

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | WEDNESDAY | 19 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

Max: 32.0°C
Min: 25°C
RH: 79%
Rainfall: 23.7 mm
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
32/25°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 Bhadrapada Shuddha Padyam till 5.18 am (Thursday)

Star: Magha till 2.05 am (Thursday)

Varjyam: 3.05 pm to 4.33 pm

Durmuhurtam: 11.54 am to 12.45 pm

Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Zulhijja 28,144 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.15 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 5.15 pm

Magrib: 6.50 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.29 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.52 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 5.51 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 7.45 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

Sports ministry picks badminton duo for award

Shuttler Satwik wins Arjuna award



MOSES KONDETY | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

Badminton player Rankireddy Satwicksairaj 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

for me well. Our phones were flooded with messages. It just hit us," the 20-year-old said from his home in Amarapuram, AP.

"This was just the kind of motivation we needed in these days of lockdown. The Arjuna Award will spur us to do a lot more for the country," the six-footer, who

trains at the Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad, said.

"Ahead of the scrutiny, talk in our circles was that it was rare for two players from the same sport to get the Arjuna and so we were not quite sure. I was thinking it wouldn't be fair if only one of us was picked for the

THE MADHYA Pradesh government jobs used to attract candidates from Hindi-speaking states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and also Maharashtra.

Chouhan said.

MP government jobs used to attract candidates from Hindi-speaking states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and also Maharashtra. MP had so far shunned 'son of the soil' policy in government jobs since the state never faced issues of insider and outsider like Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The announcement came three days after Chouhan indicated in his Independence Day address that people of MP would be given preference in government jobs. It comes ahead of the byelections to

the state.

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,"

Chirag Shetty (left) and Rankireddy Satwicksairaj (right) trains at the Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad, said.

"Ahead of the scrutiny, talk in our circles was that it was rare for two players from the same sport to get the Arjuna and so we were not quite sure. I was thinking it wouldn't be fair if only one of us was picked for the

award, for we are a team. Thankfully, both of us have been named," Satwik, who shares eight international trophies with Chirag and four in mixed doubles with erstwhile partner K. Maneesha, explained.

Meanwhile, in a first, the committee proposed five — cricketer Rohit Sharma, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, women's hockey captain Rani Rampal, table tennis player Manika Batra and Rio Paralympic gold-winning high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu — for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna.

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

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

full coverage on Page 8

NATION | 4

Ashok Lavasa resigns as EC, to join ADB



WORLD | 5

Trump slaps new curbs on Huawei



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Dream XI wins IPL title bid at ₹222 cr



Vol. 32 No. 80 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00



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 aerial survey

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

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 the river from emptying into the sea, resulting in inundation of areas like Kapileswarapuram, Antarvedipalem, etc

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first level at 11.75 ft in the next 24 hours.

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

dent Rahul Gandhi shared the letter on his Twitter handle and said Facebook needs to be questioned by all Indians. "We cannot allow any manipulation of our hard-earned democracy through bias, fake news and hate speech. As exposed by WSJ, Facebook's involvement in peddling fake and hate news needs to be questioned by all Indians," he said.

Facebook had said on Monday that the company's social media platform prohibits hate speech and content that incites violence, adding these policies are enforced globally without regard to political affiliation.

However, Facebook, which counts India among its largest markets globally, acknowledged that "there is more to do".

Hitting back at the Congress, Union IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said former Congress president Rahul Gandhi believes that any organisation that does not work to his liking is acting under the pressure of the BJP and the RSS.

"If the platform is public, then every Indian regardless of his ideology and commitment has got the right to convey his view. It is a hard fact we need to know that people whose political base has shrunk seek to dominate discourse on these platforms," Prasad said.

Last week, the American newspaper alleged that a senior Facebook executive had opposed applying hate-speech rules to posts by certain BJP leaders, triggering scathing attacks from opposition parties against Facebook.

Former Congress presi-

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, "Unfortunate that the Supreme Court allows the non-transparent & unaccountable PM-CARES Fund set-up as a secret trust to garner money."

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

source of information was not reliable.

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
VISHAKHAPATNAM, 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 Paderu, 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 fleeing 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, Dharmarapu 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. Jayadeer, 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 Srisailam 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 Srisailam reservoir. Sunkesula barrage near Kurnool on Tungabhadra River is adding another 24,000 cusecs into Srisailam.

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 Srisailam 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 Srisailam reservoir.

District collector G. Veer Pandian has asked irrigation, revenue, police, disaster management, and fisheries department officials to evacuate people from low-lying areas whenever 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 Srisailam, Ouk, 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 Srisailam 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.

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



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 Rampaodavaram 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. Gandipocham 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 Rampaodavaram. 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 sanitisation 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 AERIAL 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 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 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 Srisailam, 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 HOSKUR | DC
ANANTAPUR, AUG. 18

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

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SHORT TAKES
MAN HELD FOR TRYING TO KILL 3 BIZ PARTNERS

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.

However, Venugopal Reddy on several occasions asked Gangadhar and Sivaramakrishna Reddy to compensate the loss he suffered in the real estate business. As the duo failed to settle it, he conspired to take revenge on them. Accordingly, he called his three former partners to meet at 1 p.m. and spent some time in a restaurant. Venugopal Reddy was driving the car with Sivaramakrishna Reddy sitting next in passenger's seat while the couple were sitting in the rear seat. Venugopal Reddy pulled out a bottle of petrol mixed with sanitiser from a cover and doused Sivaramakrishna Reddy and the couple with it and set them on fire with a lighter and got down from the car and locked it from outside and ran away.

Both the police and fire personnel rescued the three from the burning car and shifted Gangadhar who suffered burns to a hospital for treatment.

NO HOME ISOLATION OF COVID PATIENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
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. 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.

GMC'S COMMUNITY LEADERS TO FIGHT COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 18

In an innovative move, Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) has decided to appoint community leaders to create awareness among Covid patients about the need for getting treatment in the early stage of the virus.

The GMC officials stated that many people were afraid to undergo tests and treatment and thus were spreading the virus to their contacts. To educate people about the need for quick treatment, GMC decided to appoint community leaders. The community leaders will identify and bring the suspected persons for Coronavirus diagnosis and counsel them to take treatment.

District Green Core coordinator Tirupathi Reddy said that 20 persons came forward to work as community leaders to create awareness among the people about Covid-19. He said anyone including social activists and NGOs interested to serve the society were invited to apply.

GMC commissioner C. Anuradha said that the people who were interested should contact 9493443342 and register their names with details to work as community leaders. She said that more than 15 per cent of the Covid suspects were not coming forward for test.

She stated that GMC would appoint such persons as community leaders who have contacts with local people and have a capacity to counsel them for treatment.

She said that presently 41 nodal officers, 207 ANMs, 4,000 ward volunteers, 1,800 ward secretaries are working to trace suspected persons, primary and secondary contacts in the city.

She appealed to the people with Covid symptoms to come forward for test without any hesitation.

According to the police, Nutalapati Navin Kumar

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SHORT TAKES
RLYS JUSTIFIES HIKE IN PLATFORM TICKET RATES

DC 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 RAUT

SONU 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 aghast 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 STUDENTS

MANOJ ANAND | DC
 GUWAHATI, AUG. 18

Assam government on Tuesday announced to gift a scooter 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 scooter 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 scooter 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 scooter 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 order

J. STALIN | DC
 with agency inputs
 CHENNAI, AUG. 18

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

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 Subbarao 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

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

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

Chandra next in the line of succession.

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

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.

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 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-

gements 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.

This was disclosed by the ED, 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 crore 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.

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: ED

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
 THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 18

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

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.

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

Malayalis gear up to celebrate Onam

DC CORRESPONDENT
 THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 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 festival 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 feasts.

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.

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-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 & Spruengli 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 smart-phone 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

— 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

— 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 southwest 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

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 sup-

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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.

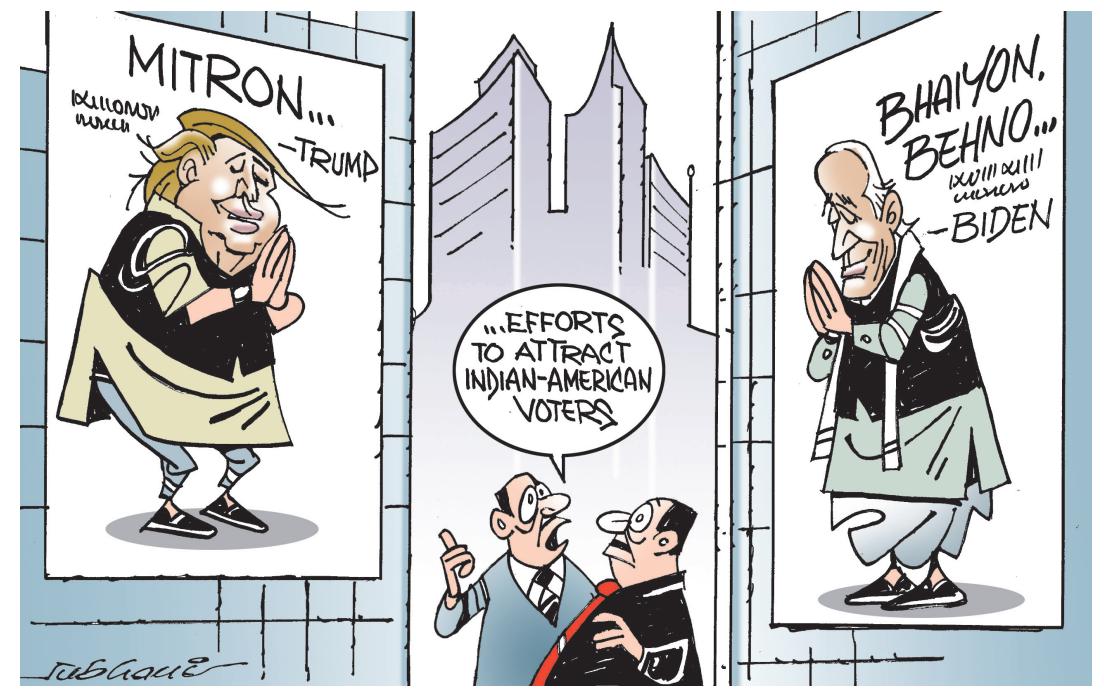
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Subhani



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



Sanjay Kumar

The seven-decade-long journey of electoral politics in India has been 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 sarpanches) has declined over the last few decades. This is largely due to frequent defections of leaders from one party to another, signalled 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, 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 men and women voted in equal proportions

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 men and women voted in equal proportions

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SHORT TAKES

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 and said profound changes were coming for the first team.

Spanish media said Dutch coach Ronald Koeman was the front-runner to take charge.

— Agencies

Inter Milan make Europa title clash

Cologne, Germany: 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. Lukaku's 33-goal debut season in Italy has taken Inter back to a European final for the first time in 10 years, while Antonio Conte's men finished the Italian league season just a point behind perennial champions Juventus, who won it for the ninth time on the trot.

— AFP

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



Rohit Sharma

● **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),

AWARDS LIST

Vishesh Bhargavanshi (basketball), Manish Kaushik and Lovlina Borgohain (boxing), Ishant Sharma and Deepi Sharma (cricket), Ajay Sawant (tent pegging), Sandesh Jhingan (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).

VIRTUAL CEREMONY PLANNED

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 likely 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

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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.

● Fantasy gaming platform Dream11 won the IPL title sponsorship rights with a bid of ₹222 crore, replacing Chinese mobile phone company Vivo. There is a possibility that Dream11 can stay till the 2022 IPL in case Vivo doesn't come back next year.

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.

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-

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