Jones 43, Pandey 3-22) bt India 54/3 (Mandhana 29, Deol 17, Glenn 1-6) by 18 runs (DLS method)

Pope doubtful for
first Test vs India

London: England batsman Ollie Pope was on Saturday rendered a doubtful starter for the opening Test against India after suffering a thigh injury during his stint for Surrey in the Vitality Blast. The 23-year-old wicket-keeper-batsman sustained a thigh muscle injury on July 2 during Surrey's match against Kent in the domestic T20 tournament. "Pope has been ruled out until England's LV= Insurance Test Series against India after suffering a left thigh muscle injury," England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement.

"The ECB and Surrey fitness teams will work together to deliver Pope's rehabilitation with a focus for him to be available to return for the first Test against India."

The first Test starts at Trent Bridge on August 4. — *PTI*

Player tests +ve in
alternate SL squad

Colombo: A Sri Lankan player in one of the two bio-bubbles has tested positive for Covid-19 as the virus outbreak continued to rock the home team ahead of its limited-overs series against India. The group of players are training separately even as the virus outbreak forced a postponement of the series by four days after the home team's batting coach Grant Flower and data analyst G.T. Niroshan have contracted the virus.

'NewsWire.lk' quoted Sri Lankan sources as saying that batsman Sandun Weerakkodi has tested positive for Covid.

According to the report in the website, Weerakkodi was with the 15 senior cricketers who were training here while staying at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel. The report further stated that Weerakkodi, along with Bhanuka Rajapaksa and several other cricketers, were sent to Dambulla on Friday to play practice matches ahead of the India series. — *PTI*

Anand trumps
rival Kasparov

Zagreb: Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand trumped former world champion Garry Kasparov in the much-awaited contest of the Croatia Grand Chess Tour here on Saturday. Playing with white pieces, the Chennai-based maestro took down Kasparov in 30 moves in a Sicilian Najdorf variation game in the fourth round of the Blitz event. The Indian ace, however, went down to Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi, the top-seed here, in round five. He was placed sixth after five rounds with 11.5 points. Anand had started the Blitz competition with a defeat at the hands of Dutch GM Anish Giri. — *PTI*

IT'S BARTY TIME

Barty first Australian woman to lift Wimbledon trophy since 1980

London, July 10: Ashleigh Barty won her first Wimbledon title on the 50th anniversary of fellow indigenous Australian Evonne Goolagong Cawley's maiden crown, beating Karolina Pliskova 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3 in the final on Saturday.

The 25-year-old Australian — who wore a specially-designed dress in tribute to Cawley's iconic scallop one she sported in 1971 — adds the Wimbledon crown to her 2019 French Open title.

"It took me a long time to verbalise, to dare to dream it and say it," said Barty.

"I didn't sleep a lot last night, I was thinking of all the what-ifs. I hope I made Evonne proud."

It was the first women's Wimbledon final to go to three sets since 2012 when Serena Williams beat Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska.

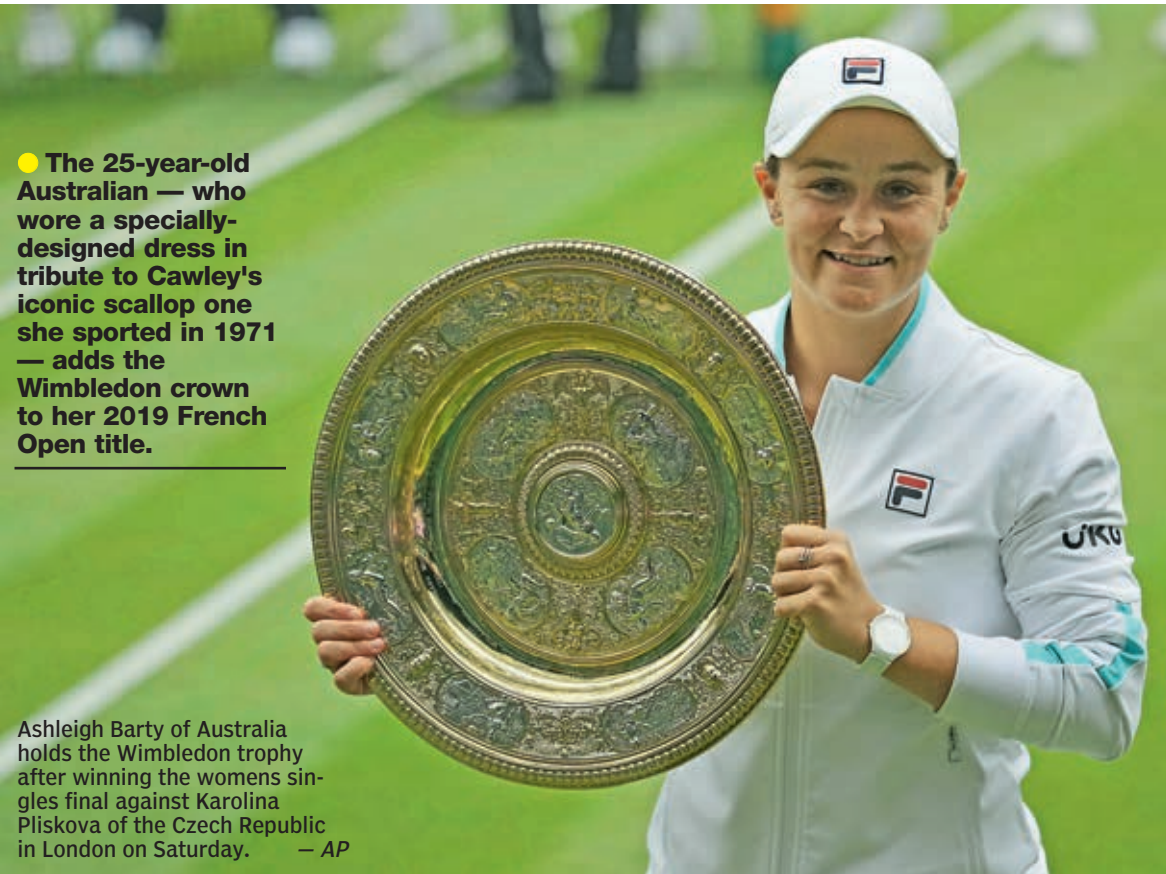
Barty had looked like cruising to victory after soaring into a 4-0 lead over her opponent — the Australian's start so blistering that she won the first 14 points.

However, 29-year-old Pliskova steadied herself while Barty faltered when she served for the match at 6-5 in the second set. The Czech broke and then swept the tiebreaker to take the final into a decider.

Barty got the break for 2-0 in the final set and despite one or two wobbles she got herself over the line sinking to her knees, her hands over her face in disbelief.

She wiped a couple of tears away before climbing up to the player's box, just like her compatriot Pat Cash did when he won the Wimbledon men's title in 1987.

"This is incredible,"



Ashleigh Barty of Australia holds the Wimbledon trophy after winning the women's singles final against Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic in London on Saturday. — *AP*

said Barty, the third Australian woman to be crowned Wimbledon singles champion in the Open era (Cawley and Margaret Court (1970) the others).

"I have to start with Kaja (Karolina Pliskova). "Congratulations on an incredible tournament to you and your team. I love testing myself against you and I'm sure we'll have many many matches."

Barty is masterful at remaining poker-faced on court and she managed to restrain her emotions largely at the presentation ceremony.

However, once off court she sobbed as she hugged her boyfriend Gary Kissick. — *AFP*

DJOKOVIC INTO 30TH SLAM FINAL

London, July 10: Novak Djokovic reached his 30th Grand Slam final on Friday with a straight sets win over Canada's Denis Shapovalov to move one victory away from a sixth Wimbledon title and record-equalling 20th major.

The world number one triumphed 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, 7-5 in a tense semi-final in which he crucially saved 10 of 11 break points.

Shapovalov was so distraught that he left Centre Court in tears.

In his seventh Wimbledon final, Djokovic will face Matteo Berrettini after the world number nine became the first Italian to reach a Wimbledon singles final by beating Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4.

"I don't think the scoreline says enough about the performance or the match. He (Shapovalov) was serving for

the first set and was probably the better player," said Djokovic.

"I would like to give him a big round of applause for everything he has done today and also this two weeks. We are going to see a lot of him in the future, he is a great player."

Victory on Sunday will not only take Djokovic level with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal on 20 Slam wins.

He will also just need the US Open to become only the third man in history, and first since 1969, to complete the calendar Grand Slam. "I am trying to make the maximum of my own abilities each match and see what happens," said 34-year-old Djokovic.

"At this stage of my career, Grand Slams are everything and I have been very privileged to make history in the sport I truly love." — *AFP*

MAHMUDULLAH
SAYS GOODBYE
TO TEST CRICKET

Dhaka, July 10: Senior Bangladesh all-rounder Mahmudullah has made a sudden decision to stop playing Test cricket, a day after recording a career-best 150 in the ongoing one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Harare.

According to a report in Cricbuzz, Mahmudullah informed his colleagues that he is not willing to continue his Test career anymore, leaving the team management shocked. "Yes, he (Mahmudullah) had informed that he does not want to prolong his Test career after this game. But he did not inform us anything officially and we have to see whether it's an emotional outburst or not," the website quoted a top Bangladesh Cricket Board official as saying.

Mahmudullah has played 49 Tests with 2764 runs at an average of 31 plus and four half-centuries. — *PTI*

PACER PANKAJ
ANNOUNCES
RETIREMENT

Jaipur, July 10: Pacer Pankaj Singh, who contributed in Rajasthan's two Ranji Trophy triumphs and briefly played for India, on Saturday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket.

The 36-year-old Singh, who now runs a cricket academy at the Sawai Man Singh Stadium here, made the announcement through a letter to the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA).

Singh's maiden ODI appearance came against Sri Lanka in a tri-series in Zimbabwe in 2010, while his two Test outings came against England in 2014 when he took two wickets. "Playing for RCA, IPL and CAP (Cricket Association of Pondicherry) has been a tremendous honour for me. I have been part of RCA for close to 15 years," he said in the letter. — *PTI*

Ready for long
wait at airportIOA cautions athletes may have
to spend hours at immigration

TOKYO | GAMES

New Delhi, July 10: IOA President Narinder Batra on Saturday highlighted fresh concerns that India's Olympic-bound athletes may face on arrival in Tokyo, including spending long hours in immigration without food and water.

Batra was informed of the inconveniences the athletes from other countries are facing on landing in Tokyo by the Indian Chef De mission B.P. Baishya on Friday. He has raised the issue to the Games' organisers ahead of the Indian contingent's departure.

"Important issues brought to my notice from Chef De Mission meeting on July 9. Same issue was highlighted in the meeting by different countries including Czech, those who arrived at Narita airport," Batra said in a statement.

"They have to wait for 4 HRS, before the immigration process to begin and they waited for three hours to board the transport. No food and no water was provided."

"Germany highlighted the Volunteer services are almost non-existent," the statement read.

The first batch of India's Olympic-bound athletes is set to depart for Tokyo on July 17. More than 120 athletes are bound for the Games.

"Sharing with all of you so that you are mentally prepared for what you may very likely expect at the airport until you reach the Village, these Games are being held under extraordinary circumstances and we should try to sup-

● **Batra was informed of the inconveniences the athletes from other countries are facing on landing in Tokyo by the Indian Chef De mission B. P. Baishya on Friday.**

port Japan and go through everything with a smile," Batra said.

Addressing the concerns raised by Batra, the organisers said, "The issue has been raised today to the organising committee. They will work on it with the government to make sure it does not happen anymore."

Baishya said the athletes need to be prepared for spending long hours at the airport after landing in Tokyo for testing, immigration and other clearances.

"...We have raised the problems we are facing and likely to face in Tokyo and the organisers have promised to look into them. But one thing is clear that our athletes will have to stay at the Tokyo airport for 5 to 6 hours after arrival," Baishya said.

"The first thing after arrival will be Covid tests of all the Indian contingent. Then we have to complete immigration and other required process. After that the Covid test results will come and only after that the Indian contingent will be allowed to board the bus." — *PTI*

NAVNEET FEELS INDIA COOL
PLAYING STRONG TEAMS

Bengaluru, July 10: Olympic-bound forward Navneet Kaur feels the Indian women's hockey team's mindset has changed in the past few years, adding that the side now doesn't panic playing against top teams.

"A lot has changed in the mindset of our team in the past few years, we don't fear the stronger opponents anymore," Kaur was quoted as saying in a Hockey India release.

"Earlier, when we used to play against the Netherlands or Great Britain, we used to panic. That's not the case now. We fight until the final whistle. It's not over until it's over."

Kaur, who has played 79 matches for the national team, is all set to take part in her first Olympic campaign in Tokyo.

"Playing at the Olympics is my childhood dream and I will leave no stone unturned to make it wonderful. With experience comes responsibility."

Kaur feels heading into the games with a clear mindset will be key in the Tokyo Games.

"This team is like a family. Rani and Savita keep exchanging their ideas with us on how we can improve together as a team."

"The coaches and the entire team are working towards that goal." — *PTI*

TOKYO | OLYMPICS

Fans barred from
outlying venues

Tokyo, July 10: Two more prefectures outside the immediate Tokyo area have decided to bar fans from attending Olympic events because of rising coronavirus infections, Tokyo Olympic organizers confirmed on Saturday with the pandemic-delayed games opening in just under two weeks.

Tokyo organizers and the IOC earlier in the week barred all fans from venues in Tokyo and three neighboring prefectures. They make up the overwhelming majority of Olympic venues, although a smattering of outlying areas were allowed initially to have limited attendance.

All fans from abroad were banned months ago. Now, two prefectures that were permitted to have fans have backed out of those plans.

Fukushima prefecture in northeastern Japan has decided to hold its baseball and softball events without spectators. It has been joined by the northern prefecture of Hokkaido, which will hold soccer games without fans at the Sapporo Dome.

"Many people including children have been looking forward to the games, and

I'm very sorry to take away their chance of watching baseball and softball at the stadium," Fukushima Governor Masao Uchibori said Saturday. "It was a very tough decision to make."

Fukushima was the early focus of the Olympics, trying to shine a light on recovery efforts in an area devastated in 2011 by an earthquake, tsunami, and the subsequent meltdown of three nuclear reactors.

Uchibori said the move by Hokkaido on Friday encouraged him to follow suit. He said it was important to have consistency among prefectures.

A few other events being held in the outlying prefectures of Miyagi, Shizuoka and Ibaraki will go ahead with limited spectators, organizers said Saturday.

IOC President Thomas Bach probably didn't notice, but on Saturday about 40 people staged a small anti-Olympic protest outside the five-star hotel where he is self-isolating after arriving in Tokyo on Thursday. "He (Bach) seems not to have thought anything about our critical situation and suffering, which makes me more angry," protester Ayako Yoshida said. — *AP*

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