

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

RAJAHMUNDRY | WEDNESDAY | 19 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

Max: 28.0°C
Min: 24.0°C
RH: 71%
Rainfall: 6.2 mm
Forecast: Rain and Humid.
 Max/Min temp.
 28/24 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

| CASES | DEATHS |
|-----------|----------|
| (+63,054) | (+1,096) |
| 27,63,985 | 53,018 |

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| (+1,682) | (+8) |
| TS: 93,937 | 711 |
| (+9,652) | (+88) |
| AP: 3,06,261 | 2,820 |

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| 2,21,74,684 |
| DEATHS |
| 7,79,999 |
| COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES |
| 213 |

worldometers.info/
coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Bahula Amavasya till 8.09 am and then Bhadrpada Shuddha Padyami till 5.18 am (Thursday)
Star: Magha till 2.05 am (Thursday)
Variyam: 3.05 pm to 4.33 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.54 am to 12.45 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HILJRI CALENDAR
Zulhijja 28,1441 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.15 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.38 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.26 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.46 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.04 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 3.43 PM

COUNTER POINT



Stop playing games... the party has given us these phones only to spread fake news!

IN BRIEF

Shah fatigued, joins AIIMS

New Delhi: Union home minister Amit Shah has been admitted to AIIMS here for post-Covid care after complaining of fatigue and body ache. According to a statement issued by AIIMS, he is comfortable and is continuing his work from hospital. Home ministry officials said Amit Shah was working from AIIMS. He had undergone treatment for Covid-19 at Medanta Hospital. Meanwhile UP minister of state Atul Garg has tested positive. Garg is hypertensive and a diabetic.

BIG HONOUR

Shuttler Satwik wins Arjuna award

MOSES KONDETY | DC
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

Badminton player Rankireddy Satwiksairaj continues to be a smash hit. He has been recommended for the prestigious Arjuna Award along with men's doubles partner Chirag Shetty by the sports ministry's selection committee on Tuesday. "I just cannot believe this!" Satwik shrieked when *Deccan Chronicle* broke the news of his selection. "Ever since I got nominated (in June), there have been so many calls... my father must've got more than 500 of them, wishing



JAGAN ORDERS FLOOD RELIEF OF ₹2,000/FAMILY

MD ILYAS | DC
 VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, directed officials to provide financial assistance of ₹2,000 to each of the families affected by the floods. Instructing MLAs and other people's representatives to join flood relief work and to help the flood victims, Jagan conducted an online video conference under the Spandana programme with collectors of East and West Godavari districts on the flood situation on Tuesday. He later went to East and West Godavari to conduct an aerial survey of the flood situation in a helicopter.

Concerned that the district administration take adequate measures in flood-affected areas, Jagan announced an immediate relief of ₹2,000 to each family in the low-lying areas. He said that the people in the inundated areas should be provided with essential commodities and asked officials to ensure that emergency services are not stopped. "₹2,000 financial aid should be given to each of the affected families and they should be treated with care while focus should be laid on the villages that are cut off from the mainstream. Public representatives should be part of relief and rehabilitation work and their ground-level inputs should be considered immediately and there should not be any complaints. The joint collector should be monitoring the relief camps," Jagan said.

■ **Page 2: Jagan conducts ariel survey**

MP bars employment of outsiders in state service

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
 BHOPAL, AUG. 18

In a major decision, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday announced a bar on 'outsiders' joining government services by reserving state jobs for residents of the state.

In a video statement, Chouhan indicated that necessary amendments to the law would be made to bring into force the decision.

"The state government has taken a major decision today. Government jobs in the state will only be open for people from the state. We are taking necessary legal steps to enforce the decision. Residents of MP will have sole rights of resources of the state",

NATION | 4

Ashok Lavasa resigns as EC, to join ADB



WORLD | 5

Trump slaps new curbs on Huawei

SPORTS | 8

Dream XI wins IPL title bid at ₹222 cr



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Too close



Water in the river Godavari flows very close to the road-cum-rail bridge in Rajahmundry on Tuesday. The water in the river has increased because of heavy inflows from upstream areas.

— A. MANIKANTA KUMAR

Godavari water level begins falling, coastal areas face Amavasya threat

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
 VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Water level in Godavari River has started falling, giving the much-required relief to authorities and people of both the Godavari districts.

Authorities say water level at Bhadrachalam is now at 52.1 feet with a discharge of 13.78 lakh cusecs. Consequently, water level at Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage at Dowleswaram has started falling. At 6.00 p.m., the level stood at 19.80 ft with a discharge of 22.40 lakh cusecs. Authorities say

● **THE BIGGEST** worry of authorities at present is Amavasya falling on Wednesday, August 19. They fear high tides in Bay of Bengal may prevent the river from emptying into the sea, resulting in inundation of areas like Kapileswarapuram, Antarvedipalem, etc

water level will continue falling for the next 24 hours and reach 11.75 ft, with discharges ranging from 10-13 lakh cusecs. Only the third level flood warning is in force at present. It may come down to

first level at 11.75 ft in the next 24 hours.

The biggest worry of authorities at present is Amavasya falling on Wednesday, August 19. They fear high tides in Bay of Bengal may prevent River Godavari from emptying into the sea, resulting in inundation of areas like Kapileswarapuram, Antarvedipalem and other areas along the sea coast in both the districts.

Outfall sluices are auto-managed to allow water from mainland into the sea. In case the sea water surges into the mainland due to high tide in the sea, sluice gates get shut auto-

matically, resulting in submergence of farm lands and habitations in upstream areas.

Water resources superintending engineer (Godavari Head Works) K. S. Prakasa Rao said, "We have not witnessed any breach of flood banks all along the river course in both the districts, except for a minor leak at Necklace Bund at Polavaram. We are strengthened the bund to control the leak. Though the water level has started falling, we are maintaining vigil."

■ **Page 2: State relocates people from risky areas**

SC: PM-CARES MONEY CAN'T GO TO RELIEF FUND

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
 NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Observing that PM-CARES is a public charitable trust that was set up in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said that money collected for PM-CARES Fund need not go to the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) as the former had different object and purpose.

Rejecting the prayer for the transfer of funds collected under PM-CARES to NDRF, Justice Ashok Bhushan, who pronounced the judgment, said, "The funds collected in the PM CARES Fund are entirely different funds which are funds of a public charitable trust and there is no occasion for issuing any direction to transfer the said funds to the NDRF."

Besides Justice Bhushan, other judges on the bench included Justice R. Subhas Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah.

Making a distinction between the funds, Justice Bhushan said, "The NDRF and PM-CARES Fund are two entirely different funds with different object and purpose."

The court dismissed a PIL by CPIL seeking a direction for the transfer of money contributed to PM-CARES in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic to NDRF.

Reacting to the judgment, lawyer Prashant Bhushan said, "Unfortunately that the Supreme Court allows the non-transparent & unaccountable PM-CARES Fund set-up as a secret trust to garner money."



People in large numbers throng at the fishing harbour to purchase fish neglecting the distance norms in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— DC

AP questions PIL on phone tapping

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

The state government argued over the maintainability of a public interest litigation filed on phone tapping of judges and others while hearing the case here on Tuesday and directed the petitioner, the state government, Centre and service providers to file counter affidavits and posted the case for next hearing on August 20.

Additional advocate general, P. Sudhakar Reddy, and government pleader, Suman, argued on behalf of the state government in the court by saying that the source of information for a PIL was absolutely important for its maintainability.

They said that in the present PIL, the petitioner's

source of information was not reliable.

They said that they could not believe that the judge of a high court would speak to a media agency about telephone tapping of judges and added that the state government had already served a defamation notice to the media agency and would initiate legal action against it.

However, the petitioner's advocate informed the court that he had reliable information that a senior IPS officer was designated to keep track on judges and added that he would file an affidavit naming the officer concerned.

The court asked the advocate representing the government as to why the state could not take up an inquiry on the issue.

STATE'S COVID CASE TALLY CROSSES 3 LAKH

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Andhra Pradesh has crossed three-lakh mark in Covid-19 positive cases on Tuesday. The state has reported 9,652 new Coronavirus cases, taking the infection tally to 3,06,261.

The death toll has increased by 88, taking the total number of people who succumbed to Covid-19 to 2,820.

The state's Covid-19 bulletin claimed that 56,090 samples tested in the last 24 hours.

So far, the state has carried out Covid-19 tests on 29,61,611 samples. Of this, 7.37 per cent or 2,18,311 have tested positive for the virus. Currently, 85,130 patients are still being treated.

■ **Full report on Page 3**

IN BRIEF

BJP MLC Vakati tests positive

Nellore: BJP MLC Vakati Narayana Reddy has appealed to the people who came in contact with him during last one week to go for COVID-19 test. Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle* over the phone from Hyderabad on Tuesday, he said that he got admitted to Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad after he was tested positive to Covid-19 two days back. Attributing his infection source to one of his gunmen, the second time MLC said he was doing fine and expressed hope of returning home in the next few days.

FIRST AADHAAR CENTRE SET UP IN VIZAG AGENCY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 18

Finally, the first Aadhaar Centre was established in Araku to facilitate the Aadhaar card related issues to the tribal community in the Visakhapatnam agency. The centre was established at the Rental Housing Colony in Araku by the Tribal Welfare Project Monitoring Unit.

While inaugurating the centre, Araku Lok Sabha member G. Madhavi said that the tribals need not face difficulties for changing their address, registration of photo biometric, Aadhaar seeding, registering Date of Births and other related centres at the centre. She also assured the setting up similar Aadhaar centres at Paduru, Pedabayalu and Chintapalle mandal headquarters shortly.

Project Officer, ITDA, Paderu Dr S. Venkateswar and Araku MLA Ch. Phalguna were also present.

Later, the MP distributed seeds of various fruits and vegetables to the tribal farmers. The seeds supplied by Indian Institute of Horticulture, Bengaluru.

TD HITS OUT AT GOVT ON TITLES OF LIQUOR BRANDS

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 18

TD leader, Kotamreddy Srinivasulu Reddy, has criticised the government for marketing a 'President's medal' brand whisky insulting the veneration for the prestigious award.

During a protest before a wine shop at Madras bus stand centre in Nellore on Tuesday, Mr Srinivasulu Reddy demanded the closure of liquor shops.

Justifying his demand, Mr Reddy said that the efforts of frontline warriors such as doctors, nurses, police and officials to contain the Coronavirus are wasted with the opening of liquor shops.

Questioning the rationale behind increasing the rates of ₹60 worth cheap liquor to ₹240, Mr Reddy alleged that fleecing the people has become a habit for the ruling party. He said they are lodging a complaint on the use of 'President's Medal' as name for a liquor brand.

Senior TD leader, Dharmavarapu Subba Rao, was present during the protest, among others.

DOCS TO STAGE BLACK BADGE STIR FROM TOMORROW

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Government doctors across the state will wear black badges to work from Thursday in a bid to draw the attention of the Chief Minister to their long-pending grievances.

AP Government Doctors Association convenor Dr D. Javadheer, in a statement issued here on Tuesday, stated that the state government had not come forward to provide ₹1 crore financial relief — ₹50 lakh each from Centre and state government — to the kin of the doctors who died of Coronavirus they contracted while treating patients of the dread virus.

According to him, the government did not fulfil their demand for designating a district level officer to take care of doctors and their family members requiring admission in hospitals for Covid-19 treatment on a priority basis.

The APGDA said that in order to highlight their demands such as financial incentive for doctors attending to Covid-19 duty and implementation of PRC 2016 to teaching doctors and others, they were taking up their protest by wearing black badges.

Floods bring inflows into reservoirs

Jurala project has opened 26 of its gates, letting out 3,24,889 cusecs of water into Srisailem reservoir

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, AUG. 18

With heavy inflows into Krishna river, Priyadarshini Jurala project has opened 26 of its gates, letting out 3,24,889 cusecs of water into the Srisailem reservoir. Sunkesula barrage near Kurnool on Tungabhadra River is adding another 24,000 cusecs into Srisailem.

Projects on upper reaches of Krishna, like Almatti and Narayanpur dams, are also discharging 2,50,000 cusecs into the river. Net inflows into the Srisailem project has been recorded at 165.34 tmc feet of water against the maximum capacity of 215.75 tmc.

Tungabhadra River is also in spate due to opening of six gates at Sunkesula barrage, which is letting out 26,000 cusecs of water into the Srisailem reservoir.

District collector G. Veera Pandian has asked irrigation, revenue, police, disaster management, and fisheries department officials to evacuate people from low-lying areas wherever necessary.

The district collector visited Sunkesula dam on Tuesday and inspected the flood situation there. He asked officials of dam sites and reservoirs across the district, including Srisailem, Owk, Gajuladinne and Velugodu to be extra careful. He advised fishermen against venturing out for fishing.

With incessant rains in upper reaches, Tungabhadra dam is receiving huge amounts of flood waters. With continuous inflows into the dam, authorities are releasing 60,000 cusecs of water by lifting 20 out of 33 gates to a height of two feet each. The released water is reaching the Sunkesula barrage, where the water level has reached 1.15 tmc ft against the full capacity of 1.20 tmc ft. While the barrage is receiving 22,743 cusecs of water, officials are releasing 22,700 cusecs of flood water downstream by lifting seven gates, which, in turn, is filling up the Srisailem reservoir.

According to irrigation department officials, water available currently in major reservoirs and 634 irrigation water tanks of Kurnool district is nearly 216 tmc against the total capacity of 270 tmc. In other words, reservoirs have filled to 80 per cent of their total storage capacity.



ABOVE: Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy conducts aerial survey of flood-affected areas of East Godavari district on Tuesday. BELOW: The submerged fields in East Godavari district



State relocates flood-hit people from risky areas

From Page 1

Revenue authorities in Ramachodavaram agency area are closely monitoring the flood situation in affected 33 habitations. A few houses in 15 habitations have suffered damages due to flood waters. Gandipochamma temple located on river bank in Devipatnam mandal has got submerged partially. Authorities have kept boats and launches ready for evacuating people to safety.

Rampachodavaram sub collector Praveen Aditya said, "We have moved nearly 100 pregnant women, lactating mothers and children from vulnerable areas to the safety of relief centres in Ramachodavaram. Essential commodities are being supplied to flood-

affected people. Candles are being distributed in places where power lines have got snapped. Medical camps have been established to provide health care. We are getting ready to take up sanitation measures to avoid spread of infections once the water starts receding," Aditya stated.

Authorities have evacuated people living in low-lying areas and island villages in Amalapuram area. They have been shifted to relief centres and are being provided food and drinking water. People who have resisted evacuation have been advised to move to their kin's homes in higher areas. Food and water packets are being distributed to people at their homes wherever possible.

Amalapuram sub collector Himanshu Koushik

said, "We are keeping a close tab on flood situation. People have been evacuated from low-lying areas and some island villages to relief camps. We have also stocked antidotes for snake bites and are conducting medical camps to ensure health care. We are also keeping an eye on suspect Covid-19 cases."

In Narasapuram, people from low-lying areas have been shifted to relief camps. Narasapuram sub collector K. Viswanathan said, "We are providing all requisite help to flood-affected people in the form of accommodation, food, essential supplies, drinking water and health care. One snake bite case has been reported. The person has been provided immediate medical care," he added.

JAGAN CONDUCTS ARIEL SURVEY OF AFFECTED AREAS

From Page 1

"The staff of social welfare hostels should also be drafted into the relief operations and Covid-19 tests should be conducted at every relief camp," said Jagan.

As the officials are busy in overseeing the relief and rehabilitation works, Jagan said that he had decided to conduct an aerial survey of the affected areas. The floodwater seems to be receding at Bhadrachalam which is a good sign, he said.

Enquiring about the supply chain of ration and other essential goods, including milk to children, masks and sanitisers in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, he sought to ensure that officials have been taking all the necessary steps.

The East Godavari district collector and officials informed him that 14,477 people were sheltered in 95 relief camps, 105 villages were affected by the floods and 71 villages were cut off from the mainstream. They mentioned that the administration has pressed nine launches (mechanised boats) and 136 boats to ferry people to safety.

In West Godavari district, about 2 lakh water packets were distributed and vegetables were being supplied to tribal people via boats.

The national disaster response force and state disaster response force teams are kept as a standby.

Jagan ordered "Once the floods recede, sanitary work should be taken up along with chlorination of water and health camps should be conducted. Within ten days, the extent of crop loss and damage should be assessed and power and communication lines restored."

Ministers, Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and Perni Nani, chief secretary, Nilam Sawhney, DGP, Goutham Sawang, and other officials took part in the conference.

WATER STORAGE AT A GLANCE IN KURNOOL DISTRICT RESERVOIRS:

● In Srisailem, there is 172.262 TMC ft of water available in the dam against the total capacity 215.807 TMC ft. Water levels are 877.10 feet against the FRL of 885.00 feet.

● In Sunkesula barrage, there is 1.152 TMC ft of water available in the reservoir against the total capacity of 1.200 TMC ft. Water levels are 291.80 metres against the FRL of 292.00 metres.

● In Gajuladinne project, there is 4.210 TMC ft of water available in the dam against the total capacity of 4.500 TMC ft. Water levels are 376.85 metres against the FRL of 377.00 metres.

● In Velugodu balancing reservoir, there is 9.793 TMC ft of water available in the dam against the total capacity 16.950 TMC ft. Water levels are 852.885 ft against the FRL of 868.48 feet.

● In Owk reservoir, there is 1.890 TMC ft of water available in the dam against the total capacity of 4.148 TMC ft.

All gates of Tungabhadra dam opened

NAGABHUSHANAM
HOSKOTE | DC
ANANTAPUR, AUG. 18

All gates of Tungabhadra dam have been opened on Tuesday after the reservoir reached its full storage capacity.

TB dam superintendent engineer Venkata Ramana said water level is being maintained at 97.97 tmc ft as against the full capacity

of 100.86, with 39,430 cusecs of inflows and 49,439 cusecs of outflows.

Water is being released from Tungabhadra reservoir to AP through the High Level Main Canal and Low Level Canal. HLMC authorities are also filling PABR and other summer storage tanks in Anantapur district to meet the future drinking water and irrigation needs.



BJP STATE PRESIDENT DEMANDS REHAB FOR POLAVARAM EVACUEES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

State BJP president Somu Veerajulu demanded rehabilitation and resettlement package to the Polavaram irrigation project affected people immediately.

The BJP MLC along with party leaders visited the flood-hit areas at Patha Polavaram and other areas on Tuesday and interacted with the victims. Speaking on the occasion, he said that though the YSR Congress government had given assurances to provide financial relief and take up construction of rehabilitation centres, there

was no much progress on it. He slammed the state government for failing to take up any measures to contain inundation of low-lying areas due to floods. He alleged that as the height of Cofferdam was raised, it was causing submergence of island villages. He also demanded Rs 5,000 each to the people from flood hit areas.

Another BJP team led by MLC P.V.N. Madhav inspected island villages in Konaseema region in East Godavari where paddy and horticulture crops were submerged in flood waters and demanded proper relief to the affected farmers.

Covid awareness poor in rural areas: Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday stressed the need for addressing poor awareness about Coronavirus prevention in rural areas.

Addressing a conference held online with Covid warriors and survivors here, he called upon experts, intellectuals, frontline warriors and scientists to come forward to create a greater awareness among the people on the best practices being observed around the world to fight the dreaded virus.

He alleged that the state government was going slow on tests to paint a rosy picture. Lack of awareness about safety and poor medical accessibility made rural people very vulnerable to the

virus, he observed.

The TD chief said the government reduced Covid tests from 62,938 on August 7 to 44,500 in the state and demanded expediting tests to prevent the virus spread.

The opposition leader told the Covid warriors that in his long political career, he had never been confined to home. "The Covid pandemic has brought a sea change in the lives of people worldwide. The fear factor is killing spirit of humanity, testing friendships, separating relatives and creating suicidal tendencies. Another major worry is the stigma attached to the virus," said the former CM.

Positive thinking, regular exercise, healthy diet and good habits were the need of the hour to beat the pandemic, according to the TD leader.

Parvathi seeks CBI probe against Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Andhra Pradesh Telugu Academy chairperson, Nandamuri Lakshmi Parvathi, demanded a CBI inquiry on the illegalities and corruption of Telugu Desam chief, N. Chandrababu Naidu.

She said she filed a case against Naidu for his corruption and illegalities 14 years ago but Naidu got a stay order, unable to face the case. She demanded that Naidu accept a CBI inquiry on corruption in the Polavaram project

and further corruption and illegalities during his government.

Saying she would write a letter to the Centre to inquire into the corruption charges against Naidu right from Polavaram project to his involvement in managing systems, Parvathi slammed Naidu for making a fuss by falsely alleging phone tapping by the government and demanded that he prove the allegations.

Parvathi alleged that Naidu is trying to defame the government with false accusations.

War of words over Naidu's phone tapping charge

Naidu allegation baseless: HM

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

War of words on tapping of phones is continuing between leaders of ruling and opposition parties. Opposition Telugu Desam has demanded that the YSRC government order a probe to prove its innocence, while the ruling YSRC has asked the TD to submit proof about phone tapping, so that action could be taken.

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging tapping of phones belonging to opposition leaders, advocates, journalists, and social activists. He wanted the centre to take stringent action against the YSRC government and certain private persons, who are involving in the tapping of

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Home minister Mekathoti Sucharita on Tuesday said phone tapping allegation made by Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu was baseless and intended to divert public attention from "multi crore Amaravati scams".

She said that the government asked Mr Naidu and

phones. The opposition leader alleged private persons are using cutting-edge technology and equipment to unlawfully tap phones, which poses a major threat to national security.

Reacting to Naidu's letter, AP DGP Gowtham

other leaders to provide proof of phone tapping on Monday, but they failed to submit even a scrap of evidence.

Ms Sucharita claimed that investigation was ordered to unearth multi crore scams in land pooling system in Amaravati. "The investigation has reached a crucial stage hence Mr Naidu has hatched a plan to defame

Sawang asked the opposition leader to submit evidence about phone tapping.

Home minister Mekathoti Sucharita refuted the allegation and assured that if Naidu submits evidence, stringent action will be taken

the police department with baseless allegations."

Denying phone tapping by the police department, Ms Sucharita said, "there is no need for us to do such things". Mr Naidu and his benamis would face the music in the Amaravati multi crore scams and cautioned that they cannot escape from the clutches of law by playing cheap tricks.

against those responsible.

YSRC MLA Ambati Rambabu alleged that the TDP chief is making false allegations about even phones of judiciary being tapped. He contended that the YSRC government has no reason to tap the phones of opposition,

which is weak and negligible.

He criticised Naidu for playing cheap politics with involvement of his friendly media. YSRC MLA Karanam Dharmasri pointed out that while in power, Naidu had spoken against Modi and now he is trying to woo the BJP government at the centre.

TD chief Chandrababu Naidu wondered how AP Director General of Police could ask for proof on phone tapping. He said it is laughable that instead of initiating action to verify facts, the DGP has written a counter letter seeking evidence.

The opposition leader pointed out that he had written many letters and submitted memoranda on false cases filed against TD leaders in the past, but the DGP never cared to respond.

Govt told to file counter affidavit on the issue in eight weeks

State told not to acquire lands of edu institutions

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

An Andhra Pradesh High Court division bench, comprising Chief Justice, J.K. Maheswari, and justice, D. Ramesh directed the state government not to allot vacant sites belonging to government educational institutions as house sites anywhere in the state and asked it to file a counter affidavit on the issue in eight weeks during a virtual hearing held on Tuesday.

Dudu Latchanna Dora filed a petition in the high court stating that 03.76 acres of land located at

survey no. 19/4 at Pinakota village, Anantagiri mandal in Visakhapatnam district, where a government tribal welfare ashram school was being run presently, was allotted to be distributed as house sites under state government welfare scheme called 'Pedalandiriki Illu'.

He said in the petition that the land belonged to his mother-in-law, Siragam Varahamma, and was donated for the purpose of setting up a school earlier and two more donors also donated some additional land for further expansion of the school. The petition also men-

tioned that though the school headmaster opposed the allotment of school land for housing scheme, the tahsildar had taken a unilateral decision without even consulting the gram sabha though it was mandatory to do so under section four of the panchayats (extension to scheduled areas) act, 1996, to allot the land for the housing scheme.

During the hearing, petitioner's counsel, T. Yogesh, asked the court to issue an order declaring the action of the respondents, the state government and others, in allocating house sites under 'Pedalandiriki

Illu' scheme and starting construction of panchayat secretariat building and allowing the construction of Koval Foundation building on the land belonging to a government tribal welfare ashram school, illegal, arbitrary and a violation of Art 14, 21 (A) and Art. 21 of the constitution of India.

The court asked for widening the scope of the PIL to all over the state and issued direction to the state government not to acquire lands belonged to any government educational institution and allot them as house sites under any government scheme.

Petitioner's counsel, T. Yogesh, said, "It is good that the High Court has expanded the scope of the PIL and directed the state government not to acquire lands belonging to government educational institutions and converting them as house sites for distribution to the poor all over the state. The donors of that land at Pinakota village wanted the promotion of education by setting up a school and its expansion in future and if such land was acquired by the government, the purpose of the donors for donating their land would be defeated."

SHORT TAKES

NO HOME ISOLATION OF COVID PATIENTS

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL, AUG. 18

The District Collector G. Veerapandian has cancelled home isolations for Covid-19 patients. He said that patients with coronavirus symptoms must be admitted in Covid hospitals only.

Kurnool Government General Hospital superintendent Dr G. Narendra Nath Reddy said that Covid-19 patients in home isolation had been shifted to TIDCO quarantine centre. He said that the state Covid hospital is currently treating 600 patients out of whom 40 patients are on ventilators.

One of the reasons for cancelling home isolation facility by the district collector was that some of the patients who were on home isolation were freely moving in the society becoming a threat of spreading the virus in the community. This is much more dangerous than somebody who is contraction the infection from a direct source, the doctor said.

WOMAN MURDERS LIVE-IN PARTNER

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

A woman murdered a person with the help of her lover and buried the dead body in their house at Cherukupalli in Guntur district.

According to the police, Ballepalli Chiranjeevi, 40, working as RMP was missing for the past one week. His father, Subba Rao, lodged a missing person complaint with the police. During investigation, the police found that Chiranjeevi was murdered and buried in his house. A woman who was in a live-in relationship with Chiranjeevi committed the murder with the help of her lover.

Addressing a press conference at Guntur on Tuesday, Guntur rural SP, Vishal Gunni, said that the police arrested Vakkalagadda Saisirisha and Katakalia Bhanuprakash, after investigation. The deceased Chiranjeevi was married to Madhavi, alias Nagamani, for 16 years and separated after two children due to family disputes eight years ago. He started to live with Saisirisha in a live-in relationship.

OFFICIALS TOLD TO SPEED UP WORKS

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 18

Nellore rural legislator Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy reviewed development programmes in progress in his constituency with higher officials including collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu and Joint Collector N. Prabhakar Reddy on Tuesday.

The legislator has requested the officials to speed up the development of Sri Vedagiri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, flyover bridge on mini bypass road and sports complex in Mogallapalem.

He also underlined the need to realise the proposals related to a degree college in South Mopur, BC Bhavan, Ambedkar Bhavan, Christian community hall and minority residential school.

TTD TOP BRASS CONDOLES DEATH OF OFFICER

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, AUG. 18

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) assistant vigilance and security officer died while undergoing treatment in Chennai late on Monday. TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, EO Anil Kumar Singhal, chief vigilance and security officer Gopinath Jatti, additional CVSO T. Sivakumar Reddy and others expressed their condolences on Tuesday.

V. Maheswara Rao, working as AVSO (Communications) in TTD's vigilance and security wing, was admitted at a private hospital at Chennai on July 28, with symptoms of Covid-19. Sources said that his test results came negative a couple of days ago and that everyone believed that he would recover and re-join duties soon.

However, soon after his test results, his medical condition deteriorated. Maheswara Rao's colleagues in the vigilance department recalled his invaluable services to the TTD.

Covid cases cross 3 lakh

9,652 Covid cases in 24 hours, 88 deaths raising the toll to 2,820

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday crossed the three-lakh mark of Covid-19 positive cases by reaching the figure of 3,06,261 since the beginning of Coronavirus pandemic in the state.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin here reporting that out of 56,090 samples tested, 9,652 new Covid-19 cases have turned out to be positive. The number of deaths during the last 24 hours has been 88, raising the death toll to 2,820.

So far, the state has carried out Covid-19 tests on 29,61,611 samples. Of them, 2,18,311 infected patients have been discharged after recovery, while 85,130 infected patients are still undergo-

ing treatment in various hospitals.

Among the new confirmed Coronavirus infections, East Godavari district continues to lead with 1,396 cases, followed by 990 in Chittoor, 928 in Visakhapatnam, 895 in Guntur, 830 in Kurnool, 805 in West Godavari, 755 in Kadapa, 725 in Prakasam, 684 in Nellore, 513 in Vizianagaram, 445 in Anantapur, 405 in Srikakulam and 281 in Krishna.

With regard to cumulative positive cases, East Godavari district again tops the state with 42,600 cases, followed by 34,782 in Kurnool, 30,507 in Anantapur, 27,810 in Guntur, 26,255 in Visakhapatnam, 25,111 in West Godavari, 24,907 in Chittoor, 18,329 in Nellore, 18,086 in Kadapa, 15,663 in Srikakulam,

● The state has carried out Covid-19 tests on 29,61,611 samples

● East Godavari district continues to lead with 1,396 cases, followed by 990 in Chittoor

● East Godavari district tops the state with 42,600 cumulative cases, followed by 34,782 in Kurnool

● Chittoor district has registered the highest number of 14 deaths on a single day

13,608 in Vizianagaram, 12,948 in Prakasam, 12,760 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Rate of recovery among infected patients has been good in Kurnool district with 27,604 recoveries, followed by 27,056 in

East Godavari, 25,218 in Anantapur, 20,242 in Visakhapatnam, 19,584 in Guntur, 19,544 in West Godavari, 15,284 in Chittoor, 13,505 in Kadapa, 12,973 in Nellore, 10,267 in Srikakulam, 9,665 in Krishna, 7,923 in Prakasam, 6,551 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Chittoor district has registered the highest number of 14 deaths on a single day, followed by 11 in Prakasam, nine each in Anantapur, Guntur and Kurnool, seven in Nellore, six in West Godavari, five each in S r i k a k u l a m, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram, four in East Godavari, three in Krishna and one in Kadapa.

The cumulative number of deaths is high with 306

cases each in Kurnool and Guntur districts, followed by 290 in East Godavari, 257 in Chittoor, 238 in Anantapur, 232 in Krishna, 208 in West Godavari, 216 in Visakhapatnam, 185 in Prakasam, 176 in Srikakulam, 155 in Nellore, 126 in Vizianagaram and 125 in Kadapa.

The state health authorities have discharged 9,211 infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the state in the last 24 hours.

AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 55,461 samples for one million population and registered a Covid-19 positive rate of 10.32, while Maharashtra tested 25,690 with positive rate of 18.83 and Telangana tested 19,169 with positive rate of 12.25.

Victims' bodies get swapped in hosp

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 18

Tension prevailed at Sanga Mithra Hospital in Ongole after the bodies of two Covid victims belonging to two different communities got swapped on Tuesday.

According to Ongole DSP P.V.V.N. Prasad, a 72-year-old Basha (name changed) belonging to Cumbum town of Prakasam district tested positive for Coronavirus on August 5 and was admitted in Sangha Mithra Hospital on August 13 with high fever.

He breathed his last on August 16. His body was kept in the mortuary of the hospital and his family was informed of his death.

Similarly, a 67-year-old patient from Karamchedu village in Prakasam district, Dharmamiah (name changed) was admitted in the same hospital with Coronavirus on August 16.

He passed away on August 17.

The family of Dharmamiah hired some people in Ongole and cremated him on Monday.

Meanwhile, the relatives of Basha came to collect the body. They were shocked when they found the body of Dharmamiah when they opened the bag before placing it in the van.

The hospital management realised the goof-up after verifying the records at the mortuary and tried to pacify the agitated family, but in vain.

A police team led by the DSP rushed to the spot and pacified the angry family of Basha.

Police said that the management was very sorry for the lapse and reportedly offered free treatment to the daughter of the deceased who is undergoing treatment for Covid in the same hospital.

Tirupati top in Covid cases in Chittoor dist

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, AUG. 18

Despite a robust recovery rate, the rise in Covid-19 deaths as well as positive cases continue unabated in Chittoor district. In just a fortnight, 13,580 tested positive and 143 succumbed to the virus in the district.

Adding much to the worry of the people, the district accounted for 14 of the 88 deaths in the last 24 hours in the state as per the bulletin released on Tuesday.

Going by the state bulletin, the district so far recorded 24,907 Covid positive cases and 257 deaths.

There are still 9,366 active cases, while 15,284 people have been discharged till date. The district which

reached 10,000 mark on July 31 since the first Covid case reported on March 24, raced to 25,000 cases in just 17 days. A disturbing indication that the infection is spreading rapidly in the district.

The situation in Tirupati is even worse with the temple city's urban and rural limits together accounting for about 50 per cent (12,629) of the total cases in the district. With 114 deaths, the city accounted for 44 per cent of the toll in the district.

Constituency-wise, Tirupati city tops the list followed by Srikalahasti, Chittoor, Puttur, Madanapalli and Chandragiri, while Gudupalli mandal is in the last place with 13 cases so far.

SV veterinary varsity secures two projects

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, AUG. 18

The Sri Venkateswara veterinary university in Tirupati has secured two international collaborative research projects, funded by various national and international institutes of veterinary sciences.

According to the vice-chancellor, V. Padmanabha Reddy, and dean, T.S. Chandrasekhara Rao, the first project titled 'Modelling exposure to biological hazards in the dairy chains of Andhra Pradesh to inform food safety policy' will be taken up by the varsity's NTR college of veterinary sciences in collaboration with the royal veterinary college in London and GAD veterinary and animal sciences university in Ludhiana.

The ₹1.80 crore project will be funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation and the UK's department for international development. Associate professor, Dr T. Srinivasa Rao, will be the principal investi-

gator. The project focuses on studying ways to improve milk hygiene and reduce food-borne diseases.

The second project titled 'Lab on wheels: an innovative point-of-care test to diagnose chlamydiales in one health setting,' will be taken up by the varsity in collaboration with the society for health allied research and education, India (SHARE India), Hyderabad, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS), Allahabad, BiosparkQ (NL), TubaScan (NL) and Ghent University, Belgium.

The ₹1.07 crore project will be funded by the department of biotechnology and Netherlands enterprise agency and aims to detect chlamydiales (bacteria) in poultry samples, workers in poultry farms and poultry processing plants through mass spectrometry.

The project is considered a high impact study as the bacteria transmitted from birds can cause infertility in humans.

MAN HELD FOR TRYING TO KILL 3

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

Police arrested a man identified as Bhimireddy Venugopal Reddy here on Tuesday for his alleged attempt to kill three persons by setting a car on fire on Monday evening.

The police said that D. Gangadhar and his wife

Nagavalli Kumari were involved in selling and buying of used cars. Venugopal Reddy and another person, Vazrala Sivaramakrishna Reddy, joined hands with the couple to do real estate business.

However, as they suffered loss in that business, they went their own separate ways.

Ganesha invitation



Kanipakam Temple priests, minister Peddireddy Ramachandradev invite Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for attending the temple Brahmotsavams at the camp office on Tuesday.

Parent shares porn video on kids' WA group

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL, AUG. 18

The parent of a student shared a porn video on a WhatsApp group created for Class VIII children of Pathikonda Zilla Parishad Girls High School in Kurnool district, leading to protests from students, school teachers as well as other parents.

The video that had gone viral caused embarrass-

ing moments for everybody who was on the group to educate children online in view of schools being closed due to Coronavirus pandemic.

Pathikonda police have registered a case against the parent accused of putting the porn video on the group.

According to Pathikonda circle inspector Adi Narayana Reddy, the WhatsApp group had

● The video that had gone viral caused embarrassing moments for everybody who was on the group to educate children online

been created to educate Class VIII students of Pathikonda Zilla Parishad Girls High School. Teachers would interact with children in the group and clear their

doubts. A few parents were also included in the group to help their children.

Meanwhile, the parent of a girl student shared a porn video in this group, which remained viral on other groups of the town for two days. The administrators of the Class VIII group deleted the video and zeroed in on the sender, who accepted to sharing the video. The

parent contended that it had been shared by mistake.

Students' associations and school teachers have demanded immediate action against the parent for offending students, parents and teachers in the group.

Police have registered a case and have started investigation, Pathikonda circle inspector said.

Laxity in Covid-19 care in Nellore

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, AUG. 18

If the situation in Nellore is anything to go by, officials seem to have bid adieu to the practice of shifting Covid-19-positive to hospitals immediately after the results. Worse, they seem to be ignoring another important task: tracing the primary and secondary contacts of the infected.

In the past, health officials and sanitary supervisors would rush to the house of the person who tested positive, get him/her admitted and do a recte of all primary and secondary contacts to prevent spread of virus, sanitary staff used to sanitise the entire area after the patient was taken away.

Now almost all such practices are not enforced for reasons best known to the authorities concerned.

For instance, no one from the government turned up to check the whereabouts of a 33-year-old software professional who tested positive last Saturday. He is living in an apartment at Netaji Nagar in Podalakur road. He went for the test to a nearby ZP High School because he was suffering from fever.

He got a message stating that he is positive on August 15. As a responsible citizen, he sent his family members including father, mother, sister and wife for Covid-19 tests to the same school next day and their results are awaited.

"Though it is three days since my son tested posi-

tive, nobody contacted us so far and his temperament has subsided now. We are waiting for our results," his father, a retired bank officer, said, expressing surprise over the inefficiency of the government machinery.

A resident of Magunta layout also had a similar experience when the maid in his house tested positive a few days back. Residents of a group of apartments located behind Nellore museum in the Saraswathi Nagar area have been living in fear following the death of two women over a gap of three days because of the virus. In this case also, sanitisation of the premises was not carried out nor was there any contact tracing.

Responding to a question on the situation, district medical and health

officer, Dr Rajyalakshmi, said that they are facing a peculiar situation after rapid antigen test kits were introduced. "Since the results are declared on the spot, several positive patients are disappearing after the test," she said, adding that they may be joining in hospitals of their choice or remaining in home isolation.

She has also attributed the problems they are facing with respect to tracing contacts to the unprecedented increase in the number of positive cases from an average 500 per day from a mere 100 or 150 in the past. Stressing that their workforce is doing their best to rise to the occasion, she said the number of employees has not increased in tune with the spike in the number of cases.

Rape victim held captive, exploited by home guard

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

A 14-year-old married girl was abducted and raped by a youth and, the same day the hapless victim fell in hands of a home guard and his friend, who held her captive for 13 days and abused her. The incident came to light on Tuesday in Guntur district.

According to the police, Notalapati Navin Kumar

alias Naveen of Karlapalem abducted the girl from Kattavada village, where she lives with her husband, and raped her in the fields near Yerravagu and later left her at Vaikuntapuram on the outskirts of Tenali on July 27, after thrusting ₹200 into her hands. The humiliated girl, unable to return home, decided to take shelter for the night at her friend's house at Perecherla. While she

● 14-year-old married girl raped for two weeks by a home guard and his friend.

● She managed to escape from the room and narrated her plight

was waiting at a bus stop, home guard Ashok Chakravarthy and his friend Durga Rao saw the girl and offered to help her.

They promised to take the girl to the police station and entrust her to the protection of a woman constable. Trusting the two men with her safety, she agreed to go with them. But the two predators kept the girl in a room at Perecherla and raped her for two weeks.

She managed to escape from the room and narrated her plight to her mother.

Addressing a press conference at Tenali on Tuesday, deputy superintendent of police K. Srilakshmi said that the police arrested the accused Naveen, home guard Ashok Chakravarthy and his friend Durga Rao based on the complaint of the girl and booked a case under Sections 5, 6 of POCSO Act and Sections 366, 376(2)(i) of IPC against them.

| VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC) | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| 'E' Procurement Notice No.18/VMC/AE/2020-21, Dt.18-08-2020 | | |
| Sl. No. | Name of work | Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs |
| 1 | Supply of Workers on Out sourcing Basis for Town Planning Section, Development of Besant Road, CC Roads in Goparaju Ramachandra Rao Street, Raghava Reddy Road, Bavaji Peta, Prasanthi Nagar, H.B Colony Internal Roads, CC Roads & Water Supply lines in Patta Lands, CC Drain Phanu Nagar, Renewal of BT Road to Sangeetha Kalasala Road, Land Scapes Hard Scapes works in HB Colony Park, O&M of 150 TPD Capacity of Solid Waste Management, End to End Shoulders with Paver blocks to Nirmala Convent Road, Engaging of 4000 Litrs capacity 8 Nos. of water tankers and 4 Nos. of water spray tankers. Providing water supply distribution and pumping line to Gunadala Municipal Employees Layout VMC (16 Works) | 1563.79 |
| Contact: Superintending Engineer (Works & Projects), VMC, Vijayawada-520 001 Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ www.tender.aeprocurement.gov.in | | |
| Download of bid documents | | - 20-08-2020 @ 4.00 P.M. |
| Last date / time for receipt of tenders | | - 03-09-2020 up to 4.30 P.M. |
| Sd/- For COMMISSIONER | | |

SHORT TAKES

RAILWAYS JUSTIFIES
HIKE IN PLATFORM
TICKET RATESDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

The Railways on Tuesday tried to justify a hike in platform ticket rates by saying this move is to control crowd at the stations in view of Covid-19 and the hike will be reviewed post-pandemic.

"Instructions have been issued to divisional Railway managers to take local decision to increase platform ticket fare to desist non serious persons from entering stations and maintain social distancing at the stations during Covid-19 pandemic. This decision will be reviewed post pandemic," said a Railway official.

The justification came following a tweet by Congress leader Digvijay Singh in which he posted photographs of two platform tickets — one during 2011 when the Congress-led UPA government was in power, and another of this month. "The cost of platform ticket that was ₹3 in Congress regime has now become ₹50. During Congress, Railways was under government while now under BJP it is privatised," Digvijay Singh tweeted. (sic)

DOCTORS REMARK
AIMED AT W.H.O.,
CLARIFIES RAUTSONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 18

After being condemned over remarks on doctors, Shiv Sena leader and party spokesperson Sanjay Raut on Tuesday said that he did not intend to insult doctors, his statement was in reference to the WHO. Last week, Raut had said that he prefers consulting compounders as they are more knowledgeable than the doctors. Following this, the Indian Medical Association (Thane branch) has written a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray demanding Raut's resignation.

According to the letter, they are looking up to government and politicians to stand with them during the pandemic. "The healthcare workers are working at great risk not only to themselves but also risking their dependents, spouses, children and aged senior citizen parents. At this critical time, we would look up to the government and senior politicians to stand with the frontline workers," the letter said.

It further added, "We are agast that a senior politician like Sanjay Rautji would say that compounders know more than doctors. We condemn this behavior and ask for his resignation." Replying to the doctors, Raut said, in a clarification, that his comments were misconstrued and that his remarks were in reference to the WHO.

ASSAM TO GIFT
SCOOTY TO 22,000
GIRL STUDENTSMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 18

Assam government on Tuesday announced to gift a scooty to 22,000 girls who passed class 12 examination with first division from the state board this year under the Pragyan Bharati scheme of the state government.

Announcing that each scooty will cost something in between ₹50,000 and ₹55,000, Assam education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters that they had announced this scheme in the state budget to which they are going to implement now.

"22,000 girl students had secured first division marks in the higher secondary examination and we will now gift a scooty to every single one of them so that they can travel to their respective colleges," said the education minister clarifying that students will not be able to sell the gift for next three years.

Informing that department has decided to hand over the scooty to the students by October 15, the minister said that the government, however, will not provide the cost for registering the vehicles and helmets.

He also announced that each teacher, professor, and every other employee associated with the educational institutions of the state government will have to go for the compulsory Covid-19 test from August 21.

"From the Aug. 21 of this month till Aug. 30, all the employees associated with the education sector shall be compulsorily tested for the Covid-19 for the well-being of the students," he said.

Back to work



Guest workers, returning from their native places, wait to get tested for Covid-19 as they arrive at Anand Vihar in New Delhi on Tuesday during Unlock 3.0. Meanwhile, workers cured of the virus have been inducted by the West Bengal government as members of "Covid-19 warriors club" to provide a healing touch to patients undergoing treatment for the infection in different hospitals in the state. — PTI

Sterlite: Madras HC
upholds govt's orderJ. STALIN | DC
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The Madras high court has upheld an order of the Tamil Nadu government, directing permanent closure of Sterlite Plant in Thoothukudi district over pollution concerns.

The company described the verdict as "temporary setback" and said it would look into all legal options available to it while political leaders and others welcomed the judgement.

A division bench comprising Justices T.S. Sivagnanam and V. Bhavani Subbarayan dismissed the petitions filed by Vedanta Limited, which sought a direction to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board to facilitate the immediate opening of its Sterlite Plant in Thoothukudi by immediate de-sealing of the plant with restoration of supply of electricity.

The bench also declined to entertain a plea from

Vedanta to suspend the operation of the order for two weeks to enable it to file SLP in the Supreme Court.

Vedanta had approached the high court in February 2019, seeking to reopen the Sterlite plant which was closed following a May 23, 2018 order issued by the TNPCB in the backdrop of violent protests against the unit that left 13 people dead in police firing on May 21 and 22.

It had filed the petition in the high court as suggested by the Supreme Court which had on February 18, 2019 set aside the National Green Tribunal order that allowed opening of the Sterlite Plant.

Several people hailed the high court judgment in Tuticorin in southern Tamil Nadu by distributing sweets and bursting fire crackers.

Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam welcomed the ruling, saying it reflected the thoughts of crores of people.

Ashok Lavasa resigns as EC,
to join ADB as vice president

Sends resignation to Rashtrapati Bhavan, requests to be relieved on Aug. 31

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Ashok Lavasa, who was next in line to head the poll panel, on Tuesday resigned as Election Commissioner and would soon be joining the Asian Development Bank as vice president, sources said.

Lavasa, the sources said, has sent his resignation to Rashtrapati Bhavan and has requested to be relieved on August 31.

He would be joining the Philippines-based ADB sometime in September, they added.

He was named the bank's vice president last month. "The ADB has appointed Ashok Lavasa as vice-president for Private Sector Operations and Public-Private Partnerships," the multilateral lending agency had said in a statement last month. "He will succeed Diwakar Gupta, whose term will end on

August 31."

Lavasa, who would have retired in October 2022 had he become the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), is the second election commissioner to step down from the poll panel before the completion of his term.

The last time an election commission put in his papers was in 1973 when CEC Nagendra Singh was appointed a judge in the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

His resignation comes at a time when the Election Commission is preparing to hold Bihar assembly polls amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Lavasa, a career bureaucrat, joined as Election Commissioner on January 23, 2018, and being senior most on the poll panel would have become CEC in April next year after the term of incumbent Sunil



Ashok Lavasa

Arora ends.

Lavasa still has over two years left in his term at the Election Commission of India and as CEC, he would have conducted Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur, and Goa, among other states.

His premature exit puts his colleague Sushil

Man arrested
for ₹712cr fake
invoices scamAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 18

The GST Enforcement Squad in Odisha has busted a racket involved in generating fake invoices worth ₹712 crore and passing bogus Input Tax Credit of ₹129 crore over multiple transactions routed through different chains. The squad arrested the kingpin of the racket, Kashmir Kumar Agrawal, director of Madhumita Steels Industries Private Limited, from Sambalpur. Sources said Agarwal was under the scanner of state GST Enforcement Squad for a very long time but he used to change his address frequently from Rourkela to Haryana to Sambalpur.

Some of the accused involved in the racket were arrested earlier.

Subsequently, by tracking the chain of fraudulent transactions followed by the scrutiny of suspected e-bill transactions and collection of intelligence, physical inspections, Agrawal was

arrested. Proprietors of these fake firms admitted that they were neither doing any business nor making any purchases/sales in the name of these firms. They said the transactions reflected in their returns were only paper transactions without any actual receipt and supply of goods.

"All of the accused categorically admitted that they had neither deposited nor withdrawn any amount from the bank account opened in the name of their firm. The banking transactions in the name of the firms had been undertaken by the mastermind by misutilising the signed cheque book and RTGS forms taken from persons in whose name registration had been taken fraudulently and in some cases by forging their signature," a member of the squad said.

It was also revealed following the investigation that the accused has transferred a huge amount of money to different firms without having any business transactions with them.

● **LAVASA, WHO** would have retired in October 2022 had he become the Chief Election Commissioner, is the second election commissioner to step down from the poll panel before the completion of his term.

● **HIS PREMATURE** exit puts his colleague Sushil Chandra next in the line of succession.

Chandra next in the line of succession.

According to the provisions of the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, an EC or the CEC can tender his or her resignation addressed to the President.

Lavasa had made headlines during the 2019 Lok

Sabha elections when he gave a dissenting note to the Election Commission of India (ECI) giving a clean chit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former BJP president Amit Shah on allegations of violating the Model Code of Conduct.

Three members of the Lavasa family including his wife had come under the scanner of the Income Tax Department for alleged non-declaration of income and disproportionate assets.

The family members had denied the allegations.

An MBA degree holder from Southern Cross University in Australia, and MPhil in Defence and Strategic Studies degree from the University of Madras, Lavasa, a 1980 batch IAS officer of Haryana cadre, also worked as Finance Secretary. — PTI

ED records statement of Sushant's father

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 18

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday recorded statement of K.K. Singh, father of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in connection with the money laundering probe in the backdrop of the actor's untimely death.

The officials sought details of the actor's finances and relation with the family and his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty. Chakraborty's lawyer Satish Maneshinde meanwhile put out a statement alleging that the actor's

sister groped her following a party in April 2019, straining relations between her and the actor's family.

The 74-year-old father was sent a questionnaire at his Patna residence and the officials said that further questions could be asked if needed. The ED till now has recorded statement of Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Showik, father Indrajit Chakraborty, Rajput's business managers, chartered accountants, house helps and Rajput's flat mate Siddharth Pithani in connection with the sui-

cide. The officials said that they would also record statements of other family members of Rajput.

Maneshinde's statement meanwhile mentioned, "Rhea's financial documents which clearly shows the falsity of allegations, has been handed over to the ED. She has not received a single transfer from Sushant's account. The IT returns have been examined by the police as well as the ED. Neither of them have found anything incriminating."

The probe is getting murkier by the day with a series of sensational alle-

gations being made by the actor's family and Chakraborty against each other. The row hit a new low after Maneshinde's statement mentioned Chakraborty having been groped by Rajput's sister Priyanka.

"In the initial months of their relationship, when Rhea had visited Sushant's house, his sister Priyanka and her husband Siddharth were living with him. On one night around April 2019, Rhea and Priyanka had gone out to a party. Priyanka consumed copious amounts of alcohol

and was behaving inappropriately with men as well as women at that party."

"Upon returning, Sushant and his sister continued drinking alcohol while Rhea retired for the night as she had a shoot the next morning. Rhea was asleep in Sushant's room when she suddenly awoke to find Priyanka had got into bed with her and was groping her. Rhea was extremely shocked and demanded that she leave the room immediately. Subsequently, Rhea herself left the house," the statement said.

FESTIVE | SPIRIT CM issues do's and don'ts; strict safety measures to be in place

Malayalis gear up to celebrate Onam

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANNAHPURAM, AUG. 18

With Malayalis biggest annual festival Onam round the corner, the government has directed the district collectors and SPs in Kerala to take adequate safety measures in the wake of unprecedented increase in Covid-19 cases in the state.

Onam festive season will begin on August 22. The auspicious main festival known as "Thiru Onam" will be on August 30. All the nine days leading to Thiru Onam are celebrated by Malayalis.

Kerala had the biggest single day spike in Covid-

19 with 1,725 cases on Monday. The total number of cases reported in the state so far stands at 46,140 as on Monday.

Against this backdrop, the district collectors have been asked to convene meetings of traders and businessmen to ensure that strict safety measures are enforced to check Onam rush. The Malayalis go on a shopping spree during Onam festive season.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has listed a few dos and don'ts for Onam celebrations. No individual or groups will be permitted to organise Onam festivities in public places or offer Onam feast in the open.

The shops will not remain open for shopping till 10 pm-11 pm as in the past. There will be no late night shopping with shops and business establishments downing their shutters by 7 pm.

Some of the hotels and restaurants will be allowed to function till 9 pm complying with safety norms. However, the government will encourage home delivery of food items including Onam feast.

The government has given strict directions to flower traders to take adequate measures while bringing in consignments. Flowers are an integral part of the festival as peo-

ple, communities, residents associations and various organisations make *athapoo* or floral carpets marking the arrival of Onam festival. Arrangements are also being made to test people arriving in the state for Onam festival season.

The strict restrictions imposed by the government may lead to the scaling down of the celebrations this time, but people here say safety measures will not dampen the Onam spirit of Malayalis in any way.

Meanwhile, as many as 10 persons who took part in the rescue operations after the air crash at Kozhikode international

airport have tested positive for Covid-19.

More than 200 people from Kondotty who took part in the relief and rescue work were subjected to tests. Earlier, 20 officials of the Malappuram district administration including collector, assistant collector and district SP tested positive. These officials had supervised the relief, rescue operations besides treatment of injured in hospitals.

Soon after the mishap and rescue operations, health minister K.K. Shailaja had appealed to all officials, security personnel and local residents who took part in the rescue work to get tested.

Swapna, UAE
officials got ₹3.60cr
commission: EDGILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 18

Gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh and top officials of UAE consulate here received ₹3.60 crore as commission from a construction firm for a Life Mission project in Vadakkanchery in Palakkad district of Kerala.

This was disclosed by the Enforcement Directorate which had earlier questioned Swapna Suresh. The Life Mission project costing ₹18 crore was meant for providing flats to those families which lost their homes in floods.

The ED said of the ₹18 cr for the project, ₹3.60 cr was given as commission which was shared by Swapna, top brass of UAE consulate and an Egyptian national at the consulate.

The deal was to pay 20 per cent of the project cost as commission for getting the funding sanctioned for the project.

The commission issue has come as a major embarrassment for the ruling Left Democratic Front government as the Life Mission is its flagship programme aimed at providing homes to landless and homeless families in the state.

● **THE ED** said the deal was to pay 20 per cent of the project cost as commission for getting the funding sanctioned for the project.

● **THE CONGRESS-LED** Opposition UDF has demanded a high-level probe into the commission issue.

According to ED, Swapna had also received ₹70 lakh in 2019 from a company which was awarded the contract for visa stamping at the consulate.

Besides she reportedly used to get 1000 dollars for every kg of gold smuggled through her.

Meanwhile, the Congress-led Opposition UDF has demanded a high-level probe into the commission issue.

At a press conference here, Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala said that the Chief Minister cannot shy away from his responsibility as commission was sought for a government sponsored project.

He said the Chief Minister needs to give an explanation to the people as to how Swapna Suresh became part of official delegations headed by him to foreign countries.

IN BRIEF

457 cases linked to church: S. Korea

Seoul: South Korean health officials said Tuesday that they have found 457 Coronavirus cases linked to a huge Seoul church led by a bitter critic of the country's president, driving an alarming surge of infections in the greater capital area. Kwon Jun-wook, director of South Korea's National Health Institute, said outbreaks at the Sarang Jeil Church and elsewhere have pushed the country into the biggest crisis yet since the emergence of Covid-19. He said a failure to slow transmissions in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, home to nearly 26 million people, could create a situation comparable to the "miserable scenes of the United States or European countries."

2 existing drugs can prevent virus: Study

Boston: Two existing drugs inhibit SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, from infecting human cells in the lab, a study has found. According to the study, published in the journal PNAS, both drugs, vacuolin-1 and apilimod, originally developed years ago, target a large enzyme called PIKfyve kinase. Before this study, little was known about this enzyme's role in Covid-19 infection, the researchers said. The work, which will need to be replicated in human trials, suggests a potential new target for Covid-19 therapies, they said. "Our findings show that targeting this kinase through a small-molecule antiviral against SARS-CoV-2 may be an effective strategy to lessen the progression or seriousness of Covid-19," said study co-senior author Tomas Kirchhausen, a professor at the Harvard Medical School (HMS) in the US. Kirchhausen said he discovered vacuolin-1 16 years ago, while apilimod was developed by a company called LAM Therapeutics.

Chocolate firm glitch dusts Swiss town

Berlin: Residents of a Swiss town got a bit of a shock when it started snowing particles of a fine cocoa powder after the ventilation system at a chocolate factory malfunctioned. The Lindt & Sprüngli company confirmed local reports Tuesday that there was a minor defect in the cooling ventilation for a line for roasted "cocoa nibs" in its factory in Olten, between Zurich and Basel. The nibs, fragments of crushed cocoa beans, are the basis of chocolate. Combined with strong winds on Friday morning, the powder spread around the immediate vicinity of the factory, leaving a fine cocoa dusting. The company says one car was lightly coated, and that it has offered to pay for any cleaning needed — but hasn't yet been taken up on the offer. Factory production was able to continue as normal and the company says the particles were completely harmless to people or the environment.

CHINA CONSIDERS IMPOSING TARIFFS ON OZZIE WINE

Canberra, Aug. 18: China on Tuesday began investigating whether Australia is dumping wine in a trade dispute that further strains relations between the countries and could shut the biggest export market for Australian wine.

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce said the anti-dumping investigation involved wine in containers of 2 liters (68 fluid ounces) or smaller imported from Australia from Tuesday.

The Australian government denied subsidizing exporters. "We do find this deeply troubling, concerning and perplexing given Australia's wine industry is not subsidized to export and it's certainly not dumping product on the world market," Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said. "Now it's for China and Beijing to explain the rationale behind these actions and why they have moved to that stage of an investigation."

China's only other anti-dumping investigation of Australian products effectively closed the China market to Australian barley in May through crippling tariffs. Australia is appealing that decision.

The investigation of Australian wine exports, which made 1.1 billion Australian dollars (\$795 million) from the Chinese market last year, could take between a year and 18 months.

Trump govt imposes new Huawei limits

Washington, Aug. 18: The Trump administration is further tightening restrictions on China's Huawei, seeking to starve it of crucial components by cutting off all access to US technology.

"We don't want their equipment in the United States because they spy on us," Trump said. "And any country that uses it, we're not going to do anything in terms of sharing intelligence."

The Commerce Department's new rules, rolled out Monday, will further block Huawei from accessing chip technology. Washington cut off Huawei's access to US components and technology, including Google's music and other smartphone services, last year.

Those penalties were tightened in May when the White House barred vendors worldwide from using US technology to produce components for Huawei.

A Huawei executive said this month that the company has started running out of processor chips to make smartphones as a result of those sanctions, and may have to stop production of its own advanced chips. But the Commerce Department said Monday that more restrictions were needed because Huawei has "continuously tried to evade" the earlier sanctions by using technology supplied by third parties.

The new rule is designed to block Huawei's access to commercially available chips made with tools acquired from the US "The new

SENATE CONDEMNS CHINA'S HOSTILITY TOWARDS INDIA

Washington, Aug. 18: A bipartisan US Senate resolution has condemned China's use of military force to change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India and called for a diplomatic solution to the issue.

Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter standoff in several areas along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh since May 5. The situation deteriorated after the June 15 Galwan Valley clashes in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed.

The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. The resolution, introduced by senators John Cornyn and Mark Warner, commended India for taking steps to secure its telecommunications infrastructure from Chinese security threats and also supported bilateral and multilateral partnerships, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), to promote a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

— PTI

rule makes it clear than any use of American software or American fabrication equipment to produce things through Huawei is banned, and requires a license," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said.

— PTI

#MilkTeaAlliance to aid Thai protest

Bangkok/Hong Kong, Aug. 18: As Hong Kong pro-democracy advocates voiced support for Thai anti-government protests at the weekend, they used the hashtag #MilkTeaAlliance.

In Bangkok, flags representing Hong Kong and independence for Taiwan appeared on a sign bearing the tag at the biggest demonstrations in years.

And in Taipei, dozens of people gathered to back the Thai protests and give weight to a nascent community of cross-border youth movements pushing for democracy at home and uneasy with China's growing regional power.

"This is the first physical expression of the Milk

Tea Alliance," said Thai student Akawat Siripatanachok, 27, who helped organise the show of solidarity in Taipei joined by Hong Kong activists, a Chinese dissident and Taiwan students.

"We don't want to just talk about it online. We want a pan-Asian alliance for democracy" A hashtag that began in April as a backlash to Chinese nationalist attacks on a Thai celebrity for a perceived slight to China shows signs of turning into a bigger movement uniting like-minded activists.

Why milk tea? The light-hearted name represents a shared passion for sweet tea drinks in Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

— Agencies

China's swollen river triggers flood alert

Shanghai, Aug. 18: China's biggest river, the Yangtze, and several of its tributaries have risen to dangerous levels after days of heavy rain, forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes and triggering an unprecedented emergency response alert.

China has seen unusually high levels of rain this flood season, with south-west and central regions in the Yangtze river basin bearing the brunt of flooding.

The Ministry of Water Resources said on Monday that 38 tributaries on the upper reaches of the Yangtze were now higher

than their warning levels, 19 dangerously so.

The southwestern province of Sichuan, which includes a major upstream section of the Yangtze, has raised its flood emergency response to its highest level, the first time it has ever done so, with its rivers overflowing and villages and farmland inundated.

The Qingyi river, an upper Yangtze tributary, had seen its worst flooding in a century. Sichuan's flood control authority said, with the city of Yaan forced to evacuate more than 36,000 people as the river burst its banks on Monday.

— PTI

ANIMAL | SHELTER

20-year-old apes Samson and Bobby in Java suffer from malnutrition

Jakarta, Aug. 18: Two critically endangered orangutans have been rescued from captivity on Indonesia's Java island and sent to a rehabilitation centre on Borneo to assess whether they can be released back into the wild, a conservation group said.

"Samson" and "Bobby", both male and estimated to be around 20 years old, were suffering from malnutrition when they were removed from an amuse-

ment park and a private family home, according to a statement from International Animal Rescue (IAR).

The two Bornean orangutans had been identified as being illegally held in captivity in October last year before a rescue was arranged, said Darmanto, the head of Indonesia's nature conservation agency in Central Java.

The orangutans, who had been held in cages, have

Lukashenko must go



Belarusian opposition supporters gather for a protest rally in Minsk, Belarus. More workers in Belarus joined a widening strike on Tuesday as they press for the resignation of authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has extended his 26-year rule in an election the opposition says was rigged.

— AP

LITHUANIANS VOTE FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST BELARUS

Vilnius, Aug. 18: Lithuania's parliament voted for economic sanctions against neighboring Belarus on Tuesday, saying the presidential election there mustn't be internationally recognised. "We are sending a strong message to the world today," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius said after lawmakers approved the sanctions on a 120-0 vote with two abstentions. Nineteen of the 141 parliament members were absent.

The document adopted by lawmakers in the Seimas, Lithuania's national legislature, also calls for an international rejection of the legitimacy of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's reelection. Both the European Union and the US have called the presidential election in Belarus EU foreign ministers have rejected the election results and last week began drawing up a list of officials in Belarus who could face sanctions.

— AP

Democratic Convention kicks off with a call to defeat Trump

Michelle Obama scorches Don, says 'vote for Biden like our lives depend on it'

Don retweets Biden's disputed audio call

Washington, Aug. 18:

President Donald Trump has retweeted an audio recording that US intelligence officials have described as being part of a Russian campaign to denigrate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

The leaked conversation, purportedly between Biden and former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, dates from Feb. 18, 2016. The excerpt of it retweeted by Trump centers on the ouster of Ukraine's chief prosecutor, who had previously investigated the owner of a Ukraine energy company where Biden's son, Hunter,

once held a board seat.

By amplifying the recording to his more than 85 million Twitter followers, Trump underscored the ease with which pro-Russian narratives can seep into American public discourse ahead of the 2020 election even after being flagged by intelligence officials as the product of a concerted Russian effort.

US President Donald Trump's election campaign has described the Democratic National Convention as a Hollywood-produced infomercial which fails to hide the radical-leftist takeover of presumptive nominee Joe Biden.

— AP

US PRESIDENT TO PARDON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE LEADER SUSAN ANTHONY

Washington, Aug. 18: President Donald Trump said Tuesday he will pardon Susan B. Anthony, a leader in the women's suffrage movement, who was arrested for voting in 1872 in violation of laws permitting only men to vote.

Anthony is best known for her role in the movement to secure voting rights for women, but she also was a strong anti-slavery and voting rights pioneer. Trump's pardon,

which he said he'll issue later on Tuesday, comes 100 years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which ensured women the right to vote. It's also known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. His move also comes amid an outcry over Postal Service disruptions that Democrats say endanger the voting rights of millions of Americans who would vote by mail in November amid the pandemic.

— AP

ACCURACY ISSUE WITH COVID-19 TESTS, SAYS FDA

Washington, Aug. 18: Potential accuracy issues with a widely used Coronavirus test could lead to false results for patients, US health officials warned. The Food and Drug Administration issued the alert Monday to doctors and laboratory technicians using Thermo Fisher's TaqPath genetic test. Regulators said issues related to laboratory equipment and software used to run the test could lead to inaccuracies. The agency advised technicians to follow updated instructions and software developed by the company to ensure accurate results.

The warning comes nearly a month after Connecticut public health officials first reported that at least 90 people had received false positive results for the Coronavirus. Most of those receiving the false results were residents of nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

A spokeswoman for Thermo Fisher said the company was working with FDA to make sure that laboratory personnel understand the need for strict adherence to the instructions for use.

— Agencies

Washington, Aug. 18: The Democratic National Convention kicked off with a call to unite the US — in the wake of widespread nationwide protests against racism and the deadly coronavirus that has taken a toll on the country's economy — by defeating President Donald Trump in the November 3 elections.

Leading the charge was the former first lady Michelle Obama, who described the nation as "deeply divided". "We live in a nation that is deeply divided... If we have any hope of ending this chaos, we have got to vote for Joe Biden like our lives depend on it," Obama said in her video address as she concluded the first day's proceedings of the convention whose theme was 'We the People.'

The four-day convention is being held virtually in view of the Coronavirus that has so far killed over 1,70,000 people and infected 5.4 million in the US. The convention would formally nominate Biden, 77, as the party's presidential candidate and Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris, 55, as his running mate.

Harris, the first-ever woman of colour and first-ever American of Indian and African descent to be nominated as a vice-presidential candidate by a major political party, made a few brief appearances during the first night as part of the former presidential candidates' address.

If Trump is reelected, "all the progress we have made will be in jeopardy", former presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders said as he accused the president of being negligent to the pandemic which has resulted in job losses of 30 million people.

Harris was a presidential aspirant until last year before she dropped out of the race because of lack of popular support. "We all ran for president motivated by the same reasons," said Harris who is scheduled to address the convention on Wednesday. "Donald Trump does not understand who we are as Americans. He really doesn't," she said in another brief remarks as speakers after speakers at the convention slammed the president for his policies, which they alleged has divided the country.

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According to Senator Cory Booker, who was also a presidential aspirant, "We've got one shot to make Donald Trump a one-term president, and that shot is right now." Another former presidential candidate Senator Amy Klobuchar alleged that Trump is trying to divide people and is also not responding to the coronavirus pandemic and the significant needs of the US economy.

Indian-origin Democratic politician Sara Gideo, who is running for US Senate seat from Maine, said with Biden in the White House and a Democratic Senate, the US can build back its economy and its communities even stronger.

The resolution supports resettling Sikhs and Hindus from Afghanistan in the US under the United States Refugee Admissions Programme pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Expressing concern for the safety of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, the resolution condemns all terrorist attacks, religious persecution and dis-

crimination against members of these communities in the war-ravaged country. Noting that Islamic militants attacked a gurdwara in Kabul on March 25, killing 25 worshippers, including a four-year-old girl, the resolution said that the terrorists made further attempts on the lives of the survivors before and after the funeral ceremony held for the victims.

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Sikhs, Hindus endangered minorities in Afghanistan: US Cong resolution

Washington, Aug. 18: Describing Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan as "endangered minorities", a resolution introduced in the US Congress has sought to resettle these persecuted religious communities from the war-torn country to America. Introduced in the House of Representatives last week by Congresswoman Jackie Speier and co-sponsored by seven others, the resolution sup-

ports refugee protection for Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, noting the "systematic religious persecution, discrimination and existential danger" faced by the members of these communities.

"Sikhs and Hindus are indigenous but endangered minorities in Afghanistan, numbering approximately 700 out of a community that recently included over 8,000 members," the resolution

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2 captive orangutans rescued in Indonesia

Jakarta, Aug. 18: Two critically endangered orangutans have been rescued from captivity on Indonesia's Java island and sent to a rehabilitation centre on Borneo to assess whether they can be released back into the wild, a conservation group said.

"Samson" and "Bobby", both male and estimated to be around 20 years old, were suffering from malnutrition when they were removed from an amuse-

ment park and a private family home, according to a statement from International Animal Rescue (IAR).

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DECCAN Chronicle

19 AUGUST 2020

Let them skip JEE, for their own good

With the Supreme Court's indiscriminate status quo on the JEE and NEET entrances taking effect, a logistical nightmare stares at the authorities. Parents are happy that their children will not "lose" a year and will be availing of the best opportunities. They forget that the rules of both the NEET and JEE allow students to take it multiple times and it is commonplace for many to give up a year anyway in order to take it twice. In these unprecedented circumstances of a Covid year, should not the health of their children have been the parents' priority? But then, the deadly virus has so far only been known to hit other people. Denial is comforting.

So the governments at the Centre and in the states must now be seen working to ensure that the examinations do not become another source of the spread. For this, they have to plumb the best practices from around the world and then adapt them here. Sadly, given our high population and low per capita income leading to anxiety for our children's future financial security, the emphasis on a job-oriented STEM education is paramount leading to a manic make-or-break college entrance system unparalleled in the world. Hence not many examples of these practices exist. While 17 lakh students have registered for NEET, 11 lakh youngsters will be writing the JEE. Only a limited number of exam centres are present in a state. Not every district has an exam centre. The students will be accompanied by their parents on these outstation trips where they will arrange for overnight stays in hotels and at relatives' residences, raising infection chances.

As far as holding of exams is concerned, so far it has been seen that the level of precautions taken and screening done at centres are dismal. The World Health Organisation now holds that the Coronavirus is airborne. Patients, too, may be asymptomatic. Asymptomatic patients will inevitably be seated in the exam hall next to uninfected for three hours. More alarmingly, there will be cases of students coming to take the exam with a light fever, sparked by stress or common cold, and they will be made to take the exam in isolation alongside those who may be having the virus. An online exam would have solved this crisis, but neither the government nor the court displayed the requisite pro-activity. The only option that remains now is for parents, themselves, to let their child skip the exam. The government, which can still step in, is unlikely to, seeing as it has consistently opposed the entrance postponements.

So that relief is available to all, 11 students from various parts of the country had moved a petition in the Supreme Court. But god forbid, if the student "wastes" their year frivolously, studying science or engineering/medicine in less prestigious colleges and institutes or, in the worst case scenario, in pursuits other than the most heavy-duty academics. "These students are all 21-22-year-olds. Can you believe they will not be going out," solicitor general Tushar Mehta submitted before the court. The government had also cited, not so accurately, that the entire country is "working".

The court, therefore, in its uncontested wisdom, declined the students' prayer. After all, is there a precedent that the esteemed Indian judiciary took into account a child's argument? Even if, in the process, it has jeopardised the child's right to health and their right to life. For their own good.

Flashpoint in Belarus

Over three decades after the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated shortly afterwards, Belarus' embattled President Alexander Lukashenko, who ruled his country — once part of the Soviet empire — with an iron hand for over a quarter century, is being taught a lesson on the meaning of "people power". After claiming victory in the August 9 election, he faced nine days of continuous protests demanding he leave for rigging the results, with even some police and intelligence personnel deserting him. Mr Lukashenko, described by many as "Europe's last dictator", stood firm at the outset, but after open heckling by factory workers in Minsk on Monday, who demanded he "step down", seemed to indicate he might be open to sharing power. He suggested a referendum be held to change constitutional provisions so that a fresh election could take place, but this concession seems to have come too late, with the demonstrators demanding that he just go. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the Opposition leader who fled into exile in neighbouring Lithuania two days after the election, claims that she won by a 60-70 per cent margin, and said she is ready to take over and lead the country, but Mr Lukashenko vowed he won't quit "under pressure". He even said: "Until you kill me, there will be no other elections." One hopes he hasn't forgotten the fate of Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena.

The embattled leader may have hoped Russia, Belarus' powerful eastern neighbour, might come to his rescue and he spoke to President Vladimir Putin several times, but Moscow's intervention seems unlikely. President Putin promised help in case Belarus faces an external threat, but the threats Mr Lukashenko faces are internal. There is little anti-Russian sentiment in Belarus, and most people speak Russian, so rather than prop up the unpopular President, Mr Putin might try to "manage" the transition. An invasion, like in Ukraine some years ago, would also trigger fresh Western sanctions, something Russia might wish to avoid. The European Union has called an emergency virtual summit on Wednesday, as it explores how to help Belarus in its hour of need.

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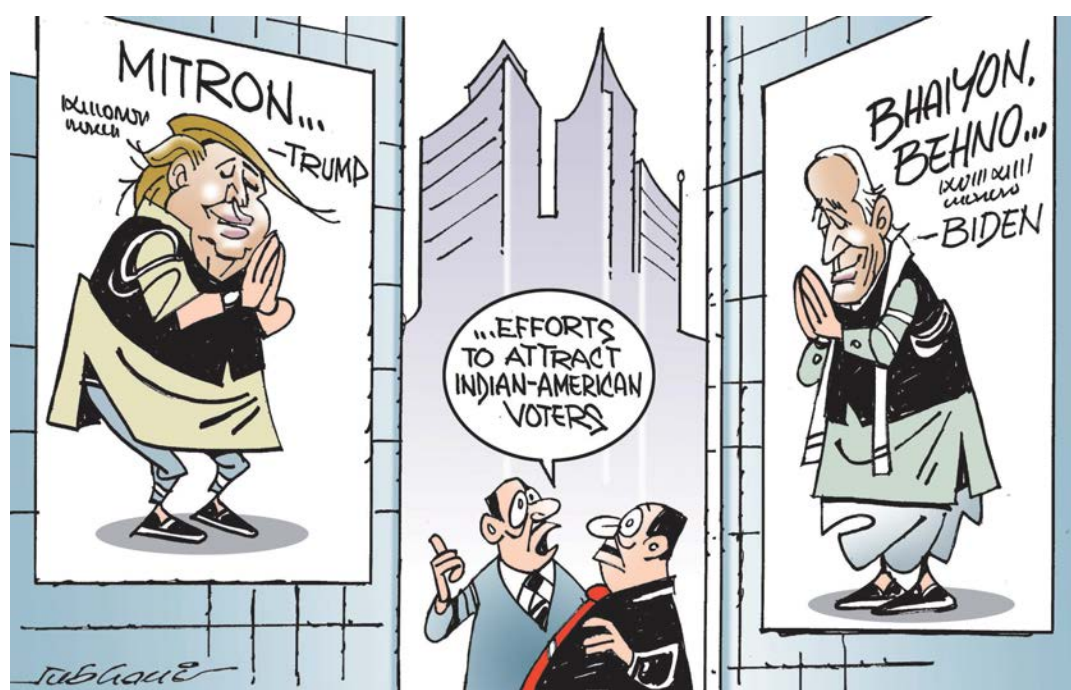
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Subhani



Polls at 73: More women voters, 'criminal' leaders



Sanjay Kumar

The seven-decade-long journey of electoral politics in India has both sweet and sour memories. The sweet memories of India's electoral journey could be documented as the increasing participation of Indian voters in the numerous elections held so far to form governments at three levels — central, municipal/panchayat and state. The sweet memories could also be remembered as an upsurge in electoral participation of the marginalised. It can also manifest as a reasonably high degree of trust shown by Indians in institutions vital for the functioning of the government. But in this journey of sweet memories have also existed some bitter experiences — elections being violent at times, an expanding role of muscle (dabang) and the role of money power. Though trust in institutions remains high, the trust in elected representatives (MPs, MLAs and sarpanchs) has declined over the last few decades. This is largely due to frequent defections of leaders from one party to another, signalling the declining role of ideology in Indian politics.

Since Independence, Indians have exercised their franchise 17 times to elect the national government. These elections over the years have witnessed increasing participation of voters. The first Lok Sabha elections witnessed a high turnout of 61.1 per cent and the second in 1952 witnessed a higher turnout of 62.2 per cent. But after that, for a very long time, the turnout at Lok Sabha elections remained below 60 per cent, barring exceptions. It increased to 66 per cent during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and touched 67 per cent during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The state Assembly election witnessed a much higher

turnout compared to the Lok Sabha election and the last few decades witnessed a significant increase in this parameter. Due to constituencies being much smaller and campaigns being personalised, local body elections have witnessed a much higher turnout compared to the other two levels of elections.

Although women got their voting rights along with men, they lagged far behind men in exercising it. Earlier, many of them did not come out to vote resulting in a big gender gap in turnout. But turnout amongst women has increased significantly during the last few Lok Sabha elections. The gap between male and female turnout that used to be 9-10 per cent got narrowed down to 1.6 per cent during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and during the 2019 Lok Sabha election men and women voted in equal proportions — shoulder to shoulder — the biggest story of the Indian elections so far. Youth, too, have begun to participate much more actively in elections now. Dalit and adivasi voters, who were earlier missing from the long queues on the voting day up until the mid-1990s, have also started voting in much bigger numbers.

The beauty of Indian elections has been that all its verdicts have been acceptable to both the winner and the loser. Some elections resulted in the incumbent getting re-elected, while there have been other instances when the ruling party lost

Based on their own declaration of pending cases, 43 per cent of the current Parliament has criminal cases pending against them. In the previous Parliament, this number was 34 per cent.

The gap between male and female turnout that used to be 9-10 per cent got narrowed down to 1.6 per cent in the 2014 elections and in the 2019 elections men and women voted in equal proportions

badly. This trend has been visible in all the three types of elections. There have been contestations and counter-contestations about how free and fair the elections were, especially in the 1990s when elections, including many state Assembly elections, were marred by violence, but in spite of all that, results were accepted gracefully. There has been discomfort about the use of the electronic voting machine (EVM). Political parties suspected these machines could be tinkered with, but all these issues come to a rest once results are declared. Unlike in many countries where there are major disputes around election results, in India we never had any similar dispute and government formation has never been held up due to controversy over election results. Political parties have shown a great deal of maturity in this respect, but the credit should also go to the Election Commission of India.

Question have been asked about the EVMS, but results have gone in favour of and against all political parties at some point of time — no party can complain of being at the receiving end all the time. In election after election, both at the national and state levels, Indian voters have shown a great deal of maturity, voting back only the government that worked for the people. Were it not the case, the government would not have changed eight times at the national level. Between 1952 and 2019, of the 363 Assembly elections held, the ruling party got re-elected 188 times and was defeated 175 times.

But unfortunately, this is not the whole story of the Indian elections.

The aim of being in politics has almost entirely shifted from serving the people (*seva bhaav*) to be in power to make money by using political position and political pressure. Elections have become far more expensive now compared to the past. An ordinary man has no place in present-day politics. Not that one can win election only by using money power, but the importance of money for contesting an election has increased enormously. A very large number (almost 30 per cent) of all contestants during the 2019 Lok Sabha election owned property worth more than ₹1 crore. It is important to note that 86 per cent of elected MPs have assets worth more than ₹1 crore. The story remains the same for the state Assembly elections.

Even more disturbing to note is that a large number of elected representatives both in Parliament and the state Assemblies have criminal cases pending against them. Based on their own declaration of pending cases, 43 per cent of the current Parliament has criminal cases pending against them. This is not unique of the current Parliament, 34 per cent MPs of the earlier Parliament had criminal cases pending against them, too. This number stood at 24 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively, for the Lok Sabhas of 2004 and 2009. If women's turnout is the biggest success story of the Indian elections, criminalisation of politics is its darkest.

The writer is a professor at Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and a political analyst. Views expressed are personal.

Unlike in many countries where there are major disputes around election results, in India we never had any similar dispute and government formation has never been held up due to controversy

LETTERS

BANE OF POLITICS

The bane of Indian politics is the ruling party's intolerance of the Opposition and the Opposition thinking that it has been decimated. A constructive Opposition is a must for effective functioning of Parliament. A constant effort to educate people by the Opposition about the ruling party's follies and the ways to rectify them should be suggested. The party at the helm should take them with magnanimity. Primarily it is nation's interest that counts. A cohesive effort by both the ruling and opposition parties can go a long way to keep our nation in good stead.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

FACEBOOK

The row over alleged preferential treatment by Facebook to the ruling BJP is a needless controversy. Facebook and other groups of social media are not charity organisations. They work to make profits. They will try to be in good books of ruling parties as far as possible. Every person or party can try to utilise the powerful platform on an equal plane. The only concern must be they should not be utilised for spreading fake news or hatred. For that there should be a legal solution. Just like net neutrality is made assured by TRAI, the social media should be made accountable for its behaviour.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

NEET AND JEE

Considering the loss to the country and students, the SC has rightly refused to defer the NEET and JEE schedules (*SC refuses to intervene in JEE, NEET schedule, DC, Aug. 18*). Now, these exams will be held as per schedule in September. It is a great relief for the tense students and worried parents. All necessary precautions with Covid-19 protocols must be taken to smoothly conduct these exams.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

Scooter plant in public sector soon

NEW DELHI, Aug. 18 The Government has decided to set up a Public sector unit for manufacturing 100,000 scooters annually with foreign collaboration because

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle no indigenous developed design of a scooter was readily available. This was informed by Industrial Development Minister Dinesh Singh to both the Houses of Parliament today.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



India builds UN team ahead of 2021-22 stint at Security Council

India will take over as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in January 2021. The government has begun preparations by deciding to upgrade India's diplomatic presence at the UN. The Indian delegation is being strengthened with the appointment of an additional deputy permanent representative and a counsellor to solely handle Security Council matters.

According to sources, 1999-batch Indian Foreign Service officer R. Ravindran, who is joint secretary (Central and West Africa) will join the Indian Permanent Mission in New York in the rank of additional deputy representative. He served in the office earlier under Hardeep Singh Puri, who is now minister for civil aviation, urban development and commerce, but who headed the mission when India was a non-permanent mem-

ber in 2011-2012.

Ravindran's colleague Pratik Mathur, who is from the 2007 batch, and is deputy secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), will be a counsellor. Both IFS officers will join the mission before the 75th UN General Assembly opens next month. The India mission is currently headed by T.S. Tirumurthi, with Nagaraj Naidu as deputy permanent representative. It is also said that external affairs minister S. Jaishankar will be keenly following India's stint at the Security Council with regular monthly reviews.

DISCRIMINATORY RETIREMENT PRACTICES?

At a time when the Covid pandemic has forced states to tighten their finances, the Tamil Nadu government has decided to increase

retirement benefits for retired senior officials. Citing petitions from the IAS Officers' Association and senior bureaucrats, it has permitted an additional ₹10,000 monthly servant allowance to all retired chief secretaries and additional chief secretaries.

The move is bound to raise eyebrows since many other states with strained finances have been forced to hold back the dearness allowance of government officials and pushed back pension grants. Barely two months ago, the government had increased the retirement age of babus from 58 to 59 years, ostensibly to postpone the huge pension burden it would face. More recently, the government has given retiring chief secretary K. Shanmugam a three-month extension.

According to sources, the state government has based the order on

a similar order by neighbouring Karnataka, in 2015. Then Karnataka had allowed chief secretaries and additional chief secretaries a servant allowance of ₹6,000 plus telephone and medical allowances over and above the pension and other benefits of the retired babus.

BITTER MEDICINE

Manipur has a qualified doctor as the state's new chief secretary. Senior IAS officer of the Manipur cadre, Rajesh Kumar who was additional chief secretary, has succeeded J. Suresh Babu who superannuated from government service. Incidentally, Babu was also a doctor who became a civil servant.

Mr Kumar's appointment comes in the backdrop of a demand from several student organisations in

the state to appoint a "qualified state native" to the post of chief secretary. Kumar, who is an IAS officer of the 1988 batch, is not. Once Mr Kumar's appointment was announced, some organizations are now demanding that the decision be reviewed. The state government, however, has shown no sign of acknowledging this demand.

With the students upset over what they term as "denial of rights of the native communities" by the state government, Mr Kumar as the new chief secretary may have to apply a healing balm to the "hurt" sentiments of the student community first, besides getting down to discharging his own considerable administrative duties.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|--------------|--------|
| Sensex | 38,528.32 | 1.26 |
| Nifty 50 | 11,385.35 | 1.23 |
| S&P 500* | 3,391.16 | 0.27 |
| Dollar (₹) | 74.76 | 0.17 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 98.40 | -0.44 |
| Euro (₹) | 88.95 | -0.37 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 54,856▲1,182 | 2.15 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 45.36 | -0.01 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 5.986 | 0.011 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.669 | -0.014 |

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Govt may give MSME status to dealers: Gadkari

The government is considering according MSME status to dealers, as this will enable them to avail of benefits offered to micro, small and medium enterprises, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said. "Regarding MSME, we are thinking now of giving MSME status to dealers," Gadkari said. The minister also reiterated his appeal to major industries to clear the outstanding dues to MSMEs in a timely manner.

Porsche drives in 718 Spyder, 718 Cayman GT4



The German luxury sports car-maker Porsche said it has launched new 718 Spyder and the 718 Cayman GT4 models in India with a starting price of Rs 1.59 crore and 1.63 crore, respectively. The two super cars get six-speed manual transmission options to retain the genuine flavour of managing shifts. Both cars hit 100-kmph mark in just 4.4 seconds and while its top speeds are hardly road legal, they can hit 301 kmph.

Data, AI can add up to \$500 bn to GDP: Nasscom

Data and AI could add \$450-500 billion to the GDP by 2025 and drive India's vision of inclusive development, a Nasscom report said. If India acts quickly, it can be a leader in building a holistic data utilisation and AI effort. A coordinated programme across all five building blocks—strategy, data, technology stack, talent and execution—is required to capture the opportunity, the report said.

Axis Sec. floats platform to trade in US stocks

Axis Securities announced the launch of a platform -- Global Investing -- that will provide an opportunity to its customers to invest in the US stock markets. For this, Axis Securities has partnered with Vested Finance, an online investment platform, the brokerage house said. Investors can buy or sell shares of companies like Facebook, Apple, Netflix and Google or invest in theme-based baskets or ETFs, it added.



Job gains in June look like a blip Five million more lose jobs in July

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 18

An additional five million salaried jobs were lost in July, taking the total job losses for the salaried class since the lockdown that began in late-March to 18.9 million. The job losses among the middle-class would make recovery of the economy harder.

An estimated 17.7 million salaried jobs were lost in April 2020. An additional one lakh jobs were lost in May. However, in June, 3.9 million jobs were re-gained, taking the total job loss to 13.9 at the end of June. But, the recovery was short-lived and another 5 million jobs were lost in July, finds a CMIE report.

On a net basis, the plight of salaried employees has worsened since the lockdown began. By July, their job losses rose to 18.9 million, making the salaried segment the worst affected by the lockdown.

"While salaried jobs are not lost easily, once lost they are also far more difficult to retrieve. Therefore, their ballooning numbers are a source of worry. Salaried jobs were nearly 19 million short of their average in 2019-20. They were 22 per cent lower than their level in the last fiscal year," said Mahesh Vyas, managing director of CMIE.

Aditya Narayan Mishra, director and CEO of CIEL HR Services, said, "Businesses have suffered



losses due to a decline in consumer demand. In order to stay afloat, they have tried to adjust their costs to match the decline. As a result, people in permanent as well as contractual roles have lost jobs. In the current scenario, it is not easy to get the jobs back."

According to Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, the job losses among the salaried class will make recovery of private consumption and the economic recovery tougher.

"Services had come to a standstill in the three months of lockdown. Though companies have restarted thereafter, MSME and logistics still remain disrupted," she said. According to Mishra, sectors like tourism, hospitality, entertainment and retail are yet to recover and the recovery will take time and the job losses will take many months

to get back to normalcy.

The salary growth among listed companies was in low single digits in the past two years. The job losses will further hit urban consumption.

"The premiumisation that has been happening in consumption will come off. Further, the middle-class is the largest consumer of electronic items and appliances and their demand will take a hit," said Shah.

Currently, the impact is not visible due to the pent up demand in the market. But the real impact on private consumption will be visible by December-January when the pent-up demand exhausts. "External demand or foreign direct investment or even government stimulus can ease things. Else, a recovery of consumption to its earlier 5 to 6 per cent levels will take another three to four years," said Shah.

HC restrains Emami from using Glow & Handsome

Mumbai, Aug. 18: The Bombay High Court, in a temporary order, has restrained FMCG firm Emami from selling any skincare product under the brandname containing the words "Glow and Handsome", saying that prima facie Hindustan Unilever (HUL) has used them first in its brands. Justice S. C. Gupta passed the order on Monday on an application filed by HUL under the Trade Marks Act, seeking an injunction against Emami from using the trademark Glow & Handsome.

HUL recently dropped the word Fair from its skin creams and renamed the men's skin cream as Glow & Handsome.

Emami claimed that it was the proprietor of this trademark, and was going to launch a skincare cream for men under the same name. "... plaintiff (HUL) prime facie appears to be a prior adopter and user of the mark 'Glow & Handsome,'" the high court said in its order.

HUL had already launched its goods in the market with this trademark while Emami was still at the stage of adopting a process of launching its goods, the court noted. "Its (Emami) application for registration of that mark is also of a subsequent date," the order said.

Further, HUL had sufficiently advertised its new brand Glow & Handsome, said the court. —PTI

Auto firms asked to cut royalties to foreign parents

ADITI SHAH NEW DELHI, AUG. 18



The Union commerce minister has asked automakers to find ways to reduce royalty payments to foreign parent companies for use of technology or brand names in an effort to boost local investment and reduce outflows, two sources told Reuters.

In the country's competitive auto market, top-selling carmakers Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor's local unit pay millions of dollars in royalties to parent companies in Japan and South Korea for using their technology and brand to build and sell cars.

The minister, Piyush Goyal, in a meeting last week asked officials from groups representing carmakers and auto parts manufacturers to review such payments with a view to reducing the outgo, said people with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"The concern raised during the meeting was that the outflow is high, even for old technologies, and something should be done about it," said one of the sources.

The sources declined to be named as the talks are private. The ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

India, for years, has debated imposing stricter caps on royalty payments, which spiked after 2009 when foreign investment rules were eased and restrictions on such payments were removed. The country's markets regulator last year sug-

gested imposing curbs on payments exceeding 2 per cent of revenue. The limit was finally set at 5 per cent after complaints from some sectors and fears it may dissuade foreign firms from investing or sharing technology.

Recently, however, the government has made a renewed push to make the country a major manufacturing hub by encouraging domestic production and curbing imports. It also wants to increase local investment and reduce foreign outflows.

While India does not restrict the amount that can be paid as royalty, any payment by a locally listed company exceeding 5 per cent of revenues needs shareholder approval.

Listed companies such as Maruti Suzuki and parts makers including Bosch, Schaeffler India and Wabco India typically pay royalties of 1-5 per cent to their foreign owners.

Maruti Suzuki paid Rs 3,820 crore (\$510 million) as royalty to its Japanese parent Suzuki Motor in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, amounting to 5 per cent of its revenue,

according to its annual report.

Privately owned companies such as Hyundai's local unit paid \$150 million or 2.6 per cent of revenue as royalties to its South Korean parent in fiscal 2019 and Toyota Motor's India arm paid \$88 million or 3.4 per cent of revenue to its Japanese parent, government data shows.

Royalty provision has been important in attracting foreign investments into various sectors in India, especially autos, said Vaibhav Gupta, partner at tax firm, Dhruva Advisors.

"Depending on the form in which the government brings back such caps ... it may impact the ability of auto companies to benefit from the use of foreign brands and technical know-how," said Gupta.

A February report by proxy firm Institutional Investor Advisory Services showed royalty paid by 31 leading Indian companies with foreign parents, including Maruti and Bosch, grew 9 per cent in fiscal year 2019 to total \$1.11 billion. —Reuters

Stock market at 5-month high on FPI buying

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 18

Sensex and Nifty-50 closed at fresh five-month highs after trading in narrow range for a month. Continued and higher foreign investor buying seemed to have helped boost sentiments.

A fall in fresh Covid-19 cases, further improvement in the recovery rate of infected persons, good monsoon rains and fresh government measures to support the economy were the triggers for the market gain, analysts said.

The Sensex gained 477.54 points or 1.26 per cent, closing at 38,528.32 and the Nifty-50 closed at 11,385.35, up 1.23 per cent or 138.25 points. The Nifty Midcap-50 Index closed 1.43 per cent up, outperforming the benchmark.

All sectoral indices on BSE and NSE registered gains, led by Realty index, which gained over 4 per cent and the Nifty Bank gained 2.16 per cent.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,134.57 crore.

Permanently seal Vedanta unit: HC

SUDARSHAN VARADHAN CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The high court on Tuesday refused to allow the re-opening of Vedanta's copper smelter in Thoothukudi, more than two years after it was closed because of pollution concerns that triggered violent protests.

The Tamil Nadu government ordered the smelter to be closed a week after 13 people died when anti-pollution demonstrations turned violent and police fired at protesters.

The Madras High Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea by the company seeking the smelter's reopening. "The doctrine of sustainable development, precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle needs to be applied," the court said.

"If applied, facts speak for themselves, petitioner needs to be closed and permanently sealed."

Tens of thousands of locals stormed the streets of Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu on May 22, 2018, accusing Vedanta of polluting the environment. Police said they opened

fire as they were overwhelmed. The subsequent violence claimed 13 lives and injured over a hundred people. No policeman has been charged so far.

Vedanta has denied accusations of pollution, and called the decision to shut its plant a political response to the outrage over the police firing.

But the Madras High Court said in its 815-page judgment on Tuesday the shutdown "cannot be treated as knee-jerk reaction". The judgment is the latest challenge confronting Vedanta, which has also faced legal action over its operations in Zambia.

C. Aryama Sundaram, a lawyer for Vedanta, said the company plans to challenge the judgment in the Supreme Court, adding the judgment would raise India's copper imports.

The court downplayed this argument. "The petitioner has been consistently stating... requirement of copper in India cannot be met... The courts have held that when it comes to economy pitted against environment, environment will reign supreme," it said. —Reuters

Gulf to be focus region for India's food exports

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The government has identified the Gulf region as a focus area to increase food exports. It will also set up export promotion forums for eight agricultural products, including rice, banana and mango.

As part of the agri-export strategy, the government will focus on development of "Brand India" to help penetration into new foreign markets as well as export of new products which translates into higher value realisation. The government has made a product market matrix containing a list of products which could be expanded in new geographies and a list of known markets which can be introduced with newer products.

The Gulf region has been identified as a focus destination to increase the market share. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are among the top 10 export destinations for India's farm produce. The Gulf countries are highly dependent on food



imports and imports make up about 80 to 90 per cent of their total demand. Though the Gulf region is a strong market for India, India caters to only 10-12 per cent of their total imports.

Further, the government has created export promotion forums (EPFs) to improve exports of eight products, including grapes, mango, banana, onion, rice, nutri-cereals, pomegranate and floriculture under the aegis of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda). India exports fruit worth Rs

5,638 crore and vegetables worth Rs 5,679 crore annually. However, its share in the \$208-billion world trade of fruit and vegetables is miniscule.

Each EPF will have exporters of the related commodity as its members along with official members representing ministries/departments of the central and state governments. Apeda chairman shall be the chairman of each of these forums.

The forums will meet at least once in every two months to discuss/ make recommendations on related issues.

Got proposals worth ₹12 L cr under PLI scheme: Prasad

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Tuesday said proposals worth Rs 12 lakh crore have been received under the new PLI scheme to boost electronics manufacturing, and some manufacturing lines have moved from China to India during the pandemic.

The minister for IT and communications, while speaking at an industry event, said, "...All the top mobile manufacturers and their contract manufacturers have applied in that (PLI) scheme, including five global champions and five national champions and collectively, they have promised to make mobile phone and components worth Rs 12 lakh crore in the coming five years, out of which they're going to export Rs 7 lakh crore (worth of items)."

—PTI

CCI may sell cotton to B'desh to trim stock

PRATIK PARIJA AUG. 18

India plans to sell cotton to Bangladesh to trim its bulging reserves following a slump in demand from textile mills in the top grower.

State-owned Cotton Corporation of India may export 1.5 million to 2 million bales of the fibre to the neighbouring nation to help reduce India's record surplus before the new crop begins arriving in October, said Pradeep Kumar Agarwal, chairman of the corporation. It generally sells cotton to local mills and traders at market prices, after buying from farmers at government-set minimum rates.

Higher sales from India may potentially increase reserves in top exporters like the US and Brazil and further lower global



prices that have fallen about 8 per cent this year as the coronavirus erodes demand for clothing. Global cotton consumption is set to drop about 15 per cent from a year earlier to 22.29 million tons in 2019-20, according to the USDA estimates.

Export prices will be decided by the two governments using the Cotlook index, Agarwal said. Industry researcher Cotlook Ltd's benchmark is a daily average of the five cheapest cash prices

in the world. "In any case, I can assure that it won't be lower than domestic prices," which have fallen about 20 per cent since the outbreak of the coronavirus, he said.

Cotton Corp plans to sell 500,000 to 700,000 bales of 170 kg each to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh in the marketing year ending on September 30. The rest of the quantity will be shipped in 2020-21, Agarwal said in a phone interview. Bangladesh vies with China as the world's biggest buyer of cotton.

India is likely to have a record closing stockpile of 10.25 million bales by September 30, according to the Cotton Association of India, as domestic consumption may drop more than 20 per cent from a year earlier to 25 million bales in 2019-20, it said.

—Bloomberg

VIT AMONG TOP 9 INSTITUTIONS

Hyderabad, Aug. 18: Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has moved up the ranks in the 2020 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) of Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. The ranking, released on Aug. 15, places VIT in the 801-900 group this year, up from last year's 901-1000, among world universities.

VIT is the only private institution of India figuring in the Top 1000 List of the Shanghai Ranking, which also said VIT is one among the Top 9, out of 15, institutions of India. VIT entered this prestigious ranking in 2019.

VIT chancellor Dr. G. Viswanathan said this was result of the commitment of VIT faculty, research scholars and hardworking students towards quality in research.

Business NOTE

SHORT TAKES

Asian Boxing event postponed

New Delhi: The Asian Boxing Championship, which was to be held in India in November-December, has been postponed to next year owing to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the national federation's Secretary General Jay Kowli said on Tuesday. The decision was taken at the Asian Boxing Confederation's (ASBC) Executive Committee meeting held online on Monday.

"A postponement was proposed owing to the conditions prevailing because of the pandemic and it was accepted. India remains the host and the tournament will now happen in 2021," Kowli, who is a member of the ASBC EC, said. "The 2021 window for it will be discussed in the next EC meeting in November," he added.

India last hosted the men's Asian meet back in 1980 in Mumbai before conducting the women's event in 2003 in Hisar.

The tournament became a combined event for men and women last year.

"We have to be careful, the cases are on the rise everywhere. Unless it is definitive that there is a decline, it was thought best to put things on hold," Kowli said.

— PTI

Historic first as 3 Indians at Major

Royal Troon: Indian women's trio of Aditi Ashok, Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik will look to write a new chapter in Indian golf when they tee off at the prestigious Women's British Open on Thursday. This will be the first time that three Indians, men or women, teed up at the same Major. The young threesome will have family and friends with them at the famed Royal Troon golf course, even though there will be no spectators.

The 22-year-old Aditi, who often has her father on the bag, has her mother, Maheshwari, this time — she was also there at Scottish Open — while 19-year-old Diksha's father, Col Narendra Dagar will as usual do the duty of a caddie. Tvesa, 24, has a friend and experienced European Tour pro, Kiran Matharu, as her caddie. "I have some experience of playing with the European players, especially at home at the Hero Indian Open, where I had my first Top-10 last year, but a Major in Scotland is a different thing altogether," said Tvesa, who will be making her Major debut here.

When she tees up on Thursday, Aditi will come one step closer to becoming the Indian with most Major starts. — PTI

Barca fire coach, director post loss

Madrid: Barcelona have sacked Eric Abidal as sporting director, the club announced in a statement on Tuesday, a day after dismissing coach Quique Setien.

"FC Barcelona and Eric Abidal have reached an agreement for the ending of the contract that united them," the club said on its website.

Like Setien, Abidal, a former French international defender, has paid the price after Barca ended a season of internal conflict by surrendering the Spanish league title to Real Madrid and then suffering a humiliating 2-8 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

The decision was announced after an urgent board meeting summoned by president Josep Bartomeu in Barcelona. The club also announced new elections for March 2021.

Live on TV

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Jamaica Tallawahs vs St Lucia Zouks from 7:30 pm; Guyana Amazon Warriors vs St Kitts & Nevis Patriots at 3 am (Thursday). Both matches on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

NBA PLAYOFFS

Toronto Raptors vs Brooklyn Nets from 11 pm; Boston Celtics vs Philadelphia 76ers from 4 am (Thursday); Los Angeles Clippers vs Dallas Mavericks from 6:30 am (Thursday). All matches on Sony Six, HD

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL

Bayern Munich vs Lyon from 12:30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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RoHIT for Khel Ratna

Vinesh, Rani among 5 recommended for top sports award

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Star cricketer Rohit Sharma, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, and women's hockey captain Rani Rampal were among an unprecedented five picked for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, while another unparalleled 29 were recommended for the Arjuna award by the sports ministry's selection committee here on Tuesday.

Paddler Manika Batra and Rio Paralympic gold-winning high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu were the other two recommended for the country's highest sporting honour by a 12-member selection committee. Rampal was a late addition to the initial list of four.

For the Arjuna, India pacer Ishant Sharma, recurve archer Atanu Das, women's hockey team player Deepika Thakur, kabaddi player Deepak Hooda, and tennis player Divij Sharan were among the 29 short-listed, an official source said after the selection committee's meeting here.

The 31-year-old Ishant has played 97 Tests and 80 ODIs for India, grabbing over 400 international wickets.

This is the first time in the history of awards that five athletes have been recommended for the top sporting accolade with the final decision resting on sports minister Kiren Rijiju.

In 2016, four athletes — star shuttler P. V. Sindhu, gymnast Dipa Karmakar, shooter Jitu Rai, and wrestler Sakshi Malik — were collectively given this award.

Rohit will only be the fourth cricketer after Sachin Tendulkar, just retired Mahendra Singh Dhoni and current skipper Virat Kohli to be conferred with the Khel Ratna.

The committee, comprising the likes of Virender Sehwag and former hockey captain Sardar Singh, met at the Sports Authority of India headquarters here and finalised the names after deliberations that took up the first half of the day.

While Rohit has been recognised for his ever-rising accomplishments with the bat, Vinesh has been rewarded for her gold medals in the 2018 Commonwealth and Asian Games besides a bronze in the 2019 Asian

LIST OF AWARDEES

● **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award:** Rohit Sharma (cricket), Vinesh Phogat (wrestling), Manika Batra (table tennis), Rani Rampal (hockey), Mariyappan Thangavelu (para high-jumper).

● **Arjuna Award:** Atanu Das (archery), Shiva Keshvan (luge), Dutee Chand (athletics), Rankireddy Satwiksairaj and Chirag Shetty (badminton), Vishesh Bharguvanshi (basketball), Manish Kaushik and Lovlina Borgohain (boxing), Ishant Sharma and Deepti Sharma (cricket), Ajay Sawant (tent pegging), Sandesh Jhingran (football), Aditi Ashok (golf), Aakashdeep Singh and Deepika Kumari (hockey), Deepak Hooda (kabaddi), Kale Sarika (kho kho), Dattu Bhokanal (rowing), Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary (shooting), Madhurika Patkar (table tennis), Divij Sharan (tennis), Divya Kakran, Rahul Aware and Sakshi Malik (wrestling), Mirabai Chanu (weightlifting), Suyesh Jadhav (para athletics), Sandeep (para athletics) and Manish Narwal (Para shooting).

Wrestling Championships. Terming it as one of the biggest moments of her career, Vinesh promised to live upto the expectations associated with the award.

"It's a proud moment for me. It was a long wait but it was worthwhile. If God permits I would live up to the reputation associated with this award," Vinesh said.

Manika was recommended for her remarkable performance in 2018, a year during which she won the Commonwealth Games gold medal and Asian Games bronze in women's singles. — PTI

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Rohit Sharma



Vinesh Phogat



Manika Batra



Rani Rampal

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SPORTS AWARDS LIKELY TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY

New Delhi, Aug. 18: In a first, this year's National Sports Awards ceremony is likely to be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with all the winners logging in from their respective places to hear their names being announced on August 29.

The National Sports Day is celebrated on August 29, the birth anniversary of hockey wizard Dhyan Chand.

"The sports awards function this year is like-

ly to be an online function. As per the Government of India instructions, the awardees will also be announced on the morning of the day of the function," a sports ministry source said on Monday.

It also allowed athletes to self-nominate in view of the "difficulties" being faced by them in finding people who can recommend their names amid the lockdown.

— PTI

Shuttler Satwik strong & steady

MOSES KONDETY | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

For shuttler Rankireddy Satwiksairaj, sport came first, studies later. Strange it may sound as he was born to school teachers in Amalapuram, Andhra Pradesh. His father was a Physical Education Teacher and there lies the catch.

"I was always attracted to sports as a child and was OK in studies... would skip school to watch cricket though," he told this correspondent on Tuesday after being recommended for the Arjuna award.

Satwik was six when he started playing badminton, at the Officers Club at Amalapuram Indoor Stadium where his father used to coach. His interest gradually grew as he picked up well at the summer camps that followed. "I started playing at the district level and soon got selected for the state at the Under 13 level along with my first partner Krishna Prasad. We had surprised everyone by winning the first state tournament we participated in. That success gave us an entry into the 2011 Nationals in New Delhi, where we did decently well by making the quarterfinals," he says.

That was the turning point. "My family then made the decision for me, that I should pursue badminton. So in June 2012 we went to the Pullula Gopichand Badminton

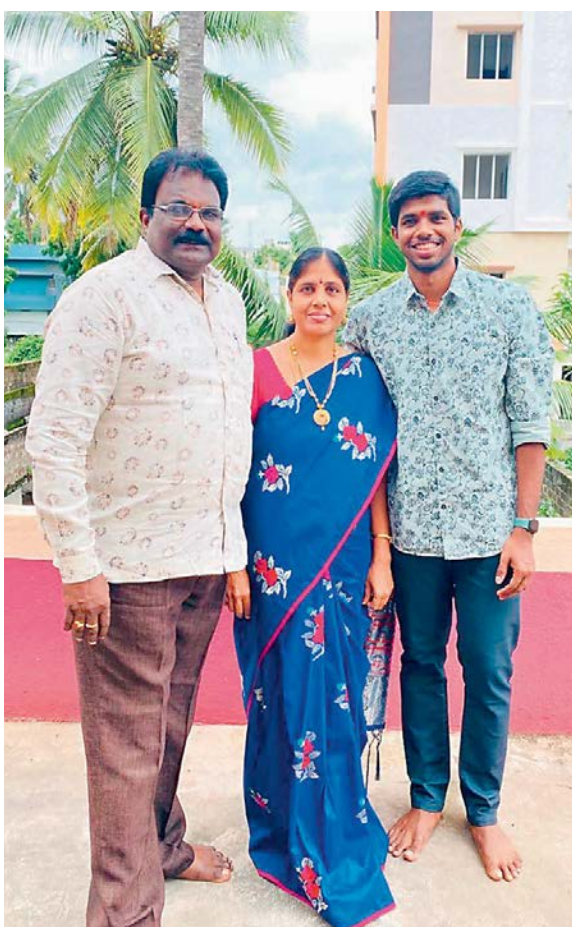
Academy in Hyderabad. Gopi Sir had asked us to come back later as the camp for the London Olympics was on. Then I went to Bhaskar Babu's badminton academy in Saroornagar, Hyderabad, and trained there for three months before joining PGBA full time," Satwik says.

That was the Under 13 level, and after playing the U-15s he shifted to doubles completely. "In 2016, doubles coach Tan Kim Her of Malaysia paired me up with Chirag (Shetty) on court and we've been together ever since," the 20-year-old says of his men's doubles partner.

They've had their starting problems though. "Communication was a hindrance initially. Gradually we developed an understanding on and off the court as well. We used to go out for dinners, share the room and little things even as we respected each other's personal space. Soon, we gelled well, grew very close and started winning tournaments," he says.

They share eight international trophies now.

But he was on seventh heaven when he first donned Indian colours. "My most memorable moment was when I first wore the India T-shirt at the Asian Junior Championship at Kudus in Indonesia in 2013-14... I was playing in the U-15 category then. It was an emotional moment for our entire family. I



Rankireddy Satwiksairaj (right) with his parents at his home in Amalapuram on his birthday last Thursday.

remember my brother was in tears," he recalls.

The next big feat was when we won the mixed team gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast, Australia. "To be on podium with other

teammates gave me goosebumps. That trip (to CWG) was truly special. To see all the great Indian achievers like Mary Kom and interact with them was such a thrill and gave me a high," says the six-footer.

Satwik also won the men's doubles silver alongside Chirag in the men's doubles, India's first ever medals in those sections and partnered the seasoned Ashwini Ponnappa to lose the mixed doubles bronze medal match in two tight games.

"Winning the Thailand Open (men's doubles) last year was another huge kick. It was a Super 500 tournament and myself and Chirag were the first Indians to win that," he says.

He's had his share of lows too, in the form of shoulder and ankle injuries. "They haunted me at the start of every year, since 2018. Being out of action for two-three months at the beginning of the season can be painful I tell you, but when you bounce back, it gives you a kick."

Now, the Olympics are surely on the mind. "That's something every sportsperson dreams of. We just don't want to be also-rans, but want to perform and earn laurels for the country to prove ourselves," he says.

At No.10 in world rankings, they are well-placed in the race to Tokyo. The top 16 teams get a direct entry into the Olympics.

In his moment of triumph, Satwik sums up the support he has received over the years. "My parents (father Kasi Viswanadham and mother Rangamani) have been a

IPL TITLE | SPONSOR

Fantasy platform gets Dream deal

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Fantasy gaming platform Dream11 on Tuesday won the IPL title sponsorship rights with a bid of ₹222 crore, replacing Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for a four and a half month deal.

Dream11 has been one of the IPL sponsors for a couple of years now.

"Dream11 has won the rights with a bid of ₹222 crore," IPL chairman Brijesh Patel said.

There is a possibility that Dream11 can stay till the 2022 IPL in case Vivo doesn't come back next year. Dream11 will be then paying ₹240 crore each for 2021 and 2022. This will make it an average of ₹234 crore per year for three years.

It is learnt that multinational conglomerate Tata group didn't place a final bid while two education technology companies — BYJU's (₹201 crore) and Unacademy (₹170 crore) — came second and third respectively.

Vivo and the BCCI suspended a ₹440 crore per year deal for this season owing to the border stand-off between India and China. The IPL starts on September 19 in the UAE, moved out of India due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year.

There are certain questions about Chinese company Tencent's investment in Dream11 but one of the BCCI insiders privy to the development said that it is less than 10 per cent.

Dream11 is an Indian company founded by Harsh Jain and Bhavit Sheth. "Dream11 stake-

holders, including its founders plus all 400 plus employees, are Indian," a BCCI source said. "Their Indian investors are Kalaari Capital and Multiples Equity. Even Dream11's product is available exclusively for use only by Indians. Only a single-digit percentage minority stake is held by Tencent," the official added.

However, as recently as last month, the BCCI's Anti Corruption Unit (ACU) had sought an inquiry against the company after it was reported that the platform had links to a fake T20 league which was held in a Punjab town but was live-streamed as a game in Sri Lanka.

The ACU investigations showed that kits used by players in the tournament had the Dream11 logo and the event was live streamed on FanCode. Both Dream11 and FanCode are part of Dream Sports group.

— PTI

Milan Inter title clash for Europa

Cologne (Germany), Aug. 18: Romelu Lukaku did his bit but there will be no reunion between the Belgian and Manchester United in the Europa League final.

Lukaku's Inter Milan will be in Friday's final in Cologne after he and strike partner Lautaro Martinez took their combined tally for the season to 54 goals, each scoring twice in a 5-0 demolition of Shakhtar Donetsk.

Headers from Martinez in the 19th minute and Danilo D'Ambrosio in the 64th put Inter on course to play for its first major continental trophy since winning the Champions

League in 2010 under Jose Mourinho. Martinez and Lukaku added three more goals in 10 minutes to make sure of the result.

Shakhtar was also trying to emulate past European glories after winning the UEFA Cup in 2009. The only remaining player from that team, goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov, was at fault for the opening goal.

Lukaku's 33-goal debut season in Italy has taken Inter back to a European final for the first time in 10 years, while Conte's men finished the Italian league season just a point behind Juventus. — AFP

COVID IN | THE AIR

VINESH PULLS OUT OF CAMP DUE TO SCARE

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Vinesh Phogat, the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for Tokyo Olympics, has pulled out of the national camp citing health safety concerns amid the Covid-19 pandemic, a decision which has irked the national federation.

The rescheduled national camp for Olympic weight category wrestlers is set to begin from September 1 in Lucknow (women) and Sonapat (men).

However, Vinesh is not comfortable travelling to Lucknow as she is fearful of her health amid the raging pandemic.

"I am not going to attend the camp. I am training everyday with coach Om Parkash, who follows the plan which my personal coach Woller Akos sends me every week. The situation is not good to travel to Lucknow," Vinesh said.

The 2019 World Championship bronze-medallist said she "falls sick very easily" so she does not want to take a chance with her health.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is not impressed with the reasons given. "The selection committee will decide if Vinesh will get exemption or not," said a WFI Assistant secretary Vinod Tomar. — PTI